

Expanding the Ever-Evolving Indian Pro AV Market

*In Conversation with Vijay Sharma,
Country Head, Optoma*



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*No obstacles can affect the vision of a growth-driven brand in India. This interview provides a glimpse on the efficiency of the pro AV industry leaders who work to drive the change diligently. **Vijay Sharma**, Country Head, Optoma India interacts with the AV-ICN Expo Magazine team about the marketing strategies, Optoma's growth in the Indian pro AV market, and how the team embraced the challenges during the pandemic. Vijay Sharma also elucidates on the expansion of the organisation and his role in leading the change.*

Vijay Sharma started his journey with Optoma as the Country Head in 2019 and has been a part of the expansion since then. With different marketing strategies and growth plans, he has played an influential role in the company. Optoma, being a Taiwanese company, established its operations in India in 2010. However, its recent performance has shown a major spike in the Indian business and is delivering results beyond expectations in India and globally. The brand extended its focus towards the pro AV segment recently in India and is ready to optimise the performance with better growth initiatives and solution-driven changes.

With the expansion model in mind, Optoma has brought many new launches in 2023 and is set to bring more AV products and solutions in 2024. Could you provide a brief on the new products launched in India?

In 2023, we introduced our high brightness laser projectors both in optional lenses and fixed lenses. In optional lenses,

our product range is up to 22,000 lumens and in fixed lenses, the product range is up to 10,000 lumens, which primarily is at par with other pro AV brands in the market. We also introduced our interactive flat panels in 2023.

This year marks the enhancement of our solid-state offerings, specifically laser projectors, we currently boast the most extensive projector range in India. As the industry shifts from traditional lamp-based to solid-state technology projection technology, we are at the forefront, driving significant advancements in the projector segment amid stiff competition from traditional lamp based projector brands. In our commitment to bring best of technology and environmental sustainability, we're expanding our portfolio with both mainstream and premium laser projectors.

Our recent launches include the 4K high brightness laser projectors with fixed lenses for both long and short-range projection. Additionally, we're updating our Interactive Flat Panels with the newest series and introducing versatile all-in-one

LED Displays, currently offering 130-inch and 163-inch models. We plan to introduce two to three more models in large displays this year. Expanding our focus, we're venturing into software collaboration products and devices with the introduction of our OMS – a cloud-based and on-premises remote management software. This innovative solution is designed for customers managing numerous devices, enabling IT administrators to control settings like remote on/off or troubleshoot issues across multiple classrooms instantly via software control. We're excited to officially launch the software this year.

How are you pushing Optoma as a brand in the country? Can you elaborate on your sales and marketing strategies, as also your dealer/distribution network?

In our marketing strategy, we focus on digital initiatives tailored to our main sectors, including hospitality, museums, education, and large-scale venues. We're dedicated to addressing the unique needs of each segment, deploying specialized teams like our home theatre group to engage consumers and segments digitally via social media. Our network of channel partners, experts in their respective fields, represent Optoma across India. They operate experience centres where customers can evaluate the actual performance of our products and make informed selections.

For the professional AV market, targeting large venues, auditoriums, and classrooms, we connect with B2B clients through industry events such as the AV-ICN Expo and Infocomm. These events and exhibitions are pivotal in reaching our intended audience and keeping them updated on our latest offerings and innovations.

How is Optoma adapting the trends in the pro AV market? Also, in the pro AV segment, many players are offering innovative projectors. How is Optoma creating a strong foothold despite the competition?

Currently, the projection segment is experiencing rapid growth within the professional AV industry. Optoma, a key player in the global projection market, began intensifying its focus on India's PRO AV segment from 2021 onwards. The company made strategic moves by participating in Infocomm and forging partnerships with leading systems integrators and consultants nationwide. These collaborations, coupled with efforts to educate these partners about Optoma's new products, have solidified our position in India's pro

AV market and facilitated connections with our intended audience through established channels.

At Optoma, we prioritize understanding the professional AV industry's needs and ensuring our products meet these demands. We gauge the confidence our partners and end-users have in our offerings; especially as pro AV solutions are increasingly adopted on a larger scale. The Optoma team in India is dedicated to delivering our products to users, leveraging our recent market entry. As one of the top OEM/ODM providers for several major global brands in the projection industry, our technical expertise and the distinct advantages of our products have been instrumental in securing valuable partnerships and establishing a strong presence in India's pro AV sector.

How do you approach the systems integrators and consultants apart from exhibitions as a marketing strategy?

Optoma spearheads an initiative known as OptomaMAX, a roadshow designed to directly engage with our target market across India. Additionally, we host dealer connect events in various cities, inviting the region's premier consultants and partners to present Optoma's array of products and solutions. These events serve as a platform to communicate our company's vision, mission, and operational methodologies. Beyond traditional exhibitions, these roadshows are instrumental in fostering customer relationships.

