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The
nt
magazine

The magazine for TV news professionals

August 2008

The Dashing Dozen

News folks who rule television

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A Question of Balance

Editorial integrity on test as news channels rush to rake in higher ratings and revenues

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Network 18

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01 From the Editor-in-Chief



"If there's no news, let's manufacture it."

Many a fictional book has carried this caricature of this megalomaniac demigod media mogul trying to whip up the passions of the masses by concocting news or even making catastrophic events happen.

Is this true in the Indian context in a scenario where a zillion (pardon the exaggeration) news channels are blooming? Have things worsened since The Indian News Television Summit last year, when the government was threatening to clamp down on errant news television channels who were unperturbed about what they were labeling as news?

Well, the uncharitable may well state that the situation has gone from bad to worse. The industry promised that it would behave itself and set up its code and self-regulatory mechanism hence the government went easy on its threat to sew up the lips of news anchors, editors and owners.

And that situation is unlikely to change especially considering that politics has made the situation uncomfortable for government and an election is not too far away. The pressure off their backs, the news television industry is taking its time to set up its structures to self regulate, bit by bit. Whether those will come up quickly enough is only the industry's guess.

For some in the news business, the TRP chase continues with programming catering to viewers' base tastes and darkest fears. Programming around religion, superstition, vague references to the netherworld, standup comedy, clips of shows from entertainment channels has become a common feature during prime news time. One which generates the highest viewership and, in the process, ratings. News editors working in the news channels themselves decry this, but express sheer helplessness, saying they are victims of management, revenue and shareholder pressures.

And they have a point. Over the past year, news channels have been getting whacked in the belly harder than ever before. One little statistic on their balance sheets which has ballooned way beyond proportion is that of carriage fees. With the analogue feed of cable ops getting choked with channels, broadcasters have been tripping over each other to get prime band carriage and placement. The cable ops and MSOs have been asking for mega bucks to present them that carriage and placement. Again, there is no certainty or surety for how long that carriage will be maintained.

News channels have a smaller advertising pie to chew on as compared to the general entertainment channels which have been besting each other and the news folks while forking out carriage fees. Clearly, distribution has become a game which is becoming hard to second guess. Money that could have gone towards promotion, marketing and in setting up news bureaus, and in journalists is being flushed down an ever demanding outlet.

Carriage and placement fees per se are not unwelcome, they are the practice in FMCG distribution and retail too. And in more developed television markets too. But with no ceilings in place, they can be extremely hurtful. Cable ops on their part have their hands tied: they are not allowed to charge as they please or as much as the consumer may be willing to pay thanks to price caps in place over the past couple of years. CAS is spreading albeit slowly, limiting their revenue generation capability; hence forcing them to demand higher and higher carriage fees from broadcasters.

Clearly, there are problems plaguing the television ecosystem. Not just news television. But since they are linked it would be good news if some of them are sorted out. Especially for the news business.

The effort behind *indiantelevision.com*'s Second News Television Summit on 9 August is to address some of these issues. And hopefully find some solutions. The information and broadcasting ministry, the TV news industry, service providers, and advertisers have come out in full support of our initiative. The Second NT Awards which follow in the evening are an effort to recognise some of the shining examples of great TV news journalism. Once again, industry and our esteemed jury has been extremely cooperative and supportive. That we believe will go a long way making them the standard bearers for the cause of serious TV news journalism.

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The Dashing Dozen
Spotlight

The views expressed in the magazine are those of the invited writers and professionals quoted and The NT Magazine and Indiantelevision.com need not necessarily subscribe to the same

Issue Coordinator: Nasrin Sultana
Cover Design: Jay Hasija

Beep, Beep... Warning Signals

Though expansion is 'The Mantra', the TV news sector looks set for tough times, says Sibabrata Das

Around the world, the pure form of TV news is vanishing. The 'flag-waving' style of coverage by Fox News Channel in

Iraq and Afghanistan may be an extreme case, but it goes to prove that the old format is dying in more ways than one.

In India, Hindi news channels have shown how they can expand mass viewership with soap opera style of coverage.

They have also taken advantage of the lack of a tabloid in the print media to tap the Hindi mass with crime, sleaze and entertainment content.

News channels, be it Hindi or English, have eaten away audiences from general entertainment channels (GECs). The news genre has grown from a 5.3 per cent share in 2004 to 8.4 per cent in 2007, according to TV ratings agency Tam in All-India markets. Hindi news channels, in particular, have climbed from 5.5 per cent in 2004 to 7.4 per cent in 2007 (in HSM) while Hindi GECs have dropped from a share of 36 per cent to 33.1 per cent during this period.

"As Hindi GECs have provided no alternative for male and young viewers, there has been some audience migration to news channels," says BAG Films and Media Ltd managing director Anuradha Prasad.

The TV news business, however, is getting tougher. The market is being seized by a rise in operational costs, the threat of a deepening economic slowdown, and the entry of too many players.

The Hindi news TV space, pegged at Rs 6 billion, is getting too cluttered and would need capital to support sustaining power. The deal for 51 per cent acquisition of Hindi news channel Live India by property developer HDIL group reflects the troubled times roiling the genre.

Hindi news channels at the bottom of the ratings heap will find it difficult to steer out of trouble as the space is more or less getting defined with the top six players. What could be additionally painful is

the fact that the genre has seen a fall from a share of 7.4 per cent in 2007 to 7 per cent in the first half of 2008 (Tam data in HSM), despite new channel launches.

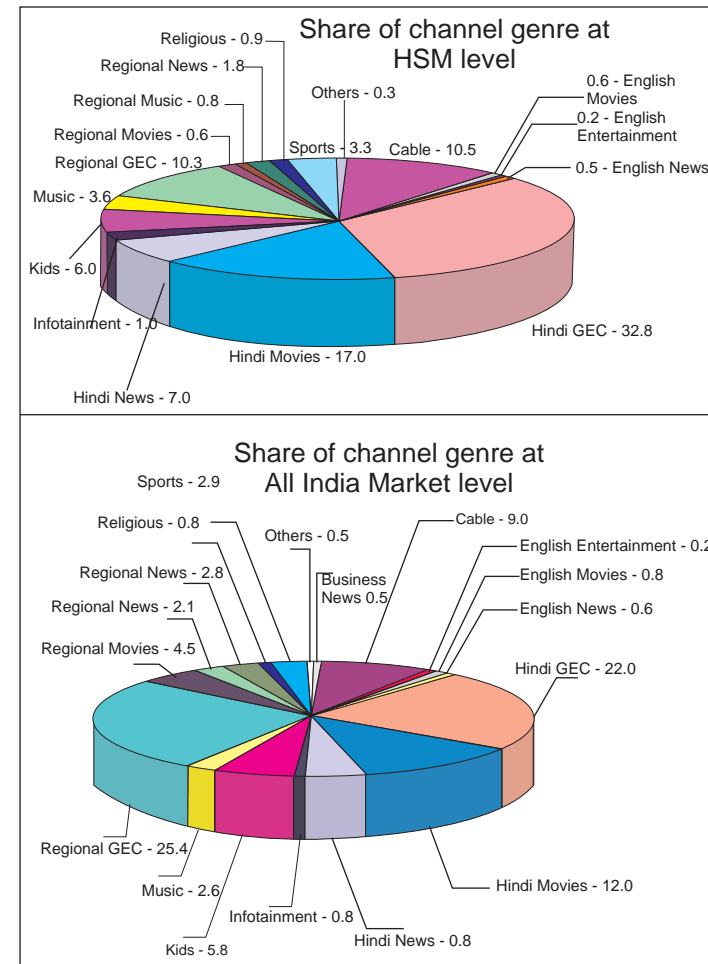
The biggies can take comfort from the fact that personnel costs, which were continuously climbing over the last couple of years, could now be stabilising. But bringing short-term misery will be the surge in distribution costs this year as news channels jostle for space on choked analogue cable networks. The price tag for presence in prime locations could go as high as Rs 450-500 million, about 40 per cent higher than last year as newly-launched Hindi GECs are willing to pay more.

"Personnel costs are well on track within our overall revenues," says NDTV Group CEO Narayan Rao. "As for distribution expense, it is a pressure point for the industry as a whole."

Agrees Prasad: "Distribution costs are going haywire. Even DTH operators have started asking for carriage money. For single news channels, the game will become very difficult. The Hindi space is headed for consolidation, but we haven't yet reached the buyout stage."

The English general news channel space hasn't seen a flurry of new launches and is restricted to four players who are part of a bigger chain. The genre enjoys a share of just 0.6 per cent, according to Tam data in All-India markets. Yet, Bennett, Coleman & Co is readying to launch an English business news channel to add to its existing bouquet of Times Now and Zoom.

TV news organisations are stepping up their expansion plans to create a full boutique. The race is on to fill up the regional



Source: Tam

pockets ahead of others. For Zee News Ltd, which will soon launch a Telugu news channel, the strategy is to launch a language GEC, wait for it to operationally break even, and then club it with a news channel. IBN18 Broadcast Ltd (earlier Global Broadcast News) has forayed into the regional space with the help of a print joint venture partner - Lokmat - for the Marathi market.

"The capex of launching a regional language news channel would be around Rs 200 million. The operational cost would be around Rs 150 million. Typically, it would take 2-3 years to break even," says the financial head of a leading news broadcaster.

It is clearly a land grab situation. News broadcasters have also worked on add-on channels to amortise their costs and keep the revenues up. TV Today Network Ltd has successfully added low-cost, targeted channels like Tez to keep their profitability high. Says TV Today chief executive officer G Krishnan, "The add-on channels have helped us not only meet our bottomline

target but improve our ad rates."

Zee News is starting a franchising model to enter into new markets, the first of which will roll out in Chattisgarh with local partner SB Multimedia. "We are in talks with several regional upcoming news channels to see if we can work out similar arrangements," says Zee News chief executive officer Barun Das.

When the market was buoyant, companies like Network18 Group and NDTV raised money to fund their expansions. BAG Films restructured at the right time to raise Rs 2.6 billion from three separate investors - Indiabulls promoter Sameer Gehlaut, Kolkata-based High Growth Distributors (P) Ltd and Fidelity.

The market, however, is entering troubled times. Several media companies have seen their market caps croppped off in a year's time. TV18's market cap has slumped from Rs 47.84 billion on 31 July 2007 to Rs 25.62 billion on 30 July 2008, TV Today from 9.20 billion to Rs 6.20 billion, and Zee News Ltd (which houses regional GECs as well) from Rs 16.32 billion

to Rs 10.70 billion. NDTV has stayed steady with a market cap of Rs 24.58 billion on 30 July 2008, up from Rs 24.57 billion a year ago.

With the market toughening and the cost of money going up, news broadcasters may put on hold their growth plans.

"Media companies will have to find alternate sources of funding including debt, rights issue and convertible instruments rather than just depend on equity. There may be some slowdown but these companies have chalked out their expansion plans to scale up their businesses," says ICICI Securities senior vice president Ravi Sardana.

