

Keeping up with the Kapoors

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Today's young Indians aren't 'Indian' at all. They're global consumers with modern values and an increasing desire for an international lifestyle, from Levi's jeans to Starbucks coffee. And the world is beginning to take note.

AUTHORS

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LOCATIONS:
INDIA

GENERATIONS:
GEN Y (BORN
1982-1996)
GEN Z (BORN
1997-2010)

SECTORS:
MEDIA AND ENTERTAIN-
MENT
COFFEE AND SOFT
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SCOPE

The young Indian of today is truly unrecognisable to older generations. He wears torn and faded Levi's bought at premium price, which look to his parents like hand-me-downs, and he hasn't missed a single episode of Homeland. She read Fifty Shades of Grey two weeks after it first came out, and spends her afternoons meeting friends in Starbucks, buying cups of coffee for 'about a hundred bucks' apiece.

Today's young Indians, in fact, aren't 'Indian' at all. They're global consumers with modern values and an increasing desire for an international lifestyle. And the world is beginning to take note.

KEEPING UP WITH THE REST OF THE WORLD

"Watch the best of America, with America and before the rest of the world," declares the advert for Star World Premiere, a new entertainment channel launched in September 2013. It's run by India's Star TV, a subsidiary of 21st Century Fox, and it offers American shows at the same time they're aired in the US for Rs. 60 (60p) a month.

The Indian appetite for English-language programming has exploded in recent years – especially for American shows like Homeland, Castle, and White Collar. It's so popular that 21st Century Fox chose to offer this 'simultaneous' service to India rather than English-speaking countries like the UK or Australia. "We know there's a premium audience in India today, which is very up-to-date with global trends," says Kevin Vaz, Business Head of Star English channels. "They're what I like to call global Indians." [1]

Video URL: [//www.youtube.com/embed/8CLOCBTjztc?rel=0](http://www.youtube.com/embed/8CLOCBTjztc?rel=0)

A NICHE AUDIENCE

"Our target audience is the top 1% of the population, between the ages of 20 and 35," says Vaz. "We are targeting the global audience, who proactively seek out and are willing to pay for this premium content." [1]

While the audience for English general entertainment channels in India is relatively small in comparison to the kind of popularity the Hindi channels enjoy, it's still a sizeable audience. Harish Bijoor, a brand strategy specialist and CEO of Harish Bijoor Consults Inc notes that numbers don't matter in this instance, because the audience is so niche and focused that they're an ideal target market. They're comprised of the richest segments in each of the top 46 towns and cities in India. "At the end of the day, what does it matter if the programme is popular all over the country, but conversion rates of advertising is a nano miniscule of that?" asks Bijoor. "If there are a hundred people watching [Star World Premiere], it's quite likely that 85 of them are prime target audiences for the products promoted through the channel." [2]



Two and a Half Men is one of India's favourite TV programmes

CBS (2013)

THE RISE OF THE NEW INDIAN

"India is one of the best markets to tap right now, primarily because of the size of its audiences and the growth factor," says Vaz. "There are so many people... converting from Indian general entertainment channels to English. Of course, the new generation is addicted to a number of Western shows." [1]

In fact, the English entertainment genre is one of the fastest growing spaces since the arrival of cable and digitisation of broadcasts. The availability of sufficient bandwidth made it possible to increase the quality of picture and sound. And the channels themselves have worked hard to give primetime slots to selected English shows, using subtitles so Indian viewers can understand unfamiliar accents. [3]

» Of course, the new generation is addicted to a number of Western shows

Kevin Vaz, Business Head of Star English channels

Star TV's executives are confident that viewers who downloaded torrents of their favourite American shows in the past will be happy to pay to view alongside America. It's the only reason Jatin Varma went ahead and finally signed up for an HD connection. 27-year-old Varma is the founder of Indian Comic Con, an event that now takes place annually in four cities across the country. He's seen the trend towards Western brands in his own business, and now he's watching it spread across various forms of media. "The urban audience that we're targeting consumes most of its international content in English – it's very well versed," he notes. "The internet has kept them informed of everything. I don't do BitTorrent any more. I'd rather pay for the shows and watch them immediately. Why even wait for a day?" [4]

India is exciting, says Bijoor, because a large number of people in this country are suddenly waking up to new consumption possibilities. "The prosperity norms of the Indian are growing by a quantum whereas the prosperity norms of an American

or a Briton are not growing by the same measure,” he says. “So affordability indices of an Indian today are greater than the affordability indices of pretty much everyone else.” After decades of being told that consumption is bad and that you should get by with little, Indians are not only beginning to excited by brands, but by the concept of luxury.



The spread of Western media has resulted in India's own Comic Con

ComicBuzz (2013)

AN EXPANDING MEDIA MARKET

Television is not the only media sector in India that's feeling the effect of globalisation. The Daily Mail partnered with the India Today group in 2007 to launch Mail Today, a newspaper that now has approximately half a million readers. [5] Indian editions of magazines like Elle, Cosmopolitan, Marie Claire and Forbes have been published from India for years, and in 2011, The New York Times launched the India Ink blog to tap into an upsurge in Indian readers on the site. [6]

"People are shifting from vernacular reading to English reading," says Bijoor. "As people move from local languages to English, there will be a need for content that is not only written in English but also breeds the English ethos. This content will come from overseas markets." [2]



Popular magazines have released Indian versions, created within the country

Forbes (2013)

INSIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The Indian television industry is projected to be worth Rs. 848 billion (\$13.7 billion) by 2017. [7] According to analysts, not only is the number of Indian viewers growing, but they're getting more discerning, too. "The United States is considered to be the mother market of all good entertainment and there's a great degree of demand for brands that emanate from the US side of the business," says Bijoor. "There was a time when the UK was much more attractive. That was version 1.0. This is version 2.0." [2]

» The United States is considered to be the mother market of all good entertainment

Harish Bijoor, brand strategy specialist

Ultimately, the mindset of the Indian consumer is increasingly global. Bijoor calls it the brand caste system. "Let's say there's a viewer in Madurai in India who views exactly the same programming that a person in London is viewing or a person in Pittsburgh is watching. Now these are guys who I think belong to the same caste and they belong to the same caste because they watch the same shows. They emote with the same English language, share the same ethos, and it just so happens that they live in diverse geographies. This is not an Indian we're now talking about. This is a global citizen." [2]

That's not to say the Indian market is challenge-free. Censorship is a huge issue, with viewers frequently finding themselves irritated by the bleeping out of curse words – even late into the night – or words like 'beef', even when used in cooking shows. Yet neither viewers or providers are deterred. "The biggest challenge we have is that we need to engage audiences in a way that they're willing to watch something new," says Vaz. "With the steadily-growing success that the English channels are seeing today, however, it seems that this huge market is just waiting to be tapped." [1]

Mridu Khullar Relph is a writer, entrepreneur, and content strategist. She has written and consulted for The New York Times, Time, CNN, ABC News, The Independent, The Christian Science Monitor and more. More details can be found on her [website](#).

KEY STATISTICS

- Star World Premiere's services are available for Rs. 60 (60p) a month [1]
- The Indian television industry is projected to be worth Rs. 848 billion (\$13.7 billion) by 2017 [7]

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SOURCES

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2. Interview with Harish Bijoor conducted by author
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4. Interview with Jatin Varma conducted by author
5. 'Thomas Jacob on Mail Today's launch into India's booming newspaper market', Thomas Crampton (April 2008)
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7. 'Indian media and entertainment industry to achieve growth of 11.8% in 2013 and touch INR 917 billion', KPMG (March 2013)

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