

AAROHAN

The Ascend

EDITION HIGHLIGHTS

Snippets once again proves to be your reliable newsletter for everything that happens in SoBA. From Deeksharambh to Convocation, in this edition we focus on First steps; some wrong turns & more.

INDUSTRY EXPERTS

Our latest edition of Soba Snippets shows: Interview with Ms. Lara Balsara the Executive Director at Madison World; Interview with Mr. Ajay Mehta the content & creative head at WPP; Mr. Suresh Naik the chief creative officer at Ogilvy and Ms. Darshana the CMO at Aditya Birla Capital.



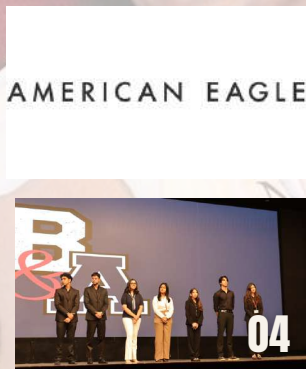
**BEST
INDUSTRY
HACKS**

**MEDIA
ARTICLE
HIGHLIGHTS**



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FROM THE DEAN'S DESK

My dear SoBA Students,

Humans draw energy from new beginnings. They feel like standing at the edge of dawn, when the sky has not yet chosen its colors but already promises light. It is the hush before the first note of a song, the pause before a story takes flight. I welcome the incoming students to the journey of shaping themselves into competent branding professionals.

SoBA will always be a second home, for my convocated students but growth demands stepping beyond comfort zones. The first step may be small or uncertain, yet it is what makes the journey possible.

And to those who hesitate, wondering if they are ready for the competitive world of branding and advertising, remember the words from The Curious Case of Benjamin Button: "It's never too late to be whoever you want to be... If you find that you're not, I hope you have the courage to start all over again."

New beginnings ask only for presence and trust that momentum will follow once you leap. Renewal, joy, and the magic of starting again all wait at the horizon. So meet the dawn not with hesitation, but with hunger.

As Mary Oliver asks: "Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?"

"And suddenly you know: It's time to start something new and trust the magic of beginnings."

- Meister Eckhart



Embracing CHANGE

SOBA SNIPPETS INTERVIEWS MS. LARA BALSARA

At SoBa NMIMS' Convocation 2025, students had the privilege of hearing from Ms. Lara Balsara Vajifdar, Executive Director at Madison World and one of India's most influential women in advertising.

In a candid conversation with Snippets and her inspiring convocation address, she shared her views on AI, the future of agencies, and the personal principles that guide her career.

She highlighted the importance of emotional intelligence over IQ, noting that being able to read people's signals and connect with them is the key to success.

Learning doesn't stop after college; continuous growth and curiosity are essential.

On the industry front, she called AI the most disruptive force, urging students not to fear it but to use it smartly.

Repetitive and laborious tasks can be automated, but creativity and human judgment remain irreplaceable.

Reflecting on her journey at Madison, Ms. Balsara spoke about the rise of digital advertising, from less than 1% when she started to 44% today. With Madison now having nearly 600 digital specialists, she stressed that reinvention is in the industry's DNA, and agencies will keep evolving with culture and technology.

Her leadership mantra is simple: "Stay grounded, stay observant, surround yourself with smarter people, and work not just hard, but hard and smart."

These principles have not only helped her sustain relevance but also build collaborative teams that thrive in times of change.

-KASHVI MAHAJAN



Advertising demands *curiosity and resilience*. Staying informed, open to change, and eager to learn will set you apart.



SCAN THE CODE TO WATCH THE FULL
INTERVIEW!!!

PLACEMENT *Chronicles*

SoBA Snippets Features Raveena Shankar on Her Journey to Marcus Evans Placement

marcusevans

SS: Were there any people, mentors, or moments in college that shaped the way you approached this opportunity?

RS: "My entire SoBA journey prepared me for work and helped me discover my passion for sales, especially through a subject we had on it. Internships deepened my understanding. Dean Ma'am has always been a guiding light, and Priyanshi Bhargava, our placement coordinator, with her corporate experience, coached and guided our entire batch personally. The placement team was always there to solve queries and support us. And of course, my parents, my ultimate mentors. They stood by me through soaring highs and sinking lows. Faculty, staff, and support staff have all shaped me into who I am today as a professional."

