

THE MOST INFLUENTIAL GLOBAL INDIAN WOMEN

An ET Magazine-MavenMagnet study on global women achievers of Indian origin in business and the arts who are creating the biggest buzz online

They were born in India, and achieved fame, glory and success in other parts of the world. Which is why we decided to call them the Global Indian Women (GIW) – their influence measured by big data research firm MavenMagnet, which began with a long list of 60 women, all born in India and making waves outside it (see *How We Did It* below for more details on the methodology).

These women earned their spurs across countries – from the United Arab Emirates to, inevitably, the US – but one thing's for sure: you can't take India and their Indianness out of them. After all, many of them are what and where they are because of their cultural roots, and their ability to adapt them to a new milieu.

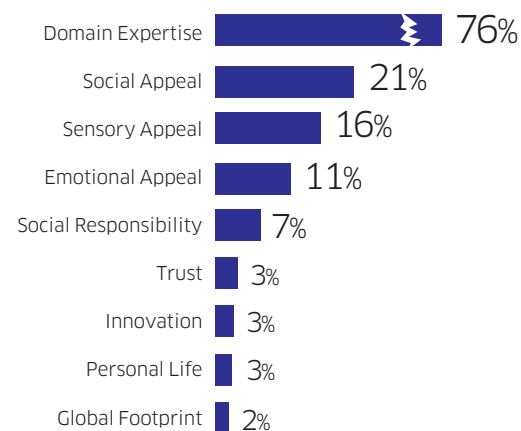
Consider, for instance, the story of Falu Shah, who has introduced the West to a mint-new genre of 'Hindi-Indie' music. Part of the credit for the success of Falu – or Falguni as she was known in her childhood days in Mumbai – would have to go to her mother Kishori Reshamdalal who ensured that her daughter was trained in Hindustani classical music.

Then, the success saga of Zulekha Daud, founder of an eponymous UAE-based hospital chain, is incomplete without a significant mention of the struggles of her mother Bilkis Vali in getting Zulekha trained as a doctor in Nagpur, fighting orthodoxy on the one hand and her own lack of formal education on the other. In fact, Zulekha recalls how her mother successfully sat for her own class 10 exams while Zulekha studied medicine.

The MavenMagnet long list also had names like Leena Nair, till recently head of human resources at Hindustan Unilever before being called up to the Unilever Headquarters in London. The likes of Nair have been left out purely because much of their achievements were back home – at least so far. The study focused primarily on two areas: business; and the arts. That helped to short list 20 names for an in-depth research to bring out the granular details of their sphere of influence.

A caveat here would be appropriate – this is not a ranking, and there is subjectivity in the final selection of the 20 names, 10 each from the fields of art and business. Read on:

EXPERTISE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT DRIVER OF INFLUENCE



How We Did It

MavenMagnet, a research company, uses big data to uncover consumer and market insights across a broad cross-section of demographic and psychographic segments. The key advantage of its research methodology is that it does not involve moderation of discussions or questions. Instead it uses the conversations that the consumers are having on various online platforms with their friends and family to gather insights. MavenMagnet analysed **4,172 conversations** among **1,642 individuals** around the 20 women to

evaluate their footprint in their domain of expertise and beyond.

A key functionality of the approach in this study is its impact normalisation technique. This was essential because of two reasons. Firstly, the social sphere of influence for individuals working in different fields is considerably different. For instance, authors writing in a particular genre have a great influence on their readership, but generally their sphere of influence is considerably smaller as compared to actors working on projects with mass

appeal. In order to cover women in different fields, MavenMagnet normalised the influence analysis based on the field of focus. Secondly, some business leaders (Indra Nooyi and Padmasree Warrior) and show-business personalities (Mira Nair and Freida Pinto) are outliers who have a considerably high overall impact due to their stature and work. This approach ensured that these outliers didn't set the benchmarks.

MavenMagnet's Conversational Research™ doesn't involve any discussion guides or ques-

tionnaires that can steer the outcome in a certain direction. This considerably increases the scope of discovery. One surprising insight in this study was that the imagery spectrum (sphere of influence) of artists is narrower as compared to business leaders. While the perception of artists was generally driven by factors such as domain expertise and sensory appeal that were directly linked to their profession, peripheral attributes such as social appeal and trust were relatively more dominant in case of business leaders.

Padmasree Warrior,
 CHIEF TECHNOLOGY &
 STRATEGY OFFICER,
 CISCO SYSTEMS

Tech Trooper

She's as at ease with her emotions as she is with the internet of everything

Finding women at the top in Silicon Valley – steeped in a culture dominated by men – is a rarity. And to find an Indian-origin woman at that would seem near impossible. Padmasree Warrior, chief technology & strategy officer at Cisco Systems, is a notable exception. Warrior became CTO and executive veep at Motorola in 2003. She was the highest-ranking woman in the company's history; she had joined a Motorola semiconductor factory way back in 1984, one of the few women on the rolls, where she spent 23 years. She quit Motorola in 2007 and is tipped for the job of CEO in Cisco. Warrior's experience, strong credentials – she is an engineer who graduated from IIT-Delhi in 1982, one of five girls in her batch and holds a masters from Cornell – and sparkly resumé have earned her a Twitter following of 1.46 million. That explains her strong domain expertise and social appeal in the GIW study.

"I believe being a leader is all about making a lasting difference while staying authentic as a person. I focus my leadership on enabling Cisco to lead major market transitions," Warrior told *ET Magazine*. Outside her core work, Warrior's passion is to mentor the next generation of leaders, especially women in technology.

Warrior's 'integration' in focusing on the things most important to her has been inspiring for her

social media followers. It is said that her son would cry and so would she whenever he saw her suitcase because he knew she would be travelling. She began involving him in her work and travel. This way he could be involved in her life – even when she wasn't there – something that her fans admire her for. In her own words, "as a person I am approachable, straight-forward and decisive".

"I was very close to my parents growing up in India. Engineering education in India is often highly competitive, and I am proud to have been one of only five girls enrolled in my class of 250 at the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, where I spent my formative years," she said.

Warrior is considered among the most influential tech visionaries globally with *Fortune Magazine* having called her one of four rising stars on its Most Powerful Women list way back in 2006. "Technology has always had an impact on society and our lives – from the industrial revolution to the information revolution. This impact is often positive but occasionally negative. We are witnessing unprecedented pace of change across every industry today. The internet, mobile and cloud are at the heart of this change. We are about to enter the era of internet of everything which is the networked connection between people, process, data and things," she says. – *Ishani Duttagupta*



Alka Banerjee,
 MD, STRATEGY AND GLOBAL EQUITY
 INDICES, S&P DOW JONES INDICES

Queen of the Equity Cult

She's on a mission to make transparent and liquid investments accessible to all

Even though Alka Banerjee reached American shores in 1994, it is best to call her a global citizen who keeps travelling and often lives out of a suitcase. As managing director of strategy and global equity indices at S&P Dow Jones Indices, Banerjee is often criss-crossing the world. Her travel brings her to India often where she oversees a joint venture with the Bombay Stock Exchange called Asia Index Pvt Ltd.

