

The RAW Truth

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With a couple of new launches and recycled old iconic properties, MTV gets into a new phase of programming. Aditya Swamy, head honcho, talks about the channel's latest strategies.

What is the idea behind launching a new phase of programming on MTV?

I wouldn't exactly call it a new phase but, yes, we are having an action-packed start this year. The youth is constantly changing and we want to give them what they want. MTV's philosophy is 'stay raw' and what better way of expressing it than dance. Today partying and dancing has become a way of life for teenagers, which is why we are bringing back our iconic property MTV Grind, albeit in a different avatar. Earlier it had international numbers and now it is set to non-stop Bollywood remix music. There will be five veejays in the show and since it is in collaboration with Shimak Dayar's dance school, there is an international feel to it. Another old property Youth Marketing Forum that discusses youth-related issues also makes a comeback. Besides this, we are launching two new reality shows True Life and Crunch.

True Life is a docu-reality show about real people sharing their experiences and is pretty successful globally, Crunch explores a new genre in India. It has 20 people put up in pairs in 10 rooms for four weeks with the walls crunching in every day. They are given tasks in every episode.

Crunch sounds like Bigg Boss?

Not really. As I said, it's a show that explores the multi-stream format. It will be available live on the web 24/7 and on mobile, apart from TV screens. The web is primary, mobile is secondary and TV is tertiary. On TV it is more like an update. The concept is totally homegrown.

Is the web more important for MTV?

MTV has the largest social media following in the country. Our Facebook and Twitter community has over three million people and all this has been built organically. Life is not about one single screen which is TV. We come up with a lot of initiatives across the three platforms. For example, even as somebody is watching Roadies, there is a voice chat happening with Raghu Ram, while someone is also tweeting, making it the No.1 trending topic on Twitter.

But surely, there is no advertising revenue on the Internet.

It's not an advertising module but a consumer engagement module. Having a community on Facebook is not advertising. It is talking about the brand and what we are doing. It's a way of having one to one dialogue with our audience. For instance, if we have something happening in Roadies, just one post and three million people come to know about it. If you ask me if this dialogue finds its way to the channel, yes it definitely does.

Youth channels like Channel [v] and UTV Bindaass have started airing fiction shows. Do you have any such plans?

These channels are doing what we experimented with years ago — there was a serial Kitni Mast Hai Zindagi on MTV. Having said that, their learnings could be different from ours. We are not closed to anything. If there is a good concept and the time is right, then we'll do it. After all, the youth is watching Lost and 24, which is fiction. However, right now we have a lot of other things happening.

What about music? How important is that to your channel?

M is the heart of MTV and we have a lot of stuff around music. We have done some innovative things in recent times. We have just wrapped up a show that scouted for India's fusion rock band in collaboration with Indian Ocean.

Also, apart from the classics and hits, which we keep airing, we have opened a new one-hour music block Mash-ups, where we play songs across languages. If we feature a hip-hop song in Hindi, there will be one in English and African. We had a hunt for house music [DJ](#) and a bike and rock concert called Rockathon too.



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Who do you consider your closest competitor?

Our biggest competitor is Facebook — that's what I would like to be. If you stop Facebook for a youngster, imagine the effect it will have on him. Similarly, if [MTV](#) is denied to the youth, they should feel withdrawal symptoms, that's the direction we are moving in. We want to be a multistream engagement platform that not only entertains the youngsters but also leads and reflects them.

So, what does today's youth want?

(Laughs) If I knew that I would be god. Seriously, I don't think even the youth knows what it wants. They are always looking for the next thing to connect. In fact, we have done a detailed study and are releasing it on April 25. It talks about two things that is driving the youth this decade. Virtues are out and vices are in. Lust and greed, relationship and money are the main driving factors and their attitudes and aspirations manifest it across various genres of entertainment and habits.