

# Sony's foray into factual

Sony BBC Earth eyes a high-growth category with insightful but easy-to-consume content

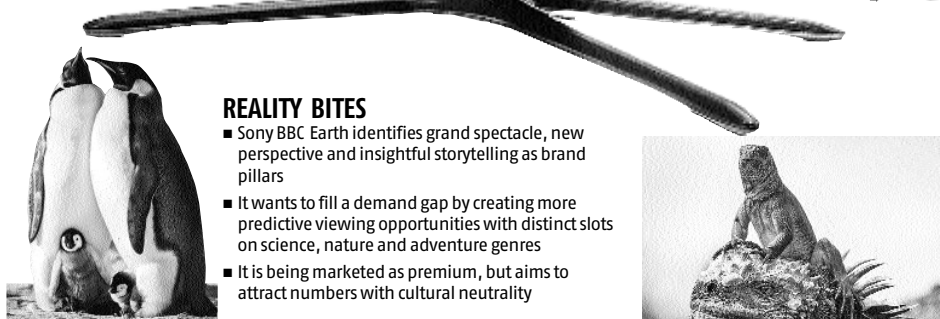
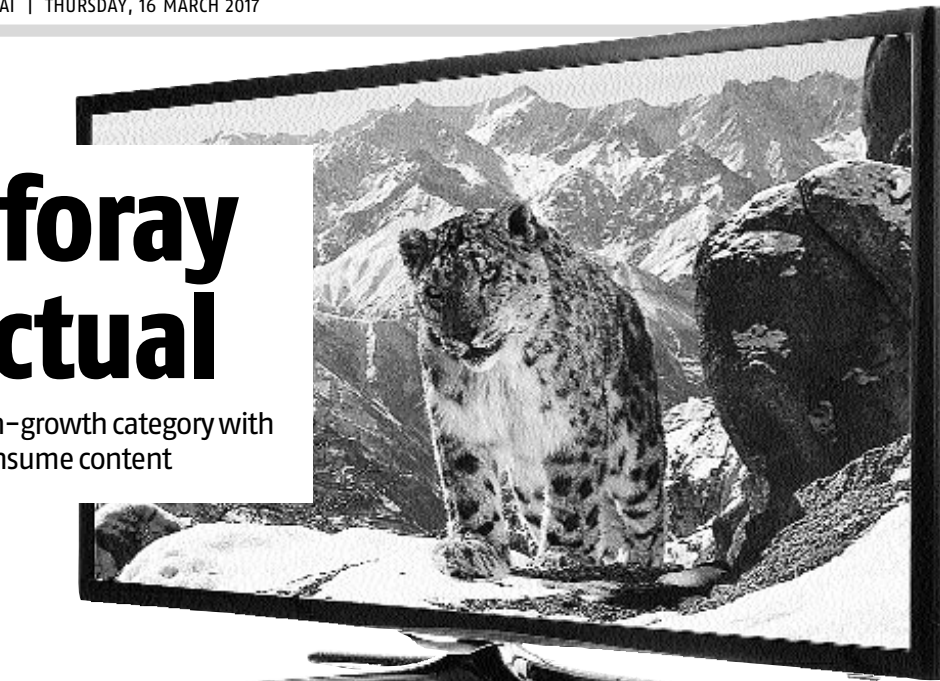
RITWIK SHARMA

For over two decades, the Indian television audience has been exposed to factual entertainment following the entry of Discovery Channel in 1995. Last week marked the launch of the latest entrant Sony BBC Earth, a channel by a joint venture of Sony Pictures Networks India (SPN) and BBC Worldwide. SPN is bullish about driving what is viewed as a high-growth category with the help of content that is visually superior, insightful and easy to consume.

In the infotainment segment, Discovery, National Geographic Channel and History TV18 are the leading players. Globally, the genre accounts for 12-13 per cent of TV viewership. The low percentage of viewership in India indicates that TV — still the biggest source of entertainment for the masses — remains more of an escape route than serious viewing.

In India, the factual entertainment genre is pegged at ₹1,500 crore and comprises merely 1.2 per cent of the overall TV viewership. Saurabh Yagnik, executive vice-president and business head, English cluster, SPN, points out that the network surveyed viewers across eight cities and identified Indians as being increasingly driven by success and demanding instant gratification. If Sony brings brand building and distribution to the table, its partner BBC is one of the biggest content creators for factual content, he adds. Hence, Sony BBC Earth ensures portfolio expansion for both in India. "Our brand pillars are going to be grand visual spectacle, never before seen or new perspective, and positive insightful storytelling," says Yagnik.