So where is the TV news business headed? If the tabloid form of Hindi news grows, we could see a situation where news broadcasters find it economically viable to segment audiences with separate channels. A new wave of growth can also come from news channels which have political stripes like the Shiv Sena. And why not when the print has done it successfully? **NT**

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A Question of Balance

Revenue pressures are staring news channels in their face as they rush to generate ratings often at the cost of journalistic standards. By Nasrin Sultana

The public have an insatiable curiosity to know everything. Except what is worth knowing. Journalism, conscious of this, and having tradesman-like habits, supplies their demands.

- Oscar Wilde (1854 - 1900)

The great playwright passed away over a hundred years back, but the essence of the statement is being much debated in India. With reason.

Over the last few months, a section of the news channels have been showcasing content that one would've never quite expected to see on an offering that's supposed to air news and current affairs. Purists are aghast, but many in the business see nothing wrong.

With peculiar Indian curiosity to know about the minutest detail of the lives of the others, the appetite and consumption of news is on its growling pounce. News channels - at least a section of them - satiate the curiosity which derives voyeuristic pleasure from gossip and rumours.

Because it is this cacophony of subjects of coverage that offers something for everyone, that is driving up not just the ratings, but also revenues for Hindi news channels. And while there are those who wonder when the Hindi news engine will start to lose its steam, most are in agreement that it is not going to be any time soon.

The statistics though are telling. The advertising revenue of the news segment in the fiscal year

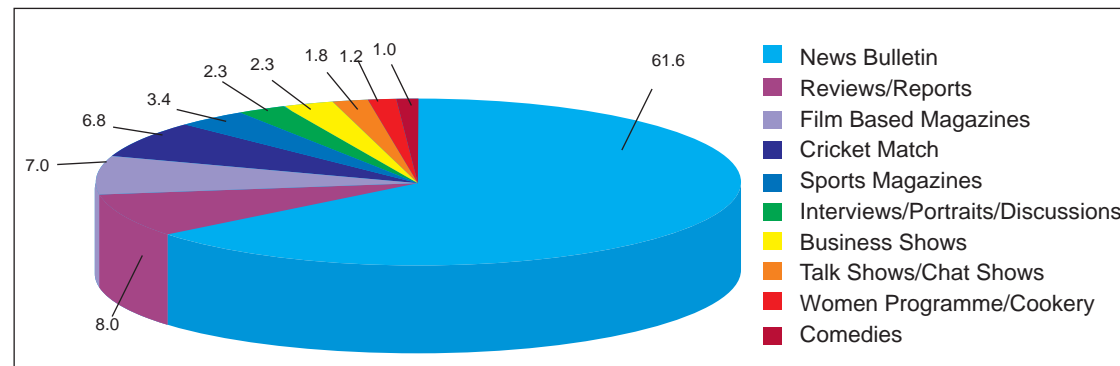
2006-07 is Rs 9.8 billion. In FY 08 it has touched Rs 12 billion and expected to grow to Rs 14.5 billion by the fiscal end. According to industry research body Tam, in the January-June 2008 period, 54.2 per cent of the content on Hindi news channels was not news. And among English channels, the number is 38.4. This evidently seemed to help the ad volume. As per Tam Adex, ad volume growth in Hindi and English news channels which stood at 47,449 seconds in 2006 jumped to 62,173 in 2007. In the six-months period from January to June, it has already clocked 36,398 seconds.

The share of ad volumes of news channels in the overall TV advertising pie has been growing steadily. It went up 16 per cent in 2007 from 15 per cent in 2006. Says MCCS CEO Ashok Ventaramani, "The advertising revenue of the market has been growing with a CAGR of 18 per cent since the last five years."

There is no doubt that advertising is the fuel that drives the satellite boom and India's burgeoning news channels trade.

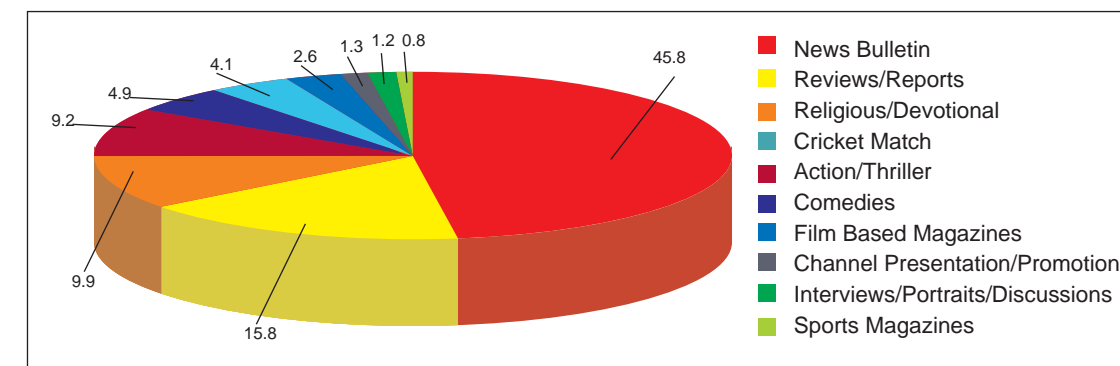
The consumption of news too has increased. From 6.9 per cent in 2006, the Hindi news genre has surged to 7.4 per cent to end-2007 (Tam, c&s, HSM, 15+). In

English News Genre



Tam, c&s, All India, 15+, January-June,08

Hindi News Genre



Tam, c&s, HSM, 15+, January-June,08

the first half of 2008, it is well-placed at 7 per cent as compared to 32 per cent covered by the Hindi entertainment channels (GECs).

With the genre of the TV news consumption getting expanded, the advertising trend has also changed in a short span of two years. In 2006, the top advertisers rooster which was ruled by categories like car/jeep, corporate (brand image), social advertisements, suiting, hosiery and pan masala or gutkha no longer feature in it. The top categories in 2007 and 2008 have been replaced by categories like cellular services, internet and SMS services.

In 2008, direct-to-home (DTH) service and real estate are the unique categories that feature in the top 10 advertisers. Advertisers like Biswanath Hosiery which topped the list in 2006 have been replaced by cellular services like Reliance Communication, Vodafone Essar in 2007 and 2008. In the first half of 2008, the top five advertisers slots are filled up by cellular services.

The entry of a new set of viewers is attributed as the reason for newer categories of advertisers mostly targeting Sec A and B stepping in.

For media planners, news is often a means of reaching newer audiences, while

As per Tam, 51 per cent of news channels viewers are from 35+ years, 28 per cent comes from 15-24 years and the rest 22 per cent are from 25-34 years

keeping costs under check. Advertisers are not so much looking for new viewers as much as they are looking for the right kind of viewers. News channel viewers belong

mostly to Sec A and Sec B. They have higher purchasing power, making them more attractive clients for advertisers. As per Tam, 51 per cent of news channels viewers are from 35+ years, 28 per cent comes from 15-24 years and the rest 22 per cent are from 25-34 years.

What's on the menu?

To a large extent, revenue flows determine how content is produced, packaged and put on airwaves by news channels. This leads to a permanent tension between the journalistic and commercial imperatives of media entities and affects the very nature of news programming.

According to Tam, from January to June in 2008, Hindi news channel have covered 45.8 per cent of news bulletin followed by reviews and reports (15.8 per cent), religious and devotional stories (9.9 per cent), cricket match (9.2), action and thriller (4.9 per cent), comedies (4.1 per cent), film based magazines (2.6 per cent).

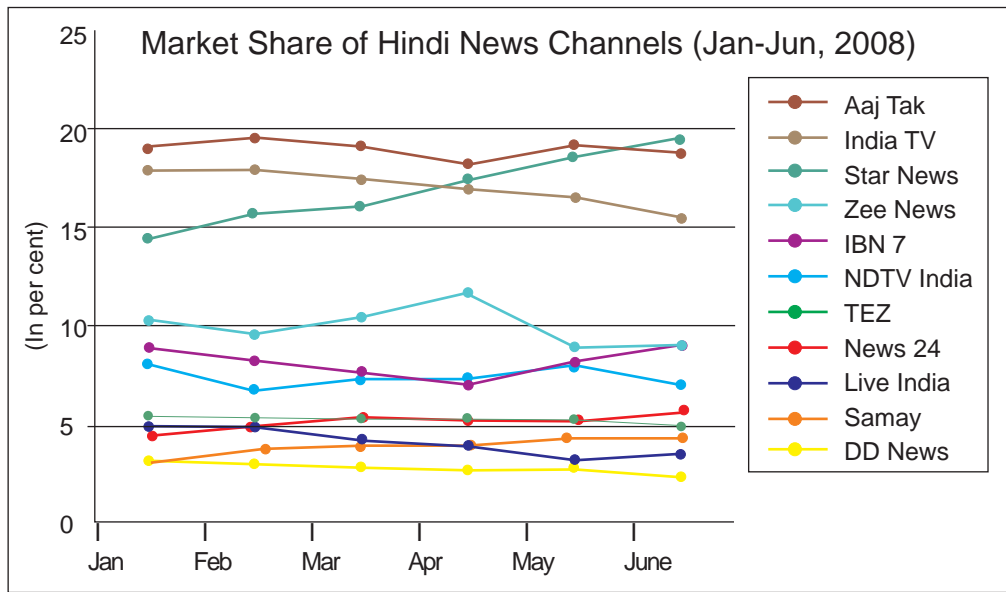
English news channels have covered 61.6 per cent news and bulletins, reviews

On 19th July, we predicted what will happen on 22nd July. UPA government stays.

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आपको रखे आगे

STAR न्यूज़



Tam, c&s, HSM, 15+

channels in shows like *Zinda Hain Rawan*, *Sabko Mil Gaye Ram* and *Kaise Dekhe Ram*.

Star News claims that in the week ending 1 March, 41 per cent of the content in its channel was news bulletin while the rest was religious, crime and cricket-centric stories. Religious stories were 8 per cent while sports reviews, comedies, business shows, crime and thrillers were 7 per cent each. Cricket-based shows grabbed 10 per cent while film shows managed 1 per cent of the entire content pie.

