

# It's not just cricket

Adoption may be uneven but sheer market size, a growing middle income and large infrastructure projects make India's AV trajectory unstoppable, says *Adrian Pennington*.

» As a country of deep contrasts, with a population split among the most technically literate and technically unaware, the uptake of AV technologies in India is both rapid and unevenly distributed.

The country boasts the fastest-growing pro-AV market in the Asia-Pacific region, projected to reach \$5.4 billion by the end of 2016, according to InfoComm's Market Definition & Strategy Study.

"For the last couple of decades India has largely been viewed as an outsourcing destination," says Gaurab Majumdar, InfoComm's regional director, India and Middle East. "The country is increasingly recognised now as the world's largest potential market for goods and services."

## Middleclass growth

With a rapidly growing middle class, technology users are on rise. "People have become more tech savvy with interest in adopting international standards and best practises," says Majumdar.

"This can partly be attributed to the number of international companies employing engineers and support teams based in India," concurs Eleuterio Fernandes, MEA sales director at Exterity. "The globalisation of the corporate sector there has also led to substantial digital development which has spilled over into other sectors."

The \$200 million Goldman Sachs campus in Bangalore "is seen as the benchmark for technology and installations for all global financial institutions," according to Tadke, sales manager, WyreStorm. Vmmare (in Bangalore) and Google (Hyderabad) are also building HQs.

India is the world's largest sourcing destination for the IT industry, account-

## BLOCK 22 NIGHTCLUB



Hyderabad's new 500-capacity Block 22 nightclub is outfitted with an L-Acoustics sound system. "The idea was to bring Ibiza and Vegas style chic to India," says specialist consultant, Kapil Thirwani at Mumbai-based installer, Munro Acoustics. "We'd already used L-Acoustics systems in the blueFROG venues in Mumbai and Pune and (club owners) Mudassar Muneer and Anand Yadav had also heard one of the company's systems at the Tomorrowland festival in Belgium."

The system features main clusters of three ARCS WiFo, four SB28 subs for the dance floor and four of L-Acoustics' new X12 cabinets.



ing for approximately 67 per cent of the \$124-130 billion market (InfoComm). More importantly, the industry has led the economic transformation of the country. Its IT sector is expected to grow 12-14 per cent this year reaching \$350 billion by 2025, according to local trade body, NASSCOM.

Consequently, the corporate and financial sector is seeing strong growth "due to the high number of engineering and support teams based in the country," reports Fernandes. Similarly, healthcare is strong. "This is a sector

the AV market can tap into, as there will be a demand for technologies that will empower staff to keep up to date with the latest outbreaks, such as Ebola or Zika," he adds.

Government initiatives such as Digital India aims to boost broadband numbers to 600 million by 2020, streamlining bureaucracy.

The impact of such transformational programs on the AV industry should be significant, states InfoComm, and will make for "a burgeoning market in IP video solutions," says Fernandes.

## Reaching one billion

Developing AV business in India means tackling the sheer size of the one billion population spread across 29 territories speaking over 120 languages.

"AV companies looking to increase their presence in India cannot approach the market with a 'one size fits all' approach," advises Fernandes.

Bangalore is considered the AV hub due to its concentration of tech companies which "drives a thriving corporate event market," observes Peter Owen, L-Acoustics' sales

manager. Many global AV companies with an operation in Bangalore are also opening branches in Mumbai - considered the country's financial capital - and home to Bollywood "which drives demand for galas, special events and broadcast opportunities."

The capital, Delhi presents most government event opportunities and, together with other metropolitan cities (listed by InfoComm as Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Pune, Ahmedabad) are beginning to house most system integrators.

"More recently, tier 2 cities (Lucknow, Bhubaneswar, Chandigarh, Guwahati, Cochin, Jaipur) are gaining momentum due to increasing AV projects," reports Majumdar.

InfoComm points out that customers in the south tend to be more technologically savvy but typically have smaller budgets than their northern counterparts who reportedly spend more on AV.

The uniting force would be national demand for "high quality nightclubs", according to Owen.

"Sports events, weddings, and ICE market," says Tilak Swarup, director, Liviano Lighting Systems (an Airstar distributor).

And, of course, religion - which, for Indians, means cricket.

"We work with rental companies which provide sound systems on match days and, as you can imagine, Twenty20 games demand pumping sound systems to help create a lively atmosphere," says Owen.

Sporting events are a "real business driver" for Liviano, in particular Indian Soccer League, Pro Kabadi League and cricket's IPL. It also gains work from election campaigns, government sponsored summits and music festivals.



Helium filled 4,000 watt tungsten lamp at the Aman Hotel, Delhi

**ICT expansion**

In addition to finance and technology, education is set to develop massively in future. The market has, though, been plagued by a weakening rupee, reduced exports and a new government that's been slow to release public sector funds

"The result has been an education market that's suffered from minimal ten-

der activity - propped up only by the burgeoning private school system," says Claire Kerrison, senior market analyst, Futuresource Consulting. "The corporate sector has fared slightly better."

