Indian Kids’ TV channels: Balancing international with local content

Toonz Media Group: Aiming to be the game changer of Indian animation

Indian animation: From outsourcing to original IP
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Indian animation is at an inflection point. More than a handful of studios have proved themselves as good workhorses, able to deliver on complex complete assignments from international majors. And they have been given high grades by their customers. What began as small sweat shop operations, have flourished with fancy facilities and the top of the line software and hardware. And the best part is they are willing to work to tight deadlines. The outsourcing miracle seems to be working.

While this is good news, what is also needed is that Indian creativity attains global aspirations. Kids content – especially animation – could emerge from any country and become a global phenomenon. A Mickey Mouse or Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles or Pokemon have emerged from different countries. South Korea and China – with its huge cash stash – too are delivering intellectual properties and domestically developed animation shows and films which are getting traction in many new territories in Europe, Latin America, Asia and the US.

India has a surfeit of talent. All its studios require are a lot of gumption and derring-do. We watch a Hercules or an Alexander series or film not just in India but all over world, because the stories connect with us. The storytelling is engrossing.

India has many tales to tell. Of modern India. And an ancient civilisation. The question is will studios pick up the gauntlet? The Narendra Modi government has brought with it a new wind of economic optimism. India’s animation studios need to drink in that. Deeply and open their wings and fly.

A well told and well animated tale of Lord Ganesh will definitely travel to different countries. Many here at MIPCOM and MIPJunior have time and again asked me where are the good animation studios in India. I tell them they are blossoming everywhere – in the north, south, east and west. Now these studios need to step out and get themselves wings. And tell the stories which many a child across the world has not heard.

Digital has afforded creators that opportunity. ChuChu TV is a case in point. Its animated nursery rhymes with a twist have touched the hearts and minds of many a toddler and his / her mother on YouTube. Language dubs are slated to follow.

Others too could follow.

Anil Wanvari
Editor in Chief
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With over 300 animation studios producing content, IP creation, outsourced and collaborative animation services, India has raised the bar in the quality and quantity of animation. Over the past decade, the Indian animation industry has moved up the value chain from a traditional outsourcing model to creating its own intellectual property (IP) and co-production.

Studios now have moved beyond traditional mediums like television and cinema halls to showcase their content and use digital platforms such as YouTube, Netflix, VOOT and other OTT platforms.

Says Assemblage Entertainment strategy and new business development executive Arjun Madhavan, “India has all the right ingredients including the creative ability, the technical skill-set, the production and delivery practices and an increasing access to film financing, to become a global player in the business of entertainment, particularly in the animation.”

Outsourcing provides continuous revenue but studios create original content and IPs for long term sustainability, growth and brand building. It gives them the liberty to create characters and themes that have a longer shelf life and can be monetised through various avenues including merchandising.

IP creation has its own perks in terms of long-term revenue generation, brand-building, merchandising, licensing and distribution. India’s most famous character Chhota Bheem has been the bellwether of the Indian animation industry for it has left its mark at both regional and international markets.

India gaining identity through major IPs

Created by Green Gold Animation, ‘Chhota Bheem’ which began as an animated series for broadcast has found a home in kids classrooms and bedrooms in terms of day-to-day merchandising products. With continuous series in the broadcast space, the animation studio has produced three theatrical feature films.

On the small screen front, the characters Motu Patlu have spread their wings across the Indian subcontinent.

Created by Maya Digital Studios in 2012, Motu Patlu series hit the television space on Nickelodeon and thus has traversed a journey of eight seasons till date. More than 250 episodes, around 10 television feature films and one theatrical movie have been produced.

Apart from this, Maya Digital Studios has worked on other IPs like Kisna, Eena Meena Deeka and Vir - The Robot Boy. The famous animated series Shiva is an example of an IP sale where Maya has sold that IP to Nickelodeon but the studio creates the entire animation for the series. Shiva was one of the most-watch shows when it was launched in December 2015. However, Motu Patlu and Chhota Bheem are the current most-watch shows in India.

Broadcasters have now shifted to more of local content rather than imported content. This has, in turn, increased the pressure on animation studios and production houses to craft new original series. Thus, a number of animation studios have tried their hands at creating IP models for broadcast that cater to the global audience.