SS: You've had experience across internships and volunteering-what lessons from those helped you during the placement season?

RS: "Patience, above all. From my corporate and academic experiences, I learned how easy it is to feel overwhelmed, but having a routine and a clear belief in what you're doing makes all the difference. Early on, I tried different things, figured out what worked for me, and stayed focused on roles aligned with my goals, which helped me realise just how much I incline towards sales. That's how I ended up at Marcus Evans."

SS: If you could give one piece of practical advice to someone starting placements next semester, what would it be?

RS: "Have faith and patience. It's okay if things don't work out right away. Experiment, learn, and grow. While studying the subjects here, you'll discover which areas genuinely interest you. Always value the advice of your faculty, placement coordinator, and coaches; they genuinely want the best for you and often know more than you think. Look for companies that align with your personal goals and interests, because at the end of the day, you'll only succeed if you enjoy what you're doing."



"My journey taught me that true leadership is built on faith, growth, and gratitude; a gift this college has given me to carry forward always."

MEET
Raveena
SHANKAR

-TANISHA CHADHA

DEEKSHARAMBH 2025

SVKM's NMIMS SoBA Welcomes Batch of 2025–2029
with Deeksharambh Induction Program

The morning began with the registration of students and parents, filling the venue with excited chatter and new beginnings. Soon after, the ceremonial arrival of the Chief Guest and NMIMS officials set a tone of dignity and importance for the day.

A warm welcome by the faculty anchor broke the ice, inviting everyone into the SoBA spirit. The lighting of the lamp, accompanied by the soulful notes of Saraswati Vandana, brought an air of reverence and tradition, followed by the NMIMS Anthem, uniting the audience in pride.

Dr. Kiran Desai, Associate Dean, SoBA, opened the formal proceedings with an insightful introduction to the School, outlining its vision and vibrant culture. Dr. Tanmoy Chakraborty, Registrar, NMIMS, and Ms. Sneha Parikh, Mentor, SoBA, followed with words of encouragement and warmth for the new batch.

The audience was then treated to a video introduction of the Chief Guest, Mr. K.V. Sridhar (Pops), Global Chief Creative Officer, Nihilent Limited & Co-Founder, Nativepur. His keynote address was both inspiring and thought-provoking, urging students to embrace creativity, resilience, and adaptability in the fast-evolving world of branding and advertising. The session ended with a heartfelt vote of thanks and felicitation.



The day progressed into an engaging panel discussion on career paths in branding and advertising, featuring industry experts Suresh Nayak, Ajay Mehta, and Darshana Shah. Their discussion, rich with real-world insights and practical advice, was followed by an interactive Q&A session that kept the audience hooked. The morning concluded with the introduction of faculty and staff, closing remarks, an oath-taking ceremony affirming commitment to learning and integrity, and the National Anthem.

Post-lunch, the atmosphere turned lively as the second half began with a spirited student-led welcome. Committee introductions showcased the diversity of opportunities at SoBA- Literary, Sports, Branding and Advertising, Cultural, and Social Responsibility, each paired with captivating performances.

From the graceful moves of Zephyr (dance) to the soulful notes of Leherein (music) and the glamour of Atelier (fashion show), creativity took center stage. The program wrapped up with a playful Sa-Re-Drama act and a final round of thanks from the student anchors.

By the day's end, the new batch was not only oriented to the academic framework but also immersed in SoBA's vibrant community, a place where talent, passion, and collaboration thrive.

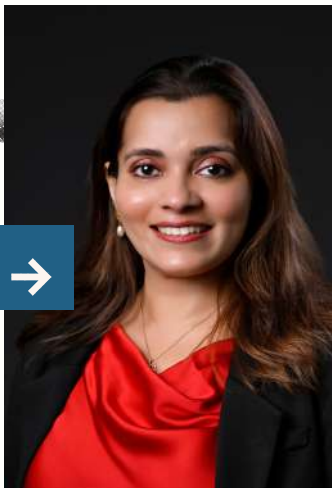
-Aryaa Girkar



BEYOND THE MIC



WITH DARSHANA SHAH



INSIDE THE MIND OF AN INDUSTRY EXPERT

One of the highlights of the panel was the presence of Ms. Darshana Shah, Chief Marketing Officer of Aditya Birla Capital. As CMO of one of India's leading financial services companies, she brought sharp insights into how marketing and branding shapes industries and shared her perspective with clarity and warmth, leaving the new batch inspired to think bigger about their own journeys.

