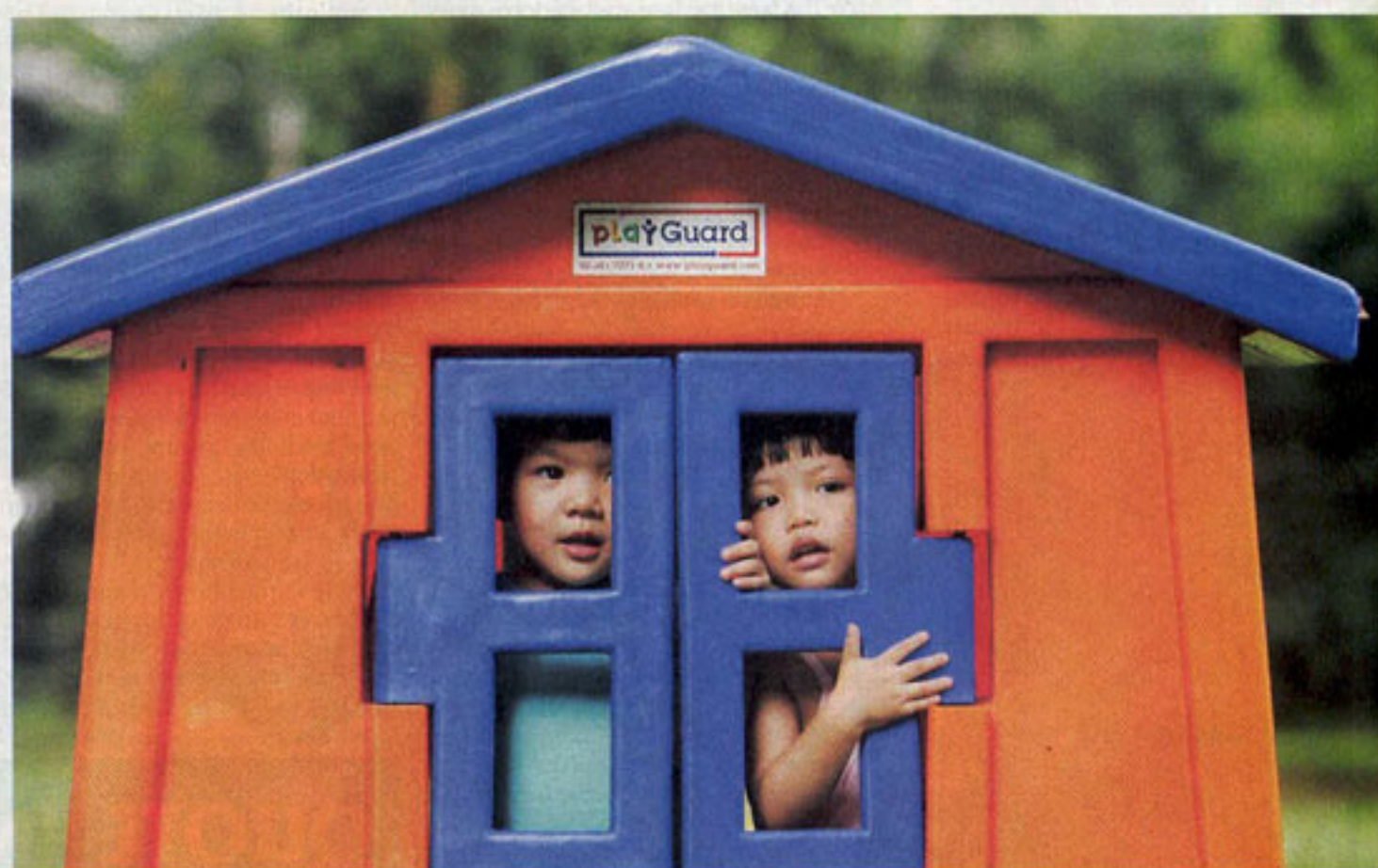


Know 'Em Insight Out

To reach out to the consumer of tomorrow, marketers need to equip themselves with new skills and a little imagination



