



'We are losing out on the DNA Of News'

The three things that will make an impact on Television Journalism, on the road to 2010

You can call me a little old fashioned on this issue, but I believe that certain things like the basics of journalism don't change - a good story is a good story. There are certain rules of journalism that will not change, whether it is 2007 or 2010.

Today, we sometimes tend to sensationalise and in the process play around with the fundamentals of journalism. The essential fact checking is missed out, it's shoot and scoot journalism that appears mindless at times. Checking one's facts, acting in the public interest are basics - norms and values will not, or rather should not, change.

Journalism, I believe (the old fashioned way) should be intelligent, impactful, interactive, innovative and, importantly, inclusive.

The basics will always be there and you don't have to change the rules of journalism. However, there are some things that will change. One of the things that will change is the manner in which we disseminate the news.

Multiplicity of Media

We are clearly moving towards an era of multiplicity of media. From existing TV channels to the online space and the mobile media, the way news is consumed is already changing; but what we are entering is an increasingly multimedia universe of news consumption. Information will stem from multiple sources and interaction will happen through multiple media. Technology will be a catalytic partner in this transition. As technology becomes more sophisticated, it introduces a certain dynamism in journalism. We see it happening. And we'll see more of it.

Increasing Interactivity

I do see a growing space for interactivity - a journalism that is genuinely a two-way process. In the days and months ahead, we will see more of this. Citizen journalism that we introduced at CNN IBN is definitely the way forward.

Television journalism today, and more so going forward, will not be just about somebody standing on a pulpit and reading out the news. The future of television requires the viewer to feel connected, and never be talked down to. This will be an era of inclusive journalism.

There has to be a greater understanding of the

changing reader and viewer that goes into deciding news hierarchies. The obsession with political minutiae is coming to an end. Civil society will take precedence. There will be greater emphasis on issues of relevance to people: environment, health, education, these are critical to the future of journalism. Journalism will have a human face, stories of ordinary people in extraordinary situations will be told. Politics will be important, but more when it connects to issues of social concern, to morality questions, to civic activism. This will, in that sense, be the era of the "citizen journalist".

Interactivity also means a greater focus on localization and regionalisation. People want news to be less Delhi-centric, and more about their neighbourhood. As a result, the structure of news networks too, will change. It cannot be about one national channel, but a national channel with its many affiliates and partners who give it depth across geographies. The nature of issues across these channels will reflect the change from state to civil society.

Clear and Present Danger

There is the danger that the lines between entertainment and journalism are getting completely blurred over time. The process has begun, is gathering momentum and is a dangerous trend. I see that the trend might grow with the competition encouraging banal one-upmanship. Tabloidisation of news is the concern, a situation in which page three becomes page one.

Let me say that there is space for good tabloid channels. In fact, good tabloid journalism is actually a difficult thing to do. But we are now entering a period where news channels are merely titillating the viewers and not informing them. Unfortunately, we see that is precisely what is happening. In the process of attracting viewer eyeballs, we are losing out on the DNA of news. We are in danger that *masala* news takes over for most part.

A television channel needs to be a *thali*. You have rice and *roti* and *dhal* and *sabzi* and then you have *achaar*. You need that *thali* to have a wholesome meal. If *achaar* becomes the main course, there's a problem somewhere. In a copycat syndrome, will *achar* become the main course is a fear. Will *dal*, *roti* and rice lose out? That is the real fear looking ahead.

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