In a recent development, Optoma launched its inaugural national reward and recognition program. This initiative gathered the top 25 Optoma partners from across India, encompassing elite AV consultants, systems integrators, and distributors. These partners have demonstrated a profound interest in Optoma's professional AV solutions and have been pivotal in realizing our objectives and aspirations for the year.

Moreover, Optoma collaborates with industry-leading certification programs to enhance outreach to System Integrators, providing them with comprehensive knowledge of Optoma products and valuable industry insights. This collaboration ensures that professionals are well-equipped to represent and advocate for Optoma's innovative solutions effectively.

How has the brand performance been in the last five years?

Five years back, Optoma was relatively lesser known in the Indian AV market. Now, it's recognized as one of the top three AV

brands in the country. To secure our market standing, we're proactive in launching and updating products and new product segment for our brand. We actively engage with partners, consultants, and customers through events, exhibitions, and digital marketing efforts to enhance brand recognition. This year, we've partnered with Vistara Airlines for in-flight branding, ensuring our target customers become familiar with the Optoma brand. Our goal is to optimize brand awareness and retention among our target demographic by executing targeted campaigns at opportune moments.

In the professional AV sector, we've been one of the top three contenders in the fixed lens projector category for the past two years and remain in the top five for the optional lens projector category. Over the past three years, Optoma's market share has seen an increase from 5% to 15%.

Acknowledging certain shortcomings in the Indian business, our top management in Taiwan decided to overhaul the Indian business, we initiated a significant change from 2019. A new leadership team, including the Country Head of India was instituted to bring required reforms and to propel the organization's vision forward. This strategic move revolutionized Optoma's engagement with the Indian AV market, propelling the brand from a minor player to one of the most prominent names in the Indian pro AV industry.

What were the challenges you faced while setting up the teams and leading the change, especially during the pandemic as you mentioned above?

The pandemic did not significantly impede our progress, as we adapted our market strategy accordingly. Year 2018-2019 the projection sector was at its peak, but it suffered a decline during the pandemic due to the closure of educational institutions and corporate offices, affecting the broader pro AV segments. Consequently, we pivoted our focus to the home entertainment sector, securing suitable partners and directing our team's efforts toward establishing a dominant market presence and leadership in this area.

To achieve these goals, we engaged with essential stakeholders, including AV consultants and channel partners. Despite the ongoing challenges in sourcing the ideal resources and personnel, we have remained steadfast and committed to training, guiding, and equipping our partners. During this period our aim was to elevate brands standing and solidify Op-

toma's position as a market leader in Home Projector business, and we were successful by becoming No.1 4K UHD and Laser TV projector brand.

In which segment/sector do you see maximum growth?

Optoma is a top player in the residential AV segment right now as we have acquired over 35-40% of the market share for the segment in India. Overall, our home segment grew in double digits during the pandemic. However, post-Covid, we understood the changing needs of the market and started catering to other markets segments as well like pro AV segment and education.

Based on your response above, can you state how is Optoma positioned in the education sector?

Optoma stands out as a prominent supplier in the education sector and continues to be a leading provider in this market. With a focus on short-throw projectors, we have maintained our position as a top brand in this category within the Indian AV industry for over five years. We're not just informing systems integrators and partners about our products; we're also enhancing their portfolios by transitioning from lamp-based to laser projectors, capitalizing on the education sector's shift towards solid

state projection technology.

Two years prior, Optoma expanded its product range by launching interactive flat panels. The 5-Series was introduced to serve the high-end Indian market, including prestigious international schools and discerning customers. Subsequently, we unveiled the more cost-effective 3-Series, broadening our reach within the education segment. These strategic moves have led to the installation of approximately 5,000 displays and over 200,000 projectors across India, marking significant penetration in the market.

What about market for gaming and residential AV?

Optoma was the first brand to introduce the 240 Hz gaming projector in 2021. However, the gaming projector market did not find many buyers. Even though gaming is one of the fastest growing markets in India, it still has to go a long way when it comes to creating a demand for gaming projectors in the home entertainment industry. I believe, users prefer laptops and monitors over projectors for gaming.

Being a leader in European and American markets and obtaining a prominent position in the Indian market, how is Optoma strategizing to maintain the recognition it has developed today?

Undoubtedly, Optoma has set a standard in the industry, beginning with our initial operations. Our journey started in the UK, then expanded to the USA, where we solidified our presence in both European and American markets. In contrast, our Indian operations commenced with a new team in 2019, initially concentrating on establishing a robust presence in the education sector before moving to lead the professional AV segment as well.

Presently, we are a prominent name in India's 4K UHD projector market and rank among the top three in the professional AV industry, emulating the successful strategies of our American and European counterparts. Our B2B outreach has encompassed numerous systems integrators and channel partners. While educating the partners about our products and policies, we ensure the guidelines we create are in line with the brand's vision and mission.

Our policies cater specifically to the needs and preferences of each market segment, creating mutually beneficial outcomes. This approach has consistently provided us with a competitive advantage in the Indian professional AV market. Our aim is to expand our reach to Tier II, III, and IV cities, incorporating more skilled partners and integrators into our network, fostering collective growth.

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