

JAIPURIA INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT, NOIDA
LIBRARY AND RESOURCE CENTRE



BUSINESS INSIGHTS }

VOLUME- 09

ISSUE- 07

JULY, 2025

LATEST HAPPENINGS, DEVELOPMENT AND RESEARCH IN MANAGEMENT



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www.jaipuria.ac.in

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

AI-led ad tools are helping small brands reduce reliance on big agencies

Swiggy isn't alone. Across categories — from beauty platforms to D2C brands and even astrology start-ups — AI-led advertising tools like Google's Performance Max and Meta's Advantage+ are fast becoming indispensable.

By Geetika Srivastava



At a Google India roundtable last week, Arjun Choudhary, VP of revenue & growth head for food delivery & Instamart at Swiggy, offered a peek into how one of the country's largest hyperlocal brands is deploying artificial intelligence (AI) not just as a tool, but as a strategic partner.

“As a hyperlocal business, we prioritise quality over volume, while focusing on users across cohorts,” Choudhary said. “Google has played a key role in helping us reach and engage them effectively. With Performance Max, we’ve delivered the right ads to the right users, driving new user growth while reducing costs. Testing Retention Mode has also helped cut re-engagement costs by nearly two-

thirds... These capabilities have helped us improve results while making our campaigns more efficient.”

Swiggy isn't alone

Across categories — from beauty platforms to D2C brands and even astrology start-ups — AI-led advertising tools like Google's Performance Max and Meta's Advantage+ are fast becoming indispensable. They promise what traditional digital marketing networks render out of reach: intelligent targeting at a fraction of the cost. Take Google's Performance Max campaigns. Instead of manually testing different creatives and deciding when and where to allocate spend, you just leave it to AI. It analyses reams of data in real time, adjusting creative elements to drive mammoth conversions. Says Deepak Gupta, co-founder of beauty platform Style Lounge, “Tools like Meta Advantage+ and Google Performance Max have helped us run smarter campaigns, reaching the right people at the right time.” He says such tools have ensured better conversion rates —up to a 12-15% higher — at a much lower — often half — the cost compared to traditional ad setups.

The top draw? They are simple and intuitive and inexpensive to implement, and will certainly speed up the content creation process. For many, it's the AI's ability to make sense of complex data and automate targeting. Even with little historical data, they are able to reach high-intent buyers. “When backed by strong creative and clear objectives, AI doesn't just enhance campaign performance, it transforms it,” says Vaishal Dalal, co-founder & director of Excellent Publicity.

In-housing made easier

A byproduct of AI's growing ease-of-use has been that campaign deployment has started depending less on large network ad shops. The whole exercise has become more plug-and-play even for smaller marketing teams. Take the example of astro-consultancy firm NumroVani that leans heavily on Meta's AI suite. Founder Sidhharrth S Kumaar says that since adopting Meta

Advantage+, his team has seen significant gains. “Our conversion rates are 21% higher, our CPA is 14% lower, and our ROAS is 32% higher than when we were doing manual campaigns.” The AI-driven system has streamlined operations for the company. “It has cut our campaign administration time by 40%, which has let us grow more quickly while still focusing on strategy and creativity with a lean team.”

That is not to say the rise of AI has made agencies irrelevant — it has actually forced them to pivot. “While the fundamental approach hasn’t drastically changed, what has changed is the time and workforce needed to optimise and scale campaigns,” says Shlok Hari, business head at SW Growth Labs. “AI tools are becoming increasingly useful across the entire campaign lifecycle, from planning and execution to optimisation and reporting.”

Rather than compete with automation, agencies are leaning into interpretation and strategic application. What’s expected now is quicker turnaround and higher-value insights. “The monotony is gone, but that also means teams must be hyper-focused on what the data actually means,” adds Hari.

Venugopal Ganganna, co-founder and CIO of LS Digital, points to the shift in execution models. “Some clients have taken parts of execution in-house. What’s changed is how engagements are structured. Instead of full-service retainers, there’s a move towards more collaborative, focused partnerships... where the work is more pointed, often more strategic, and designed to complement what brand teams are building internally.

He points out that while platforms optimise against set goals, they don’t ask if the message fits the current market context. That’s where agency experience still matters.

That said, AI-led platforms come with trade-offs. “There’s a ‘black box’ element,” says Kumaar. “It’s harder to gather useful information that helps with cross-channel planning because a lot of the targeting and optimisation happens behind the scenes.”

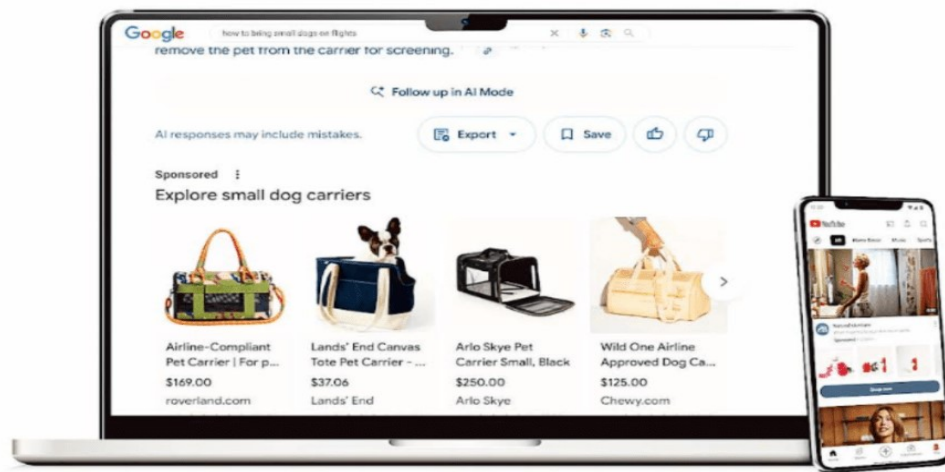
Gupta agrees. “AI can tell us what’s working, but not always why.” Cultural or emotional nuance, especially in industries like beauty, is still something algorithms can’t grasp. Which is why most see the future as a hybrid. “AI will handle the execution and scalability. Humans will determine the strategy, story, and creative vision,” says Kumaar.

In the end, it’s not about getting rid of people, it’s about allowing them to do what they do best. (FE18072025)

Google’s AI-powered ad suite reimagines digital marketing in India

Google will help the buyer in brand discovery, and help the seller with customisation and measurement.

By Geetika Srivastava



On any given day, an average consumer would watch a random Shorts video on YouTube, search for the website of the brand embedded in it, scroll through the bouquet of offerings, and make a purchase, all without leaving Google territory. This increasingly linear journey of the consumer makes Google's AI-led suite of ad tools so compelling.

Google isn't hiding that it knows this. On Thursday it rolled out several new AI-powered features for its ad ecosystem in India, structured around four key pillars: creative, performance, discovery, and agentic tools. The ambition is clear: To be the only platform present across all four behaviours shaping the digital consumer— searching, scrolling, streaming, and shopping. “While many platforms offer reach, only Google and YouTube can help brands be present across all four of these behaviours,” says Roma Datta Chobey, managing director, digital native industries, Google India.