In her dual role, as the head of indices globally, and head of the Indian JV, Banerjee is firmly clued into what is happening locally. She says: "India is at an exciting time today and I see a lot of dynamism and growth in the country. I have been coming to India on professional visits for the last 15 years and the

change in mood is dramatic. I have seen a lot of changes which have happened for the better in the last decade but now I sense that change will be much more rapid and constructive."

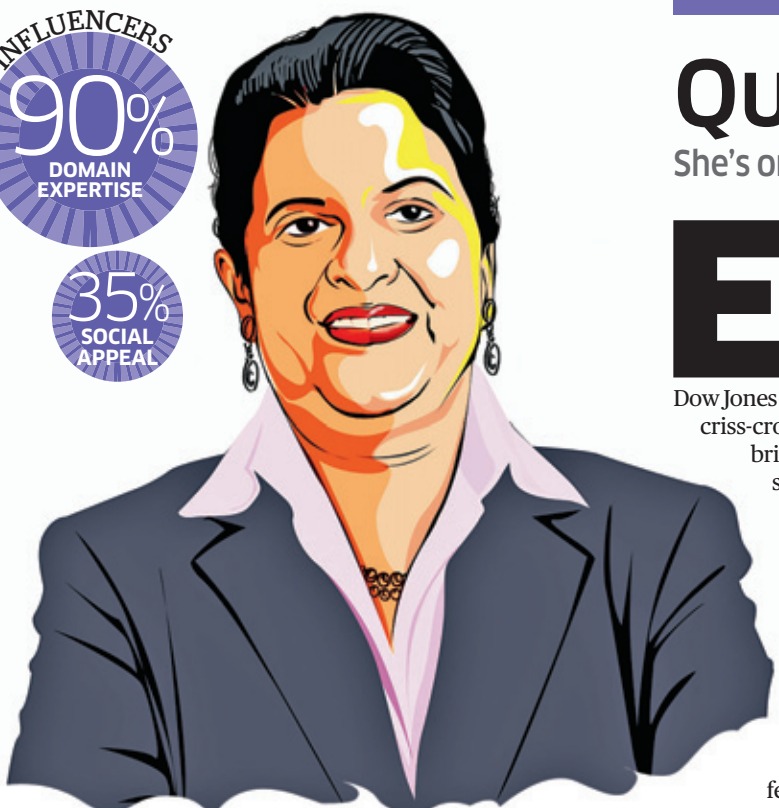
Banerjee is keen to promote index-based investing across the world

The GIW study found that her imagery and influence is strong in the community where she matters most: investors. Online conversations about her are almost entirely about her domain expertise.

Banerjee feels India helped develop her personality as well as her work ethic. "I am who I am because of my Indian parenting, my Indian schooling and the Indian value system that I grew up with."

Banerjee is keen to promote index-based investing across the world. "Every country needs robust capital markets... and a complete range of transparent, cost-effective and liquid products accessible to all. I see myself helping to bring this message to all the countries around the world."

– *Suman Layak*



ILLUSTRATIONS: SUNEESH K

Rashmi Sinha,
 CO-FOUNDER, SLIDESHARE

Pride and Playboy

Academics can make canny entrepreneurs, as this woman executive has shown

It took someone with a post-doc in neuroscience to find a way to keep us out of boring meetings: SlideShare let users store and share presentations on the web, making them accessible anywhere. A fan of stoner comedy film *Harold & Kumar Go to White Castle* and sitcom *Arrested Development*, Sinha's previous work used online gaming in client research. "We'll use that excuse the next time the boss catches us playing *World of Warcraft*."

These were lines from a 2009 profile in *Playboy* of Rashmi Sinha, co-founder of SlideShare, serial entrepreneur and angel investor, who had been named among America's sexiest CEOs that year. Victoria's Secret and Femme Productions, an adult entertainment venture, were the kind of names likely to be seen on this list.

However, Sinha's presence was rather unexpected and by her own admission something she did on a lark. It would be foolhardy to believe that she's leaning on looks alone to get by.

SlideShare, a site which aggregates presentations, was conceived and scaled by her husband Jonathan Boutelle and brother Amit Ranjan and, when acquired by LinkedIn for \$119 million in May 2012, had 60 million monthly users and hosted some 7.4 million presentations.

Business and starting up was something of a career change for the academically oriented Sinha. Despite being acclimatised to the demands of academia – she is a PhD in

psychology besides the post-doc in cognitive neuroscience – the thrill of starting up convinced her to switch careers. SlideShare was the result of this endeavour – and the acquisition by LinkedIn validation of her switch.

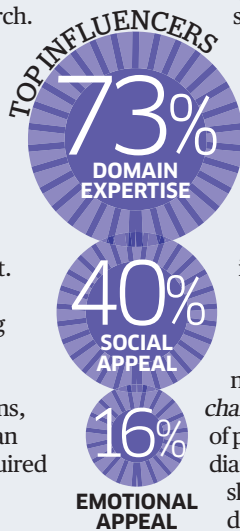
Building, scaling and selling SlideShare – and an earlier boutique consultancy – handed Sinha many life lessons she is keen to pass on.

"When I decided to do technology I knew a little bit of computer science, I had taken a few courses but I was definitely not a very technical person," she said in an interview to National Centre for Women and Information Technology, a non-profit venture. "I... forged ahead... and have learned along the way and have picked things up. I would say that's a very important thing to decide what interests you because you can't do anything as well as the things that truly make you come alive."

Sinha grew up in Allahabad and tries to stay connected to all things Indian – she likes to drink *masala chai* and eats Indian food – and is a strong supporter of prime minister Narendra Modi and the Indian Space Mission on Twitter. Even as she tries to keep in touch with her Indian roots, she's already plotting her next venture – having quit Linked-

In – and is dispensing advice to those looking to follow in her footsteps.

– *Rahul Sachitanand*



Gargee Ghosh,
 DIRECTOR, DEVELOPMENT POLICY AND FINANCE, BILL & MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION AND MEMBER, US PRESIDENT'S GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Influencer Beyond Work

The impact investing votary wants to redefine how aid is distributed and healthcare is accessed



Nearly \$135 billion in aid was doled out to impoverished countries globally, according to Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, a grouping of rich nations. However, most institutes that used to apportion this money were created in the 1940s and are in urgent need of re-invention, as political boundaries are redrawn and the needs for compassionate capital change.

For Gargee Ghosh, director of Development Policy and Finance at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, rewiring the aid ecosystem is a favourite project.

"Today's world is radically different," she said in a statement announcing The Next Horizons Essay Contest on The Future of Development Assistance. "While many have evolved since then, we think there is more to do to make sure we are getting the most impact for every dollar of aid spent: we need to re-imagine aid for the 21st century."