In terms of projector volumes, sales to education decreased six per cent in 2015 (to around 226,000 units) despite classroom penetration sitting below 20 per cent. "The new government has allocated increased funds to classroom ICT," says Kerrison. "Bureaucracy has led to significant delays in projects going out to tender."

This trend has had an even greater impact on the IWB market which tumbled 40 per cent in 2015 to just 30,000 units. Sales of projectors to corporate applications increased two per cent to 82,000. As the economy improves, volume sales to education "are set to rise as government funding is released."

Futuresource finds that India has "a penchant" for entry level/prosumer products with 39 per cent of total sales derived from this sector in 2015. "This is significantly higher than most other major countries in the region with only Korea having a larger proportion of such sales (thanks to the strength of domestic players Samsung and LG)," says Kerrison. "This demand is a reflec-

tion of India's economic development, and the infancy of its digital signage market. At present, products that possess slightly more advanced feature-sets than consumer TVs (with in-built signage functionality around broadcast TV, enhanced warranties and better connectivity) are deemed 'good enough'."

However, as the economy improves and the DOOH signage market matures, sales of commercial grade FPD is set to mount. Futuresource predicts double-digit growth is expected for several years ahead.

**Smart cities**

The \$100 billion Smart Cities is a state-backed mission to produce higher quality urban environments across 100 cities.

The goliath driving expansion is a \$1 billion Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC), touted as the world's largest infrastructure project. Starting outside Delhi and ending in Maharashtra, the DMIC has been inspired by Japan's Tokyo-Osaka industrial corridor and indeed is part funded by a Japanese government loan.

The DMIC alone encompasses 24 cities, 23 industrial hubs, six airports, two ports and a six-lane expressway stretching 1,500 km.

As the Smart Cities initiative requires a wide range of changes to the processes of planning and governance, it will inevitably require new AV infrastructure. "AV communication technology will not only help boost the effort of making modern cities but also accelerate advances in education, hospitality/tourism and healthcare," explains Majumdar. "Presently, pro-AV and Unified Communication networking is witnessing numerous government projects, both at central and state level and equally in the private sector."

**Education required**

Well before these initiatives were announced, India's pro-AV industry was characterised by a significant shortage of skilled consultants, designers, installers, and technical operations and maintenance staff.

"There remains a lack of education in terms of the true potential of what AV has to offer," suggests Ankur Bhatt, director/owner of Sound Sense, a CEDIA-certified AV consultant. "Although those from higher income homes and ultra rich backgrounds may well have encountered AV offerings before, the true potential of AV, particularly the integration of AV and home automation is yet to be known to the wider Indian market."

INDUSTRY VIEWS



**There's national demand for "sports events, weddings, and the ICE market."**

**Tilak Swarup**

Director, Liviano Lighting Systems (an Airstar distributor)



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**Rohan Tadke**

Sales manager, WyreStorm

CCTV STRENGTHENS TEMPLE SAFETY



SHUTTERSTOCK

Crime at the Golden Temple in Amritsar typically involves pickpocketing, garment thefts as well as missing children. Tasked with enhancing security Vantage Integrated Security Solutions placed 140 Sony PTZ cameras into eight zones controlled through a centralised control room within the temple's compounds.

He adds that the traditional way of life is changing. "It used to be living as a big family in the ancestral home. Increasing migration for work, school, or a better lifestyle means Indian culture is fast becoming about comfort, security as well as prestige. As more families move into their own homes,

this cultural shift is a strong factor in dictating the growth of the home automation business."

**Indian installers adapt**

WyreStorm says it was the first manufacturer of signal distribution products to host training sessions in India. "It

was important that we proactively embraced the market by training installers on AV-over-IP technology at the earliest opportunity," says Tadke. "Given the speed of market expansion, we had to make sure dealers were aware of the technology as a viable option to present to their clients."

He adds: "Indian installers are very good at quickly adapting to new technologies. Already we are starting to see AV-over-IP being accepted and specified faster than it has been in the EU or US."

InfoComm marks India's card with challenges including price competition, the "lack of AV-certified manpower and proper AV standards" and delays in payment from the government. On the upside, the market's size, huge infrastructure projects and the modernisation of the military, plus the rise in middle class incomes, are highlighted.

The UK's export department also rates India a price competitive market. Government contracts are awarded to the lowest bidder meeting the technical specifications, it states, adding 'consumers often prefer lower prices to quality or durability'.

For L-Acoustics, the biggest chal-

lenge is bringing more knowledge to the market. "Indian industry members love to learn, and helping them with training both on the products and how best to use the products, is vital to market development," says Owen. "For us, India is an exclusive territory and a local presence is vital to creating a dynamic market there. We have other distributors to reach other countries on the Indian sub-continent, as each country has its own distinct culture and market."

Owen adds: "Indians do a lot of global travelling and that means they'll come home and ask local AV companies to design something bigger and better than the biggest and best they've seen during their travels. Overall, AV work in India is varied and presents some really fun challenges." ■



Adrian Pennington is a former AV writer now specialising in media technology, writing regularly for Broadcast and The Hollywood Reporter. He is the co-author of Exploring 3D: The new grammar of stereoscopic filmmaking.



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