“With digital video and OTT platforms, cross-boundary ideas are bound to disrupt traditional IP creation. Besides that, Indian broadcasters too are hungry for local content and we have more Indian shows on air than ever before,” affirms Digitales Studios director of business development and strategy RK Chand.

HopMotion Studios, along with Sphere Origins, produced the animated TV series Chhoti Anandi with a female lead character. It was broadcast on the Hindi general entertainment channel (GEC) Colors (under Viacom18) and received a great response.

HopMotion founder and CEO Anish Patel elaborates, “Outsourcing is a short term model while IP is a long-term process. Indian players should tryout both the models. After a certain point, even in outsourcing there is no growth as such for, at the end of the day, you do not own anything.”

iRealities picked up Lotpot comics character Sheikh Chilli to create an animated television feature and series for Discovery Kids, while Green Gold Animation is coming up with a new television feature Super Bheem for Pogo. Graphiti produced its own IP with animated series Krish Trish and Baltiboy (9 x 60 minutes) on Cartoon Network featuring Indian folk tales of wit and humour flavoured with its own ethnic music portraying the traditional Indian style of storytelling.

A 3D CGI film Kulveera was conceived by the studio Graphiti and developed with Cartoon Network as a part of the SNAPTOONS program. Graphiti has been working with producers and broadcasters across the world for the last 15 years in terms of concept art development, character design, environment design, storyboards, animation production and post production.
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Outsourcing leading to revenue generation

90 per cent of American television animation is produced in Asia, according to a recent study. The pre-production is done in the US or European countries after which the projects are sent to Asia for production. Assemblage Entertainment has been India’s leading co-production studio. Within two and a half hour of its conception, the studio has delivered big budget international animated feature films like Blinky Bill - The Movie and the recent Norm of the North. Gaining revenues from co-production, Assemblage is now focusing on creating original IP as well.

Indian animators have also worked on Hollywood projects like Kung Fu Panda, The Jungle Book and Shaun-The Sheep. Various processes like lighting, rotoscoping, matte painting have been done on various Hollywood projects by various studios in India. Dedicated DreamWorks Unit (DDU) India delivered the animation, character FX, FX and lighting for Kung Fu Panda 3 and Penguins of Madagascar 3. Prime Focus crafted and delivered the entire VFX pipeline for Sin City 2. Digitales Studios entered into a multi-project deal with the US based Splash Entertainment for the Lionsgate franchise Alpha and Omega. DQ Entertainment and the UK based Method Animation joined hands to co-produce TV series 5 and IT. Artha Animation is working with the South African company My Child TV to develop new 2D animated series My Child. Toonz Animation picked up the rights from Gummybear International for the much-acclaimed series Gummy Bear.

Digital disruption paving the way for creative freedom

Liberty in IP creation has encouraged animation enthusiasts in India to experiment and go beyond the horizons of creativity. And, the disruption of digital media has been the perfect platform for such expansive exploration. ChuChu TV, Asia Pacific’s most-watched YouTube channel, has tried its own IP in terms of animated nursery rhymes for kids on its YouTube channel. In just a matter of two and half years, the channel has gained over five million subscribers and an average of three million views per video.

CVS 3D Rhymes has three million subscribers while Videogyan has over 2.5 million subscribers. Both these YouTube channels feature animated kids content and have a viewership across major continents. Toonz Media Group, the studio known for series like Gummy Bear, Tenali Raman and Kid Krrish, has also got onto YouTube with Chotoonz on which it is porting original content. Toonz is also involved in outsourced work for international projects such as X-Men series and Bubble Bip.
Licensing and Merchandising (L&M)

Major broadcasters such as Viacom18, Disney India and Turner International are adopting the licensing and merchandising model. For this they need to own their IP, which enables them to produce consumer goods and distribute these themselves. In this way, these major players venture into distribution and thus explore various liberties with the IP.