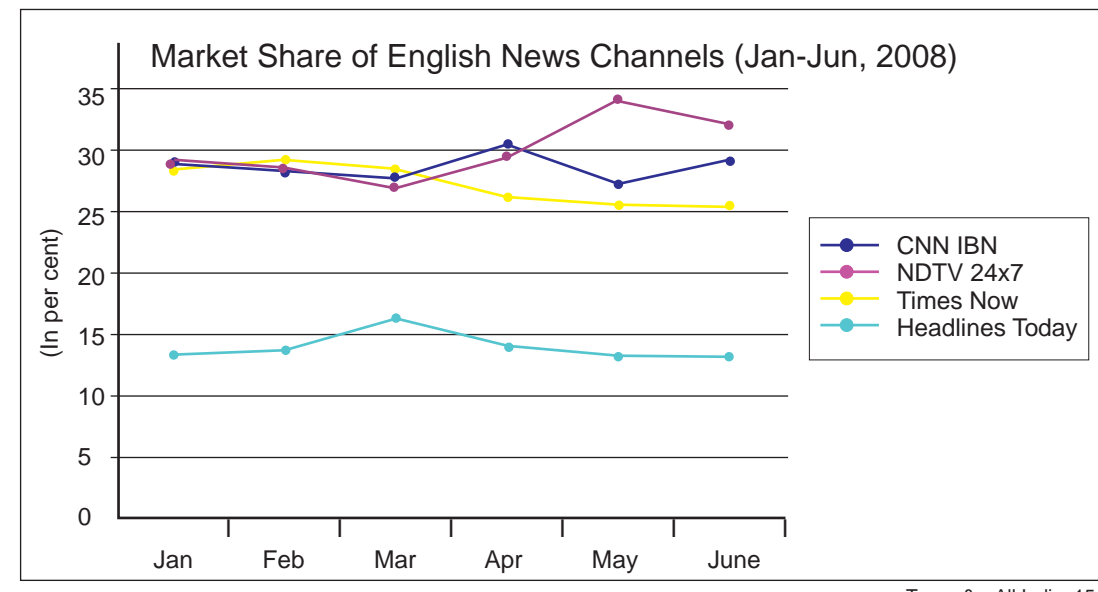
Times Now editor-in-chief Arnab Goswami scoffs at the suggestion that viewers go away if channel don't go strong on soft stories. He cites the example of the Khali episode. "Times Now did not devout a single second to Khali, yet we did not lose out on viewers and market share."

News channels are realising this fast enough. Recently, Zee group chairman Subhash Chandra announced that his channel is bringing news back in its origi-

and reports (8 per cent), film based magazines (7 per cent), cricket matches 6.8 per cent) and comedies (1 per cent).

In various Hindi news channels, cricket has been featured differently in *Ye Cricket*

Kuch Kehna Hain (Aaj Tak), *Nach Le Cricket* (Aaj Tak), *Disco Cricket* (Star News) while Khali has seen a variety of presentations like *Khali Ki Khalbali*, *Khali Karega Khatma* and *Khali Sae Bali*. Gods blessed the news



Tam, c&s, All India, 15+

How channels stack up? In the Hindi news genre, from January to June 2008 six-month period, long-time leader Aaj Tak still rules the roost with an average relative market share of 18.98 (Tam, c&s, HSM, 15+) per cent, followed by Star News with 17.94 per cent. In the third spot is India TV in terms of average relative marketshare (14.43 per cent). However, a closer look on month-on-month index puts India TV on the forefront in the month of May and in June shares the top spot with Aaj Tak (19 per cent each). Aaj Tak has been almost consistent with 19 per cent market share in the six-month period.

nal form . With the new positioning of 'Zara Socheye', Zee News promises to shun stories on godmen and superstitions.

Says Zee News CEO Barun Das, "It is high time someone realise that a news

channel is meant for only news. He stresses on the fact that after the re-packaging of Zee News, he has managed to make it "non-entertaining" yet "non-boring".

Its sister concern channel Tez has averaged 5.55 per cent. India TV opened the year with 14 per cent to gradually move up to 19 per cent.

Star News which was so far on the

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The Numbers Speaketh

A quick look at some of the media companies' balance sheet of fiscal 2008 that own news channels in various genre.

NDTV

- Net loss of Rs 1.85 billion.
- Net sales was up almost 30 per cent at Rs 3.06 billion as against Rs 2.35 billion reported the previous year.

TV18

- Net profit of Rs 60.18 million, as against Rs 175.11 million a year ago.
- Total revenue climbed to Rs 4.35 billion.

TV Today Network

- Net profit surged 40 per cent to touch Rs 435.5 million from Rs 310.9 million in the year ago period.
- The topline has grown by 24 per cent to Rs 2.51 billion as against Rs 2.02 billion last year.
- During the year, Aaj Tak expanded its international footprint by launching in UK and continental Europe.

Zee News

- Net profit Rs 369.30 million.

IIBN18 Broadcast (earlier GBN)

- Standalone net loss (standalone) Rs 68.66 million as against a loss of Rs 320.35 million in the year ago period.
- Expenditure increased to Rs 1.2 billion from Rs 986.65 million.

second position on month-on-month basis had 18 per cent share in January slipped to 17 per cent in April and ended May with 16 per cent.

With an average of 10.31 per cent, Zee News had 10 per cent in January, picked up in April at 12 per cent but slipped to 9 per cent in the month of May and June. This is in the back of the Zee News' re-positioning from Hageqat Jaise Khabar Waise to Zara Socheye. Zee's claim to bring back news to its truest form though has not been able to scale up its ratings in the scorecard.

The six-month average of IBN7 is 8.92 per cent while NDTV India has an average of 8.11 per cent. Samay has 4.91 per cent from January to June. Newly launched channel News24 has an average of 4.42 per cent, Live India average 3.24 per cent while public broadcaster Doordarshan managed to pull 3.14 per cent.

The English news segment still continues with a three-way tussle. Six-month average places CNN-IBN with 29.09 per cent (Tam, c&s, All India, 15+), NDTV 24X7 with 28.91 per cent while Times Now is at 28.58 per cent. Headlines Today stands at 13.34 per cent.

Blame it on distribution?

Advertising is central to privately owned news businesses across the world and in India Indian TV channels derive roughly 70 per cent of their revenues from advertising and about 30 per cent from subscriptions.

Venkataramani says, "Depending upon the band preferences of the channel, the distribution cost of a national channel can range anything between Rs 200-800 million."

A large proportion of subscription revenue is consumed by cable operators and since broadcasters do not control their own distribution they can not pinpoint the exact number of viewers. Ratings therefore become vital as the currency of success.

A senior executive at a news channel who request anonymity vehemently opposes the Tam rating system. He argues that content is mainly driven by the Tam ratings. Explaining further, he says that most of the time, the editorial is forced to do stories which categorically caters to the places or states where Tam Peplemeters are placed.

The ratings, however do not represent all the states with a limited number of peplemeter which are absent in states like Bihar, North East and Jammu and Kashmir. This factor alone has tremendous impact on the content, programme packaging and imperative of selling airtime advertisers.

A man hit by a bull in the streets of

2007	
Rank	Top Advertiser
1	Hindustan Unilever Ltd
2	Bharti Airtel Ltd
3	Tata Teleservices
4	Paras Pharmaceuticals Ltd
5	Tata Motors Ltd
6	Homeshop18
7	Reliance Communications Ltd
8	Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd
9	Coca Cola India Ltd
10	Emami Limited

Source : Tam

MCCS CEO Ashok Venkataramani says, "Depending upon the band preferences of the channel, the distribution cost of a national channel can range anything between Rs 200-800 million."

Delhi will get more coverage and footage than five men killed in Darjeeling or Assam. The reason is only that peplemeters are located in Delhi and not in the hill zones. For a Delhiwallah, the neighbourhood report naturally gets more hits in the peplemeter.

"The content is thus decided by the geographical placement of the peplemeter to get spikes in the ratings. Hence, some parts of India (where the peplemeter is absent) and some stories are left untouched or given very little importance," says the executive.

Over and above this constraint, with most news channels being free-to-air and hence not making any monies from subscriptions, their dependence on advertising and hence ratings is total.

A frequent complaint of news broadcasters is the heavy distribution cost.

2008 (First Half)	
Rank	Top Advertiser
1	Reliance Communications Ltd
2	Vodafone Essar Ltd
3	Hindustan Unilever Ltd
4	Bharti Airtel Ltd
5	Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd
6	Reckitt Benckiser (India) Ltd
7	British Broadcasting Corporation
8	Life Insurance Corporation of India
9	Tata Teleservices
10	Idea Cellular Ltd

Source : Tam

Broadcasters say more than half of the outlay goes in paying for reach, which cuts other costs like human resources. That is why a reporter cannot be placed in the interiors as it has its own costs. A virtual studio

is distribution. It is getting more and more competitive, as more and more channels come into business. The cost is enormous and growing wildly, and it is hurting every broadcaster from the biggest to the small-

ultimately becomes the easy answer.

Says Ashutosh, "Distribution costs have gone up tremendously because of the clutter of channels. This is in fact affects quality as a lot of money from a fixed budget goes into distribution, and channels compromise on quality. If only we could be patient, a lot of difference could come in."

"The single biggest problem in the industry today

est, FTA or pay.

"In this battle, multi-system operator (MSO) and local cable operator (LCO) point fingers at each other, but either way it is costing the broadcaster. And money that could and should have been spent on content is getting spent on distribution instead, and it weakens the industry," said a the broadcasting executive.

India is the only country in the world with more than 80 24-hour TV channels broadcasting programmes on news and current affairs, barely a quarter-century after the world's first 24-hour TV news channel (CNN or Cable News Network) came up in 1980.

The challenge for the news broadcasters in 2008 would be to turn the tables-lower the carriage fees and churn out revenue from subscription. Till the dependence on advertising revenue hangs on, there will be more breaking stories, exclusive stories, Amitabh Bachchan going to Shirdi, Siddhivinayak Temple et al, Salman Khan's doings and live do or die battle between godmen and rationalists. **NT**

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It's Rainin' Channels

Nasrin Sultana finds the new crop of Hindi, English general and business news channels raring to go... and how!

It could be best billed as the year of the bubbly in the Indian broadcast sector. For, the number of launches that happened in the news channels marketplace last year (2007-08) was mindboggling. Each of them claimed to be 'the total news channel' and carrying 'news' in its 'truest' sense. We also saw non-news players like real estate firms foraying into the sector.

The national news channels that hopped on to the bandwagon in 2007 and 2008 (till August) are three Hindi news channels, an English news and an English business news channel.

The companies include BAG Films and Media's News24, Ronnie Screwvala's UTVi, INX Media's NewsX, Triveni Media's Voice of India and Information TV's India News.

INDIA NEWS

The publisher of Hindi current affairs magazine India News launched a Hindi news channel by the same name. Promoted by



Kartik Sharma, son of former Union minister Venod Sharma, India News is currently in Hindi, but an English avatar is also in the offing. Guiding the channel is the veteran broadcaster and former BBC journalist Satish Jacob.

NEWS24

In the Hindi space, a big entrant was News

24. Already a name for the crime show *Sansani* on Star Plus, Anuradha Prasad's BAG Films and Media launched News24 in December. BAG has earmarked Rs 4 billion for its broadcast venture. Apart from News24 and entertainment channel E24 (which launched a few months later), BAG has two more channels in the pipeline -- a wellness channel called Bliss24, and

“There is no room for infotainment in our channel, since I have a hard news background,” says Anuradha Prasad

glamour and lifestyle channel Life24.