Yagnik identifies brand positioning as one of the key tasks for differentiating the channel. "We want to showcase content diversity and provide easy and predictable viewing opportunities. One of the issues that most viewers told us is that they don't know what to expect when they tune in to



## REALITY BITES

- Sony BBC Earth identifies grand spectacle, new perspective and insightful storytelling as brand pillars
- It wants to fill a demand gap by creating more predictive viewing opportunities with distinct slots on science, nature and adventure genres
- It is being marketed as premium, but aims to attract numbers with cultural neutrality

watch this genre. We want to tap this opportunity by creating more predictive viewing opportunities," he says, adding the channel would do so by having distinct slots on science, nature and adventure genres. To emphasise unique storytelling, he cites the example of a show called Wild Earth, which highlights the strategies behind hunting, as against shows that routinely focus on the act of hunting itself.

According to Ayan Banik, head, brand strategy, Cheil India, socio-cultural factors will drive the growth of infotainment in India. He says, "First, we are becoming more and more visually oriented as human beings, in terms of consumption of content. The attention span of millennials is reducing drastically. So, TV is no longer a source of entertainment but also information so long as it is packaged with the right adrenalin quotient. Secondly, because of

global warming, pollution or new diseases there is an increasing need for people to understand. The more you know, the more you are equipped to survive in a hostile environment." As BBC enjoys credibility in terms of fact-based content and Sony has a strong grasp of Indian entertainment requirements, the joint venture is a "juxtaposition of the best of two worlds".

Sony BBC Earth will be available in standard and high definition in English, Hindi, Tamil and Telugu. When asked, Yagnik says localising content is good but not a necessary "criterion" in the category. "We find what people are looking for is easy-to-consume entertaining content, content that helps create conversation value, and mind-blowing facts, visuals and stories."

Sony BBC Earth is being marketed as premium in terms of the content, but given its cultural neutrality the owners hope it



would be consumed by large audiences.

Banik points out that infotainment channels are wont to merely dubbing programmes in order to "make it Indian", and they tend to prioritise the media planner over the consumer so as to attract ads. Also, repetition of factual content — that is more expensive to produce compared to general entertainment — can affect viewer loyalty.

## GUEST COLUMN

# Boosting connection culture and output

Leaders can motivate employees by promoting bonds based on shared identity

It's typical for people working in cultures of control and indifference to develop learned helplessness where they feel their opinions and actions don't matter so they give up and just try to survive in order to protect their jobs. Such an approach sabotages the organisation's productivity with sub-par employee performance.



MICHAEL LEE STALLARD  
Co-founder and president, E Pluribus Partners

Organisations can address such issues by fostering what is called connection culture. Connection is a bond based on shared identity, empathy and understanding that moves individuals toward group-centred membership. A connection culture is created and maintained when leaders communicate an inspiring vision, value people and give them a voice. Few leaders do this well.

One leader who created and maintained a connection culture was Admiral Vern Clark, the US chief of naval operations (CNO) from 2000 until his retirement in 2005. The CNO is the principal naval adviser to the President on the conduct of war. When Clark assumed the CNO role, the navy was not performing at its best. One metric that shows the navy's culture was not inspiring performance excellence is enlisted sailor retention which had fallen to half of the navy's goal of 38 per cent. Given the sophistication of the navy's tech systems, including nuclear power and weapons systems, having high-quality, motivated personnel is essential to maximising productivity and minimising defects and accidents.

To begin with, Admiral Clark made sailors feel proud to be in the navy. He said the navy's mission is to take the "war fighting readiness" of the US to any corner of the world at a moment's notice and it was "our turn to make history" by "building a navy for the 21st century" that would be "strategically and operationally agile,

technologically and organisationally innovative, networked at every level, highly joint (with the other services), and effectively integrated with allies".

Second, Clark made each sailor feel valued. He described his strategy as using the navy's "asymmetrical advantages" of the "best technology in the world" combined with the "genius of our people." When navy budget officials proposed cuts related to training and developing people as part of the annual planning cycle, Clark wouldn't allow it. Instead, he increased the training budget. He strongly supported an increase in pay that was approved by the President and Congress. He increased the training budget to support personal and professional growth.