Viacom18 has been monetising its IP brands such as *Motu Patlu* and *Shiva*. Flipkart has tied up with Viacom18 for the licensing of *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, *Spongebob Squarepants* and *Peanuts* for online customers. Disney has IPs that have been built internationally like the Marvel’s *Avengers*, *Spider-Man* and *Star Wars*. Turner India has leveraged and capitalised on the popularity of the character *Chhota Bheem*.

Industry experts estimate that the Indian L&M market is currently projected at approximately INR 30,000 to 35,000 million and is growing at more than 12 per cent year-on-year. The popularity of certain original characters can be gauged by their presence in the form of toys, school products, accessories, clothing, collectibles, footwear, bags and various fast-moving consumer goods.

According to the annual Deloitte report 2016, in 2015 the Media and Entertainment industry grew at 11.76 per cent with a market size of USD 19 billion (INR 1,281 billion). Overall, the industry is expected to expand at CAGR of 13.98 per cent till 2018. By 2025, it is expected to attain a market size of USD 100 billion (INR 6,743 billion). India is globally the fifth largest media and entertainment market.

Collaboration between brands and IPs

The popularity and brand recall of various IPs paves the way for various cross promotions and collaborations. For example, *Chhota Bheem* and the popular cookie brand Parle-G collaborated as the animated character was seen on the biscuit, Cartoon Network and Pogo collaborated with the Bollywood star Shah Rukh Khan’s *Dilwale* as the actors were featured in the TV shows along with the animated characters, Kinder Joy partnered with Disney’s princesses while *Motu Patlu* were seen on the packets of Yellow Diamond Rings.
Toonz Media Group: Aiming to be the game changer of Indian animation

By Ronald Rodrigues

It has become a bellwether of sorts for the Indian animation industry. Toonz Media group began its journey 17 years ago with just 100 artists. Since then, it has spread its wings over Europe, south east Asia, and Asia Pacific with acquisitions and partnerships and is looking forward to expand into other territories. The studio has gained a reputation of sorts as one that delivers on outsourced projects. It is a force in domestic animation production in both 2D and 3D for theatrical feature films as well as for television with its shows. Its licensing and distribution arm has made a mark internationally and in India. It has now moved into the digital space and is quite focused on creating content for its YouTube channel.

Toonz Media Group CEO P Jayakumar has been at its helm throughout this journey. And he has seen it through its ups and downs even persuading the company’s owners, the billionaire Chanderia family, to invest when the company was facing tough times. For that he has gained respect from his peers.

Animationxpress.com had a short chat with him to find out what makes the company tick and where he intends to steer it further. Excerpts from the interview:

What is the kind of content created by Toonz?
Toonz creates a wide variety of content for the kids and family audiences. From toddlers to tweens, teens to family, Toonz produces content in numerous genres in both animation and live action.

What is the kind of work done by Toonz in terms of outsourcing projects?
Based on the client requirement, Toonz undertakes shows with a wide range of complexity. Based on the skills and capabilities, Toonz studios are graded and the quality of the projects that go to those studios depend on the quality match between the project and the studio grading.

Can you highlight a few of the outsourced projects?
Wolverine and the X-Men series, Miraculous - Tales of Lady Bug and Cat Noir, Bubble Bip, The Skinner Boys.

What are the kind of clients that Toonz works with for outsourcing?
Toonz has been working with all the major names including Marvel, Disney, Cartoon Network, Nickelodeon, Google, Sony and many more.

Can you highlight a few of your major IPs?
Gummy Bear, Jamillah and Alladin, Lucky Fred, Kat & Keet and Kid Krrish.

How is Toonz facilitating the outsourcing industry?
Toonz is very particular about the quality of the products it delivers. So, our primary aim is to give out the message that outsourcing doesn't diminish the quality at all. We have a seamless functional system where our ancillary studios are graded based on their capabilities and the projects we undertake are sent only to a quality compatible ancillary studio. This way the quality of the project is strictly maintained. We have a time-tested pipeline that makes sure that the schedule is strictly followed and deliveries are always made on or ahead of time.

Where do you see Toonz as a major outsourcing hub five years down the line?
Toonz has around 3000 artists working in our ancillary studios across the world and we produce over 5000 minutes of animated content every year. We have clear short-term, mid-term and long-term plans for our productivity. By 2020, Toonz would be producing over 10,000 minutes of content every year. We would want to be the first choice for all the major creators in the world.