With the tag line *Nazar Har Khabar Par*, the newly launched news channel targets the 'Young Adult'.

"We feel that news has vanished from channels. The youth particularly do not take any interest in the news channels. That's why we decided on a channel addressing that target group" says BAG Films and Media managing director Anuradha Prasad.

It was first launched in all Hindi-speaking markets (HSM) towns on cable. It is now available on Tata Sky, DD Direct, Dish TV and Sun Direct.

The entire editorial guideline of News24 is based on reporting, analysing and presenting hardcore news for the youth. "There is no room for infotainment in our channel, since I have a hard news



background," says Prasad, "This is what we are going to restore in the Hindi TV news space."

Rozana 10 Baje is News24's top-rated show. Exclusive stories are the channel's priority as it thinks scoops are broken on all news channels almost simultaneously. "We believe that our exclusive stories are the ones that give us an edge over other competitive channels which we will continue to do in the near future", says Prasad.

The channel has a dedicated 30-minute daily programme focused on youth and the issues that concern them. It will also feature a show on campus life and there's a separate group of 30 reporters for youth programming, which is distinct from the general news set-up.

Prasad says the channel is "hugely interactive" with a clear presence on the internet and not just employing the use of shortcode-based SMSes. News 24 operates with editorial inputs from its 42 reporters and 300 stringers across the country.

UTVi

Also targeting 'young viewers' is Ronnie Screwvala's English business news channel UTVi. Screwvala says that UTVi doesn't just concentrate on the stockmarket but it's a complete business market channel.

Wholly owned by Screwvala, UTV Software has applied to the Securities Exchange Board of India (Sebi) for approval to pick up 20 per cent stake in the



channel, pegging its initial valuation at Rs 2 billion. UTVi has an investment plan of Rs 1.2 billion in the first year and its peak funding requirement will be Rs 1.6-1.8 billion.

The founder group of UTV Software has inked a strategic content tie-up with ABC News, thereby extending UTVi's relationship with Walt Disney, which currently owns a 32.1 per cent stake in UTV Software on a fully diluted basis.

Headquartered in Mumbai, UTVi has bureaus in Delhi, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad and Chennai. *Autocar India* Editor Hormazd Sorabjee and rallyist Renuka Kirpalani present an auto show while youth magazine *JAM* editor Rashmi Bansal hosts a careers show.

The main target of the channel being is students, managers, businessmen and entrepreneurs.

NEWSX

Launched with much anticipation in March 2008 in the English news channel space was NewsX from the INX stable. With a tag line 'Clarity in a complex world', NewsX is now available on all digital and analogue cable networks in metros, 10 lakh+ cities and 1 lakh+ towns.

It is also available on Tata Sky, Dish TV and Sun Direct. Major chains of hotels



have been seeded and now almost 90 per cent+ hotels are seeded via cable or their own head-end. The channel is in the process of now launching in the UK, USA, Middle East and South East Asia. Some of the advertisers that the channel has attracted are global brands like Samsung, HP, Saint-Gobain and others.

The list of programmes that the channel banks on are *NewsX@9*, *Sports Live*, prime time news hours, news bulletins and special programmes on sports such as *GoalPost*.

The USP of NewsX: it restrains the use of 'breaking story'. "The developments need to meet the strict editorial standards in the news room before they can qualify

“NewsX's focus is on the delivery side of the news rather than the climbing the ladder of ratings. A chase for ratings tend to dilute the quality.”

for going on air. We cover exclusive stories very extensively and get a panel of experts and guest to discuss and debate the developments", says an official spokesperson.

NewsX claims to not be a ratings-driven channel but more of a perception-led channel. "In-depth news and analyses is what we aspire to deliver to our audiences," says the spokesperson.

"However, when you focus on 100 per cent quality, the numbers come on their own and we are happy about this. While we get very good ratings for our programmes and the time spent on the channel, our focus would continue to be on the delivery side of the news rather than the climbing the ladder of ratings. A chase for ratings tends to dilute the quality of news because then you need to go for the eyeballs through sensationalising news, sting operations and trivial news programming," says the spokesperson.

VOICE OF INDIA

The most recent launch has been that of Hindi news channel Voice of India promoted by Triveni Media Limited.

Triveni Media Limited, part of the Rs 30 billion Triveni Group, is also launching a lifestyle channel, *Millionaire*. Triveni Infrastructure and Development Company (TIDCO) has interests in construction, real estate, automobiles and hospitality.

With an investment of Rs 2 billion, the company plans to set up 18 channels in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh,



Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Maharashtra, Punjab and West Bengal within two years.

To support the huge news operations, TML has invested in newsgathering resources for uninterrupted news flow across India through dedicated networks. These dedicated news networks will scout for news content from all corners of India.

Meanwhile Triveni Media has tied up with Kolkata-based production house Sukriti Productions to outsource all its content for the proposed Bengali news channel. Says Sukriti executive director Abhijeet Dasgupta, "We will provide complete content to the Bengali news channels. Apart from it, we will also provide West Bengal-related content to other news channels that Triveni is going to roll out."

Sukriti Productions has been in content production with a news show *Khobar Akhon* which it co-produced with TV Today Network Ltd. Currently the show is off air.

There are more many channels waiting in queue, pumping in more sweat and money. It would be interesting to see how the rest of the year 2008 unfolds as new players like business dailies *Economic Times* and *Mint* scale up operations to launch business news channels. So is the news channel sector expanding? Or will every channel be teething the same pie? Time perhaps will tell. **NT**

Regionalism Rules

Local language news offerings are making waves in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka, West Bengal and Maharashtra, notes Gaurav Laghate

There's no business like news business. Or at least that's what it appears given the way new players are surfacing with amazing regularity. The national news market is already packed with players besides new entrants still waiting in the wings. It doesn't come as a surprise then that regional news channels too are hopping on to the bandwagon.

The growth in the regional news markets – specifically Maharashtra, West Bengal and the Southern states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh – is remarkable.

This is why even national news broadcasters are eying the regional spaces. Star and Zee already have a presence in West Bengal and Maharashtra. Network18 has just joined the party in Maharashtra with IBN Lokmat.

The regional news market, year-on-year basis, has grown 13.3 per cent in 2006 and 41.2 per cent in 2007. The first six months of 2008 have seen growth being pegged at 16.7 per cent, leading to the regional news audience share touching 2.8-

which is a doubling from 1.4 in 2004.

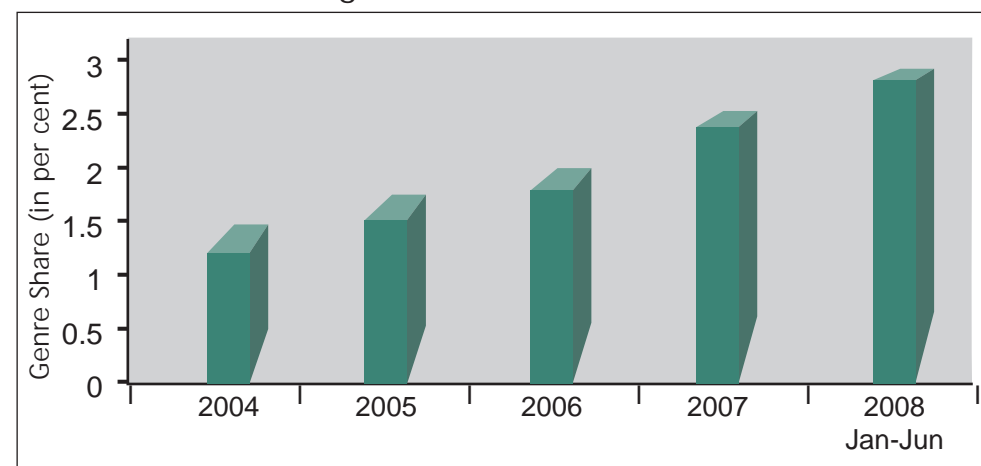
Moreover, ad volume is also seeing exponential growth, according to Tam Adex.

It says that ad volume on regional news channels (combined – Marathi, Bengali, Southern) in 2006 was 17,682 seconds.

Regional news market has grown 13.3 per cent in 2006 while in 2007 it expanded by 41.2 per cent. In the first half of 2008, it has leaped 16.7 per cent.

The amount virtually doubled in 2007 to touch 31,167 seconds. Even in the first five months of 2008, the ad volume was 18,843 seconds.

Regional News Genre Share



Source : TAM All India C&S 4+

South Rules!

The southern broadcast news market is the most lucrative amongst Indian regional plays. Apart from the subcontinent, the channels have viewership in Sri Lanka, China, the Middle East, UK, Canada, Europe, Australia and parts of South Africa and the United States.

Recently, the southern market has seen much activity: launches, announcements of launches, changes in political equations and an increased intensity of competition in almost every language segment – Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada or Telugu.

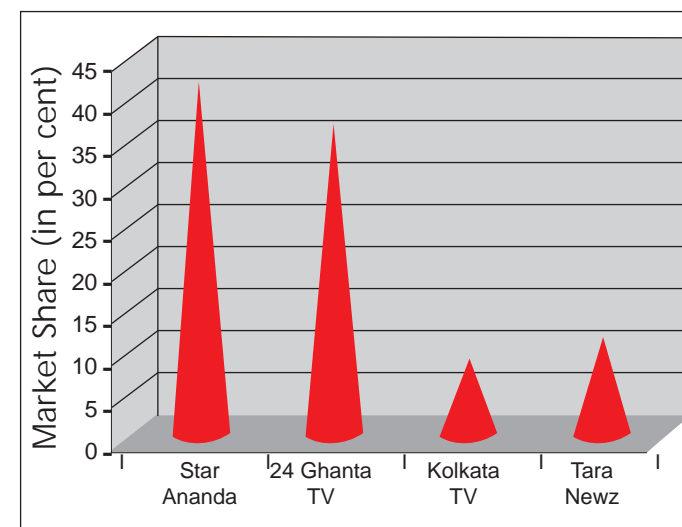
The Tamil news segment for instance is just opening up following the public parting of ways between Kalanidhi Maran's Sun Network and his grand-uncle and Tamil Nadu chief minister M Karunanidhi.

As of now, Tamil Nadu has three major players: Sun News from Sun Network, Jaya Plus from the AIADMK backed Jaya TV and Raj News from Raj TV. The DMK backed Kalaingar TV also runs its own news bulletins. The free to air Mega TV, a 24-Tamil news, current affairs and entertainment channel, promoted by State Congress MP KV Thangabalu, completes the Tamil news pack.

An interesting point to note is that the market is nascent and players are taking it easy: Raj News, for instance, has invested Rs 300 million, but has yet to start generating revenues. "Our investment is about Rs 300 million, and breakeven will be in three years. From next year we will start billing," says Raj TV Network promoter Rajendran.