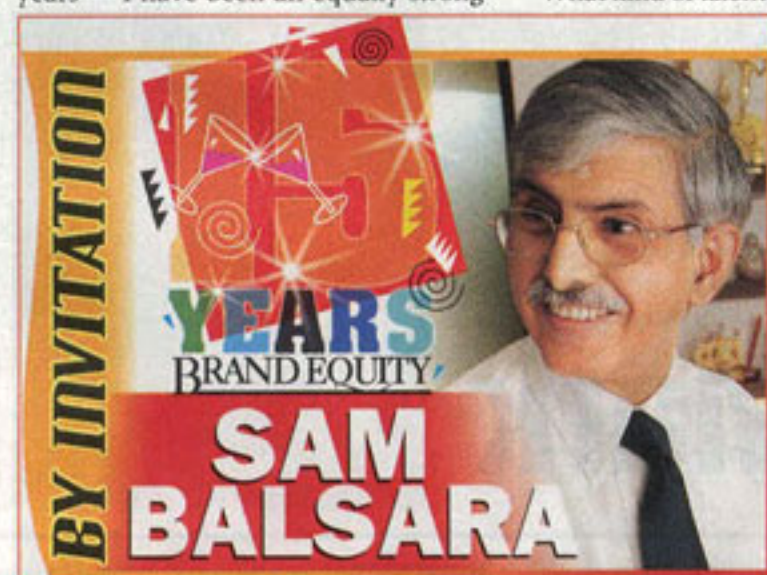
BRAND Equity has given me the task of writing 750 words on "How to be a part of the lives of consumers of tomorrow". Whilst I consider this task daunting, and am flattered that they consider me worthy of even attempting a treatise, implicit in their request is the assumption that I, along with many of my colleagues from the 13-odd media agencies, am an expert at being a part of the lives of today's consumers. This doubt came to my mind, as I was lolling on my bed, inflicted with viral fever, aimlessly watching TV, when, on NDTV 24X7, I saw a bunch of the ubiquitous Mumbai *dabbawallas* in Saffola T-shirts, mumbling something, not about Prince Charles or their lecture at a management institute, but about looking after one's heart and taking a pledge to do so and how they are happy to do their little bit for the cause.

This provoked me to shout across the house to my wife, "Homai, what cooking oil do we use?" Came the answer, "Saffola" and I sure was relieved to hear it. I recalled this incident, as I sat down to write this piece and the thought that struck me was, when was the last time that I had seen a vanilla 30-second commercial which provoked me to think or ask if we were using the brand featured in the commercial in our home? The next morning, I saw 20 celebrities plug Saffola on Page 3 of *Bombay Times*, and as I read my *naseeb* in *Sunday Mid-day*, even Marjorie Orr urged me to take the pledge. The afternoon found me hearing a similar message on GO FM. And at night when I decided to see a movie in one of those fancy new multiplexes, since I was over-rested(!), the Saffola message, riding on the excuse of World Heart Day, hit me again. I believe there are about 7,000 advertised brands, all ably supported by media experts charged

with the responsibility of making them play a part in our lives. How many actually do? Like Saffola did in my life, over the weekend?

Whilst, for a long time, I have been a staunch believer in the near magical powers of TV — more so in its infant years — I have been an equally strong

believer in the power of multimedia. The Saffola experience that I went through, (especially when I was a bit unwell) and about which I did not have *a priori* knowledge, convinces me of the growing importance of a multimedia plan, going beyond buying just space and time in units and capsules in which it is sold to drive brand preference or action.



We think we already live in an over-communicated society with too much advertising bombarding us from newspapers, TV

screens, radios, billboards and websites. But some survey tells me that India is only 14th in the list and we need to train our minds to develop cutting-edge ideas to cut through increasing clutter. And, as clutter increases, the role of non-mass media is going to grow exponentially in importance.

What kind of talent do we need to develop, to crack media ideas in the future? Those who have a facility with numbers, who have a business sense, can read balance sheets and have generous doses of imagination, guts and persuasive skills. I wonder how many of the current crop, including myself, can pass this test?

And what is the weapon we need to pass the grade? CPRPs, CPTs, Reach/Frequency curves, Econometrics, Modelling? Yes, all very necessary, but not a sufficient condition. You need dollops of what I call **media insight** — uncommon observation about the not-so-obvious media behaviour of a group of individuals, with respect to a particular category of goods that will lead to the dissemination of a message, when the suspect least expects it or at time when he is

most likely to act upon it.

A long time ago, when I was in college, I recall someone explaining to me the difference between an engineer and a technician. An engineer is equipped to handle any technology, no matter how much it changes; a technician can handle only one on which he is specifically trained. If the technology changes, he becomes redundant, much like how radio officers became redundant on newer ships with simpler communication devices, which anybody could handle.

As we stand on the shifting sands of technology that threaten to change the manner in which consumers will receive advertisers' messages (who knows, we may not even call it advertising!), or in fact block or avoid such messages, the need of the hour is to develop media strategists who understand the principle and theories of consumption and mind, and develop media insights relevant to appropriate categories, which can be universally applied, irrespective of medium or gizmo or technology.

Let's not get too worried. If we don't do anything on our own initiative, there'll always be Brand Equity with its insightful pieces, keeping us abreast and nudging us along.

Congratulations BE, on a pioneering and path-breaking 15 years. I hope I will be around with enough mental faculties to say a HELLO to you and your readers, when you turn 30.

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