Where do you intend to take Toonz in terms of IP creation in the future?
I envision Toonz to be reckoned as one of the finest IP creators for kids and family across territories. I also have a dream of creating an Indian style of animation which would appeal to the global audience, thus creating a signature for my country.

What are the various services provided by Toonz? How does 'Chotoonz' play a major role?
Toonz is the one-stop-shop for anything related to animation. From concept
What is the revenue generation model of Toonz?
It is a mix of various revenue streams. Revenues come from our service work, syndication and distribution, licensing and merchandising and also advertising revenues from our digital channels.

What is the work done in terms of IP creation?
Toonz has an elite creative unit named 'Cocoon' which is a team of multination-al creative experts who bring in a wealth of creative knowledge from across the globe. Today Toonz has its original IPs on all the major broadcasters like Walt Disney, Cartoon Network, Nickelodeon, Discovery Kids, CBeebies and Youtube Kids to name a few.

What is beneficial for Toonz- outsourcing content or IP creation?
The benefits from both are in different directions. The outsourcing work certainly has its financial benefits and such projects keep the fuel going. It gives a lot of exposure and experience to our team and builds our reputation in terms of production expertise. IP creative is a more satisfying experience. It is a matter of prestige for us to have our own shows on air. The financial benefits exist and also a great opportunity to explore the L&M possibilities of the concepts in the long run.

Why should any studio outsource their projects to Toonz?
Toonz, since the last decade, is not only a service studio, but an IP creator as well. We have our offices in all the major territories and our original content is aired by almost all the major broadcasters. We are also doing extremely well in the digital platform through YouTube and also our own kids’ channel. Thanks to our creative abilities combined with almost two decades of experience and a time-tested production pipeline, Toonz can pull off projects of any level of complexity. 2D, 3D, stopmotion or live action, we have it all in our repertoire.
Motu Patlu series hit the television space on Nickelodeon and thus has traversed a journey of eight seasons till date. More than 250 episodes, around 10 television feature films and one theatrical movie have been produced. Apart from this, Maya Digital Studios has worked on other IPs like Kisna, Eena Meena Deeka and Vir - The Robot Boy. The famous animated series Shiva is an example of an IP sale where Maya has sold that IP to Nickelodeon but the studio creates the entire animation for the series. Shiva was one of the most-watched shows when it was launched in December 2015. However, Motu Patlu and Chhota Bheem are the current most-watched shows in India.

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The trio will whisk you into the rich world of Indian folktales, beautifully animated using exquisite art of the region, flavoured with its own ethnic music & woven together with the timeless power of traditional Indian storytelling. Kids love the stories of wit, humour and heart that have an universal appeal.
By Prerna Kothari

Almost all broadcasters and networks are rushing to have a kids channel / program. According to the latest census 2011 data released this year, around 41 per cent of India is below the age of 20 years. And there’s no dearth of broadcasters in India when it comes to entertaining this humongous chunk of young audience which falls between the preschool and teenager category.

Disney India has four kids channels - Disney, Disney XD, Disney Junior, Hungama; Viacom18 on the other hand has three - Nickelodeon, Sonic, Teen Nick / Nick Jr; Turner also has three channels - Cartoon Network, POGO, Toonami; whereas Sun TV has four channels - Chutti TV, Kochu TV, Chintu TV and Kushi TV. Apart from these, there’s Zee Q, Discovery Kids, Animax and many more. And in the past decade, a shift in the nature of the content can be observed: from showcasing just international shows to homegrown content. Indian kids have been lapping up the local fare – both digital non-linear and linear television. Broadcasters, on their part, have been loving it too, commissioning more Indian produced content.

Current statistics

Says Sun TV cluster head of kids’ entertainment Kavitha Jaubin: “When we launched the kids channels in the south (of India), a decade ago we were acquiring international cartoons and movies which were very popular and adapting it to our own way through dubbing the content in the regional languages. That has marked a remarkable opening for our kids channels. At present we offer 70 per cent of international content and 30 per cent of domestic (live-action) content. In the near future we are planning to develop more domestic content and stay relevant and more connected to kids.”