The other large southern language news segment is Telugu with competition intense in Andhra Pradesh. The Telugu news leader TV9 (backed by Associated Broadcasting Corporation) appears to have ambitions to launch news channels in

Bangla News Channel Market Share (June)



Source : TAM, Maharashtra, C&S 15+

almost every language segment. It is followed by ETV2 - the news channel from ETV. The other big players are, NTV News, TV5 News and Sun's Gemini News.

Even Zee News Limited is planning its own Teugu offering Zee 24-Ghantalu, following its Bangla and Marathi launches.

TV9, meanwhile, has shown incredible growth in Karnataka, where it is much ahead of Sun's Udaya Varthegalu and Suvarna News.

In Kerala, Manorma News is leading the comparatively smaller market. Among other players are Asianet News, People TV and India Vision. Even the state unit of the Congress recently launched Jai Hind TV with much fanfare.

Jai Maharashtra

The Marathi news market is a little less than Rs 80 million in ad revenues with three 24-hour news channels, Star Majha, Zee 24-Taas and IBN Lokmat. ETV Marathi, Mi Marathi, and state broadcaster DD Sahyadri also produce news but they are part of what are essentially Marathi entertainment channels.

Industry observers say that the Marathi news segment is still in the teething stage as it accounts for a measly 5 per cent of the entire Marathi advertising market (including entertainment television) estimated at Rs 2 billion. "It is yet to get over its initial hiccups and grow to achieve its true potential," says an observer.

With the launch of more Marathi news

channels, the category will possibly have better representation and may lead to more moolah.

"I see a huge growth potential in the Marathi news segment," says Zee News CEO Barun Das. "Marathi 24-hour news channels are now gaining acceptance among viewers as well as advertisers. The future of this market seems far better than what it is now."

Tam data suggests that Star Majha was the Marathi news leader (in terms of relative share) before the launch of Global Broadcast News' IBN Lokmat.

Within three months of its launch, IBN Lokmat has captured a significant market share. Star Majha and Zee 24-Taas are running neck-and-neck with IBN Lokmat not lagging far behind (see chart).

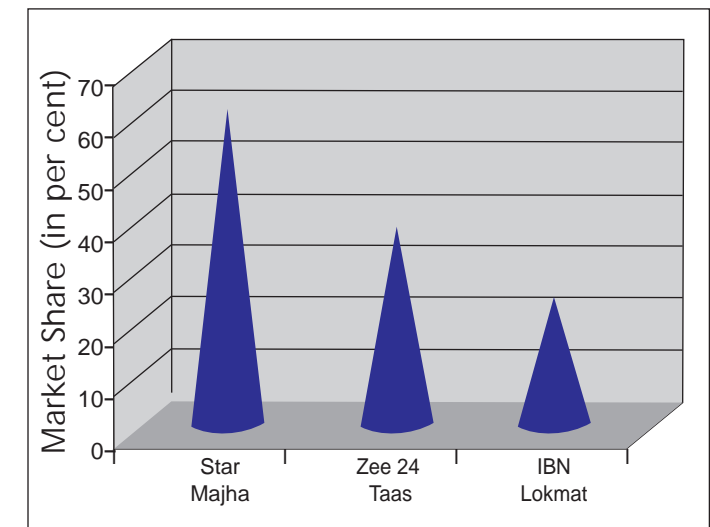
Marathi news channels agree that content-wise the needs of local viewers are different. They cannot be fobbed off with infotainment; what they look for is hard-core news - be it regional, national or international. For informative entertainment, they have the option of tuning in to other Marathi and Hindi GECs.

A major chunk of the news, around 70 per cent comes from the region or state, while national news share is 20 per cent. The balance 10-odd per cent is from international developments.

Aamar Shonaar Bangla

The Bangla news market is much bigger than its Marathi counterpart with media analysts pegging it as more than Rs 600

Marathi News Channel Market Share (June)



Source : TAM, Maharashtra, C&S 15+

million. The reason lies in the common belief that the Bengali channels targeting West Bengal are also watched in neighbouring Bangladesh, making it lucrative for broadcasters.

"The Bengalis' appetite for news in the mother tongue is higher than that in Maharashtra. Also, Kolkata is less cosmopolitan as compared to Mumbai," points out Das.

Interestingly, Bengalis tend to have a penchant for news rather than general entertainment.

That's why Tara Bangla split itself into two channels - Tara Newz and Tara Muzik (a music entertainment channel).

The other players in the arena are Star Ananda, Zee 24-Ghanta, Kolkata TV and the recently launched NE News. Star Ananda clearly is leading the pack in this market (see chart).

Even ETV, for instance, has dedicated 20 per cent of its programming to news on the Bengali channel.

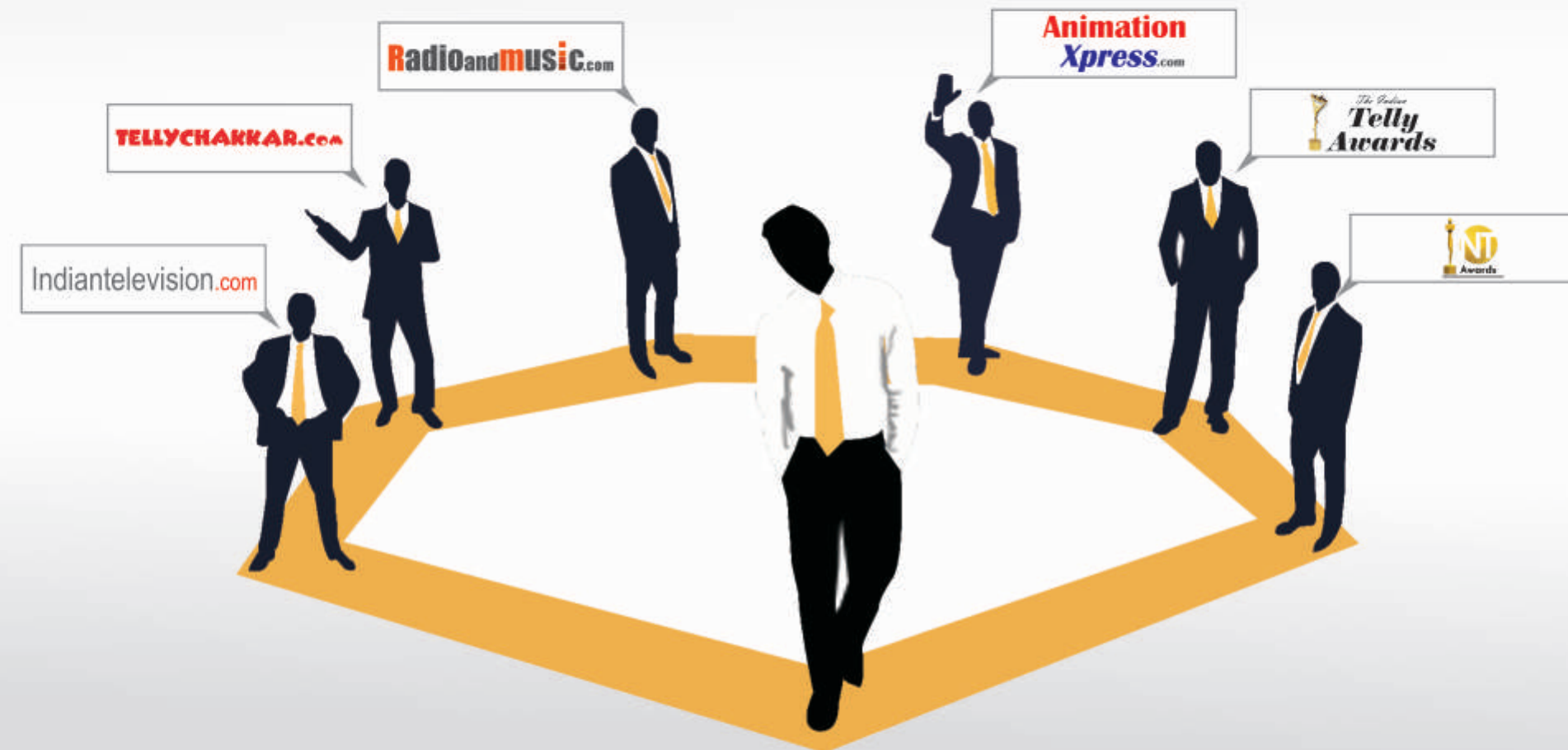
Apart from that, state broadcaster DD7, or DD Bangla channel delivers news.

Media Content and Communications Services (MCCS) the company that runs Star Ananda is bullish about the future. And what about the space getting crowded?

"In fact, I see competition helping the market to expand even further," says MCCS CEO Ashok Venkataramani.

That perhaps is the dictum across all channel segments. **NT**

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News channels have been typically looked at as a genre to target the upmarket male. Historically, this has been one genre whose viewership is skewed towards males and that's what has contributed to its popularity in media plans. Over the last few years, it has grown into English and Hindi news, general news and business news, sensational and normal news, indepth reporting and casual news.

Viewers as well as clients and agencies have started positioning differently and think of the positive or negative rub off that can possibly happen on the brand. For example, since it was launched on the back of sting operations, India TV has been branded as a "sensationalist" channel and there are quite a few clients who do not therefore want to advertise on the channel.

Overall, the positive disposition towards news channels -- typically English news and business channels -- still exists among advertisers who want to target the "upmarket" audiences and the investor/monied segments (read males).

There has also been a slight change in the way this genre is perceived, given the fact that most households in India are still single TV households, and a lot of clients look at this option even while targeting women and not just working women.

The Hindi news genre gets most of the ad pie followed by English news and the business news channels. The regional genre does not take much. In each category, you will have two channels who account for around a 20 per cent share.

In terms of categories that spend, you will see clients whose products are aimed at males using this genre. Therefore, you have financial products and services, mobile phone companies, the automobile sector, consumer durables. At the same time, while the

volume of ads on the genre has grown, this is mainly due to new entrants. The increase of inventory by the existing players is marginal.

When looking at this genre, we also consider qualitative aspects sometimes. There are shows that you know that the target group (TG) will watch. Then there are big events like the



Budget where you know that certain players will do in-depth, detailed analysis and have excellent coverage. So we go with them.

The challenges that this genre faces are

quite similar to any genre today like general entertainment, music or even kids channels. The most serious challenge is the new channels that keep getting launched which are responsible for fragmenting viewership further. The other challenge is the input costs which in the case of this genre include studio and infrastructure cost, human resources, analytical skills and sourcing data etc. For a lot of channels, getting the right balance between the input costs and revenue thereby making the venture a profit-making one is the key challenge.

Clutter definitely exists as in any genre today but the channels which can truly make a difference in the presentation style and programming content will move ahead of the others.

The desperation for ratings does have a negative impact on the channel image as I have mentioned earlier, but the masses do want sensationalism and clients that target the masses will be willing to overlook this aspect of channels that deliver them the numbers.

