**Quote by Munish Vaid, Vice-President, Primus Partners**

**Published in Mint**
**December 31, 2025**

# As viewing habits change, youth brands move advertising budgets from TV to digital

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**Article Content**:

Summary

The steady erosion of viewership for English-language, urban-centric, and niche TV categories has meant that youth-focused brands have had to reassess their media strategies.

**NEW DELHI** : Though music television network MTV shut down five of its dedicated music channels globally this year, in India, it had already diversified away from pure music to youth-driven, urban programming and live entertainment experiences.

That pivot, however, reflects a broader challenge. The steady erosion of viewership for English-language, urban-centric, and niche TV categories has meant that youth-focused brands have had to reassess their media strategies, reallocate spending from TV to creator collaborations, short-form video storytelling, and influencer-led activations.

While English-language channels accounted for just 3-5% of the overall TV advertising pie, the affluent audiences they reached are not easily accessible elsewhere. Their decline has therefore left a gap in premium brand-building environments on TV, even as the digital and over-the-top ecosystem remains relatively young and difficult to navigate at scale.

“The closure of such channels marks the loss of a ready-made cultural stage for youth marketing. These brands once used MTV’s content ecosystem—reality shows, music properties, and campus events—to build relevance. Now, they’re reallocating those spends to digital-first platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and OTT networks," said Vishal Agrahari, vice-president, paid media at digital marketing agency BC Web Wise.

"Instead of large linear sponsorships, the focus has shifted to creator collaborations, short-form video storytelling, and influencer-led activations that can deliver more targeted but fragmented engagement,” he added.

**Digital steps in**

Brands once present on networks like MTV now invest in OTT, YouTube, and short videos where youth engagement is stronger, agreed Rupali Chavan, senior vice-president and head of business at media agency Mudramax.Instead of TV spots, they’re using creators, influencers, connected TV ads, and interactive content. The focus has shifted from broad reach to genuine connections, she added.

In an earlier interview with *Mint*, Anshul Ailawadi, former business head, youth, music and English cluster at media conglomerate Viacom18, had said the impact on linear TV has been made up by digital. “The challenge is that attention spans of young South Asians are getting increasingly fragmented, so one has to remain in the realm of visibility for them in an ever-changing world. And you can’t impose what you think is relevant on them. So, it’s important to remain consumer-focused,” he said.

MTV, Channel [V], and other English-language youth channels primarily attracted lifestyle and aspiration-driven advertisers, according to experts. These included cola and snack brands, telecom operators, smartphone makers, personal care and grooming labels, auto brands with lifestyle models, and fashion or footwear players.

In India’s massive television ad economy, English-language channels make up only a sliver—roughly 3-5% of the total , according to most industry estimates. Their value wasn’t in sheer volume, but in the premium audiences they catered to: metro, affluent, and youth-skewed viewers who were difficult to reach elsewhere. So, while their absence doesn’t dent overall ad revenue significantly, it leaves a gap in premium brand-building environments on TV.

“Traction is strong on streaming and social platforms, but monetization is more difficult than with mass-entertainment linear channels. Appointment viewing has given way to algorithmic discovery, so loyalty must be built show by show and creator by creator," said Vishal Prabhu, creative director-strategy at digital agency White Rivers Media

"Premium English content still lags mass entertainment on ad CPMs—Cost Per Mille is a model where advertisers pay for 1,000 views of their ad—and subscription pull, so producers now rely on hybrid models—CTVs (connected TVs) funded by brands, creator cross-overs, international library licensing and live-event tie-ins," he added.

**But it doesn't match up to TV**

Munish Vaid, vice-president, management consultancy firm Primus Partners, said culturally it is a loss since those channels helped curate youth trends for decades, but commercially, the market adapts quickly. Ad dollars are migrating to platforms where the target audience now resides: social, YouTube, OTT, and targeted digital campaigns.

"Good English-language content can and does find viewers on OTT, but the economics are different. OTT discovery is fickle: a well-made show can garner strong niche traction and critical acclaim, yet not recoup significant production costs unless it secures multi-territory licensing, ad-supported revenue, or platform exclusivity that generates substantial revenue. OTT can give longer tails and new monetization paths such as international licensing, syndication and brand integrations, but per-viewer ARPU (average revenue per user) on OTT in India is still lower than a high-CPM TV linear slot used to be," Vaid said.

The practical challenges include discoverability, the need for subtitles or dubbing to scale, and smaller advertiser pools for premium English shows unless they break into a pan-India or global audience. "In short, creator traction exists, but monetization often needs multiple windows and revenue streams, "he pointed out.