When it comes to Disney’s local content, Disney Channel currently has three local animation shows running on the channel – Arjun: Prince of Bali, Gaju Bhai and 14Viraat; on Hungama TV there is Vir: The Robot Boy, Chai Chai and Eena Mena Deeka. Disney Junior has globally acclaimed shows that help stimulate imagination through the universal themes of humour, music and fun, and Disney XD is home to all the action and adventure content and showcases international content such as Pokemon, and Marvel’s Avengers Assemble.

The Nickelodeon cluster has a fair balance of local and international content that has helped the franchise drive affinity amongst its viewers. Local content on both Nick and Sonic is pegged at around 50 per cent while Nick Jr and Teen Nick is largely international content. Home-grown shows like Motu Patlu, Shiva, Pakdam Pakdai and international shows like Dora the Explorer and Oggy and the Cockroaches have all helped drive leadership, engagement and affinity for the franchise.

Turner’s Cartoon Network has more international shows than on POGO with an 80:20 ratio and Roll no. 21 being the first locally produced animated series for Cartoon Network. POGO on the other hand is dominated majorly by long running franchise Chhota Bheem and Mighty Raju whereas Toonami airs international shows which are mostly Japanese anime like Yokai Watch, Beast Saga.

The rise of homegrown content

Right now, there is a growing trend among kids to watch and engage with locally produced characters and stories because they are relatable and reflect their surroundings and culture.

Disney India VP content and communication Vijay Subramaniam comments:
Balancing international with local content

“At the heart of everything we do is tell great stories and engage with our consumers in new and interesting ways. And both domestic and international content is being showcased with equal emphasis, however there is a growing trend amongst the kids to watch and engage more with locally relevant themes, stories and characters and we are doing exactly that. I think it is important to understand that now there is a big shift from just consuming international content to preferring locally produced animation content and we are catering to this by providing an interesting variety and staying ahead of the curve.”

Currently, the ratio observed between international and domestic shows on Disney channel is 65:35 per cent which Subramaniam plans to take up to 50:50 per cent.

“We see a lot of research and development happening around how to create relatable local IPs from start to finish in India,” explains Viacom18, EVP and GM Nickelodeon and Sonic India Nina Elavia Jaipuria. “Slowly but steadily the proportion of local shows in the content mix is on the rise buoyed by their popularity. However, international content also continues to contribute to content mix and ratings with iconic shows. Hence the category continues to have a prudent mix of international and local content.”

Where’s the money

“International Premium titles always have a niche in attracting the advertisers, yet the domestic shows are designed in such a way that they allow us to incorporate and integrate the brands and are more flexible than the international shows. For this reason, generating revenue through domestic content is preferred by advertisers,” says Jaupilin.

Without disclosing the budgets on the shows, Disney has stated that costs involved in creating a local animation show are significantly higher than acquiring international shows.

As for Viacom18, acquiring international content and creating local IP are both expensive propositions since the category has a very high dependence on animated content that is expensive. Commenting on whether the channel generates more revenue from domestic or international shows, Jaipuria says, “For the Nickelodeon franchise, both local and international content, has been an equal contributor to ratings at this show, we will look more for 3D CGI if it fits our brand. We are also going to look for interesting short forms because that form of content is really powerful, funny and humorous and we would like to then create destinations for this content within our network.”

“Once the kids establish a bond with the characters, children tend to remain loyal with them and make them an important part of their daily lives. Taking cue from these evolving preferences we are also focused at creating relatable local IPs from start to finish in India,” explains Jaupilin.

Emphasising on Jaupilin’s point, Subramaniam adds that kids have no boundaries when it comes to imagination so international shows are equally interesting if presented in a manner that allows them to represent their local sensibilities. “Japanese animation resonates very well because of the cultural settings, stories and themes they pursue which connects well with India.”

Apart from Disney’s infinite library, Subramaniam also looks for international third party content, which is fun, entertaining, fits the brand value, can be adapted in a local manner and has a connection with the consumer. Volume is another key criteria which Disney India looks for as in India volumes have a huge role across television. Because of the availability of fresh content, it becomes a recurring expectation from the audience and the channel needs to serve accordingly.

