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<https://www.medianews4u.com/comvergence-remains-impartial-assessing-media-spend-without-relying-on-evaluated-agencies-olivier-gauthier-priyanka-mehra/>

COMvergence remains impartial, assessing media spend without relying on evaluated agencies: Olivier Gauthier & Priyanka Mehra

Sports event advertising in India is growing through immersive online and on-site options.



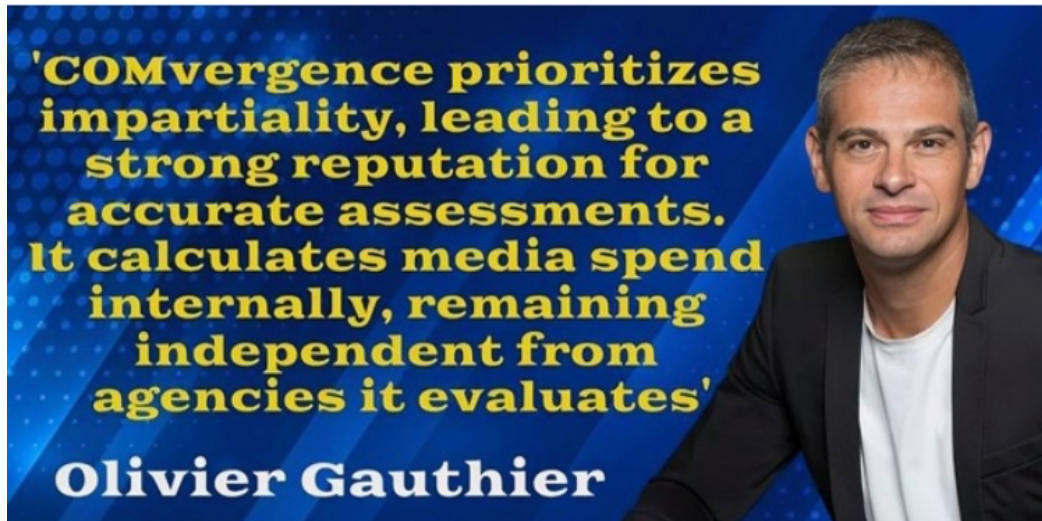
According to research and data consultancy COMvergence 2023 New Business Barometer local media pitches in 2023 accounted for 91% of total media pitches in India. Maruti, Reckitt, Swiggy, Pernod Ricard, Vivo Mobiles Beiersdorf, Ferrero, Berger Paints and Jaguar Land Rover were among some of the account moves and retentions that dominated the Indian market from January 2023 to December 2023. GroupM, IPG Mediabrands and Omnicom Media Group led media groups. Wavemaker, Mindshare and Lodestar UM dominated agency roster.

Medianews4u.com caught up with Olivier Gauthier- Founder and CEO COMvergence and Priyanka Mehra Regional Director South East Asia & India COMvergence to find out more

What was the whitespace that was seen in 2016 when COMvergence launched?

Olivier Gauthier - When I founded COMvergence in March 2016, along with my two partners, the intent was to provide a new service to the industry, and more particularly to professionals involved in the media and advertising ecosystem. From the beginning we made significant investments to develop a proprietary online platform on which we would develop interactive tools and online databases that would be updated continuously.

Moreover, and more specifically on our media agency benchmark studies, we were aiming from day 1 to establish the most objective, impartial, and accurate assessments possible - thanks to partnerships we have forged with third companies such as Nielsen or Kantar, but also by applying a uniform and very transparent methodology.



How important is India as a market for COMvergence?

Olivier Gauthier - India is a pivotal market for us, which is why we on-boarded, Priyanka Mehra to join us over two years ago, as Regional Director South East Asia and India, we realised that with the size, scale and complexities of this market, we needed a senior person who is well versed with the market. Through Priyanka's appointment over the last two and a half years, we have solidified our presence in the Indian market which is integral to us along with expanding our presence in South East Asian markets, like Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia.

Priyanka Mehra - To further give you a sense of how important India is in terms of size and scale in our latest New Business Barometer Global report which we released last month. India ranked 5th in terms of the volume of total spends reviewed globally, and second in APAC (coming after China) which is quite significant, with media spends in India estimated to be around \$1.5BN (FY 2023 New Business Barometer).

In fact in 2023 the 91% of the pitches that took place in India were local much higher than global average for local pitches 55% showcasing the extent of activity and spends in India.

The sheer volume of media spends in India has been growing Year on Year.

What trends are we seeing in media buying in India?

Priyanka Mehra:

- **Increase in Ecommerce spends** - We have seen an increase in spends on ecommerce in categories like FMCG, Fast Fashion, Groceries, Beauty Care and Personal care. Increase in Quick Commerce platforms and Market places are leading to more and more spaces for 'Product Discovery' as well as 'New Brand Launches' leading to a surge in ecommerce spends.
- **Increase in Connected Television viewing leading new ways of digital advertising** - The shift from Linear TVs to Connected TV viewing has led to an increase in digital advertising as it has opened up an entire new arena of opportunities for advertisers to tap into and this is slated to further increase with the plethora of content available across genres and geography agnostic in a country like India.

