

# IMPACT

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NEW PLATFORMS. NEW PARTNERS. NEW ERA.

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**THE YEARENDER:**  
2010 WAS A  
HORRIBLE  
YEAR, WITH SOME  
GOOD THINGS...

its rival net  
merger of two  
entertainment

## DIVIDE & RULE

Markand Adhikari unveils a master move to launch 3 Hindi entertainment channels - each with similar content but a distinct, regional 'tadka'



# The Adhikaris go for the 3-D Effect!!

How do you set up a general entertainment channel that's not similar to what's already in the market? Ask the Adhikari Brothers, who are currently in the process of launching three new channels.

By Cassandra Serpes

**T**he Hindi general entertainment space is perhaps the most talked about – the weekly ratings, the drama, the hype that surrounds the shows, et al. Now, considering the already existing number of channels, you would have to be one heck of a risk-taker to enter the space with the right content, the enormous marketing strategies and not to forget the monies involved.

#### The Twist

Setting up three new channels in the midst of all this sound and fury may sound extreme, but Markand Adhikari, Vice-Chairman and Managing Director of Sri Adhikari Brothers Television Network Ltd. makes it seem simple. That is because of the twist to the tale which he believes will “revolutionise the television space”.

While most of the Hindi general entertainment channels are aired at a national level, the concept here is to go regional, thus giving the audiences Hindi content with a flavour of the region. “The market is cluttered and is totally saturated. It makes absolute no sense to launch another channel at the national level. One has to look beyond it,” says Adhikari. The three channels are to be aired in the first week of February.

“The logic behind this is *desi* content with *pradeshik tadka*” says Adhikari. Explaining further, he says that





PICTURES: VILAS KALGUTKER

**दबंग**

Dabangg which will cater to the Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and Uttaranchal regions

**Dhamaal**

Dhamaal which will focus on Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh regions

**DHAMAKAA**

Dhamakaa which will cater to Gujarat.

**Programmes to be aired**

Five new comedy shows which include 'Sab Golmaal Hai', 'Haai Mere Bhai' and 'I Love you, Two'

Thriller 'Suraag' casts popular Bhojpuri star Ravi Kishan

'Hasya Kavi Sammelan' to be hosted by Shailesh Lodha

Stand-up comedy shows

Gags in the regional language

the markets chosen are all predominantly Hindi-speaking. However, each of these has a flavour of their own. "There are regional channels which exist in these regions, but their viewership is low. These markets prefer their content in Hindi and not in the regional language. Thus, we have decided that we will give audiences in these markets content which belongs to the quality of the nationally aired channels with a regional touch," he says.

While the concept is different, one might wonder why the launch of channels in specific regions that are already viewing national content. But there is more to it than just content – Adhikari rationalises that they are also providing an opportunity to local advertisers through these channels.

According to Adhikari, there are a large number of advertisers that want to advertise locally, but the only access they get is through the print medium, which is a costly affair. Radio is another option, but then again the drawback of the medium is that it is too city-specific. Of course, television is an available option, but then again there are setbacks. Advertising on national television would lead to unnecessary spill-over and additional expense. On the other hand, advertising on the regional channels would mean lack of reach, considering viewership is not high.

On this aspect, Adhikari said, "We are providing them (local advertisers) an opportunity that will get them national quality content with a rate that is suitable for Gujarat or Madhya Pradesh or Bihar. Print is so costly, and advertisers are being taken for a ride."

#### The Content

Content is summed up in what they call 'Chill and Thriller' which includes about 75 per cent of comedy content and 25 per cent thriller. The channels will start with up to four hours of fresh comedy programming for which prominent comedy writer Paritosh Painter has been roped in. Thriller content will be taken from the Sri Adhikari Brothers library that has been created over the years.

Considering the region-specific nature of the channels, gags need to be tailored to the audience.

Commenting on this, Gautam Adhikari, Chariman and Creative Head, SAB Group says, "We have included, in each show, a character or a situation which is very region-specific. Also, the characters of the shows will have a bit of accent from the region, so that the audience will identify with them." Examples of comedy shows that are being worked on are 'Haai Mere Bhai' which is based in Ahmedabad with characters from that region, and 'Sab Golmaal Hai' which is based in Lucknow, with shooting happening there for the audience to relate to it better.

Painter said that along with the regional touch, they are giving their shows a national feel by portraying real-life situations which people can relate to.

