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## 'India has great campaigns, poor branding'

Q&amp;A: Shombit Sengupta, Founder, Shining Consulting

Pradipta Mukherjee / Kolkata February 25, 2010, 0:43 IST

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Shombit Sengupta When Marico introduced Saffola Arise, a new rice brand, the branding exercise was done by India-born **Shombit Sengupta** who is settled in France. After shifting to Paris from Kolkata in 1973, Sengupta set up the Shining Strategic Design Company, and over the last few years has executed his concept of 'creative business strategy' to companies all over the world. Mukherjee speaks to *Pradipta Mukherjee* about his new product and retail innovations. Edited excerpts.

### What did Marico expect you to do with 'Arise'?

The product was created by Marico. But after that, Shining Consulting was involved from choosing a name for the product to positioning of the brand. We conducted research among 700 consumers who unanimously said that they wanted rice that did not make them feel sleepy or lethargic. After Marico created Arise, which is made up of good carbohydrates and has a lower GI than regular rice, the brand had to be named accordingly and positioned properly too. The job, therefore, was to successfully transform a commodity into a brand. Incidentally, Shining rebranded Marico in 1998 and ever since then, the image of Saffola is that of a healthy heart. The product itself comes in a heart-shaped jar.

### What other innovations have you carried out recently?

We have recently re-designed a 4,000 sq ft Allen Solly store in Bangalore, building on insights collected from young consumers. When you enter the store, everything appears asymmetrical. Symmetrical design means the idea gets finished in a short distance but an asymmetrical design in a garment showroom would keep consumers engaged for longer.

### Can you give examples of some of your innovations?

We redesigned Mahindra Bolero, after which it is selling 8,000 cars per month, compared to the earlier 5,000 per year. The redesigning was in terms of repositioning Mahindra Bolero as a car perfect for a section of consumers. So, the hinges were changes and the redundancy renovated. We also redesigned 'Britannia' in the 1990s and the company has always been associated with 'Eat Healthy' since then.

### Does a brand overhaul also mean an overhaul of the corporate strategy?

There is a fine-line difference between brands and corporates. Corporate image is very human resources (HR) driven. Whereas brand is a connect with consumers. A corporate presence for a brand is only for reassurance purpose. A brand is about different markets and therefore different target consumers. But for a few companies, like Coca Cola and Nike, the corporate is perceived as the brand.

### What is the ultimate objective for redesigning a brand?

A brand redesigning is for increasing market growth and net worth by establishing a strong consumer connect. Most brands in India lack a strong consumer connect. Re-purchase is the most critical factor which decides whether a brand is here to stay or will fade away. Trial or test-run is useless. So, brands should build on what is known as the 'felt benefit'.

### How does a company understand whether the 'felt benefit' of a product is working or not?

Consumer should believe in the product, be it a mobile phone brand, or foods or auto. Consumers also want to feel if a particular product is rational, works well or not, as well as whether the product looks good. Also, brands would need to have an innovative factor to justify the purchase and later on ensure re-purchase.

### How different is brand overhaul for Indian and foreign companies?

Huge difference. India indulges in the most sophisticated marketing campaigns but has poorest branding. Another difference is that marketing in India is quite complex because of strong regional players. In West, particularly the American society loves to buy and so the market is very marketing-driven. Indian consumers, on the other hand, always want to know the benefit a brand is likely to offer.

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