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If presented international content suiting the local sensibilities, kids will find it equally interesting as homegrown shows suiting the local sensibilities of kids, they will find it equally interesting”

“It’s true there’s a change in the content consumption pattern, nonetheless there’s demand from the Indian kids for international shows as well. MIPJunior and MIPCOM being one among the biggest content markets, there’s a certain type of content Indian broadcasters are on the lookout for.

Jaupilin spells out what she is always keeping her eyes open for. “Comedy, interactive, fantasy, preschool, edutainment and action cartoons and series work well for Sun TV’s kids channels and we are persistently looking at ways we can entertain and educate today’s children and gain their sustainable interest,” she says. “In the development, in every effort we do, we have that conversation about how are we going to support and engage our audience outside linear. But linear still remains the largest medium for us. Knowing, though, that kids want content anywhere and everywhere.”

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Jaupilin’s Jaipuria tells, “We are looking for great animation shows, immersive storylines and endearing characters that will appeal to Indian sensibilities and preferences. Comedy across genres and formats like shorts, series, movies, specials have great potential for Indian audiences and scores high on our list of preferred content.”

Observers say that though Indian broadcasters pay limited amounts – compared to top-notch European, Japanese and Australian buyers – they make up for it by the volumes.

And that’s something that can prove lucrative for international kids’ content distributors.
Technicolor India: Positioning India in a unique way

By Prerna Kothari

“T"oday’s brands are no longer just defined by the quality of a product or service delivered but also by the quality of an experience the client enjoys in dealing with the organisation. This changes the dynamics of how a business interaction takes place for digital content creation in an animation or VFX studio,” says Technicolor India country head Biren Ghose and a thought leader in the Indian media and entertainment industry.

India has had a long history when it comes to filmmaking and storytelling. However, the ways of filmmaking and content production have become more sophisticated over the last few decades.

Digital content production in the form of animation and particularly CG production is a relatively nascent art form. While several animation studios were set up in pockets of India around the late 90s, less than a handful of these entities have survived. Today, only an elite few are on a level that can be compared with the world leaders. The multitude of skillsets required for visual effects, animation and the gaming sector at the global entertainment industry level are multiple and varied across the different functions of the computer graphics pipeline.

Technicolor India is a stellar example of a company that has managed to dispel the notion about the quality, consistency and scale that an India-based production house can deliver. It is a lighthouse for top notch quality, timely service and extraordinary talent development.

Technicolor is a global leader in creative and production services. The company’s primary creative role is in partnering with content creators offering bespoke production and post-production services across broadcasting, motion pictures, colour-finishing and sound services.

With the advent of rapidly evolving technologies and the need to spread its roots in the international markets, Technicolor made a strategic decision to establish itself in India in 2006. Having been a part of the organisation for the past seven years, Ghose says that from 2010 to 2016 “We have successfully reinvented the perception and mindset about India’s ability to perform at global quality specifications. From just 200 artists we are approaching the 2000 team mark of artists and technicians in digital content production within the country.”

How has this India phenomenon happened?

The key growth drivers at Technicolor India are:

- Talent development
- Deploying Technicolor’s tools and technology for high end production
- Extending Technicolor's global production infrastructure network to India
- Creative workflows, pipelines and innovations - linking our ecosystem of studios that maintain Technicolor India at the heart of this web

Students coming out of India's academies are not at all production ready. Neither are those coming from smaller studios. To bridge this gap, Technicolor India has chosen to ignore this systemic inadequacy and invested in creating its own method for spotting local talent and then mentoring, tutoring and up-scaling them to work on some of the best shows. Ghose believes that, “We are almost ‘a university’ within a studio. We run several bespoke academies within our cluster of departments. We have proven that if properly groomed and deployed, Indian talent can create and participate in producing the best with the best in the world.”

With its impeccable track record over the past decade, Technicolor India has proven to its clients that India is more than just an outsourcing hub. This success is demonstrated by the fact that it has from early days been awarded entire sequences and shots in major global titles and has worked them ‘end-to-end’ across different teams and genres.

