

Profile

Helping brands speak at retail

From creating holistic retail level solutions to offering a good social network platform for shopper connect, BrandVak is all poised to becoming a one-point retail marketing solutions company.

N Jayalakshmi

“Everything we wanted to do but couldn't do,” might sound like the title of a best-selling self-help book but that is exactly how the core team at BrandVak would sum up while describing their offerings and solutions. The “everything” here of course can be translated to mean everything that a brand needs to make its retail presence stronger, whether it is in terms of visibility, communication or shopper experience. In fact, these three key words -- visibility, communication and experience -- are what the speech bars in the company's logo stands for -- a good indication of what BrandVak sees as the need of the hour.



Indeed, having had retail experience for more than 10 years, Bijitesh Mallik, CEO, BrandVak Incorporation, teamed up with Anil D.S, the Director-Design of BrandVak, and the two of them decided that the time was ripe to pool together their skill sets and experiences and start something more focused on retail and shopper marketing, thus hoping to implement ideas which they were unable to during their stint at various retail solutions companies. Thus was born BrandVak.

Says Bijitesh, “We felt that there was a need for a focused organization to create the bridge between the shopper and the store. That's how we conceptualised BrandVak -- as a retail marketing and shopper marketing organization.” He adds further while explaining the thin line dividing retail marketing and shopper marketing, “The two are very different. Retail marketing is something very new and as for shopper marketing, though people have been talking a lot about it for a long time, everybody decodes shopper marketing in the way it suits them. Shopper marketing in reality is about a broader perspective of how you

look at brand strategies in a manner that is more shopper focused. So we felt that there was a need for an organization that looks at shoppers and not consumers. Consumers is for Above The Line agencies to look at, but we felt that there was a need to look at how a consume behaves inside a shopping environment and that's when he or she becomes a shopper. So that's where we come in; where the ATL finishes its work, our work begins.”

So what BrandVak essentially does is translate the overall brand essence and project it onto retail for its clients. This starts from something as crucial as packaging and goes all the way to shopper understanding. For example, for the brand Cornitos, a Haryana based brand that sells Desi style Nachos, BrandVak, by changing the look and feel of the product packaging, made a significant difference to the brand at retail and helped it stand out among the clutter of international brands in the stores. This involved understanding of shelf space and size at retail and shopper absorption of brand positioning among other things.

BrandVak has also worked with companies such as 3M and Hike, a height enhancing shoes brand based out of Hong Kong and a few other brands, creating retail visibility solutions for them. Talking about the deliverables that the company brings to the table, says Bijitesh, “We create the essence of the brand at retail. We say “we will make your brand speak at retail”. On the other side, we are also working with retailers, especially the smaller players who are coming into the market, and we work on creating the brand identity for them because retail brand identity is very different from corporate brand identity and also product identity. Retail brand is the brand at the door and the other brands are the brands on the floor.”

Indeed, for a company operating in what is still understood to be a niche segment, the main challenge for BrandVak is to explain the actual meaning of retail identity to clients. Besides, there is also the challenge of lack of enough collaboration between the retailer and



Bijitesh Mallik, CEO, BrandVak Incorporation & Anil D.S, Director Design, BrandVak

the brand. Says Bijitesh, “We always stress on brand-retailer collaboration and that is still not happening in a meaningful manner in India. For example, category management is something that is retailer specific and internationally it is the retailer who takes a call on this. But in India, while some of the big retail groups do it, the majority of them leave it to the brand, so the latter has to take the leap and create the overall category for the retailer so that both the retailer space and the brand visibility are enhanced.”

As for the company's USP Bijitesh would define it as, ‘Retail Marketing’ because “that has not been decoded very strongly yet and we understand the overall dynamics of how the brand needs to speak at retail”. Sharath Bhat, Senior Advisor, Communication, BrandVak adds to it thus, “We are accountable to making the brand visible and engage at retail and we are very focused on results.” Going further, the company is planning to focus heavily on social network marketing. Besides, the long term vision is to create a retail marketing agency with a pan India recall. As Bijitesh says, “So when clients think about retail marketing and shopper marketing the first name that comes to their mind should be BrandVak.” ■