Google will help the buyer in brand discovery, and help the seller with customisation and measurement.

It is rolling out ads in AI Overviews, Shoppable CTV, and a Shoppable YouTube Masthead. Shoppable CTV lets users engage with products directly from the big screen. This is key for YouTube, which has been India's most-watched CTV platform for the past 12 months. The agentic capabilities in Google Ads and Analytics offer AI assistants that help set up and optimise campaigns with minimal manual effort. “We're finally reaching that moment where we can serve the right user at the right time with the right creative,” says Dan Taylor, vice-president of Global Ads, Google. “That's been the promise all along, and AI is bringing us closer than ever.”

The “Generated for You” feature in Product Studio identifies the best content opportunities across a merchant's catalogue and pre-generates on-brand images and videos for instant publishing. “Imagine a textile seller in Surat or a spice exporter in Kochi being able to generate product-centric creative at scale, in

multiple languages, without relying on studios or designers. It democratises scale, and India will benefit disproportionately,” explains Ambika Sharma, founder and chief strategist, Pulp Strategy.

Features like Performance Max Retention Only Mode, AI Max for Search Campaigns, and Smart Bidding Exploration offer predictive targeting, better search query matching, and flexible return on ad spend (ROAS)-based bidding. On Device Measurement (iOS) improves campaign performance using first-party app event data, while Meridian enables faster access to granular marketing mix modelling (MMM) insights with a scenario planner.

“Google’s AI rollout is basically rewriting how we plan and execute campaigns. Targeting is smarter and unified across Search, YouTube, and Display,” says Ramya Ramachandran, founder and CEO, Whoppl.

The numbers are already on its side. The company reported 31,221 crore in gross ad revenue for FY24, an 11% year-on-year increase, and is estimated to command 40–45% of the country’s 70,000-crore digital ad market. Its platforms are deeply embedded in consumer journeys. In just the past year, advertiser adoption of Google AI for generating creative has increased by over 250%. According to the company, about 84% of Indian users engage with Google or YouTube daily. The platforms also feature in 87% of brand discovery journeys.

Automation vs identity

Will Google end up diluting its distinctiveness in the quest for automation?

With tools that generate copy, visuals, targeting logic, and even performance scenarios, marketers are now navigating a landscape where creative work is increasingly machine-led. The upside is speed and scale; the risk is similarity. “Google’s tools are beginning to think like a planner and execute like a

performance engine,” says Pulp Strategy’s Sharma. “But they still need direction.”

A big concern is creative erosion. Will every ad start to look and sound the same? “To ensure brand safety and relevance, Google’s AI tools like ‘Generated for You’ use on-brand guidelines,” says Yasin Hamidani, director, Media Care Brand Solutions. “But marketers must still review, edit, and approve AI-generated assets before publishing.”

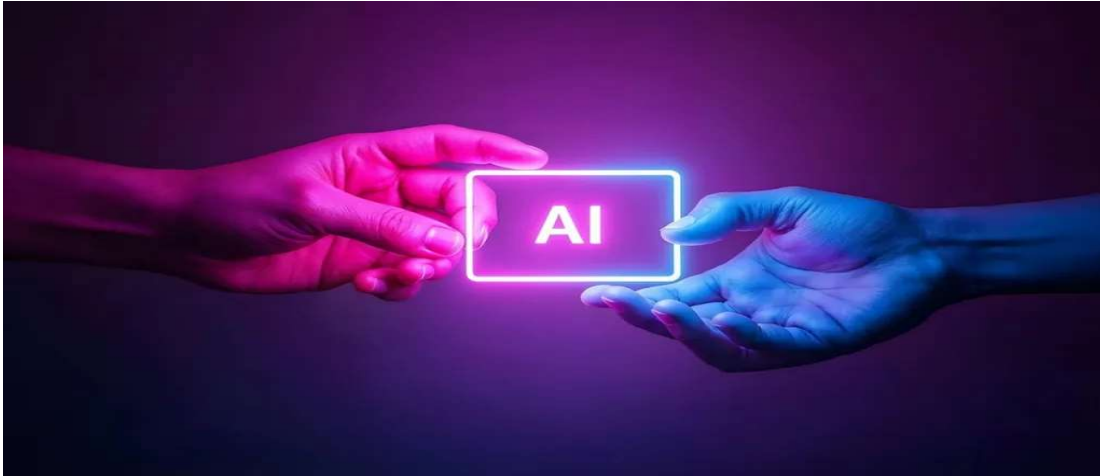
Then there’s the role of agencies. If Google’s AI can recommend bid strategies, expand search queries, and auto-generate creative, are agencies at the risk of being sidelined? Not quite. What automation replaces is executional labour. What it can’t replicate is instinct. “AI is not a strategy. AI is the how,” says Taylor. “Your marketing strategy, your audience, your creative — those remain human decisions.”

Real-world results are already coming in. Swiggy, one of Google’s early partners in India, used Performance Max to acquire 10–20% more consumers and reported a 40–50% faster return on investment. “The retention mode has helped us bring back users at a fraction of earlier costs,” says Arjun Choudhary, vice-president, Swiggy. (FE11072025)

Lens on AI in securities market

Sebi can take steps to not only regulate but also design a framework to aid growth, innovation.

By Sandeep Parekh



In one of the first measures taken by an Indian regulator vis-à-vis artificial intelligence (AI), last month the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) issued a consultation paper seeking feedback on its proposals to regulate the use of AI/machine learning (ML) in the securities market.

As defined in the consultation paper, AI refers to technologies that allow machines to “mimic human decisions to solve problems”. ML is a subset of AI, and refers to the automatic learning of rules to perform a task by analysing relevant data.

Currently, Sebi requires market infrastructure intermediaries such as stock exchanges, clearing corporations, depositories, etc., and intermediaries such as mutual funds to report AI/ML systems employed by them, thereby giving the regulator an insight into its use cases.

Use Cases and Governance Principles

Sebi has indentified that AI/ML is being used for various purposes. For instance, stock exchanges are leveraging AI for sophisticated surveillance and pattern recognition, and brokers are deploying it for product recommendations and algorithmic order execution. AI is also used for customer support.

Based on who is creating an AI/ML system, they can be classified into two categories—built in-house or sourced from a third party. In this context, it is also important to remember that AI/ML systems can be integrated with each other as well as with present systems. Further, the capabilities of AI are expanding rapidly, with models making near-accurate predictions in finance and generating model portfolios that could, not too long from now, give a fund manager a run for their money.

In a forward-looking approach, Sebi's consultation paper proposes guidelines to be framed with five core principles—a model governance framework, investor protection, testing mechanisms, fairness and bias, and data/cybersecurity.

Importantly, Sebi has proposed that third-party services would be deemed to be provided by the intermediary concerned, and thus, liable for any violation of securities laws. Further, it has extended the applicability of investor grievance mechanism in respect of AI/ML systems as well.

