

**MR. HORMUSJI N. CAMA, CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS AT THE  
71<sup>ST</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF AUDIT BUREAU OF CIRCULATIONS  
AT MUMBAI ON FRIDAY, 20<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2019**

Dear Members,

I wish to welcome you all to this 71<sup>st</sup> Annual General Meeting of Audit Bureau of Circulations. I am pleased to see you all attending this AGM. My special thanks to all those who have travelled long distances to attend this AGM.

Bureau's Annual Report together with the Audited Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 were earlier circulated to all members which I hope you must have had a chance to go through the same.

**1. Print is Relevant:**

Digital Media is moving forward at a fast pace and new digital technology is encompassing many fields including print. Mobile phones have become a tool for communication, news, TV, Radio, Video and many other forms of communication. News is now available as it happens on mobile phones. TV channels can also be viewed on mobile phones even when you are travelling.

In spite of many advances in the digital technology, print has held its own and is still relevant today. A newspaper has always been valued as a source of authentic information and news early in the morning. The habit of reading a newspaper first thing in the morning is still very much prevalent in our country.

ABC and IRS numbers have shown that inspite of digital media expanding its reach, newspapers have held its share.

**2. ABC Digital Measurement:**

As you all are aware, ABC has been in discussion with Nielsen to start its digital measurement project. Unfortunately documentation issues have delayed its launch, hopefully your new Council will iron out all differences and move forward. Once this happens I urge all publishers to participate and get their numbers certified.

Leading advertising agencies have ensured that they would support the industry backed digital measurement project and therefore the success of the ABC digital measurement is ensured.

**3. Impediments:**

Several Impediments have been faced by ABC over the years. Many publishing houses have chosen to get their circulation numbers certified by ABC for certain chosen editions only thereby keeping outside the purview of ABC some editions for reasons best known to all of us. Due to this the ABC circulation numbers do not reflect the correct picture of total circulation of print media.

The second impediment faced by ABC pertains to member publications not submitting their circulation figures for certification for upto two audit periods when it does not suit them and avail ABC certification for the third audit period in order to avoid termination of membership. This attitude of some of the member publications is also a great impediment faced by ABC since the ABC data remains incomplete and the correct picture of print media is not available thru the audited numbers certified by ABC.

#### **4. Publisher members legally challenging ABC:**

As you are aware, ABC has laid down stringent norms over the years for certifying circulation figures. However, during a surprise check if the Bureau appointed audit firm comes across certain inconsistencies or wrong doing or dumping of copies by member publications, then strict action is taken by the ABC Council of Management against such publications. One member publication's copies were physically found by Bureau appointed audit firm to be dumped as raddi copies in a raddi newspaper godown. The Bureau's audit committee and Bureau's Council of Management rightly decided not to certify the circulation figures of the said publication for two consecutive audit periods.

However, the disgruntled publication, in spite of being provided an opportunity for a one to one and face to face discussion with Audit Committee members to explain his point of view before a final decision is taken, approached the Hon'ble City Civil Court, Bombay and filed a civil suit against ABC. The Hon'ble City Civil Court did not grant any ad interim injunction as sought by the publisher. The matter is progressing in the Hon'ble City Civil Court, Bombay.

#### **5. ABC & IRS numbers in one software:**

While ABC certifies audited circulation figures of member publications, MRUC provides the readership estimate. Since both the data points are very relevant for media planning and should be looked at together, both the Board of Directors of ABC as well as MRUC have decided to build a comprehensive software to enable media planners to view both the certified circulation figures as well as readership estimates in one software side by side. This would be a very useful tool in the hands of media planners. This step would be more relevant and useful for the future of print media.

#### **6. Future of Print Media:**

Newspapers are still amongst the lowest priced products available in a market place due to low cover price. In spite of having high intrinsic value for money, some publishers have chosen not to increase the cover price of their publication. Taking into account high newsprint costs and high production costs of newspapers, it is high time publisher members get together regionally and decide to increase their cover prices. This would be of great financial assistance to the newspaper industry.

For ABC to stay relevant, it needs to strictly protect its image built over many years and rigidly monitor the audit process. Monitoring the audit firms is utmost essential, so that the publisher as well as the audit firm adheres to the laid down rules. ABC should be seen as a strong body taking severe action on publications who try to hoodwink ABC as well as audit firms and try to obtain higher circulation numbers from ABC through dubious means. ABC Council of Management should be vigilant and seen as a body who would not hesitate to protect the image and integrity of ABC at all costs.

#### **7. Acknowledgement:**

At the end of my tenure as the Chairman of ABC, I wish to thank all my colleagues on the Council of Management for their guidance and support.

I also wish to thank the Secretary General, Mr. Masani and his bunch of dedicated staff members who have always stood shoulder to shoulder with the Council in implementing all decisions of the Council.

My successor would be chosen from amongst the advertising agency representatives on the Council. I would like to take this opportunity to wish my successor and his team of Council Members all the very best for the next year.

Hormusji N Cama  
Chairman  
Audit Bureau of Circulations

Date : 20<sup>th</sup> September, 2019  
Place: Mumbai