Q What was the moment you knew this was your path?

When I started my career, I wasn't immediately sure where I belonged. I tried sales, and while it taught me a lot, I quickly realized I was a creator at heart. I've always been drawn to ideas, to shaping narratives and bringing something new into the world. My defining moment came during my time in retail marketing, that's when I knew branding and marketing were where I wanted to be. And not just in one industry; I wanted to explore it across sectors. That decision gave me clarity and shaped the path I've followed ever since.

Q What's your take on how branding has evolved over the years?

One thing I've learned is that brands aren't built by campaigns alone, they're built by entire organizations. Real branding requires commitment from leadership, patience, and often years of sustained effort. Today, I see many D2C companies struggling with this because they're under constant investor pressure to deliver instant results. But brand-building doesn't happen overnight. What has also changed is the sheer clutter in the market and the shortening of attention spans. To stand out now, we have to think about memorability in completely different ways than we did when I first began.

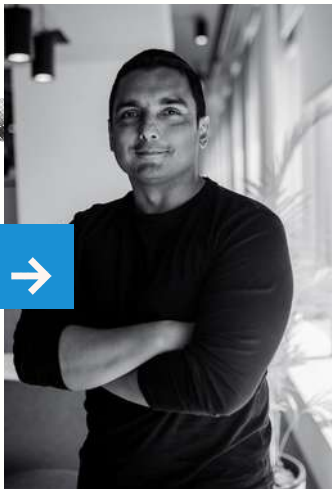
Q How is AI redefining brand trust today?

AI is here to stay. It's an incredible enabler, and we must embrace it. But technology by itself cannot build trust. Trust comes from the values an organization lives by, every single day. At Aditya Birla Group, we've seen how legacy brands can evolve with each generation while staying rooted in authenticity and transparency. For me, branding isn't about one glamorous campaign; it's about consistency across every touchpoint, whether that's a call-center agent, an AI bot, or a promise we make to a customer. AI can strengthen communication, but it's values that truly sustain trust.

BEYOND THE MIC



WITH SUKESH NAYAK



INSIDE THE MIND OF AN INDUSTRY EXPERT

We also had the privilege of hearing from Mr. Sukesh Naik, a celebrated creative leader in the advertising world. With years of experience at agencies like Ogilvy, his energy and candid reflections on creativity, partnerships, and originality gave us an honest peek into what it truly means to build ideas that move people.

Q

What was your first big creative win?

Early in my career at FCB Ulka, our young team won the first Tata car project. That was our first big win, and it stayed with me. It gave me the confidence that ideas really have the power to change how people see brands. It also made me realise I wanted to be at Ogilvy. It took me about seven months of persistence to get in, and once I did, I knew this was where I belonged. Looking back, that journey shaped my belief that hard work, patience, and passion always find their way.

Q

How do you define creativity in today's advertising world?

For me, creativity is imagination that helps people decide. It makes you feel for a brand that isn't human, it puts a soul into a product or service. That feeling shapes opinion, makes you choose one thing over another, and sometimes even pay a premium. If there's no feeling, everything becomes ordinary, and then there's no transaction, no business. Today, with so many messages competing for attention, creativity is also about clarity. It has to break clutter, make you stop, and more importantly, make you care. The best ideas don't just sell; they build relationships between people and brands.

Q

Which opportunities should students prioritize while in college?

Access isn't the problem anymore; what you do with it is. Take a campaign you love and redo it your way, then send it to the person who made it. Tag them. If there's merit, it will get noticed. I look for original voices, people with a mind of their own who can surprise me. This is a business of imagination, not age; if I see serious potential, the teaching, training, and guidance will follow. College is the best time to experiment; start a blog, run a small social campaign, create your own work. These are projects too, and they often teach you more than any internship because they force you to think independently.