Towards a Safer, Smarter Framework

Sebi has proposed a “regulatory lite framework” seeking to segregate between AI/ML systems that have an impact on the clients, and those used for internal business operations. Further, even if the system is outsourced, intermediaries will be liable. The real challenge for intermediaries lies in building sophisticated internal teams, robust audit trails, and technical capacity to manage such systems. In this context, it is worth considering if Sebi should revisit this approach and borrow a leaf out of its own playbook.

In February, the regulator introduced a revised framework for safer participation of retail investors in algo trading. In view of several entities providing algo strategies to customers and the consequent risks, Sebi decided to introduce a new class of regulated entities, viz. algo providers. While they aren't directly regulated

by it, algo providers would have to become agents of stock brokers and be registered and empanelled with the stock exchange(s).

A similar approach can be evaluated in respect of AI/ML systems, and a new class of persons—AI providers—introduced. While it is not necessary that Sebi directly regulates such persons, it could result in better oversight and understanding of the evolving nature of the AI industry and its nexus and impact on the securities market. Further, liability can be fixed on the person or entity actually responsible if an AI/ML system goes wrong, especially if the intermediary had no role in the violation. The alternative results in cascading litigation, as the investor would sue the intermediary which in turn would seek to recover losses from the third-party vendor (AI provider). While the investor grievance mechanism is proposed to be extended to AI/ML systems, introducing a new class of semi-regulated players in the securities market could have a better impact on fostering growth in a transparent, accountable manner with appropriate oversight.

Sebi's proposal includes testing requirements at the time of commencement as well as on ongoing basis, to ensure the AI/ML systems are working as expected. Here, a key reform that could propel their growth is allowing players to access the regulatory sandbox framework to test their products and systems. This would result in a heightened scrutiny of such systems, and allow Sebi to work with emerging players in the AI industry. This would also provide key data points, aiding in evolving best practices across the board. Such a framework would help it to become a proactive regulator as opposed to reacting to technological developments. It would be the first step in transforming Sebi into a regulator whose regulatory frameworks lay down the foundation for more innovation and advancement. This method will allow Sebi to be an enabler rather than impose roadblocks to new technology.

The paper highlights potential dangers of AI too. The regulator explicitly flags the threat of generative AI being used for market manipulation through deepfakes and misinformation—a systemic concentration risk if the industry leans too heavily on a few dominant AI providers. The identification of concentration risk is particularly salient, as there is a danger of unregulated tech providers becoming systemic chokepoints for the industry. Further, since there is only a handful of foundational models, the risk of synthetic data loops emerges where everyone uses the same AI model—trained on the same data—which may cause a risk of collusive behaviour and herding.

There is much to applaud about Sebi's proposal of a principle-based regulatory lite framework that reflects its intention to adapt to innovation in technology that would shape financial markets in future. At the same time, there are steps it can take to not only regulate, but also design a regulatory framework that is ahead of the curve and supports growth and innovation. (FE19072025)

BRAND MARKETING

When rebranding goes wrong: Case studies from across the globe

Yet, for many global brands, attempts to reimagine their identity have met with swift public rejection, underlining the complexities involved in altering deeply familiar brand cues.

Written by Brand Wagon Online



Rebranding, when executed thoughtfully, can signal innovation, capture new audiences, or mark a strategic pivot. Yet, for many global brands, attempts to reimagine their identity have met with swift public rejection, underlining the complexities involved in altering deeply familiar brand cues. Several high-profile failures reveal that customer loyalty often rests on emotional familiarity as much as product utility, and that tampering with legacy can be costly.

A Recipe for backlash: The New Coke experiment

In 1985, Coca-Cola reformulated its century-old flagship beverage in what remains one of the most talked-about marketing reversals in history. Dubbed “New Coke,” the sweeter version was introduced after internal taste tests suggested a preference over rival Pepsi. However, the change triggered consumer outrage. Just 79 days later, Coca-Cola reintroduced the original formula under the label “Coca-Cola Classic,” acknowledging the deep emotional connection customers had with the original product.

Design overhaul without consensus: Gap and Tropicana

Apparel retailer Gap faced similar resistance in 2010 after unveiling a new logo without prior notice. The Helvetica-based redesign was widely criticised for appearing generic and lacking brand character. Intense social media backlash led to a reversal within a week.

Tropicana, the juice brand owned by PepsiCo, encountered a commercial setback in 2009 when it replaced its iconic image of an orange with a straw with a minimalist glass of juice. The redesign made the product harder to identify on shelves, leading to a reported 20 per cent decline in sales over two months before the company reverted to its original packaging.

Shifting brand identity

In a bid to expand its audience beyond traditional genre enthusiasts, the Sci-Fi Channel rebranded as “Syfy” in 2009. While intended to modernise the channel’s image, the spelling change alienated a section of its core audience, who saw it as a departure from the brand’s roots in science fiction storytelling. Though the name remains, it did so at the expense of goodwill among long-time viewers.

Legacy undone: RadioShack and Tronc

Consumer electronics retailer RadioShack’s attempt to rebrand as “The Shack” in 2009 failed to resonate. Intended to sound more contemporary, the name confused consumers and failed to address the company’s broader structural challenges, including outdated inventory and digital competition.

In 2016, media conglomerate Tribune Company rebranded itself as “Tronc” (an acronym for “Tribune online content”), aiming to highlight a digital-first strategy. However, the new name, accompanied by a heavily criticised promotional video, became a symbol of corporate jargon disconnected from newsroom realities. The rebrand was phased out quietly two years later.

Heritage at risk: Royal Mail’s short-lived ‘Consignia’

One of the more notable institutional rebranding failures came from the UK’s Royal Mail. In 2001, the 350-year-old service rebranded its parent company as “Consignia,” hoping to signal a broader international logistics ambition. The

name was widely criticised as vague and unnecessary, and was abandoned within 16 months following intense public and political opposition.

The common thread

Each of these examples shares a common misstep: underestimating how closely consumers identify with existing brand assets. Whether it was a change in name, logo, or packaging, the rebrands disrupted established perceptions without sufficiently preparing or convincing their audiences. (FE18072025)

ADVERTISING MANAGEMENT

How BMW's emotional storytelling boosted sales and became a case study in MBA programs

It was during this lull that a group of marketers at BMW North America, led by Vice-President of Marketing Jim McDowell, made what many considered a bold and baffling move: they decided to make films.

Written by BrandWagon Online



In 2001, before YouTube existed and long before “content marketing” became a thing, BMW found itself in a predicament. The German carmaker had no major product launches on the horizon. Its competitors, led by Mercedes-Benz and Lexus, were pushing hard in North America. Traditional advertising, full-page magazine spreads, and glossy TV spots suddenly felt too predictable.

It was during this lull that a group of marketers at BMW North America, led by Vice-President of Marketing Jim McDowell, made what many considered a bold and baffling move: they decided to make films. Moving away from the traditional ads and promos, they went ahead with a series of short films to be distributed for free on the Internet.