Ghosh's work isn't restricted to aid alone. She's also feted for her work in devising innovative ways to financing vaccines for the poor. She has worked with Gavi, the global vaccine alliance, to develop the advance market commitment concept, to guarantee a market for a successfully devel-

oped vaccine.

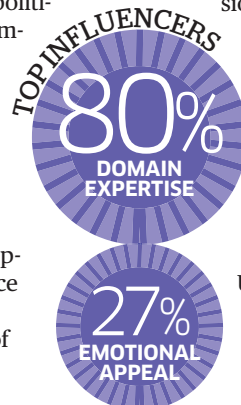
Ghosh declined to comment for this article.

A key focus for Ghosh, an economics and international relations graduate from Oxford and University of Vancouver, is making healthcare more available and affordable. She has worked on the pilot of a global fund debt conversion initiative and private equity powerhouse to invest in healthcare in Africa.

A combination of her expertise in healthcare and impact investing and know-how across consultancies, corporations and charities has created a buzz online, according to the GIW study. In November 2013, US president Barack Obama appointed her to his Global Development Council, a think tank to advise the US administration on issues such as US' global development policies and practices, supporting new and existing public-private partnerships, and increasing awareness and action in support of development.

"She has a good sense about policy, particularly what is missing in the current tool box, and is willing to pursue new options with passion," says Sanjeev Gupta, a deputy director with the International Monetary Fund.

With her two-year term on the council set to end in 2015, Ghosh will surely be thinking of her next big challenge to make healthcare more equitable. – *Rahul Sachitanand*



Ranji Nagaswami,
 SENIOR ADVISER, CORSAIR CAPITAL

Thriving in Adversity

Operating in a financial services warzone seems to bring out the best moves from this trained classical dancer

When you are given the responsibility of running a mutual fund business with nearly \$180 billion in assets under management, chances are you would grab the opportunity with both hands. But Ranji Nagaswami was given a ticking time bomb – the mutual fund unit of AllianceBernstein was struggling against a series of scandals that had led to an exodus of top management. If not a basket case, analysts considered it teetering on the edge.

An executive with Morning Star Research, a respected research outfit, cut no ice with her. “To my utter dismay, the head of the team matter-of-factly told me that I had just taken on leadership of one of the worst managed mutual fund families for shareholders,” she said in an interview to Aspen Action Forum, an initiative to connect fellows from the Aspen Global Leadership Network with other leaders from Aspen Institute programmes and partners.

Nagaswami has had some tough mandates – from resuscitating a \$180-million mutual fund to being the first investment chief for the New York mayor’s office to working with hedge fund Bridgewater Capital

In three years, the trained classical dancer didn’t just resuscitate the unit, she went from analyst pariah to keynote speaker at Morning Star’s much-sought-after annual event.

Nagaswami declined to comment for this article.

She had just fixed this business, when the financial crisis of 2008 hobbled AllianceBernstein and led to the exit of the chief executive. She followed. If this gig was difficult, her next jump, as the first investment chief for the New York mayor’s office (under Michael Bloomberg) would make her previous effort seem like a walk in the park.

The billionaire mayor wanted to fix a leaky \$120-billion pension fund, the largest in the US, to increase returns for this fund and reduce spiralling costs to tax payers. For over two years, she battled some 60 splintered constituents of the pension fund to drive organisation-wide reform at the fund.

A near three-decade veteran of the financial services industry, Nagaswami has also worked briefly with hedge fund Bridgewater Capital, one of the largest in its field, worked as a fellow at the Aspen Institute (besides a raft of other social sector commitments), before joining Corsair Capital in October 2014. Corsair, a private equity fund focused on investments in the financial services industry, would use her experience to evaluate opportunities in the asset management space.

“Ranji brings a unique perspective to our business,” Nicholas B Paumgarten, chairman of Corsair Capital, said in a media statement on Nagaswami’s induction. “She knows the investment management industry as an investor and business leader as well as serving in a very senior capacity on the investor client side of the business through her work with mayor Bloomberg.”

With specialised funds such as Corsair looking to snare more deals in an evolving financial services market, Nagaswami can perhaps look forward to a new – and different – challenge in her career. – *Rahul Sachitanand*



Bhairavi Desai,
 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NEW YORK TAXI WORKERS ALLIANCE

Driving a Union of 15,000 Cabbies

She’s a woman at the helm in a male-dominated industry

Bhairavi Desai’s Twitter handle is a fake. It is said to be a creation of the PR machinery of one of the biggest taxi fleet owners in New York that circulates propaganda against her own work. She is not surprised and is hardly disconcerted. Desai is executive director, a feisty one at that, of the New York Taxi Workers Alliance (NYTWA), an advocacy group of nearly 15,000 cab drivers in New York City. “Our organisation is on Twitter and Facebook and we reach out to our community through them,” says Desai who co-founded the union along with Javaid Tariq.

Desai, 43, is seen as one of the most important faces among women of Indian origin who have made an impact in the area of social change in the US. “She has taken NYTWA to be included in prestigious bodies such as American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations,” says Shamita Das Dasgupta, co-founder of Manavi, a New Jersey-based South Asian women’s rights organisation.

Nearly 60% of NYTWA members are from South Asia, but Desai says leadership didn’t happen because of her ethnicity. “It’s because those of us from the subcontinent understand the sense of community and we come from countries where people have a great deal of political maturity and are socially conscious,” she says. Desai grew up with two brothers – she had no choice but become one of the boys – which has helped her thrive in a male-dominated industry.

Findings of the GIW study are testimony to Desai expertise and experience – she started working for the rights of taxi drivers at 23. The domain expertise has earned her a high ranking.

“There were many drivers who wouldn’t take me seriously initially. To them, I was an outsider who didn’t understand the complexity of the industry,” she told *ET Magazine* from her home in New York City. It’s early in the morning and she’s already preparing for work. She is usually out at 8 am, visiting a taxi dispatch centre at the airport to talk to drivers and discuss issues such as health benefits. It is office next, where work on campaigns, regulations and policy matters keeps her occupied.

Desai sees her own immigrant journey different from many other well-heeled Indian Americans, who take up causes as an intellectual exercise. But like most, she too is proud of her Indian origin. “I grew up in the working class in America, but my parents encouraged me to work towards changing the world if I could, even though we had to think about survival first.”

Desai last visited India in 2008, when her father, who had moved back to India, passed away in his hometown Vadeli near Surat. “I was born in India – having come to the US when I was seven – and still feel very connected.” – *Ishani Duttagupta*



Indra Nooyi, CHAIRMAN AND CEO, PEPSICO

Frankly Speaking

One of the world's most powerful women is candid enough to admit she can't have it all

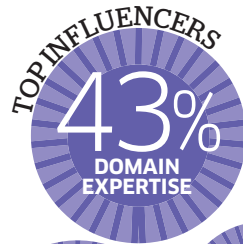
In July 2014, Indra Nooyi, chairman and chief executive officer of PepsiCo, made headlines when answering a question on work-life balance. The issue had already stoked a high-decibel debate with Facebook's Sheryl Sandberg asking women to not underestimate themselves or cut back on ambitions out of fear of work-life balance. On the other side, leading the charge was former Princeton professor Anne-Marie Slaughter who urged workplaces to change and women to stop blaming themselves.

