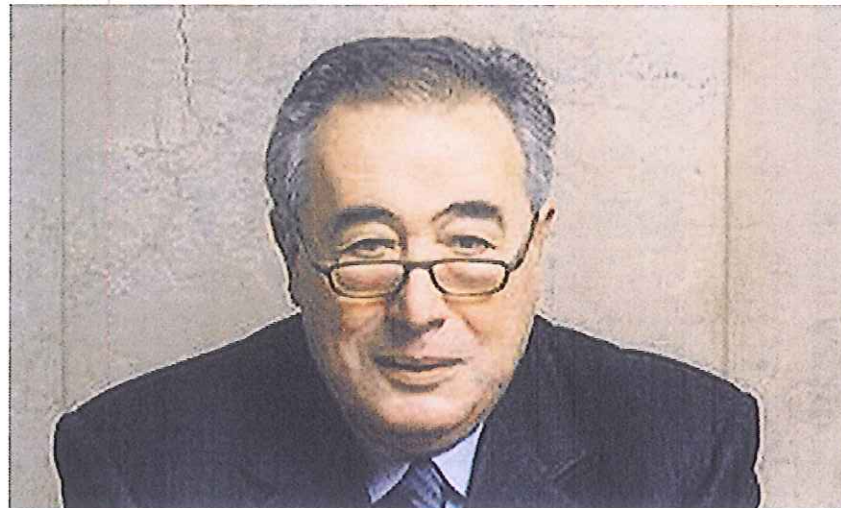


Regional media's visionary leader

Industry players remember Antoine Choueiri, the father of regional commercial media.

By Vignyan Arya

Published Sunday, March 14, 2010



Antoine Halim Choueiri. (SUPPLIED)

"Antoine was a winner and he accepted any challenge that came his way." That's how his company executives remember Antoine Halim Choueiri, says Ghassan Harfouche, Managing Director of MEMS, describing the personality of Antoine Choueiri, founder and chairman of the Choueiri Group.

The news of his demise was still echoing in the corridors of Abu Dhabi Media Summit when Choueiri, 69, died at Hotel Dieu Hospital in Ashrafieh last Tuesday. Media leaders at the summit emphasised on the firm foundation laid out by the man who is often referred to as the father of media in the Middle East.

Avi Bhojani, Group CEO of BPG Group, said: "Antoine Choueiri is the father of commercial media in the Arab World. He has left a rich legacy

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EUR	5.06	+1.987%
INR	0.08	-0.369%
PKR	0.04	+0.230%

Dubai Index

1717.97 -2.29%

that will ensure the continued prosperity of the media and the advertising industry in our region."

A school dropout with a focused determination, he enrolled for night classes to study accountancy and attained the highest qualification available in Lebanon at that time.

After short stints with regional multinationals, Choueiri set up his own business in Paris in 1975, soon after the Lebanese civil war. For him, this wasn't a reprieve from the civil war back home, but a business opportunity to establish and expand a media empire deep into the boardrooms of the Middle East.

Choueiri resolved to increase ad spend, partly through the creation of new media channels. As such, he is widely credited with creating the out-of-home sector in Saudi Arabia through the introduction of Mupi advertising; he was also the creator of on-pack video advertising for the kingdom – in the days before satellite TV – through the launch of one of his earlier ventures, Video Force.

Choueiri dominated the media landscape in the Middle East as a representative of some of the major names in the local industry, including LBC Sat, the Al Jazeera network, London-based daily Al Hayat, UAE's Dubai Media Inc and Lebanese publications Al Nahar and Al Safir.

With more than 38 years of experience in the regional media industry, he was considered one of the most influential figures in the Arab World.

His prevailing influence in the world of television prompted the formation of the GCC Association of Advertisers four years ago.

Members of the GCC Association of Advertisers include Emirates airlines, Unilever and McDonalds. All the members are said to spend more than \$100 million (Dh367m) a year on advertising in the region.

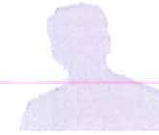
Talking of his influence in the establishment, Harfouche said: "No one can replace Antoine, considering his commitment and passion for the industry. His business sense has placed the group on a well-organised platform."

As a close associate from the industry, Ali Asghar, Managing Director of Integrated Advertising Services, said: "What can you say of a visionary who gave value and brought respect to the Arab media.

"What can you say of a man who integrated print, outdoor and television to give a bigger commercial value that benefitted Arab media in



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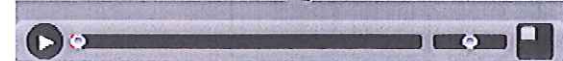


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"What can you say of a man who integrated print, outdoor and television to give a bigger commercial value that benefitted Arab media in developing properties, which otherwise was not possible.

"There can never be another Antoine Choueiri."

Choueiri was known for his philanthropy and he contributed generously to a variety of causes. His other passion was basket ball. He was one-time president of Beirut-based La Sagee Club. Under his auspices, the country won the Asian Basketball Championships three years running.

His funeral at the Saint Georges Maronite Cathedral in downtown Beirut on Thursday was also attended by an array of politicians as well as figures from the sport and media fields. (Vigyan Arya)

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