The idea gave rise to *The Hire*, a series of eight web-based action thrillers starring Clive Owen as a nameless driver-for-hire. Each episode, directed by auteurs like Ang Lee, Wong Kar-wai, John Frankenheimer and Guy Ritchie, was a high-octane, standalone story where a BMW wasn’t just product placement, it was a character in the plot.

The episodes were streamed through a custom-built video player on BMW’s website because YouTube didn’t exist yet. Bandwidth was limited. Watching one 10-minute film could take over an hour on dial-up. But the audience came. And then they told their friends too.

The series captured an ambitious anthology of eight short films, each showcasing *The Driver* (Clive Owen) navigating a range of morally complex missions, from high-stakes chases to quiet psychological dramas. John Frankenheimer’s *Ambush* delivers taut, old-school action with finesse, while Ang Lee’s *Chosen* blends chase with choreography in a tonally curious entry.

Wong Kar-wai’s *The Follow*, the series’ artistic pinnacle, shifts gears into emotional noir, offering introspection over adrenaline. Guy Ritchie’s *Star*, a tongue-in-cheek misfire featuring Madonna, lacks narrative elegance and leans into gimmickry.

Alejandro González Iñárritu's Powder Keg attempted political heft but stumbles under its weight. Season two began with John Woo's Hostage, which devolved into generic action-TV territory, and Joe Carnahan's Ticker ups the spectacle but falters with bloated pacing.

Finally, Tony Scott's Beat the Devil, a surreal, hyper-stylised drag race with the Devil, embraced excess but veers too far from the series' core.

A film festival, not an ad campaign

In many ways, The Hire wasn't a campaign at all, it was a digital film festival underwritten by an automaker. "We treated the viewer like an intelligent participant, not a sales target," a senior creative from Fallon Worldwide, BMW's agency, later said.

And the audience rewarded that respect. Over 100 million views were recorded, a staggering number in the early 2000s. BMW's U.S. sales rose by 9% in the first year of the campaign. What made the series so effective was not just star power or slick production. It was the inversion of the advertising model: story first, sales later. The Driver, cool, calm, moral yet mysterious, was a human extension of BMW's identity.

"BMW's 'The Hire' was a visionary move that redefined branded content long before platforms like YouTube even existed. It treated the audience not as consumers but as viewers—blending cinematic storytelling with brand identity. By putting narrative before product, BMW not only broke through the clutter but also built lasting emotional equity. It's a masterclass in how powerful storytelling can drive brand love and real business results," Yasin Hamidani, Director, Media Care Brand Solutions, told financialexpress.com.

A legacy still on the road

Nearly two decades later, The Hire continues to be taught in marketing classrooms and referenced at industry panels. Its influence can be seen in everything from Apple's cinematic ads to the long-form branded content of Red Bull and Nike.

In 2016, BMW even revived The Hire with a ninth episode, The Escape, reaffirming the character's cult status and the campaign's staying power. But in many ways, the original series remains unmatched, both in ambition and execution.

As brands today chase algorithms and attention spans measured in milliseconds, The Hire is a reminder that sometimes, giving the audience something to care about is more powerful than asking them to care. Back in 2001, before "going viral" was a thing, BMW quietly showed the world what it meant to tell a story. (FE21072025)

Indian advertising business set to reach Rs 1,476 billion by 2026: Report

Ad market set to hit Rs 1,476 billion by 2026 with 7.8% growth in 2025. Digital leads with 51% share, driven by video, social, and retail ads. Digital video to grow 17% vs 2.5% for TV. Publishing, audio, and experiential ads also expected to post steady gains.

By FE Bureau



India's advertising market is projected to record 7.8% year-on-year growth in 2025 to take the advertising expenditure (AdEx) from Rs 1,272 billion in 2024 to Rs 1,371 billion in 2025, according to the latest report by IPG Mediabrands' media intelligence unit MAGNA. Total ad revenue is expected to increase by Rs 99 billion this year. In 2026, the report forecasts a 7.7% growth to take the advertising industry to Rs 1,476 billion, making it one of the top 10 global markets.

While digital media is expected to grow by 12% to reach Rs 728 billion, traditional formats such as TV, radio and print will grow at a much slower 3.4% to reach Rs 643 billion. Digital advertising, with 51% share of the AdEx, also overtook traditional advertising in 2024.

While the first half of 2025 is expected to grow at 6%, H2 growth is pegged at 9%, though trade uncertainties may influence outcomes later in the year.

Overall, India's economic outlook remains positive, with robust growth potential supported by a combination of domestic demand, government investment, and a thriving services sector. India is also poised to overtake Japan in 2025 as the world's fourth largest economy, and is expected to surpass Germany by 2028 to claim the third spot.

Hema Malik, chief investment officer at IPG Mediabrands India expects that ad spending in 2025 will remain resilient, absorbing the post-election and post-T20 World Cup slowdown from 2024. During this year, MAGNA forecasts dynamic ad spending in segments like finance, media, pharma, technology, gaming and retail while categories like auto and electronics may lag.

“The trio of video, social and retail will once again lead the AdEx growth. Live sports, which were the only linear TV mainstays, have been upended with more people streaming sports content. Ad-supported streaming are experiencing rapid growth in access, consumption, and advertising sales, as nearly all streaming TV platforms offer more affordable ad-supported plans. Long-form

video is growing at a blistering pace of over 25% and is 6% of the total video forecast, estimated to gain double digit share in the next three years,” remarks Malik.

Digital pure player formats valued at Rs 680 billion are the key growth drivers for the advertising economy, estimated to grow at over 11.4%. Social media is another key advertising format, which is expected to surpass television to become the largest advertising format.

Digital video is expected to grow at over 17% this year compared with linear TV spending, which is set to grow by just over 2.5%. Digital pure play formats and video jointly account for 80% of the total AdEx.

The report also observes that publishing will grow by over 3.5% to reach Rs 205 billion, with the digital version of the format expected to grow at twice the rate. Audio and experiential ad spending are 5% of the AdEx and will grow at 5.9% and 12.9% respectively. (FE03072025)

MARKETING

How marketers are trying to maximise the growth potential of rural markets

These are just two examples of how brands are tapping growth potential in rural and remote regions. There’s a clear reason why these regions are now on every marketers’ radar.

By Christina Moniz



Just recently, Perfetti Van Melle launched the Kaisi Jeebh Laplapayi challenge for its Centerfruit brand targeting rural markets where nearly 40% of the households don't have access to TV and 50% have no internet connectivity. The campaign enabled real-time conversations in local dialects through a simple phone call using AI.

Last fiscal, automaker Maruti Suzuki developed a regional marketing strategy that blended technology, localisation and vernacular content. Its efforts paid off with a 15% retail growth in rural areas, outpacing urban markets, which saw a 2.5% growth in the festive quarter of FY25, the company said.

These are just two examples of how brands are tapping growth potential in rural and remote regions. There's a clear reason why these regions are now on every marketers' radar. Rural India is experiencing a significant rise in aspirations and digital inclusion, leading to expansion in many aspirational categories, says Soumya Mohanty, MD and CCO, South Asia, insights division, Kantar.