To this raging debate, Nooyi added her candid views. "I don't think women can have it all....Everyday, you are going to make a decision about whether you are going to be a wife or a mother....the biological clock and the career clock are in total conflict with each other.

Total, complete conflict. When you have to have kids you have to build your career...just as you're rising to middle management your kids need you because they're teenagers..."

For Nooyi, 59, with two grown-up daughters, steering a \$66.4-billion empire, and earning a pay packet of over \$18 million in 2013, it would have been so much easier to give a politically correct answer. Instead, Nooyi was brutally honest and spoke from the heart, instantly striking a chord with many grappling with work-life balance issues.

What stands out about Nooyi is **how she has managed Pepsi, how she has steered Pepsi towards a healthier portfolio of products and her emotional appeal**



That's what makes Nooyi special. On one hand, she is one of the most powerful women in the world calling the shots at a mega multinational. Yet, she is grounded enough to be able to relate to larger and popular issues like obesity and work-life-balance. Not surprisingly, in the GIW study, Nooyi leads the pack of global Indian women by a huge margin on both the buzz factor (overall volume of conversations) and the impact factor (how engaged people are in those conversations).

So what stands out in the web chatter around Nooyi? Broadly, three things: How she has managed Pepsi as an organisation, energizing and leading the team; how she has steered Pepsi towards a healthier portfolio of products; and, three, her enormous emotional appeal.

The chatter in the virtual world reflects reality. Under Nooyi's leadership, PepsiCo's revenues have nearly doubled from \$35 billion to \$66.42 billion between 2006 and 2014. Before becoming chairman and CEO she had played a critical role in shaping some of the biggest milestones in Pepsi's journey since the late 1990s with acquisitions of brands like Tropicana and Quaker Oats and the brave decision to spin off the restaurant business into a separate entity. Since taking charge in 2006, she has been slowly reinventing the cola company from a "fun-filled" fizzy drink portfolio to a healthier "good-filled" company (think juice, cereals). According to media reports, in 2013, nutritional products contributed a fifth to PepsiCo's net revenues.

— Malini Goyal

Geeta Menon,
 DEAN, UNDERGRADUATE
 COLLEGE AT NEW YORK
 UNIVERSITY'S STERN
 SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

A Scholar who Means Business

She's come a long way since her rookie research days in New Delhi

Geeta Menon's current positions, as dean of the Undergraduate College at New York University's Stern School of Business and the Abraham Krasnoff professor of global business and professor of marketing, are the culmination of an illustrious career. She has worked in a number of leading business institutions in India and the US such as Wharton School, Indian Institute of Management-Bangalore (IIM-B), Stanford Business School and Indian School of Business, Hyderabad.

Big accomplishments typically have a modest beginning. So was the case with Menon – as a research executive at the Indian Market Research Bureau in Delhi. "While I was growing up, my family moved around a lot because my father was an officer in the Indian Navy. It taught me to embrace different perspectives and cultures and to blend in seamlessly," says Menon, who graduated with a BA in economics from Chennai's Stella Maris College and an MA from Madras Christian College.

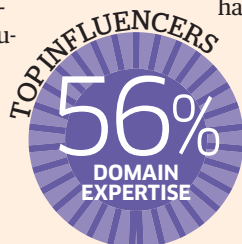
Menon grew up in a family surrounded by women who were independent and determined and drew lessons from them. "In a leadership role, belief and perseverance are key traits to keep yourself and the people around you motivated to continue to

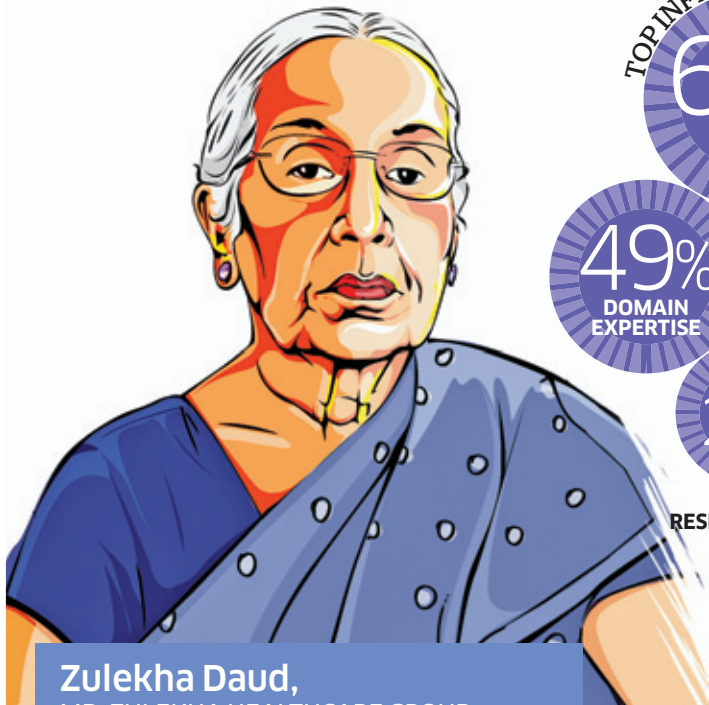
strive toward important, sometimes challenging goals," she says.

As a researcher, Menon is known for her study of consumer memory, information processing and emotions in the contexts of survey methodology. She is also a respected educator and a prominent scholar and is actively involved in PhD education, all of which she owes to her Indian roots. "My Indian background and education have compelled me throughout my career to do work that appreciates global perspectives and the convergence of cultures. My time at IIM-B and ISB Hyderabad has also allowed me to explore marketing in India as the new middle class began to emerge," she told *ET Magazine*. She often draws real-world examples from India for her class lectures.

As dean, Menon works with three core principles for the undergraduate college – academic excellence and innovation; glocal (global plus local) perspective, increasing opportunities for students to participate in the academic, cultural and professional communities of NYC; and a vibrant Stern community, working through students, alumni, parents, corporate partners and employers. Under her watch, applications to the undergraduate college have reached an all-time high. Her current position is driving both her domain expertise and her social appeal, says the GIW study.

— Ishani Duttagupta





Zulekha Daud,
 MD, ZULEKHA HEALTHCARE GROUP



Carry on, Doc

After earning her spurs in the Gulf, she's now setting up a hospital in her hometown Nagpur

Before Zulekha Daud, 75, became well known as the owner and managing director of Zulekha Healthcare Group in Dubai and Sharjah, she was already famous as Mama Zulekha, the gynaecologist who would call home for facilitating deliveries, in Dubai's conservative society. And, she did it more than 15,000 times, starting in 1964, to earn the moniker.

Battling orthodoxy was nothing new for her. In an interview to *ET Magazine*, Daud recounted how her parents, who had little education themselves, fought tradition to give their daughters an equal footing in this world as they did to their sons.