Nikhil Rangnekar is executive director, India – West at Starcom Worldwide

While the volume of ads on the genre has grown, this is mainly due to new entrants. The increase of inventory by existing players is marginal



Nalin Mehta

Riding on Three Programming Genres

In a world of 56 news channels, the only objective currency of success is high placing in the rating meters. The battle to beat the ratings means that news channels are constantly 'experimenting' and 'looking for the magic formula'. As one editor points out, "The approach is to hit entertainment TV... to enter the market of *Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi*... News is trying to enter into the area consciously... deliberately." Three genres of news television started specifically as tactics to capture high ratings: reality television, lifestyle shows and crime news.

Reality television is not an Indian innovation but it has taken an interesting form on news channels here. A case in point is Zee News' two-hour special on the Gudiya case in late 2004, a programme that the Zee News director proudly refers to as his achievement...

The week Zee ran the show was the only week it became number one in the ratings that year. The Zee News editor explains the rationale behind the show, "...As far as news is concerned, earlier it was only about politicians. We are changing that. Various kinds of things are now news because the canvas has increased."

The rush for ratings was the backdrop to this coverage. Gossip that once might have ended at the village well was now prime-time national viewing. The battle for ratings turned the private tragedy of Gudiya into a public spectacle. Zee wasn't the only channel to pursue the Gudiya case in this manner. While Zee had her entire family into the studio, other TV channels too rushed reporters who woke up her remaining relatives in her villages at midnight on live television to get sound bytes.

In January 2006, Channel 7 telecast a live six-hour argument between a divorced mother and her estranged husband in the Middle East over custody rights for their child. The channel then called her estranged husband on telephone and the two argued bitterly over the next six hours, fighting over domestic matters while her underage daughter looked on. She was even asked to comment on who she would like to live with, all in the cold glare in the camera. It was the kind of battle that should have taken place in a divorce court. Here it unfolded on national television, and it wasn't a one-off. For channel 7, such programming, along with cricket and crime, was the key component of its strategy to register on the ratings.

It was the quest for ratings that spurred Star News in 2004 to start a new afternoon show called *Saas, Bahu aur Saazish*. It is a show that seeks to build on the popularity of popular soap opera on Star's sister channel Star Plus – *Kyunki Saas Bhi Kabhi Bahu Thi* and *Kahaani Ghar Ghar Ki*. The storylines of these soaps are based

on intrigues within the huge extended families and they have been among the most popular television shows in India since the early 2005...

The third new genre that Indian television has experimented with is lifestyle programming. In 2003, NDTV started prime time shows called *Night Out* on NDTV 24X7 and *Raat Baaki* on NDTV India. These were the daily shows which were anchored live out of a different night club in a different city each day and the idea was to take viewers on a party trip with the hip and the happening. The producers took care to choose a nightclub where famous models or film stars were partying that night, and that was the selling point: party with the stars. The shows proved so popular that all other news channels started similar shows in the time and 2003 became the 'Year of Night Outs' in news parlance. Advertisers liked these shows because they brought in new non-news viewers and, more importantly, young viewers.

After the experiment with party programmes in 2003, news channels turned to crime programming in 2004. Aaj Tak experimented first with a programme called *Jurm*. Uday Shankar, who was then news director of Aaj Tak, says he got the idea from American television where crime is hugely popular. NDTV followed suit with *FIR, Crime and the City*, and *Dial 100*. Zee News started *Crime Reporter* and *Crime File*, Sahara aired *Hello Control Room* and *Crime and Punishment*. Aaj Tak responded with a second crime show *Vardaat* and Star News launched *Sansani*. CNBC India also started a programme on economic crimes.

The move towards crime shows can be explained by one factor: they fared well on the yardstick of TRPs (television rating points). Zee News' *Crime File* in the 10:30- 11 pm slot on Saturday nights registered a 100 per cent jump in ratings over the show in the previous block. Similarly, *Red Alert* (Star News) showed a 63 per cent jump and *Jurm* (Aaj Tak) an 18 per cent jump from the previous show. The ratings were much higher than any other genre in Hindi news. And advertisers came in thick and fast. The most remarkable aspect of these shows remains the presentation. There is an overt, overdone bid to create tension with the visuals as well as soundtrack, as though the crime is happening next door. Even the anchors seem to have a certain edge: they speak loudly, menacing voices taut with tension.

But television is a complex business and ratings do not always translate into revenues. They do most of the time, but not always.

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“The move towards crime shows can be explained by one factor: they fared well on the yardstick of TRPs”



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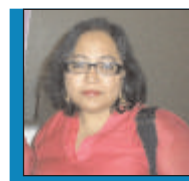
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Mr. James Goes
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Paromita Vohra

Far from the Truth

Our news channels appear to lack the basic understanding of conveying information accurately. They seem to have lost the basic essence of 'news'.

In a desire to get more ratings in the form of TRPs or television rating points which are necessary to make the business financially viable, there are some crucial mistakes that the news channels have been committing.

The first being the tendency to convey news in a fictional format.

The communication from them should be made in the form of non-fiction, but on the contrary they tend to fictionalise everything. For example, in Aarushi's murder case, channel after channel recreated the murder scene.

Putting news in this fashion is really wrong. It creates a wrong impression about innocent people's lives. Talking falsely about any one is irresponsible.

The second problem with news channels is the race for breaking stories and running them as soon as possible. In such cases, they don't wait to crosscheck information. The result is often grave as we frequently have wrong news!

They create a small piece of information into a big thing and sensationalise it.

By giving the tiniest thing an importance of 'breaking story' just because of the shock treatment of watching, they take away the seriousness of the way we talk about the world.

Also, there is need to treat things that affect a large number people in the country with some seriousness and sincerity.

For example, whenever there are rains in Mumbai, channels start reporting that Mumbai will get flooded again. This happens even when there are normal rains. This is wrong reporting.

The third problem with news channels is the people they hire. Fresh pass-outs from college, who have no expertise with the subject, are asked to report crucial stories.

In today's scenario, they don't know how to make sense out of situations and are made to report without going through

adequate training. So, we often find channels putting out stories in an exceedingly superficial and ignorant way. This is a structural problem.

As a result of all these factors, a lot of programming on news channels is about people's own prejudices – communal and religious issues, gender prejudices, et al.

This is more evident and really disturbing in the way women are spoken about. If a woman is killed, people instantly start talking about her sexual history. As if she deserved to be killed because of her sexual history!

Even in the Aarushi case, some channels started showing her romantic history. They got in a sexual angle to the entire murder case.

By portraying such a picture, channels end up victimising the weak. Why are they not doing such stories on rich and powerful people?

I strongly feel that news channels have to understand that it's not their job to conjecture.

In order to run a story, they should not fabricate it. Their language should not be full of implications.

There are so many news stories happening across the country but lesser stories are being done. The news channels in India are all about money, glamour and fashion.

I have no clue what the solution is because I don't believe in censorship. But news should have some kind of an inner reflection of society.

As a documentary film-maker, I am glad that NDTV came up with an initiative to screen documentary films.

A documentary is a reflection of the reality around us. Through documentaries you can show things that other

people don't talk about. You can show points of view which are not there in the mainstream... certainly not in many of the current crop of our news channels.

(As told to Richa Dubey)



“ I strongly feel that news channels have to understand that it's not their job to conjecture ”

Paromita Vohra is an awardwinning documentary film-maker, screenwriter and media educator. Her recent documentary titled Morality TV aur Loving JEHAD: Ek Manohar Kahani takes a close look at the ways of our news channels.

Stress 24x7?

Is working in a television newsroom injurious to health? Hectic work hours, the race for ratings and short-staffed teams have sure raised alarm bells, notes Anushree Bhattacharyya

On a typical day, you could see Sujay Gupta juggling three phones, hurriedly taking notes and issuing advisories to his team of reporters. The chief of Mumbai bureau's job in a premier news channel like NDTV 24x7 is much sought but not so for thirty-eight-year-old Gupta. One day, on a drive back home, he took a considered view and gave it all up. He ended the lease of his cosy apartment in tony Bandra, and took the first flight to Goa.

"The nature of the news television market in India is such that there is very little scope of decreasing stress levels," rues Gupta. "Pressures to perform are a part of newsrooms across the globe, but in India it's different given the number of channels we have. The demand is no more on doing big or better researched stories, it's all about breaking stories."

It is indeed.

There was a time when viewers were left with no choice but to watch national channel Doordarshan. But with Indian television going through a revolution and given the arrival of as many as 80 news channels it's a very different story now. While there are no specific recruitment forecasts available for the sector, global staffing services firm Manpower says the media and entertainment industry has the highest employment potential in the country, with 58 per cent employers intending to hire more people in the third quarter this year.

So while viewers are flooded with a variety of options when it comes to watching news on the small screen, the rise of so many channels has also given birth to greater stress in the newsrooms.

Every channel is under pressure to deliver something new, that little extra which is more relevant to its viewers... a story that is perhaps the first of its kind!

Says Gupta, "We have more news

channels than whole of Europe put together. The trouble is that the competition is not just between offerings of the same genre. National channels compete with even regional news channels.

For instance, in Mumbai, NDTV not only locks horns with CNN-IBN but also with a Marathi channel like Star Majha."

Evidently, the concept of a straightforward story doesn't exist any more. The objective is to look at every conceivable angle and generate at least three stories from what would be just one. Plus, the pressure to break news.

Veteran journalist and media educator Paranjoy Guha Thakurta puts the blame on media owners. "These days, proprietors do not want to invest in human resources. Consequently, a person is forced to multitask. The technology too ensures that a person can easily do the tasks that two or three people would do earlier. So with media owners not investing enough in experienced manpower, even though the younger lot of people are intelligent, hard-working and very talented, they do not necessarily have a good judgment of the important news. This leads in an increase in stress levels."

Some media professionals who are

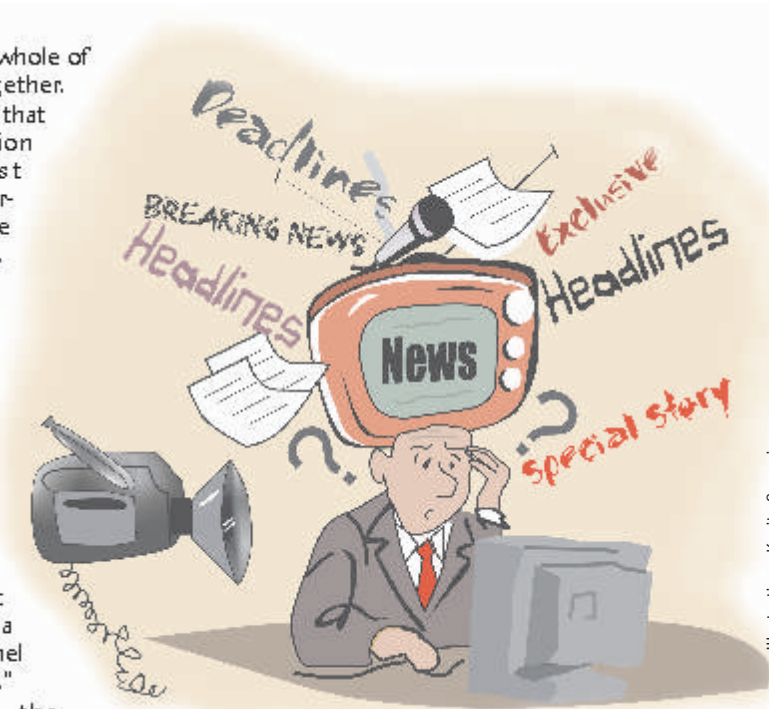


Illustration: Kavita Sangoi

currently sailing in the boat too corroborate the view that young journalists are impatient and this attitude also often leads to stress.