Despite such creative marketing initiatives, brands are often criticised for prioritising urban markets. Atul Shrivastava, CEO, Laqshya Media Group, says that many brands often treat rural marketing as an afterthought or just a seasonal push. "What brands need is not just rural reach, but impact which can come through long-term focus and not through one-off activity," says Shrivastava.

Now look at the potential. According to Kantar's FMCG Pulse for Q2 2025, branded products saw 5.1% volume growth in rural markets while unbranded grew at just 2.3%. This is in contrast with urban markets where unbranded products clocked 8.4% growth compared with 2.1% for branded.

Why that dichotomy? Many feel that regional markets remain underserved because of their complexity and the costs involved. As Shubhranshu Singh, CMO of Tata Motors Commercial Vehicles, said in a recent media interaction, brands must move out of their comfort zone—read high potential urban markets—and embrace the country's full cultural spectrum. Rajiv Dubey, media head, Dabur India, argues while marketers do not de-prioritise remote markets, reach is an issue as regular media fails to deliver. Rural markets are the bedrock for Dabur's businesses, he says. During the last fiscal, the company expanded its reach by 10,000 villages to reach a total of 1,32,000. Dabur employs free-to-air channels, single screen cinemas and consumer activations such as nukkad nataks to reach consumers in far-flung areas.

Miles to go

Kantar's Mohanty says to succeed, marketers must go beyond basic translation and focus on true cultural localisation. "The most impactful approach is to build campaigns from the ground up using regional insights, unlocking deeper emotional resonance and greater growth potential," she says.

Shuvadip Banerjee, chief digital marketing officer, ITC Ltd, cites an example. The company is adopting a 'culture centric marketing' strategy that allows it to customise first the product and then the marketing strategy for specific regions. For instance, Aashirvaad Atta recently launched Boga Atta (or white atta) in Assam because consumers in the region prefer white atta to make their daily rotis and puris. "Rural India has been one of the core industry growth drivers. We are

now leveraging video content and digital platforms to reach regional audiences,” says Banerjee.

Evidently, technology and social media are playing a crucial role in bridging the rural-urban divide. Banerjee says ITC ran a campaign for Sunfeast YiPPee! in some districts of UP and Bihar using the voices of popular cricketers Surya Kumar Yadav and Jasprit Bumrah, generating AI audio creatives to drive familiarity among consumers who have access only to a feature phone. Over 400 customised audio creatives were generated keeping the local dialect and accent intact.

Short format video platforms like Moj and Takatak can replace Instagram in the media mix while targeting remote areas. “The platforms we employ do the job cost efficiently. The share of the advertising pie looks small and gives the impression of de-prioritisation. However, our spends are a little over-skewed in favour of rural to the tune of 25-30%,” points out Dabur’s Dubey. (FE07072025)

FINANCE

Need to revisit MPC arrangement

The Monetary Policy Committee should vote on all the monetary instruments and not on the repo rate alone, to help improve transparency.

By Amol Agrawal



The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting is scheduled to be held on August 4-6. The MPC was constituted in October 2016 as part of the RBI's formal adoption of flexible inflation targeting (FIT). Since its composition, the MPC has done a fine job of managing the monetary policy. However, one problem still remains—the MPC does not vote on all the monetary instruments.

The MPC's structure was established by amending the RBI Act (1934). Chapter III-F was introduced in the Act (1934), dedicated to inflation target and MPC. Section 45ZB (3) specifies that “the Monetary Policy Committee shall determine the policy rate required to achieve the inflation target”. Section 2 (ccccc) mentions that “policy rate” will mean the rate for repo transactions. Further, sub-section (12AB) of section 17 tells us “repo” means an instrument for borrowing funds by selling securities of the central or state governments. Thus, the RBI Act specifies that the MPC's main job is to achieve the inflation target (4+/- 2 %). The MPC will achieve its job by determining the policy rate (repo rate). The other policy rates such as standing deposit facility and marginal standing facility form a corridor with repo, and both change automatically with changes in repo rate.

Limiting the MPC vote to only repo rate creates a problem as the RBI uses other instruments to conduct monetary policy. Textbooks on Indian macroeconomics teach us that apart from repo the RBI also deploys the cash reserve ratio (CRR) and statutory liquidity ratio (SLR) as monetary policy tools. In fact, both CRR and SLR were used as monetary policy tools much before repo—CRR was initiated in 1935 (at the time of the RBI's formation) and SLR was introduced in 1949, and, repo in 1999, yet, the MPC only votes on repo.

Take the case of the latest June policy, where the MPC voted to cut the repo rate by 50 basis points (bps) to 6%, surprising markets which expected a rate cut of 25 bps. A CRR cut of 50 bps to 4% was announced too. While the repo rate

easing was mentioned in the MPC resolution statement, there is no mention of CRR. The CRR was instead mentioned in the governor's statement.

Why did the MPC end up voting only on repo?

One gets some ideas in the committee established by the RBI in 2013 to revise and strengthen the monetary policy framework. The committee's report laid the foundations for the inflation targeting framework. It discussed how monetary policy has evolved in India, with the CRR and SLR playing important roles initially. With the 1991 reforms, the monetary policy shifted to the repo rate for balancing the overnight liquidity and transmission to other interest rates. It recommended that the MPC vote on the policy rate. For SLR, it said that it should be reduced to levels of the liquidity coverage ratio, and there is no mention of CRR. Based on these recommendations, the RBI Act was amended, allowing for the constitution of the MPC.

We get more clues from the government's notification of the MPC and Monetary Policy Process Regulations in the Gazette of India dated July 14, 2017. It mentioned that after the MPC meeting, the RBI would release an MPC resolution and a statement. It added that the resolution should include the repo rate and "and at the discretion of the chairperson, any other monetary policy measures including those relating to the operating framework of monetary policy". Further, it said that the statement "should describe the monetary policy changes involving instruments other than the repo rate and the operating procedure as decided by the MPC shall be explained in the policy statement, followed by a press release setting out details on implementation".

Following these legislative changes, the MPC resolution only votes on the repo rate and the governor's statement discusses the other monetary policy instruments.

However, this arrangement only causes confusion. The MPC votes only on the repo rate, and the governor's statement includes the overall monetary policy instruments, but it is not clear who decides on the other instruments. We can have odd situations going forward—for example, the MPC could keep the repo rate unchanged but tweak the CRR for liquidity. How will this be interpreted?

