

After the BPO, KPO and LPO phenomena, it's now time for outsourcing of the *desi* creative mind. Is Indian ad-land ready to take on its global counterparts? SUNANDA ROY investigates...



# Outsourcing creativity? Let the party begin

With Easter round the corner, it's carnival time, festivity is in the air and the American *junta* is in shopping mode. Be it California, Los Angeles or the hustle-bustle of New York City, the streets are flooded with billboards and hoardings of product and services to lure potential buyers. Even ad agencies in the US are going berserk, doling out campaign after campaign to bait in the consuming fish. But no one, till a few months ago, could have imagined that 29-year old Anish Mahajan, sitting pretty in his Kolkata office, would actually be working on some of these glittery hi-profile global ad campaigns. Yes sir, you read right! That's exactly what is expected to happen if 'Creative Outsourcing'

kicks off in *desi* adland. After BPO, KPO and LPO becoming cult-terms in the country, it seems CMO (*creative-mind outsourcing*) is the next wave of outsourcing that is all set to hit the Indian shores.

Till now, agencies in the West Coast had off and on passed some of their art work and illustrations to Indian ad agencies on need basis. But the trickle is soon expected to transform into a flood of sorts. "Clients, as well as agencies, have been practicing outsourcing on a rare need basis. But it is a matter of time before India actually become a creative outsourcing hub," claims a hopeful Sidhartha Roy, Executive Director, Response India. *4Ps B&M* spoke to a host of ad *gurus* and industry vet-

erans on the potential of creative outsourcing in India. One notion on which almost all of them are unanimous is that originality and creativity are deeply intrinsic to India. And on the back of this creatively distinct Indian mind, the nation has the potential to make it big as a creative outsourcer.

"Indian advertising is receiving plaudits world over. The success rate at Cannes and other awards indicate that India has arrived on the global stage. Home-bred professionals invited to judge prestigious global advertising awards are another example of the world's recognition of India's advertising talent," believes Roy. As if on queue, Adobe India too has recently enhanced its focus on the Indian advertising fra-

ternity as a potential market for tools to create rich media campaigns. The software and tech firm agrees that creative outsourcing is the 'next big thing' for India and therefore Indian ad agencies must be adept with the latest technology being used by their counterparts in say, New York.

More importantly, diversity is ingrained in India's DNA. Veterans believe that this bi-cultural outlook gives Indians a unique insight into global trends and makes the contribution precious. "If we hone our inherent skills better and expand our vision further, India will surely lead the way (*in creative outsourcing*)," feels Prasoon Joshi, Exec. Chairman, McCann Erickson.

Moreover, India's expertise on the outsourcing front (*be it business or knowledge or legal processes*) is also going to work out in its favour. As Ujjal Sinha, CEO of Kolkata-based Genesis Advertising puts it, "Thorough understandings of the outsourcing business, global reputation in this domain, improved IT infrastructure in the metros and mini metros and a robust advertising/ communication industry are a few reasons that can boost creative out-

sourcing in the country."

However, the primary reason for outsourcing to thrive is economics. Advertising is a business and like any other business, the industry strives for high quality work with the highest possible returns. "The possibility of both lies in outsourcing work to India. The process is probably at a very nascent stage now, but it will catch up in coming years," adds Roy of Response. So out of the box ideas by creatively distinct minds at lesser costs will definitely help Indian creative boutiques to lure clients. "As long as any professional firm can deliver the quality within the planned time frame, at a lesser cost, they are bound to get quality projects," claims Rajesh Kishanpuria, Senior Partner, Ideazfirst Consulting.

The rosy tale comes with a few thorns. There are people who feel creative outsourcing will be a tough task. "I wonder if it is possible to produce creative work that touches a cord somewhere without knowing those people and their culture well. In my opinion, this is going to be the biggest obstacle to cross," says Sinha.

Prathap Suthan, National Creative Director, Cheil Communications, intellectually argues, "One needs to know and be seeped in their culture and life and religion and local jokes and sport and stuff like that. If we think Americans can be capable of delivering ideas based on Indian mythology, *et al*, then I guess we could do the same for them. What complicate the equation is also European languages and sometimes

ideas take a linguistic route too. That's when we might get stumped."

Agnello Dias, National Creative Director, JWT India feels, "In pure creative product and creative execution India can become an outsourcing hub. In other things, like planning and strategy, it may take some more time."

The biggest concern that advertising veterans are raising is lack of consumer insights and cultural nuances, which can prove a big hurdle for India to become a creative outsourcing hub. However, Roy seeks to present the solution for that. "The outsourcer and the outsourced would have to figure out how the agency in India, besides studying reports, *et al*, also get enough first hand exposure in the target markets and among target consumers to create ac-

countable communication." So, the strategy should be sharing and experiencing consumer and market insights that are the key to good advertising that impacts the target consumer universe.

However, getting acquainted with an absolutely alien culture surely takes time. So it may take some time before India

actually becomes an outsourcing hub for creative work, like it is in the BPO and KPO sectors. Agrees Cheil's Suthan, "Creative outsourcing is already a small reality for niche products and niche audiences. But mainline media status for this nascent phenomenon is still years away." Be that as it may, the knocking for creative outsourcing has begun and the noise is only likely to get more deafening from hereon. **4Ps**

**Agencies have been practicing outsourcing on a need basis, but India has the potential to become a creative outsourcing hub**