Bengaluru’s robust state-of-the-art infrastructure, which includes massive storage and connectivity, makes it strongly and interactively connected with Hollywood, UK and other production centers. Shots move back and forth in heavy files for daily approvals and transfers seamlessly. Technicolor India has lived up to its objectivity of making its clients and global studios feel as if they are ‘the room next door’.

Biren Ghose
Technicolor India Production Services (TIPS) is a new entity in India, that has been started to provide high-end creative solutions to Global Visual Effects brands under Technicolor’s wing.

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“We have innovated with different models of service which are quite unique. While we do follow the classic client engagement model, we have crafted new standards by delivering work seamlessly and adding value to a project through innovation and partnership,” adds Ghose.

This is an ever-evolving technology driven business and one that is constantly and rapidly changing. “We have become a reference for technology majors who demonstrate our work to other industries to showcase how we harness computing to spur the creative process. In India we are pushing to demonstrate the importance of data security to a global standard. We are also advocating through various forums that production studios need to fight software piracy and use 100 per cent licensed software,” states Ghose.

“We never wanted to be positioned as a low cost arbitrage driven country or entity. We believe that we are responsible local citizens with a fully compliant infrastructure. We use 100 per cent licensed software and have made sure that our employees, most of who have come from other cities, think of our studio as a ‘home away from home’. The production of CG animation, visual effects and gaming is a very hard grind and requires painstaking detail. We therefore take every opportunity to provide stress busters within the workplace and make sure we get the team to let their hair down and relax as and when they can. We believe these aspects are important to them, giving us a 100 per cent when producing a shot and winning the battle of wits in producing world class content,” explains Ghose.

Why would international studios work at Technicolor India?

Being an international company and setting up an organisation in a foreign land can be a grueling job when it comes to statutory and legal issues.

Even a deregulated India is a minefield and needs constant management to ensure governance and ease of doing business.

That is where Technicolor India offers some of its clients a model to create a dedicated unit.

“In this model, an international client comes and doesn’t just contract out the work to us but effectively books a team - committing to ‘a studio within the Technicolor studio’. The client can focus purely on creativity and production while still having a captive capacity of talent infrastructure and support without having the onerous task of having to deal with the challenges of operating in a new country with its labyrinth of legalese. Labour laws, taxation and many other issues which could become bottlenecks to a content creator are then not an issue for clients. It’s a bespoke four-wall model,” states Ghose.

Technicolor has worked this dedicated unit model in India with many world leaders including DreamWorks Animation, their own MPC films and advertisement VFX teams, Rockstar Games etc.

In conclusion, Ghose takes a look at what's bubbling under its present dispensations which are extending to new forms of content creation. “The edge we maintain comes from a strong technology DNA that constantly looks at what is the next evolution in colour, picture, sound, and visual effects. We blend that into a global content production approach and have done that to scale unmatched over the last few years.”

Technicolor India is already participating in projects over the past few years that describe what the world will look like at a time when immersive media - AR, VR, and new forms of interactive and gaming will no longer be beyond the horizon!
By Prerna Kothari

Right from broadcasters to the YouTube stars, everyone is looking at riding the rising wave of digital media in India. Earlier this year, global OTT heavyweight Netflix forayed into the country with its subscription video on demand (SVOD) service. It walked into a market teeming with competition with the likes of early movers such as the 21st Century Fox-owned Hotstar, Hooq, Zee Entertainment’s dittoTV and OZee, SonyLIV, Eros Now, and Spuul, among others. And most of these were using an advertising video on demand (AVOD) model, with the exception of Hooq which is a SVOD.

One player that made a rather late debut but which probably has the largest repository of kids’ characters is Viacom18’s OTT platform VOOT which is now available for free on iOS, Android and web.

VOOT also has niche genres that are currently under serviced by the linear television channels- pre-school content (Dora, Peppa Pig, Thomas & Friends), International comedies (Kungfu Panda, Spongebob, Talking Tom), learning and development content (rhymes, DIYs, science experiments), best of storytelling (Panchtantra, Karadi Tales, Akbar & Birbal).