BEYOND THE MIC



WITH AJAY MEHTA



INSIDE THE MIND OF A MODERN ENTREPRENEUR

With over 2 decades of experience spanning both sides of advertising/communication: Creative & Media, Mr. Ajay Mehta has been shaping stories that resonate. Known for his sharp eye for detail and an instinct for what truly connects with audiences, he has led work that pushes brands to think beyond the obvious.

Q

How has your SoBA experience been so far?

It's been amazing. This was my first time at NMIMS, and honestly, I wasn't expecting to share so much with the students, but the energy in the room made it easy and fun.

What really stood out to me was how seriously you're all looking at advertising as a career. That curiosity and hunger to learn is what the industry needs. It's refreshing and gives me a lot of hope for the next generation of storytellers.

Q

What's the secret to balancing storytelling with branding?

The basics haven't changed—it still starts with a strong human insight. What has changed is the way people consume stories. You can't just lift a TVC and run it on Instagram; it won't connect.

The trick is to keep the narrative simple, relatable, and human, while tailoring it to the platform. If the story feels authentic and the brand fits naturally into it, people won't see it as an ad, they'll see it as something worth engaging with. That's when it really works.

Q

In the age of AI, how do creators keep it human?

AI is great at speeding things up, whether it's making adaptations, edits, or scaling content. But the core of creativity is still about people. Trends, culture, lived experiences, emotions; these are things no machine can replicate.

The differentiator for creators will always be their perspective and authenticity. AI can support the process, but the heart of the story has to come from you. That's what makes work resonate and feel truly original.

SOBA TARTUPs

Balancing classes and late-night brainstorming is second nature for Aryan Vaid, founder of AskItIndia. He's showing that you don't need to wait for graduation to launch an idea. Soba Snippets spoke with him about the spark behind it, the skills gained, and the reality of being a student founder.

askit



SOBA SNIPPETS
INTERVIEWED
ARYAN VAID,
THE FOUNDER OF
ASKIT

Q. For those who are not aware, what is AskItIndia and how does it function?

A. AskIt India is a peer-to-peer student-driven service marketplace. It allows individuals who require work to be done to be matched with students who possess the talent to have it done whether it is design, research, editing, academic assistance, or even various other services specific to campus life. The Service Requester posts the task, the Service Providers (students) select it, they work on it, and the task gets fulfilled easy, quick, and community-based.

Q. How did it all start with AskItIndia; was it a "lightbulb moment" or a gradual development of ideas?

A. It began as a night-long discussion between the co-founders regarding how students possess untapped potential and how numerous little, mundane tasks go unattended since there isn't an easy method to bring the two together. Within one year, that one conversation turned into AskIt India. We developed the concept further, pitched at places such as Eureka at IIT Bombay E-Cell and i-Hub Gujarat, and the positive feedback we received encouraged us to make it happen.



Q: What was the response from your peers or friends when you first began?

A: It was very positive. People said, "I actually could use this today," and that was all we needed to know. Some of them were like, "You know what, I'll sign up to become a service provider, and others were stoked about offering tasks. It put it into perspective that the issue that we were attacking was actually real and tangible.

Q: How do you juggle college life with being a startup founder?

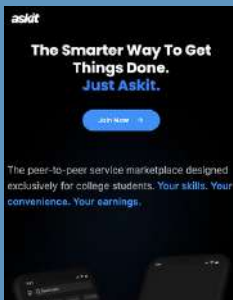
A: It's certainly a balance, but time-blocking and prioritizing really assist. I take my startup work as seriously as I do my classes so I establish specific work hours, utilize collaboration software, and benefit from an amazing co founder to share the load with. Plus, being in a startup actually supports my branding and advertising degree as I get to practice what I learn in real-time.

Q: What's something you've had to pick up on the fly that's been a game-changer for you?

A: Effective communication. Whether pitching investors, signing up users, or making it work with the team, how you frame your concept and establish trust can be everything. It's something I've developed enormously through Askit, and it's led to opportunities I wouldn't have otherwise.

Q: What's one piece of advice you'd give to other students who want to start something of their own?

A: Begin small but begin now. You don't have to have the perfect product on day one, you have to have a workable idea and be prepared to evolve. Leverage your network, converse with people, validate your idea early, and know that your time as a student is actually your best advantage, you have room to fail forward and experiment.