Famous as Mama Zulekha, the gynaecologist would call home for facilitating deliveries in Dubai's conservative society

"My father, Sadiq Vali, was in the construction business and my mother, Bilkis, a home-maker. Both did not have an opportunity to receive much education, but that made them even more determined to give their five children the best possible education," Daud said. The Vali siblings grew up in Nagpur.

In 1962, Zulekha followed her ophthalmologist husband Iqbal Daud to Kuwait and in 1964 the couple moved to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to work for Kuwait Mission Hospitals in

Dubai and Sharjah. That was the beginning; today Daud is often feted for being among the most influential business people in the Gulf, or for being amongst the most influential people of Indian origin there.

There is validation of all this in the GIW study that found Daud's social imagery is dominated by her 'social appeal' which features in 62% of conversations around her; and her 'domain expertise' is at 49%. A strong element of her social appeal, almost 96%, is because of the recognition she has earned from different fora.

Amidst all her fame in the UAE, Daud has retained her links with Nagpur. Daud says: "Home is where the heart is. I owe it to my roots. We are coming up with a super-specialty hospital in Nagpur under the name Alexis Hospitals with an advanced cancer care facility. We have also established Zulekha College, which focuses on education and vocational training for girls in particular." She is also working to provide safe drinking water to schools around Nagpur.

— Suman Layak

Shalini 'Shelly' Kapoor Collins,
 TECHNOLOGY ADVISER TO INDIA SENATE CAUCUS

Taking Tech to Politics

She dons multiple hats but has a single-minded focus as a political entrepreneur

Shelly Kapoor Collins is founder of Enscient Corporation, which specialises in security and business development for the public sector. Before you brush her off as yet another Silicon Valley tech entrepreneur, you should know she has successfully combined her twin passions of public life and technology to launch Root Square, an innovative fundraising platform using gaming to enable political candidates and non-profits to raise funds across social media sites.

Kapoor Collins received attention in 2012, when she served in a number of appointed and advisory positions for US president Barack Obama and helped raise millions of dollars for his re-election at the platform committee of the Democratic National Committee. She is currently a national co-chair for technology for Obama and has also been named a founding member of the "Ready for Hillary" super political action committee, which is laying the groundwork for former secretary of state Hillary Clinton's possible presidential run.

Kapoor Collins wears other hats too. She is a project partner of political think tank Truman National Security; mentor in the New Leaders' Council, an organisation for political entrepreneurs, founder of

Veterans Training Council, a platform to train military service people with jobs needed in the current workforce; and a staunch advocate for STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) education to junior high students, especially young girls. She was on the *Forbes* 2013 list of 40 Women to Watch over Forty. Given that she's straddling so many fields, Kapoor Collins's scores more on social appeal than on domain expertise in the GIW study.

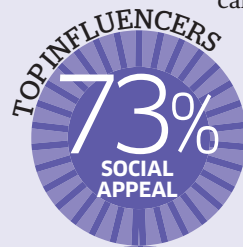
"I feel humbled that as an Indian woman, a businesswoman, and a mother, I can make my community proud of me and hopefully be seen as a role model by women from my generation and younger girls of upcoming generations who may have aspirations in life but have not acted on them," Kapoor Collins told *ET Magazine*.

She maintains a strong connect with India. "I feel grateful because my message is resonating with our community about the importance of public service, of women and girls engaging in STEM fields, and of the Indian community rising to find its political power and influence," she adds.

Kapoor Collins, who believes in multi-tasking as a mother and a businesswoman, is engaged with the schooling and cultural awareness training of her two young children, Sohana and Shaan.

In 2015, she will launch a subsidiary called Tech Hill Advisors. "The strategic advisory firm will connect companies in the high tech sector with public sector officials to understand and respond to the impact of public policies on innovation and competitiveness," she says.

— Ishani Duttagupta



Freida Pinto,
 ACTOR

She's Got the Look

She hasn't yet set the silver screen on fire but has emerged as the go-to girl for fashion trends

Since debuting in the British drama film *Slumdog Millionaire* six years ago, Freida Pinto has become something of cinema's go-to girl for fashion trends. She is the celebrity who "looks good in anything she wears". She is a red-carpet regular at nearly every film premiere or award ceremony of note. Oh yes, there have been movies: she's starred in British and American productions such as *You Will Meet a Tall Dark Stranger* (2010) directed by Woody Allen and big-box sci-fi thriller *Rise of the Planet of the Apes* (2011). But the attention is still centred mostly on her fashion preference.

Which is what the GIW study establishes: Pinto scores more on 'sensory appeal' than 'domain expertise'. "Pinto is gorgeous and elegant," avers Manashi Guha, general manager, L'Oréal Paris India.

Pinto's career buzz still bears the *Slumdog* yoke. After all, the movie was the springboard to stardom. "*Slumdog Millionaire* opened doors. It was the first time when Indian artistes, producers and investors started thinking of mounting projects on a global platform. I feel proud to be at the start of a revolution of sorts, in that sense," Pinto told *ET Magazine* in an exclusive interview.

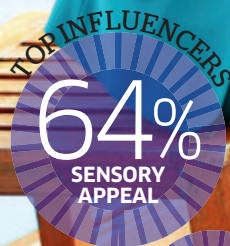
Even her personal life – until a recent split – revolved around her relationship with *Slumdog* co-star Dev Patel, according to the study (the split was not received well by fans).

Pinto had no comment about the reported split; instead, she preferred to dwell on her interests outside cinema and fashion. She is associated with the Agassi Foundation, an organisation started by tennis greats Andre Agassi and Steffi Graf, which looks to educate children. The philanthropic interest took her to the Nobel Peace prize ceremony in Oslo.

Pinto spends most of her time in Hollywood but there is no taking Mumbai, the city she grew up in, out of her. The most important lesson thanks to growing up in Mumbai has been understanding and appreciating the true meaning of resilience and hard work, she says. Mumbai, being the land of opportunity and rejection in equal measure, helped teach her how to balance rejection and elation. "Without this major learning, it would be practically impossible for me to do what I am doing."

Pinto is now looking forward to 2015, bracing for bigger challenges. "I have spoken to a lot of seasoned people in the business, and taken a lot of constructive criticism. Hence 2015 will be an interesting year of new ventures, covering new territories – all related to films and storytelling," she says.

– Ishani Duttagupta



Bharati Mukherjee,
 WRITER AND PROFESSOR

The Accidental Immigrant

The writer in her, though, isn't as serendipitous

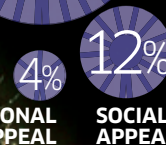
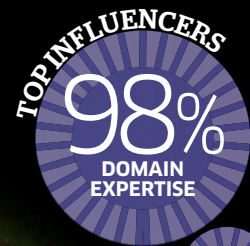
In 1988, Bharati Mukherjee won the National Book Critics Circle Award, becoming the first naturalised US citizen to win the prestigious award for fiction. In a 25-year career as professor of English – recently at the Columbia University School of the Arts and at the University of California, Berkeley – she has taught all over the US and Canada. Mukherjee is also a prolific writer with seven novels, two collections of short stories and a raft of essays. She has also written two non-fiction books with husband Clark Blaise. Small wonder she has earned a 98% ranking in domain expertise in the GIW study.