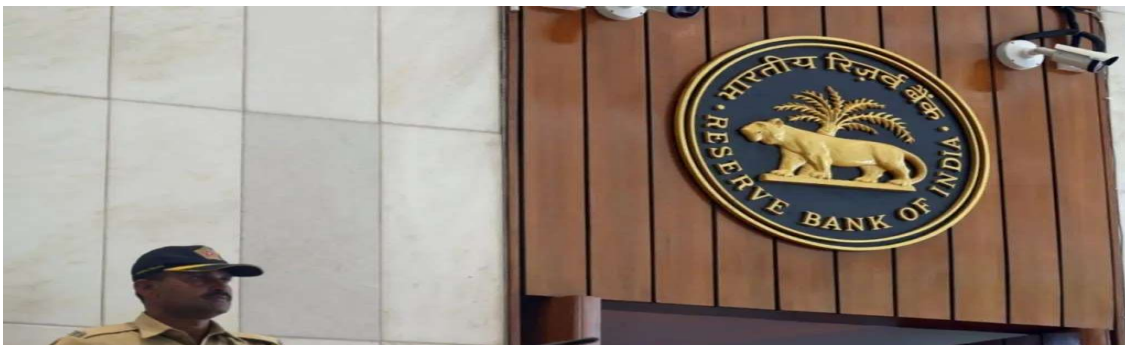
The RBI also releases a Statement on Developmental and Regulatory Practices (SDRP), which discusses new measures on regulations and market developments (this was not released for the June meeting). In the post-media interaction, the governor and deputy governors address the questions on changes in both monetary policy and SDRP. The voices of external MPC members are barely heard, barring media interviews.

The current MPC arrangement should be revisited and streamlined. It should vote on all the monetary policy instruments, and the speeches/interviews of MPC members should be linked on the RBI website. This will help improve both transparency and communications from the central bank. (FE31072025)

Case for rate cut

Softer lending rates alone can't drive up growth, but they certainly play an important role.

Written by The Financial Express



Reserve Bank of India Governor Sanjay Malhotra was bang on when he said at the FE Modern BFSI Summit on Friday that the 100-basis point (bps) repo rate cut in a span of less than six months has raised the bar for further easing of rates. Though Malhotra took care to add that any future action will depend on the outlook for both inflation and growth, the signal seems to be that the monetary policy meeting in August will be tilted towards a pause. Some believe the Monetary Policy Committee in its last meeting may have played its cards too soon, especially at a time when US President Donald Trump's tariff tantrums have added a new and completely unpredictable dimension to the normal growth-inflation trade-off. But as the governor said, in a world of uncertainty, the economy can do with some certainty.

Monetary Policy

After all, monetary policy acts with a lag of many months and, therefore, the sooner action is taken, the sooner it will take effect. Indeed, the evidence on the ground is heartening. The 50-bps cut in the repo rate between February and April has been almost fully transmitted by June for fresh loans. That's a fairly good progress and one hopes the transmission of the rate cut in early June will take place equally fast.

This is important because loan growth, for a variety of reasons, has been rather subdued and needs to pick up soon. In fact, one of the objectives of the chunky and up-fronted 50-bps cut in June, and the accompanying liquidity infusion measures, was to pull India out of a 6.5% growth trajectory and put the economy on a faster growth path. The idea is to push the economy to achieve its potential growth rate.

However, even 6.5%, which is the central bank's expectation, is beginning to look increasingly difficult in an uncertain global environment. It's not merely external headwinds that threaten to hurt the economy, domestic aggregate consumer

demand at home remains weak with only premium goods and services selling well. In fact, with the rise in incomes having been weaker than consumption growth for households in recent years, a strong and sustainable rebound in consumption demand is clearly some time away.

Policy rates

That in itself is a good reason to lower policy rates by another 25 bps whether in August or in October. To be sure, retail inflation is estimated to go up to about 4.5% in FY27 from a little over 3% in the current year. But that's significantly below the levels of 6-7% of recent years. Given how both consumer and investment demand are likely to remain subdued, the bigger priority for the central bank now should be growth which is showing signs of slipping.

There is ample evidence of this in the subdued demand for credit. Admittedly, softer lending rates cannot on their own drive up demand for credit; there must be appetite from borrowers. But lower rates can certainly play a role. For instance, large companies may be flush with funds and may not need to borrow but thousands of small and mid-sized firms do need credit at affordable rates. Since loan rates for these businesses are linked to an external benchmark, they benefit enormously, and immediately, from a cut in the policy rate. Lower interest rates on products like home loans would also ease the load on retail borrowers. (FE27072025)

Credit conundrum

With consumption trends muted, bank credit growth is unlikely to turn around this fiscal.

Written by The Financial Express



The deluge of liquidity and lower policy rates notwithstanding, bank credit growth remains subdued. Loans from banks grew at 9.5% in May, slower by about 2 percentage points than in March. Also, lending to non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) has moderated to -0.3% year-on-year (y-o-y) in May from 2.9% in April even though the curbs on risk weights have been lifted. Given that transmission is relatively faster for commercial paper (CP) and bonds, rather than for NBFCs and companies where the adjustment of rates takes time, money is moving to CPs and bonds. The stock of bonds and CPs is estimated to have gone up by Rs 0.5 lakh crore and Rs 1.1 lakh crore respectively in the June quarter. There is clearly some degree of disintermediation at play, much like deposits where savings have moved to equity products, robbing banks of cheaper resources and driving up their cost of funds.

Risk aversion

Demand for corporate credit, in particular, has slowed not only because there's little appetite for building fresh capacity. While it is true India Inc is flush with funds and most companies have the cash flows to run their operations, banks acknowledge that the credit needs of companies remain unmet because of pricing mismatches. Banks are re-pricing deposits but it's a time-consuming process and

they are reluctant to compromise on their margins. At the same time, there is also a fair amount of risk-averseness as lenders remain wary of lending to not-so-well-rated businesses, even as demand for loans has ebbed. In any case, the track record has shown little co-relation between credit growth and interest rates.

Pranjul Bhandari, chief economist, India and Indonesia, at HSBC, believes softening growth in the formal sector, led by gains from strong equity markets, and rising wage growth now plateauing after a strong run is impacting credit disbursements. To be sure, the momentum in the economy has been moderating; the economy has grown at an average of 6.5% y-o-y over the last four quarters compared with 8.5% in the previous eight quarters. While the informal sector is seeing some improvement, households may yet be reluctant to take on long-term leverage. Consequently, investment demand, such as that for housing loans, could likely be tepid. On the other hand, households in the informal sector are gaining from higher real incomes and may not now need to borrow to fund consumption.

MSMEs, retail

But it's in sectors such as micro, small, and medium enterprise and retail, which are likely to expand and throw up demand that the opportunity lies. To cash in on these spaces, lenders need to be a lot less risk-averse. The mess in microfinance, for example, would have certainly chastened banks and we should expect them to scale down disbursements to this space. If liquidity remains abundant as is expected, the corporate bond market will be the more attractive source of borrowing for companies and banks could lose more share. Of course, demand for credit can get a boost if India is able to cash in on the opportunity to become a big player in the global supply chain. That could lead to the creation of additional manufacturing capacity and more jobs, giving the economy a big fillip. In the near term, demand for credit should pick up in the second half of the year. With a larger share of deposits re-priced, banks should be more willing lenders.

But with consumption trends muted, loan growth this fiscal will likely be unexciting. (FE23072025)

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Transforming a nation of job seekers

The draft national skill policy is a comprehensive document, but it can do more on taking entrepreneurship deeper into underserved regions.