- **Sports advertising on the rise** - The significance of Sports related advertising was most evident during the pandemic wherein IPL bought welcome relief to the media community at large in India.

We definitely see a boost in sport related events advertising in India, led by Cricket as of now, with offerings on immersive viewing from online to on - ground options, we see an increase in spends in both on TV and digital related to sports, again Connected Television viewing boosted by data analytics leads to the ability to highly customise options for advertisers.



Could you talk about your principles of objectivity, transparency and agility and how this gives you a leg up over the competition?

Olivier Gauthier - Impartiality is at the core of COMvergence's mission and principles. Adherence to this principle has enabled the company to gain a strong reputation for providing quality and reliable assessments. Hence, COMvergence calculates its own estimates for media spend figures and does not rely on any "self-reported" data from the agencies. Further, COMvergence is fully independent and has no ownership ties or partnership arrangements with any of the groups and agencies it assesses.

We continue to remain a private company with no external investors or external funding.

Could you talk about the products and services that you offer communications groups?

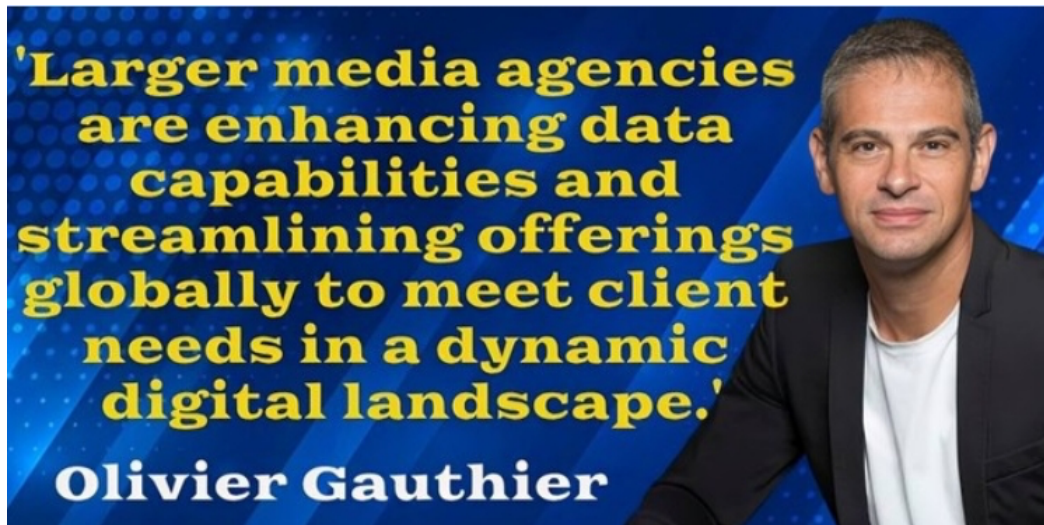
Olivier Gauthier - Over the past seven years, COMvergence has successfully developed and launched a broad range of products to analyse and measure the performances and strategic developments of the global MarCom holding company agencies, major independents, and largest management consultancy firms.

Some of our unique tools include CARD a user-friendly and intuitive online database providing a wide range of history on the relationships between major international and national advertisers and their media agencies (in 50 countries) and over 60 creative and in-house agencies (in the US).

New Business Barometer - this dynamic tool offers the ability to appreciate the impact of the most recent account moves on the agency New Business Values among other uses.

Billings and Market Share- this tool offers the ability to appreciate the size of the media agencies/groups in terms of client spend volumes across 50 markets. Agency/group rankings are based on total net media billings.

All our tools come enabled with interactive customizable charts, and provide our clients with reliable media spends, and help our clients prospect as well as protect their business.



Are we seeing even the larger agencies struggle to adapt to a fast-changing digital environment?

Olivier Gauthier - Larger Media agencies have been reinventing themselves, through streamlining their offerings and investing more in data capabilities. What we have observed is that they have made great efforts towards developing and investing in building their 'Tech stack' at group levels and offering integrated offerings to clients at the same time focusing on speed and agility to keep up with the fast-changing digital environment, this is a global phenomenon.



Is the pace of acquisitions of smaller media agencies picking up? Do you see more consolidation happening in some markets in 2024?

Olivier Gauthier - This varies from year to year, in fact our comprehensive annual global study on the acquisitions in the Marcom space for 2023 indicated the *Big 6 (Holding Companies)* were extremely active when it comes to acquisitions led by *OMG, WPP and Publicis Groupe*, followed by *Management Consultancies* led by *Accenture* whereas the digital investment firms were led by *The Brandtech Group* globally.