Says CNN-IBN deputy foreign editor Suhasini Haider, "There is no single reason behind the rise in stress levels. One of the major factors is a huge increase in competition. Apart from this, people today have no personal opinion about a particular subject or topic. There are no niches. So journalists are made to do stories on a wide range of issues. Also, newsrooms these days are younger than ever. Young journalists do not prepare themselves mentally before joining. They just want to report as soon as they join."

IBN7 executive editor Sanjeev Paliwal believes that the stress is caused by the demands of the job. "We are living in a very competitive and challenging environ-

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ment and the entire country relies on us to bring news to them in an accurate and timely manner. With expectations soaring, it is obvious that pressure in a newsroom is bound to be high. New channels asks for newer ways of gathering market intelligence being devised. This is good for the industry but is also leading to a lot of extra pressure."

Whats more, this greater stress has also at times directed to loss of life. Senior journalists Appan Menon and S P Singh, who were stars in the early days of non-Doordarshan-run news programming, lost their lives at an early age. And one of the reasons cited was mounting newsroom pressure.

Thakurta, 52, feels that though stress is escalating it also depends on individuals and their way of dealing with stress. "Late S P Singh and Appan Menon were brilliant journalists. Yes, it is true that they died at a young age. Both of them worked at a time when Indian news television industry was at a nascent stage and I presume that both of them faced stress. I too suffered a heart attack last year. Having said this I would like to emphasise that though stress is prevalent in this industry, it's also a state of mind. And it depends on individuals on how they cope with stress."

But there are many in the profession who feel that media is all about stress, and those who do not have the capacity to endure the pressure, should not enter the profession.

"I do not agree that stress is increasing," says Times Now editor-in-chief Arnab Goswami. "In fact it is wrong to use the word stress," he adds. Television newsrooms, says Goswami, are now "buzzing with excitement". "A newsroom does not operate like a bank... it's more animated. There is more action, a zeal to do some-



"The demand is no more on doing big or better researched stories, it's all about breaking stories - Sujay Gupta"

thing exciting. Therefore, people who cannot face the heat should not enter the kitchen."

According to NewsX newsroom head Arup Ghosh, stress is not a new entrant to the newsroom, "I don't think that stress is something new for journalists; it was always there. The longer hours of work also impacts personal life. One reason for this is increase in competition because of presence of so many channels. Another fact leading to rise is stress is dearth of talent. The established and the experienced management is under pressure to nurture fresh talent; at the same time retaining talent is also stressful because the moment the young talent pool that comes in learns the technique, the tendency to switch jobs increases."

Just chill!

Some medical practitioners feels that its about time that news channels take the responsibility towards providing an opportunity to destress.

Dr Sanjay Pattanayak, a psychiatrist at Delhi's Vidyasagar Institute of Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences (Vimhans), says work and peer pressure are the two basic reasons for stress levels going North. "Journalists now have less time to relax.

Thus, it is important for them to have a good social support, good diet and exercise regularly to unwind."

Leading psychiatrist Dr Sanjay Chug explains, "These days news channels give greater focus on TRPs than the actual job. Also this has led much competition which in turn has erased the concept of fixed working hours. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that, the nature of the work in journalism is stressful enough and all these factors have added to increase in stress."

And what is the solution to beat stress? Says Dr Chug, "Ideally, there's need for a change in the work culture of our channels, but since that is a long-term task, there are smaller steps that can be taken to cut down pressures and prevent breakdowns." He advises the mandatory and routine drug tests for all, mandatory and routine psychological assessments covering anxiety levels like depression levels, suicide risk assessment, adjustment problems. "It would also help if a counselling cell is provided to employees. Also, news channels can have 10 minutes of destressing every few hours which can be applicable uniformly to the entire workforce wherein people can do on-desk exercises, power naps, guided relaxations etc."

Even as there are conflicting views from practitioners on stress levels in the profession, many newsroom HR heads seem to be aware of the problems on hand. Says India Today group corporate head - human resource Geetanjali Pandit Gupta, "In this business, the performance is reviewed daily hence it increases stress levels. Destressing has to begin with correct manning and solving the external factors."

And at some organisations, the first step has already been taken towards ensuring employees have few reasons to



"I don't think that stress is something new for journalists; it was always there - Arup Ghosh"

complain.

Network 18 Group head - HR Rajneesh Singh elucidates, "At Network18, we understand the pressures so at the basic level, we provide our employees with facilities like crèche, shuttle service, cabs and 24-hour availability of food, water and security. At the next level, we have a gym and offer facilities for games so that employees can unwind. We also organise workshops, celebrate birthdays, have monthly parties and offsites that gives everyone a chance to enjoy together, have fun and relax."

But INX media head - human resources Dhruva Sen believes that parties or get-togethers need not be the right prescription for bringing down stress levels. "They only divert attention for a bit." So what's his solution? "Possibly establish a recreation room where people can enter and read or sit simply loosen up."

The onus of destressing employees, India Today's Gupta hastens to add, should not fall only on the HR of a company as employees are aware of what they are getting into. "There is only one way of getting rid



"Though stress is prevalent in this industry, it's also a state of mind. And it depends on individuals on how they cope with stress." - Paranjoy Guha Thakurta

of stress that is, providing employees enough resources to do their work," she says.

Thakurta says tensions are an inherent part of any news channel as one can never know what is going to happen next. Also the fact that media owners do not wish to invest in experienced people leads to increase in stress as young people might be intelligent, hardworking and talented but they are not better judge of importance of news. Experienced people know which is piece of news is more important to cover. This has further lead to dilution of stan-

dards including ethical standards."

And while some in this profession have learnt to cope with stress, there are others like Gupta who have succumbed to the mounting pressure and have either left or are continuing with much difficulty. Gupta chose to opt out, and is chronicling the Scarlett Keeling saga for a leading London daily, advising a corporate group on starting a local channel and an assorted number of things to achieve nirvana. "It's important to enjoy what you are doing," he says while revealing plans to promote the Goan feni. Nirvana, surely. **NT**

Zee News wins!

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3	India TV / Aaj Tak	16%
4	NDTV India	13%
5	IBN7	7%

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The Dashing Dozen

(Newsfolk who rule television)

They have not lived life by the book. Chartered accountants, science graduates, print journalists - they came from all walks of life into the untested waters of broadcast journalism in India. And have over the years, in their own way, charted courses that have been milestones in the history of news television in the country. Exposés, heart tugging interviews and sting operations are all part of a day's work for these intrepid newsmen that The NT Magazine has chosen as representatives of sterling achievement in this demanding career. The list is by no means exhaustive, but based on a dipstick on the immense talent that exists on news television in India today...listed here in alphabetical order. Compiled by Anindita Sarkar



Derring-do

Abhisar Sharma: The Pakistan government denied a visa to Abhisar Sharma during the recent elections in the country. The reason was not difficult to find. Sharma

and his audacious cameraperson were the first Indian crew to enter the Laal Masjid, the centre of violent clashes between Pak forces and militants, and return with a damning story that linked the Masjid attack to the Benazir Bhutto assassination.

The 35-year-old deputy editor at Aaj Tak, has in his short stint with the organisation, proved his mettle with shows like *Laal Masjid Ka Safed Sach* (the first journey inside Laal Masjid in Pakistan), *War Game X* (a simulated show on a possible war between India and Pakistan), and *Aatank ka Live Video* (a Taliban propaganda video which showed an entire terrorist operation).

Sharma is not only a specialist in covering domestic political issues, but is also considered to have an exceptional grasp on international affairs. This Punjab University graduate started his career in media with the wildlife beat in Zee News, but soon graduated to doing political stories and took up Parliamentary affairs as his specialised beat.

Apart from his acute interest in South Asian affairs, Sharma finds it extremely challenging to be involved in news programming as a genre as well. *Laal Masjid Ka Safed Sach* continues to be my most memorable story where my cameraperson and I hoodwinked the ISI agents, entered the Masjid and got a story that was the most impactful during the assassination of Benazir Bhutto," he maintains.

Captain Courageous

Arbab Goswami: A post-graduate from Oxford, at 35, Goswami is one of the youngest senior editors in the TV business. He started his career with *The Telegraph* in Kolkata before moving on to NDTV as senior editor in 1995. As editor-in-chief of Times Now, Goswami has been credited with bringing in an innovative structuring of news with the introduction of a new interplay between traditional journalists and TV producers.

In 2008, his marathon coverage of the Union Budget fetched more eyeballs than CNBC TV18, a huge upset in the TV industry. He followed it up by roping in the original Sony *Extraa Innings* pair - Mandira Bedi and Charu Sharma - and scoring over Set Max. A believer in "quality over scale", Goswami and his team covered all of India with just six live trucks to a leadership position, making history and expanding the traditional news market. Recently, he created history of sorts again - by anchoring for 30 hours across two days non-stop on the two days of the Trust Vote in Parliament.

He sees himself performing at this pace "for at least another three decades" and building teams that transform Indian TV history in the process. Goswami, who has published a comparison on anti-terror laws (*Combating Terrorism: the Legal Challenge, 2000*), says relaunching Times Now within three months of its launch in 2006 was a turning point in his life. "It was a huge and a risky decision on my part as no channel had never done such a thing in such a short span of time. I took the risk to get the content and positioning changed, and it paid off really well."



Young Turk

Ashutosh: Before taking over as managing editor of IBN7, Ashutosh spent a decade at Aaj Tak as a primetime anchor. His real strength lies in news management -- on the desk as well as in the field. He has covered



every part of the country -- especially elections in Jammu and Kashmir, especially when terrorism was at its peak in the troubled state. He recalls a particular incident,

"In early 1996, I was working as a correspondent with Aaj Tak, I was getting ready to give my PTC for a story on a lonely bumpy road in Ganderbal (Farooq Abdullah's assembly constituency) when suddenly, a 10-year-old boy appeared from nowhere, stared into the camera and shouted... Ashutosh, Delhi, Aaj Tak. I was stunned. I could not comprehend that in a place so removed from civilisation, someone could recognise me. That was the power of TV. At that time Aaj Tak was just a 20-minute news bulletin on Doordarshan. Those words still ring in my ears and I cannot forget that small boy's face."

