

## Idiot box outshines 70-MM screens

The television industry, once considered the poor cousin of the glitzy world of cinema, is increasingly reshaping entertainment in India with even the high and mighty of the Hindi filmdom succumbing to its charms.

Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan's return to the small screen in STAR Plus' quiz show 'Kaun Banega Crorepati-3', actress Shilpa Shetty living her life out on Britain's reality show 'Celebrity Big Brother' and film director Karan Johar's decision to restart his chat show 'Koffee with Karan' are all indications that the small screen is very big now.

According to industry watchers, the television industry posted better financial figures than film trade in India for the first time in the year 2004. Since then it has also come out of the overpowering shadow of the big silver screen, especially in terms of people's perceptions.

The soap operas have become mini films and award shows have become red carpet events. The day is not far when credits of daily soap operas will include names of film writers, choreographers, music composers, et all.

According to Anil Wanvari, chief of Indiantelevision.com, the television industry brings in twice the mullah raked in by the much older and well-known film industry.

In fact, a study by management consulting firm KPMG says the so-called Tellywood had gained at the expense of Bollywood.

The study points out that in the year when Bollywood had a series of flops and the revenue fell from Rs.45 billion in 2001 to Rs.39 billion in 2002, the total revenue generated from subscriptions from television business shot up to Rs.60 billion from Rs.40 billion in 2001 - a growth of 50 percent.

Of this, broadcasters realised Rs.8.4 billion - more than double the previous year's figure of Rs.4 billion.

KPMG's stocktaking report on the status of the Indian entertainment industry used the term 'degrowth' to describe the film industry but said television business has more than made up for the losses of the filmdom.

Latest figures say the media and entertainment industry of India has ample space for all media to grow.

A study by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and PricewaterhouseCoopers says the entertainment industry is expected to grow at 19 percent compound annual growth rate to reach Rs.837.4 billion by 2010 from Rs.353 billion at present.

Advertising spends - at 0.34 percent of the GDP - are low in comparison to other developed and developing countries, where the average is around 0.98 percent.

'Advertising revenues are vital for the growth of this industry. While the low ad spends may seem like a challenge before the E and M (Entertainment and Media) industry, they also throw open

immense potential for growth,' the report said.

If India was to reach the global average, advertising revenues would at least double from the current level of around Rs.132 billion.

According to the study, the television industry is poised to grow at 24 percent to Rs.427 billion from its current size of Rs.148 billion.

'Subscription revenues would be the key growth driver for the industry over the next five years. Subscription revenues will increase both from the number of pay TV homes as well as increased subscription rates,' the study said.

New distribution platforms such as DTH and IPTV (Internet Protocol Television) will help increase the subscriber base and push up subscription revenues.

The film industry, however, is slated to grow at 18 percent to Rs.153 billion in 2010 from the current size of Rs.68 billion.

'Advancement in mobile technology, better broadband access and Internet Protocol (IP) will be the enablers that will evolve a new breed of consumers, as opportunities for them to access and manipulate content and services will be overflowing, while their time and attention will be limited,' the study said.

According to the study, convergence will play a crucial role in the development of the Indian entertainment and media industry where consumers will increasingly be calling the shots in a converged media world.

And film stars have shown the way by climbing down from their high horse and embracing the television world.

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Radio is the next frontier for Bollywood stars. It has become commonplace for actors to appear on radio for promoting their films and many are no longer shying away from hosting small segments as well.

Madhuri Dixit has, in fact, opted to give radio interviews over the print media to get back into the public reckoning.

The radio industry is poised for big growth with projected size for 2010 at Rs.12 billion from the current level of Rs.3 billion.

Key policy initiatives announced by the government such as migration to a revenue share regime, allowing foreign investment into the segment and opening of licenses to private players are expected to drive growth in this sector.

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The one entertainment sector that is in need for some fresh impetus is the live entertainment segment. Mallika Sherawat did try to spice up the proceedings of a live performance show but ended up with a case against her.

Issues like high entertainment taxes in certain states, lack of world-class infrastructure and the unorganised nature of most event management companies continue to hinder growth of this industry.

Maybe a toned down Mallika would do the trick.

*Priyanka Khanna* ( © IANS / India eNews)