By Madan Padaki & Arup Roychoudhury



Demographic dividend, a term used for over two decades to denote India's biggest advantage in the global marketplace, essentially means the country has been in a sweet spot where around 50% of its population is below 25 years of age and 65% below 35, creating a "youth bulge".

There has been long talk of taking advantage of this by ensuring its working-age population is provided with education, skills, and meaningful employment to enable them to contribute significantly to India's economic growth. Many leading economies like China, Europe, and Japan are facing ageing, shrinking workforces, creating a massive opportunity for India. But if not harnessed, the

“demographic dividend” could become a “demographic disaster” and burden India with high unemployment and increased social conflict.

As things stand, given India’s population, no number of jobs created by central and state governments, PSUs, and the private sector will be enough. In order to achieve Viksit Bharat goals, mass employment needs to be supplemented by mass entrepreneurship. This is something that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has often spoken about, and the draft national skill policy 2025, released recently, shows the government’s intent.

Entrepreneurship needs a stronger support ecosystem

The draft policy says that 110 million students, 220 million “not in employment, education or training” individuals, and 20 million unemployed persons are either actively seeking or poised to seek employment, illustrating the scale of the challenge in our job market. It primarily focuses on skilling job-seeking youth, especially from underprivileged communities. It rightly states that India’s demographic opportunity is inspiring, but not inevitable. It needs to be harnessed through timely policy and strategic interventions that are aligned with industry and workforce needs.

While there are important proposed policy measures on entrepreneurship, further clarity is required on certain issues. The report acknowledges that the environment for entrepreneurship and self-employment needs to be strengthened. It is essential to build risk-taking appetite among the youth, ease regulatory environment, and improve access to capital.

The policy says efforts will focus on cultivating aspirations through early entrepreneurship related skilling, in middle and high schools, and awareness campaigns, connecting aspirants with mentors and resources to address challenges and explore opportunities. It says support will be planned for entrepreneurs whose ventures have failed to help them restart sustainable

businesses. It aims to equip budding entrepreneurs with essential skills like business planning, financial management, and regulatory compliance.

These proposed measures should be commended, but they may not be enough.

From Start-up India to Entrepreneurship for Bharat

To begin with, there needs to be a National Entrepreneurship Mission under which governments, private sector, academia, non-profits, and the start-up ecosystem can come up with solutions and policy prescriptions at a local level. This mission needs presence in every district, especially in aspirational ones, through nodal entities.

For example, the Global Alliance for Mass Entrepreneurship recently signed a strategic collaboration with NITI Aayog to foster the creation of vibrant entrepreneurship ecosystems, starting with pilot sites in Nagpur, Visakhapatnam, and some districts in Uttar Pradesh. The partnership seeks to empower local entrepreneurs, bringing together stakeholders in that ecosystem—from government, corporates, educational and financial institutions, and community organisations—to turn it into a movement that drives economic growth and job creation.

At the grassroots, mechanisms and support systems are needed to help those at the bottom of the pyramid in their entrepreneurship journeys, be it securing finance, opening Jan Dhan accounts, access to schemes like Mudra loans, adding them to ONDC or other e-commerce marketplaces, access to UPI, or other digital rails.

The focus of any entrepreneurship policy should be youth from the bottom of the pyramid and underprivileged sections. Many, especially women, persons with disabilities, and other economic minorities, may be willing to try out new ideas,

so their skilling should be comprehensive. They should be trained in accounting and business management, access to capital, market behaviour, and most importantly pricing—which a micro-entrepreneur can't be expected to know. The policy should promote rural entrepreneurship by creating a framework to identify opportunities, spot talent, and provide localised and specific literacy and knowledge bodies. There should also be a dedicated “remote buddy/mentor system” for rural entrepreneurs.

Now is the time to shift from “Start-up India” to “Entrepreneurship for Bharat”—because the next wave of entrepreneurs and job creators needs to come from smaller towns, remote districts, and villages. That is where governments, venture capital funds, and the private sector need to focus on. The policy needs to come up with guidelines on how to give access to capital, mentorship, and digital infrastructure to rural populations who may have great ideas but not the structure to move it to a successful venture. This will also help reduce migration to overburdened cities and create resilient local economies.

Societal thinking also needs a shift. Most parents want their children to crack entrance exams to join elite colleges and land lucrative salaried jobs. What is needed is establishing continuous skill development and career pivoting as normal practices, with robust systems supporting adult education, professional transition, and career reinvention.

Enterprise and entrepreneurship are not alien concepts. We have been practising this for centuries, from the ancient land and maritime trade routes to our current status as a global start-up and innovation hub. It is time for India to normalise entrepreneurship as a way of life, so that in every city, district, and village, people are enabled to start their own ventures and create jobs and wealth. (FE26072025)

FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT

Making sense of FDI trends

India's FDI promotion policy needs to go beyond passive facilitation to a more proactive approach.

By Nagesh Kumar



Considering that they bring a package of entrepreneurship, technology, and integration with the global value chains besides augmenting capital stock, foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows are welcomed by most governments which actively court MNCs to invest in their countries through promotion, facilitation, incentives, and concessions.

India has progressively liberalised its FDI policy regime since 1991. Over the past decade, the Indian government has also undertaken reforms to enhance ease of doing business, lowered corporate tax rates, production-linked incentives, and has established Invest India as an investment promotion agency to attract FDI inflows.

In that context, recent reports appearing in the media suggesting that net inflows of FDI have plummeted to negligible levels have raised concerns. In this article, we make sense of the trends in FDI inflows to India.

OFDI and repatriations

The confusion arises from “Foreign Investment Inflows” reported in Reserve Bank of India (RBI) bulletins, which present gross inflows/gross investment to India, repatriations/disinvestments, as well as FDI by India or outward foreign direct investment (OFDI). The RBI works out net FDI by subtracting from gross FDI inflows the values of repatriations and OFDI. As both repatriations and OFDI flows have grown in recent years, the net FDI after subtracting them from gross FDI inflows of \$81 billion (in 2024-25) leaves a marginal figure of \$353 million. This may be relevant as a balance-of-payments (BoP) entry. But from the point of view of development, FDI inflows and OFDI represent two distinct phenomena, both favourable and hence promoted, but they should be kept separate, as argued below.

OFDI is utilised by Indian enterprises abroad in search of markets, technology, and raw materials. An example is Tata Motors’ acquisition of Jaguar Land Rover, giving it access to the latter’s technology, brands, global footprints, and value chain. As the Indian companies grow in scale and ambition to become global players, they will generate more OFDI. Hence, OFDI rising from \$16.7 billion in 2023-24 to \$29.2 billion in 2024-25 is a positive trend. It should not be seen as an outflow of resources but as something extending the global reach of Indian industry. Hence, it is not appropriate to subtract it from the gross FDI inflows.

