

Your consumer is Glocal

VISHAL SHAH, MANAGING PARTNER AT MEDIACOM INDIA. 23 SEP 2020

Digital allows consumers to experience the same brands all around the world. A new breed of global and local consumers creates new challenges for brand relevance says Vishal Shah, Managing Partner at MediaCom India.

Vedika, is a 21-year-old woman, living in Mumbai, about to head to college and in the market for a new pair of sports shoes. Having travelled widely during her pre-lockdown holidays and visited adidas stores in London and Dubai, she has decided to get some new adidas trainers.

Her research takes her to the adidas USA website, a local retail shop as well as e-

commerce sites. Finally, she opts to buy her perfect sports shoes from an eCommerce site based outside India, paying by credit card.

This new breed of consumers who are both global and local are posing some fundamental challenges to the customer journey. It's no longer about global brands building their local profile but about consumers who experience those brands across a much wider geographic footprint.

As digital access and connectivity continues to expand, this group – **the Glocals** – will become bigger and bigger. The availability of low-cost smartphones and low-cost data bundles are a fundamental driver of this group. In India, for example, data access now costs as little as \$0.09 USD per GB, while a new smartphone can be just \$20 USD, catalysing the entire eco-system.

But it's not just about accessibility. There are four factors that make brand experience an increasingly global phenomenon:

- **Glocals are online globally:** brand discovery is an online experience for many consumers and there are no barriers to stop consumers getting a glimpse of their favourite brands in markets well beyond their home country.
- **Glocals can buy from anywhere:** Consumers are now able to access global brands from almost any market they like. Thanks to the likes of Amazon and Alibaba consumers are accessing brands from outside of their local geographies. Ali Express, for example, which is based out of China, is proving popular with consumers in India.
- **Glocals can pay in any currency:** Online payment systems make it easy for consumers to buy and sell anything anywhere. A Glocal is now easily able to purchase even with international currencies thanks to PayPal, Western Union or debit/credit cards enabled by brands like Visa and Mastercard.

- **Globals can go anywhere:** Pre-COVID-19 international cross border travel was on a steady rise, allowing consumers to experience the same brand in different countries. Take McDonald's for example, today when a consumer is missing a Big Mac, they know they can hop into any McDonald's restaurant and expect the same Big Mac, with the same taste and experience that they get back home.

With these emerging trends, there are three things global brands can do to address the Glocal consumer:

1. Integrate marketing communication with Popular Culture:

Every local market will have its own traditions, values, cultures, food and languages. Brands need to identify a sweet spot that makes the right connection with consumers and amplify that.

Amazon India's '[aur dikhao](#)' (show more) campaign captures the essence of choices that Indian consumers want before making a purchase decision. This behaviour is an age old tradition, where the Indian shopper would visit a shop to purchase a saree, she would see plenty of them and then tell the shopkeeper, to keep a few aside for her, while they check some more in other stores and then decide which one to purchase, if at all.

2. Don't compromise the experience, customise it:

In endeavouring to integrate the local culture, brands often end up compromising the overall experience due to global guidelines. It is important to ensure that brands are able to deliver to the local expectations rather than compromise on it by making a half- hearted attempt.

McDonald's India introduced a 20 rupees burger called Aloo Tikki Burger, a burger with a cutlet made of mashed potatoes, peas and flavoured with Indian spices. The McAloo Tikki Burger was a unique proposition that combined the familiarity of Indian cuisine and the novelty of the humble potato patty being used to create a burger.

3. Think Global but Act Local:

Most global brands have predominantly focused only on local communication to remain relevant to the local consumer. With the rise of Glocal consumers, brands need to think of an idea that can be relevant across multiple geographies by integrating it with local insights.

In April, 2018, Coca Cola's global '[Share a Coke](#)' campaign came to India using popular local words printed in the local language on the label (words like bhai meaning brother, didi meaning sister etc.). A classic example of a global campaign successfully executed using local insights.

Innovation will be essential to ensuring brands can remain relevant with consumers. Those brands that can integrate into local culture and customise the experience seamlessly keeping the Glocal consumer in mind, are the ones that will be able to make authentic connections and build long-lasting relationships with them.

OPINION