The works of Mukherjee, who moved to the US as a student in the early '60s, are a blend of immigrant experience and feminism. "Writing is such a lonely occupation. That people have actually been moved by some of my novels and collections of short stories, and my essays on the emotional consequences of expatriation and immigration gives me the strength to continue to write," she says. Mukherjee, though, calls herself an "accidental immigrant". "If my father hadn't sent me to The Writers Workshop, University of Iowa, to get my masters art degree while he looked for a suitable bridegroom for me... if I hadn't fallen in love with a fellow student, writer Clark Blaise, while studying in Iowa, and impulsively married him... if I had been spared the frightening and exhilarating experiences of 'uprooting' myself from a familiar culture and 're-rooting' in an alien culture, I would probably have written smooth, Jane Austenesque comedies of manners rather than about the raw emotions and gritty lives led by immigrants," she says.

Mukherjee has said she considers herself an American writer rather than an Indian expatriate writer, but she asserts that writers never lose roots. "You may rebel against your roots, as did James Joyce and VS Naipaul, or you may nostalgically exaggerate the beauty of your roots, as do many expatriate South Asian writers, or you may find yourself blending what you want to retain from your original homeland and what you value in the culture in which you have made your new home, as I do," she told *ET Magazine*.

She maintains ties to India through visits at least once a year with her husband to see her younger sister and family. She grew up on Indian epics from elders in the family and later acquired a systemic knowledge of Indian art, architecture, history and social traditions when she had to minor in ancient Indian culture for an MA at the MS University of Baroda. "Most of my novels are firmly anchored in Hindu thought, concepts of time and cosmology," she says.

– Ishani Duttagupta



Star's Trek

After starring in a Star Trek sequel and a hit television serial, she's game for Bollywood

Nazneen Contractor, ACTOR

Born in Mumbai, raised in Nigeria and London, settled in Canada, Nazneen Contractor could be the quintessential global citizen. But prod the *Star Trek Into Darkness* star about that intercontinental image, and she's quick to stress on her Indianness. "I am very proud to be an Indian, I always have been, and love my country for all its extremes."

Contractor, 32, mother of two boys and married to her 24 series co-star Carlo Rota, thanks her Indian roots for her work ethic. "From a very young age my parents instilled in me that hard work, focus and perseverance will always prevail. I fully appreciate that my unwavering work ethic and determination are products of my Indian roots," Contractor told *ET Magazine*.

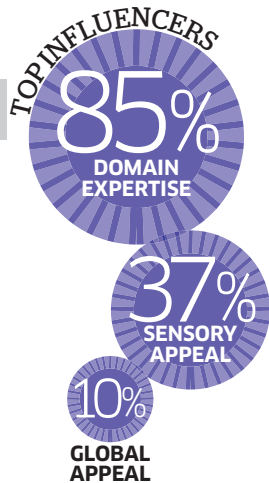
Contractor is currently working on several series with different television networks – CBS, ABC, USA and FOX. The GIW study finds that Contractor's imagery is dominated by her domain expertise – her acting career. Almost 85% of all conversations around her are about her core competence.

She had dreamt about becoming an actor since her childhood and went to performing arts high school. She got her big chance when she landed a lead role at the Stratford Shakespeare Festival, an annual event in the Canadian city of Stratford. This led her to do a pilot in Los Angeles after which she started landing roles both in Canada and the US. In *Star Trek Into Darkness* she played Rima Harewood, and in 24, Contractor played Kayla, the daughter of Omar Hassan, president of the Islamic Republic of Kamistan, played by Anil Kapoor.

Contractor is aware that the industry she is in is full of uncertainties: "A phone call could change my life. The stakes are high, the heartache tremendous and truly only the strong survive. It's not an industry for the faint of heart. But I do expect to continually work in television and film and perhaps even return to the stage again."

Will she ever work for Bollywood? Contractor jumped at the suggestion. "Make me an offer and I'll be on the next plane."

– Suman Layak



Mira Nair, FILM-MAKER

Garam Masala

She's introduced Indian culture to a global audience in her own inimitable way

For all that Irrfan Khan learned at the National School of Drama, he missed experiencing the lives of the characters he was playing on stage. But that changed when Mira Nair cast him in the role of a letter-writer in *Salaam Bombay*, an Oscar-nominated cinema verite classic about Mumbai's street kids, in the late 1980s.

Nair decided to hold a two-month acting workshop before the start of the film, where theatre actor Barry John, Irrfan and Raghuvir Yadav trained children from slums and the streets. "I was living in an apartment at Marine Lines and I spent almost all my time with the kids. Mira gave me that real-life experience at a time when I was playing these Russian characters on stage whose lives I didn't know much about. That helped me a lot in my career," says Khan, one of whose best performances was in another film of Nair's, *The Namesake*, an adaptation of Jhumpa Lahiri's novel of the same name. Incidentally, Nair passed up the opportunity to direct *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* in favour of *The Namesake*.

It's no surprise then that more than 80% of the conversations online in the last three years, tracked for the Global Indian Women study, about her relate to her directorial chops. About a third of the conversations are a result of her emotional appeal.

Born into a Punjabi family in Rourkela and raised in Bhubaneswar, Nair studied at Miranda House in Delhi before going to Harvard University where her interest was piqued by documentary filmmaking. That is where she met her longtime collaborator Sooni Taraporevala, who wrote the screenplays for *Salaam Bombay*, *Mississippi Masala* and *The Namesake*.

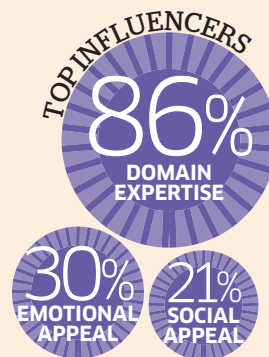
Though she has made films like *Vanity Fair* and *Amelia*, which have little to do with India, her best, right from *Salaam Bombay* to *Monsoon Wedding* to *The Namesake*, derive their power from their Indianness. "She wants to introduce the Indian culture to a global audience in the right context. She wants to celebrate it," says Khan. *Monsoon Wedding* was one such poignant celebration of Punjabis and Delhi, and won the top award at the Venice Film Festival in 2001.

Producer Lydia Pilcher, who has worked with Nair since *Mississippi Masala*, says Nair finds the universal link in themes like cultures living within other cultures and the divided self in the world of global intersections, by telling stories of complex characters and family relationships. "Mira's irrepressible zest for life, and eye for beauty, texture, and humour prevail even when plumbing the most visceral, and often frightening depths of humanity," she adds. Questions emailed to Nair's production company, Mirabai Films, went unanswered.