The increase in gross FDI inflows from \$71.3 billion in 2023-24 to \$81.0 billion in 2024-25 is impressive in the context of declining global flows over the past years as reported by the UN Trade And Development’s World Investment Report (WIR) 2025. The 2024-25 figure, however, did not cross the peak of \$85 billion received in 2021-22 on top of \$82 billion received in 2020-21. Those years, however, were aberrations representing the “gold rush” of over \$20 billion in Jio Platforms by tech majors including Google, Facebook, Qualcomm, and private equity (PE) players and sovereign wealth funds like KKR, PIF, and the Abu

Dhabi Investment Authority. After the 2020-22 boom, the gross FDI inflows had levelled to around \$71 billion in line with the pre-Covid trend.

Why gross inflows matter more than net calculations

What is new is the rising trend of repatriations in recent years, from around \$28 billion per annum during FY21-FY23 to \$44 billion in 2023-24 and \$51 billion in 2024-25. Arguably, repatriations are like servicing burden in the case of borrowings. Their recent rise results from a combination of factors. One is the rise of PE players like KKR and Blackstone among the FDI investors who keep an eye on the valuations of their investments and liquidate them to book profits. Secondly, as the Institute for Studies in Industrial Development's India Industrial Development Report (IIDR) 2024-25 has reported, valuations of Indian subsidiaries of MNCs are much higher than their parents. For instance, the price-to-earnings ratio of Maruti-Suzuki India is 36 compared to under 12 for its parent. This has led some MNCs like Hyundai to offload some of their equity in their Indian subsidiaries for repatriation to support their global requirements.

Gross inflows, therefore, are better indicators of a country's investment climate or the "pull factor" and should be paid greater attention. Yet the net FDI inflows, even after offsetting the repatriations, at \$29.6 billion in 2024-25 are higher than \$26.8 billion in 2023-24.

The other positive trend is India's emergence as the most attractive destination globally for greenfield investments with 1,080 projects in 2024 (after the UAE), among developing countries, according to WIR 2025. Greenfield FDI represents fresh investments in fixed assets and hence has a more favourable development impact than acquisitions.

Leading investor surveys confirm the growing attractiveness of India as an investment destination. The 2024 JETRO Business Conditions Survey, for

instance, highlighted an outstanding improvement in India's performance, with 80% of Japanese firms expecting to expand operations in India, compared with 45% for all regions and only 22% for China.

Yet, there is no room for complacency as India remains an underperformer vis-à-vis its potential, according to the simulations reported in IIDR 2024-25. Given that industrialised countries like the US are now aggressively courting FDI to revive their manufacturing sector through incentives, high tariffs, and other protectionist policies, the landscape for FDI promotion has become more competitive. India's FDI promotion policy needs to go beyond passive facilitation to a more proactive approach. This will require identifying key MNCs exporting to India but not having invested in the country, and approaching them to consider investing in the country and savour the immense potential of India as a manufacturing destination. (FE26072025)

EDUCATION

A template for skilling

States need to fine-tune education systems but it's private enterprise that has to hire & train labour.

By Madan Sabnavis



One of the anomalies in our system is that there is talk of demographic dividend where there is a large young population. At the same time there is a constant lament that we do not have adequate trained youth who can be hired for various jobs. This is a serious issue of demand and supply, which on deeper thought leads to the question of skilling the population. So, while we have a large number of youth with varying levels of education, the skill gap is still quite high. That there is scope to improve on this metric is a no-brainer.

There should be a medium-term strategy to bring about an alignment. There is some urgency given that the large-scale spread of use of technology and artificial intelligence can exacerbate the problem. Post-Covid, there has been a tendency among companies to gravitate more toward using technology that is displacing labour.

Skilling must begin in schools

First, there is a need for students in schools to be exposed to different crafts such as rudimentary carpentry, plumbing, electrical jobs, etc. These are skills which would be required all through one's life. While presently the majority do hire such workers for their jobs, having the knowledge helps in times of emergency. At the school level, the mind is also alert and receptive to acquiring skills. This is evidently the case with sports and should be extended to other skills too. Ideally, this should be a part of the curriculum for all schools. This can be kept mandatory for two years in the 9th and 10th classes.

There can be a buy-in with the boards to set aside some marks for completing such courses. Several school boards also include foreign languages as part of the grading process. This can be included in a similar manner. In fact, schools have classes for art, craft, and physical training that can be extended to these skills too. Children from the lower income groups would be going to state-assisted schools—also called municipal schools—which should be covered in a more

comprehensive manner. At a practical level, it may make sense for state boards to include these options in the curriculum and then expand to all-India boards depending on the outcomes.

Second, we need to have specific courses which look at honing these skills. Just like there are streams like arts, science, medicine, engineering, and information technology, there could be ones looking at practical skills that make students fit for joining industries such as construction, automobiles, or textiles that suffer from a skill shortage. By making it a formal course with a degree instead of a certification from vocational training institutes, an element of seriousness is introduced. In fact, there can be aptitude tests to guide students on what courses suit them best. The qualifying marks in school, which is normally fixed for professional courses, can be fixed at a lower level to draw students who are not good at academics. Also those who are unable to pass the school-level board exams can be nudged to these courses that are oriented more towards actual use of skills rather than textbook learning.

Link training to real jobs

Third, the employment-linked scheme of the government introduced last year was largely successful. The concept of having internships with companies is a novel way to get the youth have access to on-the-job training. Some public infrastructure spaces can be the perfect ground for grooming such students. There is a lot of investment in railways, ports, airports, among others. These organisations can accept students who have finished basic courses in schools and colleges and need to be provided jobs on real projects.

Here, the government can get youths to register with their qualifications in a database that can then be evaluated periodically and candidates short-listed for internship programmes. The companies which require such labour and are willing to train them in the requisite skills can also be enrolled. In this manner, demand

and supply for such skills can be matched. The government can offer incentives in the form of a tax break or allow the cost to be reckoned under corporate social responsibility. A similar modality has been implemented in the internship scheme announced last year by the government; it can be modified for this purpose.

The problem is acute today given that employment generation has been a challenge. Spaces like logistics, retail, and construction have generated a good number. While some jobs like delivery do not require specific skill sets, they may not be sustainable for the individuals in the medium term as one cannot build a career in the same. As more unemployed individuals join this workforce, the earnings tend to get depressed. Construction too has challenges where developers are not able to get skilled persons like carpenters, electricians, etc. The major headcount is in menial jobs, which again do not help one move up the income chain.

Hence a relook at our education system is necessary where a separate opportunity can be created for those who aren't good in academics. In this manner the skill requirements in industries such as construction, auto repairs, sewing, handicrafts, etc. can be filled by creating a formal workforce with these qualifications. The on-the-job training via internships should focus more on manufacturing rather than services as this is where there is more value to be added. Besides, when we are talking about India becoming a part of global supply chains in manufacturing, having a skilled manpower is an imperative. It must also be noted that the government is only an enabler and has taken the first few steps. The states need to join in focusing on fine-tuning the education systems, but at the end of the day it is private enterprise which needs to hire and train labour. This can be a template that can be pursued for the next five years or so until 2030. (FE22072025)

Thank You...