Clark changed legacy systems that made sailors feel devalued. One such system was the navy's job assignment process. Under Clark and a programme he dubbed "the revolution in personnel distribution," the system was changed to a job bidding approach with incentive compensation provided to the jobs and locations that were in the least demand. As a result, the percentage of sailors forced into positions or locations they didn't want was reduced from 30 per cent to around 1.5 per cent.

Finally, Admiral Clark made everyone feel like they had a voice in most decisions. He encouraged participants to speak up. His own approachable, conversational speaking style set the tone for others to share their ideas and opinions. He asked everyone to "challenge every assumption," "be data driven," and "drill down" into the details. He challenged them to "have a sense of urgency to make the navy better every day" in order to deliver greater efficiencies and readiness for the dollars America invested in the navy.

## SNIPPETS

### Spicy food and aggression



A paper published by scholars from the Indian School of Business, Hyderabad, and the University of Texas at Austin in the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* claims that there may be a

strong correlation between consumption of spicy food and aggression.

Based on an experiment conducted with 237 students, who were tested for levels of aggression and their reaction before and after eating tortilla chips, with or without chilli sauce, the findings reveal a striking change of behaviour in the participants.

Spicy food is supposed to enhance levels of testosterone in male bodies and apparently cuts down chances of heart disease and stroke by at least 13 per cent. The latest research signals an increase in risk-taking behaviour and heated debates among people who eat spicy food.

### Brands under scrutiny



Household brands in China are bracing for the government's version of public-service journalism — the annual programme on state-run TV that uses hidden cameras to highlight what the network calls consumers' unfair practices against consumers.

China Central Television's March 15 broadcast for World Consumer Rights Day has targeted some of the world's biggest companies in the past, including Apple Inc., McDonald's Corp. and Volkswagen AG. The name-and-shame show not only attracts eyeballs, it also gets results — Apple's Tim Cook apologised in 2013 and McDonald's retained some workers in 2012.

Breakneck economic growth and rising incomes transformed China into an essential market with 1.4 billion people, and the government's push for a consumption-driven economy fuelled an influx of foreign companies in the fast food, retailing and automotive industries. Of late, China has retaliated against Korean businesses after the government in Seoul allowed the deployment of a US missile-defence system that China said threatens regional security.

Chinese authorities, citing alleged safety violations, suspended operations of 55 stores owned by Lotte Group.

# 'Data is crucial in generating leads on different media platforms'

In advertising, the focus continues to be identifying the big idea, making it relevant to the brand and keeping the consumer engaged, BOBBY PAWAR tells Sangeeta Tanwar

Publicis says it offers marketing communications solutions to clients, as opposed to advertising solutions. What exactly is the difference? How does it help the client?

The starting point for a campaign is understanding the proposition for developing the communication. One has to start by understanding the problem that the brand suffers from and move on to finding a solution. So the communication message that you come up with becomes the solution. Next, you innovate with the communication message to create buzz and curiosity around the brand. To achieve that Publicis has done away with the dominant layers governing various groups or divisions. We do not believe in labels or compartmentalisation of creativity and talent. As a team everyone under the roof is free to come up with solutions. For good work to come out of an agency, it is important for people to buy in each other's vision.

There have been very few examples of product brands built in India in the last few years. But we have seen hundreds of brand extensions. How would you compare the challenge of building a new brand versus sustaining the leadership of an existing brand?

The task of building a new brand in a cluttered market is more difficult than working on an established brand. This is so because a new brand does not have big budgets to work with. Start-up brands, by and

large, have to disrupt the market with a new idea or innovation with limited resources and budgets. On the other hand, working with established brands can prove less challenging because as category leaders such players are often trapped in their own success. Since, leader brands have a momentum of their own, these brands stop experimenting and tend to play safe. On the contrary, start-ups are more likely to innovate as they need to create chaos in order to disrupt an established category or to create a new one. A relatively new player cannot hope to succeed by doing more of what an established brand has been doing. A new brand has to offer a differentiated product and an equally different purpose for its existence.

Can you give us examples from recent years of what you deem cutting-edge communication?