Nair, who is married to Ugandan academic Mahmood Mamdani, divides her time between New York City, Delhi and Kampala. She is currently working on bringing *Monsoon Wedding* to Broadway. Her other projects include an adaptation of a documentary, *Bengali Detective*, about a private detective obsessed with dance, and a film based on the book, *The Queen of Katwe*, about a Ugandan chess prodigy. Nair also runs the Maisha Film Lab, which trains East African filmmakers.

Nair's last film, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, may not hold a candle to her best works, but it wouldn't be a stretch to say that she still has quite a few stories to tell.

– G Seetharaman



Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, AUTHOR

Diva of the Diaspora

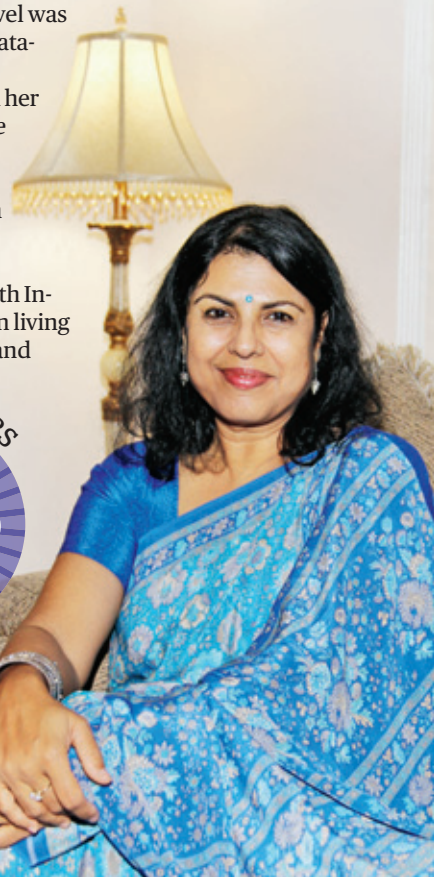
She's observed how Indian values have reshaped immigrants

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni debuted in 1997 with *The Mistress of Spices*. *The Los Angeles Times* declared it as the best of that year. Eight years later the novel was made into a film by Gurinder Chadha starring Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, catapulting the author into an even bigger league.

The debut novel, though, opened up avenues for Divakaruni to publish her work in more than 50 magazines, including *The Atlantic Monthly* and *The New Yorker*. Her writings have been included in over 50 anthologies. She's won the American Book Award and her books have been translated into 29 languages. Such a huge body of work and recognition to show for them ratifies the 98% score in domain expertise in the GIW study.

Born in Kolkata, Divakaruni moved to the US for her graduate studies and did her PhD from the University of California, Berkeley. "Much of my subject matter deals with India, the Indian culture, and the ways in which we carry this culture with us even when living in other countries, and how it causes unusual challenges as we live in other cultures and learn from them as well," she says. Divakaruni, who teaches creative writing at the University of Houston, says Indian immigrants have shaped Indian values and cultures to their needs in the US in some amazing ways. "It has been fascinating to observe and write about that in novels such as *Oleander Girl* and *Sister of My Heart*. My Indian roots and early knowledge of our epics and folk tales also helped me write novels such as *Palace of Illusions* [based on the *Mahabharata* and retold from Draupadi's point of view] and *The Conch Bearer* [a novel with an Indian hero and heroine, and a conch as the magical object that drives the story]," she told *ET Magazine*.

Divakaruni, who lives in Houston with her husband Murthy and sons Anand and Abhay, also pursues an interest as a social activist. She serves on the advisory board of Maitri in the San Francisco Bay Area and Daya in Houston – the organisations help women in abusive situations. She is pleased to have a large readership in India and harbours a plan to come to India to teach young Indian writers. – *Ishani Duttgupta*



TOP INFLUENCERS

98%

DOMAIN EXPERTISE

13%

SOCIAL APPEAL

6%

EMOTIONAL APPEAL



MALINI GULRAJANI, FOUNDER, 1X1 ART GALLERY

Home is Where the Art is

After introducing the UAE to top Indian artists, she now wants to take them to the rest of the world

Malini Gulrajani's 1X1 gallery has for a long time been the outpost for Indian art in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), exhibiting some of the top Indian artists like Chittrovanu Mazumdar and Bose Krishnamachari. However, it is time for 1X1 to take its next leap of faith and go global.

Over the last year or so Gulrajani has been collaborating with other galleries like Empty 10 in promoting Emarati artists and even Iranian art. And right now 1X1 is preparing to shift to Alserkal Avenue, the promising new art hub of Dubai.

"This will be a major expansion for the gallery. This coupled with a plan for international shows and fairs is the main focus of 1X1 in the next couple of years," Gulrajani told *ET Magazine*. Her plans include bringing shows by UAE artists to India.

Gulrajani started with a small gallery in 1997; she realised that her frequent trips to India to buy art for her own home in Dubai could just about add up to be a business. 1X1 was established later in 2006.

Gulrajani credits her liberal upbringing in Bengaluru to her love for the artistic. She says: "The homogenous culture of India has enabled me to reach out and situate myself in a society that is a composite of varied nationalities. The liberal mind and intellectual curiosity that education in India has provided enables me to handle varied and complex challenges that arise from being an Indian gallery owner situated here."

The GIW study found Gulrajani's imagery to be strongly linked to her expertise in picking up art. A verbatim conversation quote about the 1X1 gallery, picked up by the survey, says: "Moved from its Jumeirah home and occupying a converted warehouse, this gallery has emerged as a key place for sourcing Indian art. This is in part because of the efforts of Malini Gulrajani, whose mission is to showcase the best in contemporary works from the subcontinent."

Gulrajani herself says: "Dubai has a huge Indian audience for the arts both among the local as well as transient population. The future here for Indian art seems to be very promising although challenging as well." – *Suman Layak*

TOP INFLUENCERS

94%

DOMAIN EXPERTISE

18%

SOCIAL APPEAL

Kiran Desai, AUTHOR

One for the Books

Her first book created a hullabaloo, the second a sensation

Rarely are writers with only two books in their oeuvre feted as much as Kiran Desai. But it is not all that surprising given that her unusual literary talent was on display in all its glory in her first work, *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*, and more so in her second, *The Inheritance of Loss*. And all the praise is in no small measure due to the maturity beyond her age she has exhibited in her writing.

She was all of 26 when *Hullabaloo* was published, in 1998. A fable of a daydreaming slacker whose world changes when he climbs a guava tree and is seen to be bestowed with oracular powers, which are nothing but the result of his reading his townfolk's letters. Michiko Kakutani, the famed literary critic of *The New York Times*, compared the book to RK Narayan's *Malgudi stories*. She said: "The novel stands as a meticulously crafted piece of gently comic satire – a small, finely tuned fable that attests to the author's pitch-perfect ear for character and mood, and her natural storytelling gifts".

