

**Quote by Charu Malhotra, Managing Director and Co-Founder, Primus Partners**

Published in Livemint  
October 6, 2025 | 06:00 PM IST

## **TV business is shrinking. Then why are broadcasters launching new channels?**



**Read on:** <https://www.livemint.com/industry/media/broadcasters-launch-new-channels-despite-stagnating-linear-tv-business-11759649805483.html>

### **Article Content:**

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 Bangla Sonar. Sony Pictures Networks India added Sony MAX1 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 underserved 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 advertisers want guaranteed reach, she said.

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

Broadcasters' bet on new channels defies shrinking business and the rise of digital media. TV segment 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, there port said, making it the fastest growing and largest segment of the Indian media and entertainment sector at ₹802 billion.

However, TV still reaches a massive base of viewers across India, a scale that over-the-top(OTT) or streaming services providers haven't matched yet. According to the Ficci-FY report, total TV subscriptions stood at 160 million in 2024 and video OTT users at 92million.

### **Regional push**

"Audiences today are platform-fluid: they follow their favourite characters on TV, 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. Young viewers under 30 are driving growth, proving that traditional does not mean outdated; it means trusted," 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.

Launching niche or themed channels allows broadcasters to capture very specific segments of that huge audience at relatively low incremental cost of creating content, especially in regional languages, according to industry experts.

It's less about chasing big growth and more about fine-tuning portfolios: filling gaps, attracting advertisers who want sharper targeting and keeping distribution networks active in niche categories like movies and kids content. In smaller towns especially, television remains the default medium, so there's still space for well-positioned launches according to Malhotra of Primus Partners.

Jalaluddin Mondal, chief channel officer for Zee Bangla Sonar and Zee Biskope, pointed to untapped potential in television viewership 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 Bangla Sonar was launched to address these gaps," Mondal said.

Regional markets have been a promising area with channels in languages like Marathi, Bangla, and Bhojpuri launched in recent years. Apart from that, broadcasters are looking to capture demand in categories where repeat engagement is high.

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."

### **Monetization risk**

Ashish Pherwani, M&E sector leader, EY India, said free-to-air (FTA) television will continue to grow, and that will always provide the opportunity for more FTA channels. In addition, product gaps—like regional content—still exist in certain pay TV markets as well, which their right content, packaging, pricing and operating mix can help to monetize, he said.

Yet, new channels risk fragmenting audiences and advertising revenue.

This dispersal exerts pressure on advertising revenue since many brands are shifting budgets to digital channels with sharper targeting, according to Mahesh Sharma, president-strategic partnerships at Chaupal, a platform specializing in Punjabi, Haryanvi and Bhojpuri content.

Additionally, evolving consumer behaviour demands faster innovation and integration of new technologies such as connected TVs and interactive features, which can strain traditional broadcasters, said Sharma, adding that sustaining requires constant reinvention and seamless digital alignment to remain competitive.

Partho Dasgupta, managing partner of Thoth Advisors and ex-CEO of BARC India, said while broadcasters expect new channels to eventually drive more viewers towards television, there is an immediate challenge of monetization via advertising, and that seems to get worse.

However, there are others who do not consider television and digital media mutually exclusive.

"In a shifting media landscape where traditional television is losing ground, the strategy to launch hyper-targeted, low-cost channels is aimed at capturing underserved regional audiences that blend familiar formats with fresh energy," said Devyani Ozarde, managing director and lead—media and entertainment, Accenture in India.

"These channels act as entry points into a broader content ecosystem, driving engagement across TV, OTT, and digital platforms, Ozarde said. "By offering culturally resonant programming tailored to specific linguistic and demographic segments, the approach aims to retain viewer loyalty, attract local advertisers, and strengthen cross-platform monetization."