AD TALK: WHEN WORDPLAY CROSSES THE LINE



“American Eagle’s Sydney Sweeney Campaign Sparks Buzz with Clever Wordplay”

In the ad, Sweeney says: “Genes are passed down from parents to offspring, often determining traits like hair colour, personality, and even eye colour. My jeans are blue.”

The screen then reads: “Sydney Sweeney has great jeans.”

DOUBLE
ENTENDRE;
GENES

At first glance, the ad might have seemed like a bold attempt at standing out in a crowded market. But after a year of studying branding and advertising at NMIMS, I’ve come to understand just how important it is to view every piece of communication through multiple lenses and how swiftly public perception can redefine them.

FOR MANY, IT EVOKED PAST
NARRATIVES TIED TO IDEALISED
GENETICS, PROMPTING CRITICAL
DISCUSSIONS ONLINE.

While some appreciated the clever pun, others felt the focus on inherited traits, especially coming from a white, blonde, blue-eyed actress, carried uncomfortable undertones.

Within days, several celebrities, like Lizzo and Doja Cat joined the conversation. Many posted parodies and satirical takes to highlight their interpretations of the ad and its message.

In today’s digital landscape, even a few seconds of ad copy can snowball into a global conversation within hours. Social media doesn’t just amplify campaigns...it breaks them down, reinterprets them, and sometimes reframes them entirely.

THE CAMPAIGN QUICKLY
SHIFTED FROM A DENIM
PROMOTION TO A CULTURAL
TALKING POINT.

WATCH THE
CONTROVERSIAL
AD HERE

-TANISHA
CHADHA



LESSON LEARNED:

As branding students, we’re reminded that attention is powerful. But so is context. Understanding both is key to crafting meaningful campaigns.

DAY ONE, TIMES TWO

FIRST STEPS INTO REALITY

There's a certain electricity in the air when you take a "first step". Whether it's through the gates of your dream college or into the glass doors of your very first workplace, that moment crackles with possibility. It's the same blend of hope, uncertainty and the faint scent of fresh beginnings, the kind you never quite forget.

July, for most colleges, is a month of transitions, when new batches arrive and senior-most students walk the stage to graduate. In the rush of welcoming fresh faces and bidding farewell to familiar ones, we often overlook the milestones each of us quietly crosses.

From the first day in a new, and perhaps dream college, all you want is to soak in the "college experience"; finding your own circle of friends, carving a space for yourself academically and exploring opportunities in your chosen field.



Fast forward a few years, and you're stepping into your first workplace, an adult job where all the skills learned in lectures and internships are suddenly put to the test. Now, you're focused on meeting your employer's expectations while picking up a whole new set of skills along the way.

If these weren't important moments, we wouldn't spend days picking the perfect first-day outfit or calling our parents that evening to share every detail, from who we met to how the coffee machine works.

Both days feel like whirlwinds: a blur of names, instructions, and emotions. Yet they share one undeniable thing in common, the nerves. That flutter in your stomach, equal parts excitement and fear, is inevitable, and maybe, in a way, it's the very thing that tells us we're stepping into something new and something definitely worth remembering.

-KASHVI MAHAJAN



CONVOCATION 25'

DEGREES, DREAMS & A LIFETIME OF MEMORIES!

Some days in life feel ordinary until you realise, years later, that they were the ones that changed everything. College is made up of hundreds of such moments: late-night submissions, group projects that tested our patience, spontaneous chai breaks, and then, without warning, the day comes when it all comes together.

When most of us joined SoBA, we were too busy figuring out the workings of college to realise how quickly each semester would bring us closer to graduation. That thought alone can be daunting, but for our graduating batch, it wasn't just the end of a chapter; it was proof that they had the skills, strength, and memories to last a lifetime.

On 11th August 2025, we celebrated the convocation for this remarkable batch. The day began with a quick mock drill to ensure a smooth flow once parents and guests arrived. Despite the early start, the auditorium and lobby were soon buzzing with chatter, emotions, and heartfelt goodbyes, and of course, the keepsake photos with friends, faculty, and family.





The ceremony unfolded with inspiring speeches, special awards, and the much-awaited degree distribution. Proud faces lit up as students from the Dean's List were recognised for their outstanding academic achievements.