At IBN7, he is responsible for the overall editorial content that goes on the channel and heads a team of more than 250 journalists. A postgraduate in M.Phil (Soviet Studies) and MA (Philosophy & International Studies), he was awarded the prestigious Dag Hammarskjöld UN Scholarship in 1997.



Spunk personified

Barkha Dutt: The image of Barkha Dutt, reporting from a bunker, under fire from a barrage of Pakistani shells during the Kargil war, will remain with television viewers for a long, long time. The intrepid Dutt, who joined NDTV in 1995, has always excelled at conflict reporting, covering areas ranging from Kashmir, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq and the Middle East.

Dutt, 37, who is currently group head, NDTV English, hosts the popular television show *We the People*, and is a name in television households across the country. Be it the Kargil conflicts, the Gujarat riots, or reports from violence-torn Jammu and Kashmir, Dutt has been there, done that - with rare courage and consistency. Her jumping on a food trolley to get on to the plane taking militants to be exchanged for the hostages of Flight 814 too cannot be forgotten in a hurry.

A 1997 Inlaks scholar, Dutt came to the field armed with a dual Master's degree in Mass Communication from Jamia Millia Islamia University and in journalism from Columbia University, New York. It's the frontlines which have proved to be her biggest educators, however. As the Padma Shri recipient herself acknowledges: "My most memorable moment would have to be reporting from the frontline during the Kargil war and that too without any satellite uplink facilities. It was tough, overwhelming, very dangerous, and emotional and had the power to resonate like few other stories do. It changed me forever."

Action man

Deepak Chaurasia: Been there, done that would possibly best describe Deepak Chaurasia, currently national affairs editor at Star News.

The 35-year-old Chaurasia has over 15 years of media experience to his credit, a large part of which



was at the TV Today Network, from where he quit as executive editor. In the last one decade, Chaurasia has had the distinction of having interacted with almost every prominent political personality, national and international.

While he counts his special coverage of various national disasters like the Orissa cyclone in 1997 and the 2004 tsunami in Andaman and Nicobar islands as his career highlights, Chaurasia also counts the Nicobar story among his life-affirming moments. "The most touching moment of my career was when I managed to save the life of a young girl, Almas. I rescued her from the tsunami-ravaged Nicobar island. Since then, every time I hear her voice, it reaffirms my faith in humanity and life. It was many times more fulfilling than having saved my own life on several occasions, while reporting on terrorism or war," he says.

Chaurasia has also been on the field during the important Indo-Pak bilateral meetings, events including the historical bus journey from Wagah to Lahore, and the Pokhran experiments.

A BSc graduate from Indore, he took his advanced diploma in broadcast journalism from Cardiff University before returning to news journalism in India.

Talking Business

Menaka Doshi : Still in her early thirties, Menaka Doshi is already a veteran at the broadcast journalism game. Having



begun her career with TV18 in 1996 as features reporter on *India Business Report* (BBC), Doshi moved to reporting business news for CNBC TV18, played an integral role in news programming over the past nine years and is now corporate editor for the channel.

In 2001, Doshi was posted to New York as bureau chief for a nine-month stint to cover global business and the Indian diaspora. She then returned to co-anchor CNBC TV18's primetime evening news show *India Business Hour*.

Among the shows she has anchored and produced is *Young Turks*, a show that profiles young achievers, and *Realty Check*, a show that captured all the real estate action in the country.

For the past few months, Doshi has diversified her interests to corporate news features and documentaries. *The Firm* - India's first show on corporate law, audit and accounting is a few months old and the first of many such projects to come.

This St Xavier's College Mumbai economics graduate believes business news journalism is about many big moments every day, yet there are a few that stand out among her cherished memories - whether it was retracing the Dandi March on the anniversary of India's 50th year of Independence or the L&T - Grasim cement deal, or the Reliance Split. For young Doshi, the show's just beginning.



First among equals

Dr Prannoy Roy: Many who remember the soft-spoken Dr Prannoy Roy as the face that brought them *The World This Week* on Doordarshan every Friday, would not have imagined that the same man would, in another decade, be credited to have single-handedly changed the face of Indian news television.

The founder and president of New Delhi Television (NDTV), Roy rose to fame with *The World This Week* (which was nominated one of India's five best TV programmes), *Since Independence* and *The News Tonight*, the first privately produced nightly news bulletins on DD.

A specialist in covering Indian elections with his sharp insights and analyses, he was associated with the Ministry of Finance, Government of India as Economic Advisor from 1985-1987. The 58-year-old Roy, who has been associated with the small screen since 1980, is a Doon School alumnus. He graduated in economics from London's Queen Mary College, and went on to complete his PhD from the Delhi School of Economics, where he also taught for a year. After a short stint as a chartered accountant, Roy moved over to television. There has been no looking back since.

Among the various honours that have come his way are the B D Goenka Award for excellence in journalism in 1994 and 1995, Ernst & Young - Entrepreneur of the year award (Media), the Screen Videocon Award for Lifetime Achievement in 1998 and the Limca Book of Records -Person of the Year award in 1998, The 2002 Indian Telly Lifetime Contribution Award and the 2007 News Television Award for contribution to the news business.

Truth seeker

Punya Prasun Bajpai: Punya Prasun Bajpai's paper on atrocities on tribals in Maharashtra, who were booked



under Tada across all ages, forced the NHRC to intervene and review the issue and resulted in the release of more than 200 tribals. His follow up story on Aaj Tak in 2004, forced the government to release an innocent tribal who had served a prison term for more than 15 years under this law, within days of running the story. "This was one of my most satisfying moments", says the Zee News consulting editor.

An avid reader and movie lover, the 44-year-old Bajpai has had more than 20 years experience in both print and electronic journalism, and has worked in various capacities with the *Sunday Observer*, *Sunday Mail*, *Lokmat*, *Sahara*, *Aaj Tak*, *TV Today*, and *NDTV* in different states of India.

During his stint with Aaj Tak, Bajpai extensively covered stories on PoK (Pakistan Occupied Kashmir) and also became the first journalist in the world to have managed an interview with Mohd Hafiz Sayeed, the chief of Lashkar-e-Toiba. He also ran a series on the militant camps in PoK, where he interviewed youngsters, who were undergoing training to become future militants, and shared their thoughts and ideology with audiences in 2000 on Aaj Tak.

He has interviewed Jaish-e-Mohd's chief Sayeed Saluddin twice - in 2000 and 2001 (just before the Agra Summit) for Aaj Tak. He has four books to his credit - *Adivasion per TADA*-1996, *Sansad: Loktantra Ya Nazron Ka Dhoka* 2004, *Breaking news and Anchor-Reporter*-2007.

News pioneer

Rajat Sharma: One of the best-known faces on Indian news television, Rajat Sharma's has been a spectacular



journey in media. From living in a one-room tenement in Delhi to the city's upmarket Pamposh Enclave, it has been a long trek for the 51-year-old Sharma, who is now chairman and editor-in-chief of India TV, the channel he co-founded with Ritu Dhawan four years ago.

Best known for his show *Aap Ki Adalat*, born when he was news director at Zee TV.

Sharma, an alumnus of the Shriram College of Commerce, recalls the three gripping hours of his show *Breaking News* on a June evening two years ago as his most fulfilling moment. "Two youths, Neeraj Malik and Nitin Kasana from Meerut, went live on India TV, shaking up a nation by declaring how they would be killed in cold blood by trigger-happy policemen, denied a fair trial in a court of law. When Neeraj and Nitin surrendered after a solemn on-air promise of their life from a senior IPS officer, the first ever arrest during a live news show anywhere in the world, India TV had raised the bar in news journalism," reminisces Sharma.



Strong innings

Vinod Dua: Fifty-four-year-old Vinod Dua is an institution by himself in the



Man on a mission

Rajdeep Sardesai : Could well be the inspiration and role model for many an aspiring broadcast journalist in the country.

As editor-in-chief of IBN Network and the brain behind CNN-IBN, Sardesai's handling of issues pertaining to Indian politics and his very own style of analytical journalism have been trendsetting in its own way.

During his 18 years of journalistic experience in print and TV, he has covered the biggest stories in India - from the terrorist camps in Pakistan to India going nuclear, to caste and communal violence in the country to elections in India and across the sub-continent. He has contributed to several books and is a newspaper columnist.

To his credit is the distinction of having interviewed every Indian Prime Minister since 1988. An Oxford product, the 43-year-old Sardesai brings to CNN-IBN an insatiable appetite to question everything, and a spirit that embodies 'whatever it takes'. His efforts have received the highest recognition with the Padma Shri being conferred on him this year.

annals of Indian television. A native of Punjab, Dua completed his graduation from Delhi's Hans Raj College before turning to the media.

Dua has been a producer, director, anchor and political commentator since 1974 and is an 'election specialist'. Along with Prannoy Roy, Dua has over 20 years of experience of analysing elections and covering every election from 1984 to the 2004 polls. He has made numerous documentary films and programmes for various media houses.

Dua was the first electronic media journalist to have won the BD Goenka Award for excellence in journalism in 1995 and is also a Padma Shri recipient.

Taking Stock

Udayan Mukherjee: Thirty-five-year-old Udayan Mukherjee is easily the best known faces of CNBC TV18 and



perhaps amongst investors in India.

An economist who graduated from Kolkata's Presidency College and completed his MA in Economics from the Jawaharlal Nehru University, Mukherjee worked with UTV for four years before joining CNBC Asia as special markets correspondent when the business channel commenced operations in India. Currently, managing editor of CNBC TV18, he anchors live market shows like *Bazaar Morning Call* and other daily and weekly shows like *Corporate Radar* and *Taking Stock*, apart from working on the daily business news bulletin.

Among his memorable moments, Mukherjee recounts a chance meeting with an elderly lady at Delhi airport, who came up to him with tears in her eyes and said, "Beta, tum itna accha kaam karte ho, meri jo bachi hui umar hai, tumhe lag jaye..." . Says he, "No award or accolade can ever be as inspiring as that. It makes all the hard work and effort worthwhile!"

Among the shows that stand as milestones in his 35 years of experience in journalism are *Aap Ke Liye*, a Sunday morning programme on Doordarshan, and *Janvani* . From March 2004, Dua has been a regular presenter on NDTV India.

He counts an incident from his 1987 Moscow visit as one of his funniest memories. "While reporting from an event where the then Indian PM Rajiv Gandhi and Soviet Union leader Mikhail Gorbachov planted saplings and poured Ganga water and Volga river water respectively, I committed a faux pas of calling the Volga river water as 'Vodka water!'" **NT**

By Hemant Morparia



Hemant Morparia is an award-winning cartoonist based in Mumbai. His cartoons appear in Mid-Day, Time Out and a host of publications. When he is not tooning, Morparia is a practising doctor at the Breach Candy Hospital.

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