Comedies with regional characters are nothing new, but Painter says the humour will be different. "We are trying to pick from things that happen in the lives of people every day. We are in a zone where people will identify with the situation. We are catering to a set of audiences where caste and class differences still exist in the smaller



#### From Aidem's point of view

"At Aidem we have been at the forefront of innovation and have always experimented with new ideas and products. It's in our DNA to take on exciting new challenges and create new markets. We see a lot of potential from these channels and the strategy behind them," says Raj Nayak of Aidem, which is a part of these launches. Some of the 3D highlights:

- Attractive markets UP, Uttaranchal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, MP, Chhattisgarh and Gujarat
- a. 50%+ of the population of India
- b. Huge market potential underserved and underserved currently due to daunting marketing and media logistics.
- c. Strong consumption story FMCG, durables, services, financial inclusion

#### • Geographical Flexibility

- a. National media approach very inefficient (efficiency and effectiveness)
- b. Newspapers not very attractive option to reach consumers due to low/medium literacy rates (compared to say South India).
- c. Currently scanty or no local TV options to reach these markets locally
- d. SAB bouquet offers local market laser targeting eliminating spillover

#### • Cost-efficient replacement for prohibitively expensive national private satellite GEC options

#### • Unique content mix addressing local audiences in a sub-cultural context

- a. Food habits and dialects change every four hours as one travels by road in these markets how can a content mix beamed from Mumbai satisfy such diversity?
- b. Continent sized markets with innumerable subcultures cannot be handled by programming created and conceptualised in Andheri!

#### • Track record House of SAB Kings in the Content Creation business



“We are trying to pick from things that happen in the lives of people every day. We are in a zone where people will identify with the situation. We are catering to a set of audiences where caste and class differences still exist in the smaller towns of those regions, and that comes across in our programming which people will identify with.”

• Paritosh Painter

towns of those regions, and that comes across in our programming which people will identify with.”

All the production is being done in-house. As Adhikari puts it “My core strength is my production.”

**How it all works**

Markand Adhikari says he is following “the Times of India model” in the sense that of having various “editions”. “I have observed that the content in all the various editions is the same, but each has a local flavour to it. Also, I have observed that the editions are full of local advertisers. I believe we should learn from our counterparts about monetising successfully,” he remarks.

The three channels will have different feeds. Even though the channels are free-to-air for the first six months they will be encrypted at the MSO level so as not to allow transmission to the other regions. Six months from being aired the channels will go pay because Adhikari strongly believes that “pay is the future for television channels”.

On the marketing front, there are plans for heavy outdoor promotions in 20 cities across the regions.



Team 3D: Ravi Adhikari, Markand Adhikari, Paritosh Painter, Parthsaarthy Iyer and Ritu Chopra Singh

Adhikari said they would be looking at smaller towns too, because of the channels being state-specific. Apart from that, there will be television promos on news channels, music channels and channels airing films. The local print media will also be looked at. Unconventional methods will also be tried out. “About Rs 5 crore is the total budget on the marketing front for all three channels,” says Adhikari.

One cannot assume that getting advertising from local advertisers can be an easy task. To help in this part of the business comes in Raj Nayak and his team at Aidem. Nayak says, “We believe that while advertising will grow organically in the metros, the real growth in the coming years will actually come from Tier 2 & Tier 3 cities.”

He continued further, “We are in the process of building a retail team in all these markets to be able to exploit opportunities as the markets evolve. It is part of Aidem’s strategy to be able to have a presence in every market where there is advertising money. These three channels give us an opportunity to expedite our presence in these markets. We have already started the process of recruiting talent and should be able to have a retail business development team soon in all these regions.”

- a. Terrific and proven track record of delivering hits in every language/genre they have entered since the late 80s starting with Marathi
- b. Bottom-up approach to programming in the local markets with local talent and themes

**PlannerSpeak**



**Sandeep Lakhina,**  
COO, Starcom, South Asia

To me this is not a very sound strategy. The very essence of going regional is to capitalise on the culture, the food, the traditions, etc. If the language itself is missing, I don’t know how well this could work for the channel. On the advertisers’ front, I think this is a good step. It does get expensive for local or region-specific advertisers to advertise on a nationwide scale. This will help them get to their audience without them shelling out a lot of money. Of course it depends on the rates of the channel, but it sounds good.



**Sanjoy Chakrabarty,**  
CEO, Dentsu Media

I think this concept is a fantastic one and will work well. In a place like Gujarat anyway there is less viewership of channels that air Gujarati content. The Hindi language is high there and something with a local flavour will work well. It will be similar for all the other regions. When it comes to advertisers, I think it should work. It is a very well thought concept. This will work highly in the favour of local advertisers and also be of use to national advertisers if they have to target specific regions. It works both ways.