Adding to the nostalgia was the distribution of the yearbook, filled with photographs, jokes, and notes that captured the very essence of their journey. Laughter and nostalgia went hand in hand as pages were flipped, each one a portal back to moments they would carry forever.

We were honoured to have several esteemed members of the NMIMS Trust and our distinguished chief guests, Ms. Lara Balsara and Mr. Rituraaj, join us for the occasion.

The event was more than just a farewell; it was a celebration of years of memories, friendships, and milestones. As the caps were tossed high into the air, one thing was clear: this wasn't the end of their story, but the beginning of a new one, written with courage, ambition, and the unshakable bond of the SoBA family.

- KASHVI MAHAJAN





GPS

RECALCULATING ROUTE

AFTER THE FIRST WRONG TURN

The first step towards anything new feels like starting a fresh journey with a GPS. The route looks clear. The destination is marked. The voice is calm: "Proceed to the highlighted route."

And then, somewhere between the start and the first landmark, there's a wrong turn. It's not catastrophic, just not the direction you meant to take. That wrong turn could mean many things, especially in college, where you're still figuring out who you are and how to cope with this new environment.

"Recalculating..."

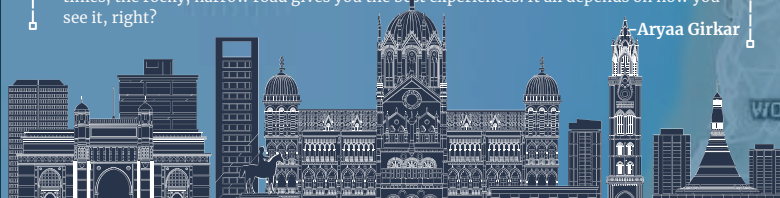
It's tempting to think a wrong turn ruins the trip. But GPS logic says otherwise. It doesn't scold, panic, or dwell on the missed road. It simply searches for the next path. That's the beauty of recalculating; it assumes forward motion is possible. Shouldn't we do the same after a mistake? We should remain calm, seek solutions, and avoid dragging ourselves down.

Every journey has these moments: a detour you didn't plan, a stretch of unfamiliar road, a pause as the system thinks. These are not signs of failure; they are part of the process. Even efficient routes adjust, sometimes to avoid traffic, sometimes for a better route, and sometimes because the driver just needs to slow down. The voice says, "In 200 meters, turn left." You do. The trip continues. The destination is still there, even if the road to it has changed shape.

Taking the first step isn't about guaranteeing a flawless route; it's about starting the engine and being willing to adapt when the unexpected happens. Growth is less about sticking to the original map and more about learning how to navigate, reroute, and keep moving.

So, when life's navigation system announces, "Recalculating..." , take a breath. Trust that the path is still unfolding. Sometimes the scenic route brings the best discoveries. Other times, the rocky, narrow road gives you the best experiences. It all depends on how you see it, right?

Aryaa Girkar



Sips & Schedules

Between orientation jitters and the chaos of new schedules, SoBA Snippets turned to those who've *seen it all* (our teachers). From secret hacks to timeless advice, they revealed their insider tips for surviving college.



SPOILER: IT'S NOT ALL ABOUT GRADES.



WHAT'S THE FASTEST WAY TO MAKE FRIENDS ON CAMPUS?



Pick a club, you'll find your people there.



Honestly, just smile and say hi, it works like magic.



Crack a joke at the chai tapri-instant squad!

ONE THING EVERY STUDENT NEEDS FOR YOUR CLASS?

A notebook full of doodles and ideas (attendance helps too).



Just bring questions-you'll leave with answers.



Be present. Physically, emotionally, and socially.



WHAT MAKES YOU APPRECIATE A STUDENT?



When I see genuine effort, even if it's a little messy.



When they bring their own spark and make the class lively.



When they capitalize on their common sense & intelligence.

WHAT'S YOUR INSIDER TIP FOR FYS?

ICAs are just as important as End terms-don't sleep on them!



Be yourself. Upskill, and keep learning.



Don't just survive group projects, thrive in them.



-TANISHA CHADHA

MEET THE TEAM

2025-26

CLUBHEAD



TANISHA CHADHA

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