Sri Lankaâ€™S Â€˜Global Localâ€™



Dilith Jayaweera and Varuni Amunugama Fernando, Joint Managing Directors at Triad Advertising, speak to Harin Fernando amidst celebrations after winning a bronze medal at the recent AdFest 2008 International Advertising Awards held in Pattaya, Thailand.

In its 11th year, ADFEST acknowledges the necessity for the advertising industry to continuously find ways to reach its increasingly hard-to-reach consumers in its 2008 theme, 'REiN-VENT.' The Triad team secured the Bronze award in the Integrated Communications category for its social service outdoor campaign 'Makeup' created for the Environmental Foundation of Sri Lanka. The concept had earlier come to the notice of the international jury panel at the recent 'Chillies 2008′ and won the only Gold to be awarded at the show.

Why has it taken so long for Sri Lanka to Arrive?

Dilith Jayaweera (DJ) – In my personal opinion, a lot of countries, especially in this region, took a long time to understand the format and the mechanics of the competition.
Though the Sri Lankan industry is 50 years old, all this while, we had been looking inward. With The Chillies – the national ad awards where the judging panel comprised of internationally reputed judges, our creative product was objectively scrutinized and judged on its creative potency. With this we gained an insight into the international perspective and expectations. It became an opportunity for agencies in Sri Lanka to think out of the box. Think fresh ideas with the power to "wow".

How have The Chillies helped?

DJ – Triad was adjudged overall winner at The Chillies for the last three years running. Ours is not an individual, but a team effort. The Chillies are based on a very similar format to AdFest – the judging process and the structure of the juries for example.
The Chillies have helped us progress and also it has made our people think differently with regard to brands. The Chillies collates different disciplines to the game plan and another aspect is that we (the industry) should learn from someone

who is doing good work and contributing in any way, to taking the industry forward.

The most heartening fact was that various international judges at The Chillies have also borrowed the concept and will implement it in their respective countries.

On your Bronze at AdFest?

Varuni Amunugama Fernando (VF) – The idea was based on an insight, namely the fact that garbage has become a really huge problem in South Asia. Wherever you are especially in urban areas, garbage is dumped in all sorts of places and our research indicated that very often garbage would be left alongside/outside dilapidated and poorly maintained walls and street fronts.
After digging a little bit deeper, we came up with the insight that average individuals, would never dump garbage outside their own house. But those very same individuals might walk some 100 yards and then dump refuse.
With this in mind, what we set out to do was to inspire behavioural change. We aimed at deterring those with an intent of dumping, by sprucing up the same walls and street fronts to look like their own homes, shops and workplaces. To check on the impact, we installed hidden cameras and witnessed for ourselves the change in behaviour.

DJ – It was a pro-active idea and on a conventional client brief. When we came up with the idea, we told the client, the Environmental Foundation of Sri Lanka a 25-year-old NGO, how the idea would be beneficial in fulfilling the objectives of the Foundation. We showcased the power of the medium; in this case how pro-active ideas could be very useful in mass communication exercises.

VF – The idea came to us and we then proposed it to the Foundation who supplied us with a further brief. We modified our approach slightly and soon we had a direction. The first of three steps; the first was to clean up and paint 10 walls that were poorly maintained with domestic and commercial façades, in order to create the desired impact.
The second step we took was to make contact with the Colombo Municipal Council (CMC) and private sector institutions that were entrusted with the task of clearing up any refuse that hap-pened to be dumped along certain allocated routes. It was imperative that those 10 sites were cleaned on a regular basis in order to maintain the illusion that they were no longer dumping sites, but rather the doorstep of someone’s home or office.
The third and final step will be for us is to work hand in hand with the CMC in order

to establish designated dumping sites. This cycle completes our objective of establishing behavioural change in addition to a fundamental mindset change, within the average individual, when it comes to dumping refuse. This stage of the campaign will be supported with mass media campaign where garbage sorting will be advocated for home gardening and other progressive environment protection activities.

Pro – Active Vs Scam?

VF – Lots of various parties label pro-active work as ‘scam.’ Pro-active thinking and initiatives are the duty and responsibility of any good agency in its efforts to boost the client’s brand, product or service. Triad does not confuse work that is fraudulent to efforts that are in the best interests of our clients. Following our metal at AdFest, all we spoke about was how ‘Sri Lanka – Can.’ It was not about an achievement of a single agency but a nation.
Six of our team who attended AdFest and took to the stage experienced a feeling of ambition and success. When the award was announced and the team got on stage and unfurled a ‘Sri Lanka Can’ banner, the entire audience broke into applause. It was only then that the gathering of close to 5,000 delegates noticed that Sri Lanka had finally come of age. This win has inspired all of us. Truly. We are also competing at Cannes. Let us wait and see if we can put Sri Lanka on the world map now.

Photo Caption – Celebrating 15 years in the industry, Triad sees this outstanding win as a stepping stone to the global advertising arena, placing the brand’s footprint on the global creativity map as Sri Lanka’s ‘Global Local’