The Inheritance of Loss took another eight years to arrive, but this time there was more adulation waiting for Desai, whose mother is novelist Anita Desai. The novel is about a teenage girl living with her Cambridge-educated grandfather, a retired judge, in Kalimpong, and their brush with Nepali insurgents; and the parallel story of the judge's cook's son who flits from one job to another as an illegal immigrant in New York.

The book went on to win the Man Booker Prize, earning Kiran the tag of the youngest female writer to have won the prize, and the National Book Critics Circle fiction award. The awards have made Desai, who left India at the age of 15, first for England and then the US, and who dated Nobel-winning Turkish writer Orhan Pamuk, one of her generation's most watched writers in the English-speaking world. Desai was not available for comment for this piece.

About 90% of the online conversations about her in the GIW study pertain to her success as a writer, more of which could well be in the offing. – *G Seetharaman*

GETTY IMAGES



TOP INFLUENCERS

88%

DOMAIN EXPERTISE

39%

SOCIAL APPEAL

Padma Lakshmi,
COOKBOOK AUTHOR,
TELEVISION HOST



GETTYIMAGES

Tangy, Hot & Sweet

Don't let the sultry looks belie her hard work – in the food business as well as on her fitness

Padma Lakshmi has been turning heads since 1989, when she started her career in Spain as a model at 18. The Chennai-born Lakshmi was one of the first Indians to boast a career in the fashion hotbeds of Paris, Milan and New York.

Today, she wears many hats – she's an actress, a television host (of *Top Chef*) and cookbook author (of bestsellers). She still hits the ramp. She is also a fitness freak. Who can forget her appearance at the 66th Emmys in a stunning white gown and her turn in a white bikini and aviators to flaunt a taut beach body that belies her 43 years?

No surprise then that Lakshmi nicks a higher ranking on 'sensory appeal' than 'domain expertise', according to the GIW study. Blame it on her lithe physique and sultry looks. But that's not to say her 'foodie' career is to be scoffed at – her professional experience secures a 98% ranking. Lakshmi's huge following on Twitter – @CookPadma is her handle – is testimony. All of which, she owes to her Indian roots.

"My Indian heritage has helped me immensely in my work. I have always wanted to show the world that there is a new modern face to India that many may not know in the West," she told *ET Magazine*. She adds that she is "incredibly honoured" when she meets Indians who know her work and achievements. "It's especially important to me that young Indian women see that there are many paths to success and the most important is to find the one that fits you," she says.

Lakshmi's second cookbook, *Tangy Tart Hot & Sweet*, released in 2007, was inspired by recipes and spices from her childhood. "I wouldn't be able to do what I do as a food writer and judge on my show if I didn't utilise everything I have learned from my mother and grandmother in the kitchen. My knowledge of eastern spices and ingredients definitely gives me an edge," she says. Much of her time is spent hosting the US reality TV programme. A third book is on the way. Lakshmi is also excited about launching a new line of seasoned and plain organic frozen rice called Padma's Easy Exotic, named after her first cookbook. "We also have a line of hard kitchen goods such as measuring bowls and serveware and will continue to expand the Padma Collection of tabletop and decor items," she says.

– Ishani Duttagupta

TOP INFLUENCERS

70%
SENSORY
APPEAL

63%
DOMAIN
EXPERTISE

9%
PERSONAL
LIFE

Falu Shah, SINGER

Hindi-Indie Pioneer

She's created a unique blend of Hindustani classical and American pop

As a little child growing up in Mumbai, Falguni often wanted to skip her music classes, wanting to play instead. Like in all Indian families with a tradition of music, there is no leniency in such matters. Falguni's mother, a trained musician, recalls how she would often carry the three-year-old in her lap to her music classes.

The tenacity has paid off: Falguni, now known as Falu, has scaled the heights with her music, popularising Hindustani classical in the US and even launching a new genre called Hindi-Indie that merges classical with pop. In 2013, Falu's second album *Foras Road* was in the running for a Grammy nomination in two categories.

Music led Falu to her marriage with Gaurav Shah and took her to the US. She met Shah in India when he was taking a break after college in Harvard. Both joined the same music classes. Falu says: "We met Ustad Sultan Khan at his home around the year 2000, and we heard him sing... Later, while in the States, we became his initiated disciples."

In the early 2000s, Shah started a Boston-based band Karyshma, with Falu becoming its lead singer. The band did dozens of concerts around the US before she was linked to a recording deal after moving to New York in 2004.

On how the Indian and American ethos has blended in her music, Falu says: "While India taught me patience, empathy and being truthful, America taught me a relentless work ethic, respecting time, and the value of being direct."

The GIW study finds her public imagery is driven by her domain expertise. Even her sensory appeal is largely dominated by her voice quality. – Suman Layak

TOP INFLUENCERS

95%
DOMAIN
EXPERTISE

9%
SOCIAL
APPEAL

43%
SENSORY
APPEAL



GETTYIMAGES

Aroon Shivdasani,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND
FOUNDING MEMBER,
INDO-AMERICAN ARTS COUNCIL



EMILY WINIKER

India's Cultural Ambassador

She helps Indian performers in their quest to find a bigger stage and financial support

If the Indo-American Arts Council (IAAC) is synonymous with Indian art and culture in the US, it has been growing steadily for 10 years, it's thanks to the passion of one woman. Aroon Shivdasani, the council's executive director and founding member, has long been building awareness about Indian artists and artistic disciplines – from performing and visual to literary and folk arts – in North America. That is not all. Shivdasani has also been promoting emerging artists from India.

In many ways, Shivdasani is a global citizen. Besides India, she has lived in England, Canada and the US. But it's the Indian roots that are the driving force behind her mission at IAAC, according to her. "I believe the melting pot of cultural diversity in the US is being hugely enriched by the knowledge and awareness of our artistic heritage," Shivdasani told *ET Magazine* by email.

Shivdasani was the brain behind the first Festival of Indian Theatre in North America; the annual Playwrights Festivals in conjunction with the

Lark Theatre; several film premiers and a film festival of New Films from India at MOMA. Currently, as the GIW study found, she is the face of the prestigious annual New York Indian Film Festival (NYIFF) of independent, diaspora, alternative and arthouse films from the Indian subcontinent organised by IAAC.

Her domain expertise, the study finds, has led the film festival through many name changes and avatars, and it remains as vibrant as ever.

Shivdasani sees 'her' annual festivals – NYIFF, Erasing Borders Festival of Indian Dance, travelling Erasing Borders Exhibition of Contemporary Indian Art of the Diaspora and IAAC Literary Festival – continuing to entertain, educate and teach tolerance to the scores of North Americans. The new year, she hopes, will also be a landmark year in finding a 'home' where artists of Indian heritage can perform, exhibit, produce, rehearse, brainstorm and generally hang.

"I hope to encourage Indian corporations to fund us. They should see the value of our commitment, realise our goals, and identify with showcasing India in the best, most creative light," she says.

– Ishani Duttagupta

TOP INFLUENCERS

97%
DOMAIN
EXPERTISE

17%
SOCIAL
APPEAL

14%
EMOTIONAL
APPEAL