We can look at the Ambuja campaign starring the Great Khali, the wrestling champion. A lot of people ask us how we cracked the campaign. Primarily, when we talk about a house, what we look for in it is stability and strength. And what better ways of highlighting these elements but bring to the forefront the troubles faced by a giant like Khali. The campaign goes to prove that brands need to stir the pot differently so as to bring back excitement to a low-engagement category like cement. Similarly, the Makemytrip campaign featuring actors Ranveer Singh and Alia Bhatt takes the lead in turning the conversation towards offline users at a time when everybody is talking about online users. The objective here is to target a large section of travelers that continues to reach out to travel agents for planning their trips. The idea is to partner with these travelers and help them migrate to a better travel and hotel experience. Another interesting campaign which has managed to create buzz is the Bajaj V campaign by Leo Burnett.

Are marketers now actively demanding data-led insights or is it still more of a supply phenomenon?

The data led world is in a nascent stage. More than advertising, data driven offerings dominate and play a larger role in media. Data plays a big role in generating leads on different media platforms. In advertising, the focus more or less continues to be on identifying the big idea from what's happening around the world, making it relevant to the brand that I am working with and keeping the consumer engaged. The focus here is to engage in topical advertising and along the way leverage available data to leapfrog the brand on the back of a great insight.

## Q&A

BOBBY PAWAR  
Managing director and chief creative officer, Publicis



## QUIZ

502

- 1 The founder of this company whose current revenue is approx. \$12 billion-plus was a daredevil at New York World's Fair in 1854. He crashed down along with a platform that was risen to a height of 100 feet. To everyone's relief it stopped mid-flight when two metal hands reached out and caught it. He wanted to prove to the public that he would be safe all the time. Name the person and the company he set up.
- 2 Which company has named its million-dollar sleek hypercar after the supernatural female beings in Norse mythology who decided human fates on the battlefield?
- 3 Madison Keys, Lucas Pouille, Stan Wawrinka and Maria Sharapova have all been connected with which brand as its brand ambassadors?
- 4 This person made his first investment when he was less than 14. He bought three shares for himself and three for his sister in a services company in the early 40s. The company whose shares he bought is known by the name ITGO today. It is in oil and gas. Name the person.
- 5 This 235-year-old company was founded by a person who was jailed for causing a riot. Watching the janitor use a broom to sweep the insides of the prison gave him the inspiration for his invention. Generally pieces of cloth or sponge dipped in a solution of sulphur were used by the prisoners for cleaning \_\_. Once he came out he started manufacturing his product using the hair of a wild boar. Name the person, his invention and the company that was set up.
- 6 What is the term used to describe the mass nod of agreement by participants in a meeting to comments made by the boss, even though most have no idea what was said?
- 7 Name the company and its founders that goes by the philosophy of "pay-per-click job advertising network".
- 8 This company's base line is "With you when it matters". It manufactures the world's toughest \_\_. Name the brand.
- 9 Who said this: "You are not born glamorous, glamour is created"?
- 10 Name the brand from its erstwhile logo.



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## ANSWERS TO THE STRATEGIST QUIZ 501

1. State Street, a \$2.5-trillion asset management company
2. The three-legged stool. For home depot three-legged stool represents three tenets: Customer experience, product authority and capital allocation driven by productivity and efficiency. For McDonald's the three legs represent McDonald's, its franchisees and suppliers
3. Instituted by Wipro Ltd, they are given at an institutional level to encourage capability building in the area of sustainability
4. All were invented in Italy. The Venice Film Festival is regarded as the oldest in the world that started in 1932
5. Enron. Its SPVs were Chewco Investments L.P, named after the Star Wars character Chewbacca, because it was created to hide losses from the Joint Energy Development Investment Limited, known by its acronym "JEDI"
6. Interstitials
7. M. C. M. Chidambaram Chettyar. He set up the Indian Overseas Bank and Travancore Rayons
8. The Economist, a magazine which still calls itself a newspaper
9. The Japanese liquor giant Suntory Holdings Adidas Superstar shoes
10. Tennis legend Bjorn Borg

One lucky winner will receive a cheque for ₹2,000. Send your entries to strategist@bsmail.in. All entries must carry the postal address of the contestant. Last date for receiving entries: March 17 till 8 pm. Previous winners and employees of Business Standard and their families are not eligible to participate. The winner is chosen on the basis of the first correct entry received.

There were four correct entries to quiz No 501. The winner is Rohit Jain from Meerut (Uttar Pradesh)