

Channels bloom as TV biz shrinks

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NEW DELHI

Indian television broadcasters are launching new channels, defying stagnating revenues and advertisers flocking to digital media. Their bet: targeted categories catering to large audience segments are still relevant.

Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd recently launched Kannada and Bengali language channels Zee Power and Zee BanglaSonar. Sony Pictures Networks India added Sony MAX 1 to its movie portfolio after Shemaroo Entertainment Ltd launched Shemaroo Josh, a full-fledged Hindi movie channel. These channels follow both ad-supported and subscription models.

Categories that either play to mass appeal or serve under-



Broadcasters eye habitual consumption areas. ISTOCKPHOTO

served niches tend to make sense, according to Charu Malhotra, managing director and co-founder at management consultant Primus Partners. Broadcasters are looking at areas where consumption is habitual and there's still room to differentiate or where adver-

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tisers want guaranteed reach, she said.

Malhotra cited movie channels, music, regional language entertainment and devotional content as obvious examples as they draw steady audiences and predictable advertiser interest. Sports and kids' genres, she said, also have strong stickiness.

The bet on new channels defies shrinking business and the rise of digital media. TV revenues fell 4.5% in 2024, declining for the second straight year after a 2% fall in 2023, according to the Ficci EY report 2025. TV advertising revenue dropped 6% due to a 12% reduction in brands using television. Digital media grew 17% in 2024, making it the fastest-growing segment of the Indian media and entertainment sector at ₹802 billion.

TV still reaches a massive base of viewers across India. According to the Ficci-FY report, total TV subscriptions stood at 160 million in 2024 and video OTT at 92 million.

"Audiences today are platform-fluid: they follow their favourite characters on TV,



The bet on new channels defies rise of digital media. ISTOCKPHOTO

engage on digital platforms, and explore snackable storytelling on mobile apps, all within a single day. Yet, television continues to hold unmatched scale, emotional depth, and engagement," said Deepak Sriramulu, business head, Zee Kannada and Kannada Zee5.

Zee Power follows a hybrid monetization strategy, combining advertising-led growth with strategic initiatives targeting subscriptions from regional audiences, Sriramulu said. The channel unlocks incremental advertising opportunities, particularly from retail, small businesses and local brands,

through strong female-forward narratives and socially rooted dramas, he said.

Jalaluddin Mondal, chief channel officer for Zee BanglaSonar and Zee Biskepe, pointed to untapped potential in TV in Bengal. While TV penetration in India is around 71%, Bengal underperforms at 66%, leaving millions of households unserved. "Despite a nearly balanced rural-to-urban population split of 47:53, programming has traditionally been urban-centric, leaving rural audiences underrepresented. Zee BanglaSonar was launched to address these gaps."

The Hindi movie genre, although crowded, continues to have room for new players, according to Sandeep Gupta, chief operating officer, broadcasting business at Shemaroo Entertainment. "Movies have very high repeat value, and audiences enjoy watching their favourite stars and blockbuster films multiple times. This makes the genre resilient, and a new entrant with the right library and curation can still capture attention."

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