

Cementing new identity

ACC is ready to restage itself with a new brand campaign launched last week. This time, however, the goal is to remain relevant to the needs of today's consumer

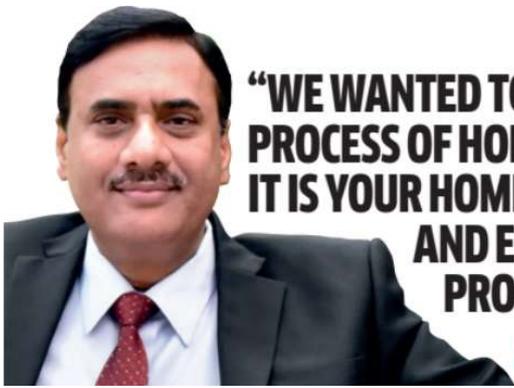
Amit Bapna | ETBrandEquity | February 20, 2019, 06:00 IST

Share



The last time ACC released a full-fledged brand campaign was 2013. The campaign that featured actor [Ramesh Deo](#) depicted the emotional journey of a grandson who rediscovers his grandfather's village and its development. Now the brand is ready to restage itself with a new brand campaign that launched last week. This time, however, the goal is to remain relevant to the needs of today's consumer and to also showcase ACC as a company that has remained modern and ahead of the times, according to Neeraj Akhoury, MD and CEO, ACC Limited.

Legacy is something that ACC has plenty of. The company was formed by an amalgam of 10 cement companies. As per the available information, these companies belonged to four prominent business groups - Tatas, Khataus, Killick Nixon and F E Dinshaw, which eventually came together in 1936 to form what was formally called The Associated Cement Companies Limited and later became ACC. In 2005, ACC Limited became a part of Switzerland-headquartered Holcim group, and in 2015 Holcim Limited and Lafarge SA together formed the building materials behemoth LafargeHolcim. Today, ACC is amongst the top 3 cement companies in the country, others being the leader UltraTech (part of [Aditya Birla Group](#)) and [Ambuja Cements](#)(also part of LafargeHolcim).



**“WE WANTED TO TURN THE TEDIOUS
PROCESS OF HOME-BUILDING ON ITS HEAD:
IT IS YOUR HOME THAT YOU ARE BUILDING
AND EVERY STEP OF THE
PROCESS SHOULD BE JOYFUL.”**

Neeraj Akhoury, MD & CEO, ACC limited

As nations grow and people build more homes and roads, an increasing number of brands and companies are recognising how building materials like cement would be a critical resource in that journey of growth. Over the decades, companies have heavily invested in that narrative. However, consumer involvement in the category is one of the lowest, which makes the job of brand builders more challenging. As [Piyush Pandey](#), CCO, Worldwide, The Ogilvy Group, says “though cement's a key ingredient in the making of a building, it remains 'invisible' to the end user.”

Brand Solutions



Kaleido Awards '19



**India Communication
Summit '19**

The average consumer doesn't have a favourite brand of cement like the “mera walla” of Asian Paints, and building a house – an once-in-a-lifetime event for most people - is seen as a chore best left to contactors and masons. The latest ACC campaign attempts to move the needle away from that category challenge.

Says Ashish Prasad, chief marketing officer and head - new products & services, ACC Ltd, “We are trying to break from the clutter of the cement category and romanticise it by celebrating cement and concrete and the joy of home-building, in an enjoyable way.” The campaign by 82.5 Communications, part of the Ogilvy Group, borrows from the Broadway musical style. The film features “joyful” ACC masons who band together to build a dream home for a young couple. There is a method in the song and dance. Explains Akhoury, “At a process level, we wanted to turn the tedious process of home-building on its head: It is your home that you are building and every step of the process should be joyful. And with the specialized products in the portfolio, specific consumer needs can be met by ACC.”

The campaign reaches out to the individual house-builder almost in a personal dialogue, shares Sumanto Chattopadhyay,

chairman and CCO, 82.5 Communications. “It was a conscious effort to make cement and concrete look “appetising” since we want people to see all construction material in a new light - not as boring cement and sand but wonderful ingredients in the elaborate recipe for their house,” he adds.

Cement brand advertising has followed a set of familiar tropes. Sometimes brands use humour (Ambuja Cement’s ‘[The Great Khali](#)’), others bring out the big Bollywood guns ([Amitabh Bachchan](#) for Binani Cement). Then there’s the higher order of nation-building like Wonder Cement’s ‘Shuruaat Karo, Pakki Baat Karo’. And finally, the kind that deploys the experts to talk product benefits and features like MP Birla cement’s on-site expert. “The communication task has often been to broadcast the same message ((strength benefit) differently. But without any messaging about what differentiates one cement brand from another”, says Jigar Fernandes, founder of creative shop tiquitaka and ex-Publicis Ambience, where he created the famous Ambuja Cement-Khali campaign (2015).

As per KV Sridhar (aka Pops), founder and CCO, Hyper Collective, “Any low-involvement category needs to be more upfront about its relevance than the high-involvement categories like colas or soaps, which can afford to take a leap of faith”. Sridhar, who worked on the launch of UltraTech’s ‘Engineer’s choice’ brand positioning in the mid-2000s, is not certain if the new ACC campaign delivers on all parameters. “Even if you are having fun, it should be ‘relevant fun’ that brings out the ‘why they do what they do’ messaging upfront,” he adds.

The question is will consumers dance to ACC’s new tune? The final proof is in the building.

Quirky Credits

Making cement Instagram-worthy: Since the idea was to make cement look “appetising”, Mumbai-based product-photography specialist Goldwin Fonseca was hired with a rather unique mandate; “Shoot cement like food.”

The Swedish Connection: The Broadway musical-style film, produced by Dejavu Films, was directed by Swedish director Anders Forsman, who also directed the 2016 IPL Carnival film and the Tata Tigor film.

Cementing Ties

M&A of Yore

Much before mergers and amalgamations became the norm, 10 cement companies belonging to four prominent business groups - Tatas, Khataus, Killick Nixon and F E Dinshaw, came together in 1936 to launch The Associated Cement Companies Limited. It later became ACC.

Global meets local

In 2005, ACC Limited became a part of Switzerland-headquartered Holcim group, and in 2015 Holcim Limited and Lafarge SA together formed the building materials giant LafargeHolcim. Today two of the top three companies -ACC and Ambuja Cements are part of LafargeHolcim.