Talking about the next phase of evolution, Gandhi reveals: “The next phase would be to build out unique digital content experiences for kids audience, and we’ll be actively looking at forging partnerships at MIPCOM with content creators who are aligned with this vision. We in any case have a significant volume of shows, episodes and genres that don’t come on Indian television today (best example of that being Peppa Pig).”

Currently VOOT runs on an ad-supported business, and has got many large advertisers on-board who target kids. “The great part about catering to this loyal set of an audience is that it will allow us to explore other business models in the near future which are not necessarily dependent solely on advertising.”

It’s a known fact that Indian audience prefer genres like Indian animation, Japanese animation and sound-off comedies when it comes to kids in a controlled linear environment. However, Gandhi mentions that VOOT has seen a similar affinity for these genres on VOOT Kids as well, but “we’ve also discovered that action / adventure and pre-school content is equally popular. These are still very early days to comment, and the audience is still discovering the different facets of VOOT Kids.”

As far as MIPCOM is concerned, Gandhi says, “We’ve already built out our core slate. So we’re essentially looking at adding depth to our current offering, and building out unique digital content experiences.”

Asserting his thoughts on the OTT space and Indian animated content, a positive Gandhi comments: “The platform will allow us to unlock the potential for multiple genres which have remained underexposed so far, and it will allow content creators to experiment with storytelling formats which are not being (or can’t be) tried on TV.”

According to him, there was a significantly higher stickiness amongst the users who have set up a PIN on their devices. The key to VOOT’s sustained growth in the coming years would be the growing affinity amongst kids and parents.

As far as content is concerned, VOOT has an user-initiated platform, which provides a choice of genres and shows to its audience. On one end of the spectrum, there’s the popular genres that work with the masses - Indian animation (Moto Patlu, Chhota Bheem, Roll No.21), action and adventure (Pokémon, Ben10, Power Rangers), comedy (Pakdam Pakdai, Chorr Police, Keymon Ache).

Reporting on the strategy behind the only Indian OTT platform showcasing animated content, Viacom18 Digital Ventures COO, Gaurav Gandhi says: “Kids born post 2006 / 2007 are what we call Screenagers - they are naturally screen agnostic. Being born in the touch screen era, kids today learn to swipe way before they even learn to walk! They start consuming kids entertainment content before they are two years old and do it across screens and devices. They want to watch their favourite show / shows – when they want to! Our strategy is to own the digital on-demand space for premium kids content In India – and that’s what we are doing with VOOT Kids.”

VOOT's kids' section is like an altogether different app within an app as there are about 7,000 kids videos with more than 80 characters, not just from Viacom18’s network but also from others.

In spite of the limited marketing carried on for VOOT, it has had a great start with nine million downloads already, and over 14 million monthly active users. Viewing time spent per user per day is well above 40 minutes and VOOT Kids too has been well received. Seems like kids content has served as a differentiated rallying point for parents to download the app.

According to him, there was a significantly higher stickiness amongst the users who have set up a PIN on their devices. The key to VOOT’s sustained growth in the coming years would be the growing affinity amongst kids and parents.

By Prerna Kothari

How Voot is capturing the kids OTT space in India

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How Voot is capturing the kids OTT space in India
With increased penetration of high-speed internet, the Indian market and the trends of consumption are fast changing.

Traditional TV distribution continues to lead while digital consumption is on the rise, and while it may not be a serious threat for programmed content currently, it is definitely leaving its mark on the way the content is consumed. Gaming on the other end is already largely consumed on digital platforms.

Let's break this down to understand the different segments better.

**Broadcast Content**

**Animation and Children's Content**

The holy grail target audience for animated and children's broadcast content is six to 10 years slapstick comedy with action coming in close second. With a skew of 60:40 in favour of boys in the viewership, largely content aimed at boys is preferred. Furthermore, historically 2D animated content has performed better than CGI.

Most broadcast channels have a mix of Indian and International content with the ratio of Indian to International content ranging from 20:80 to 40:60. While most channels are now scouting for original home grown content that connects better with the audience, the acquisition of international content hasn't slowed down.

Predominant choice of language for content consumption is English however with penetration to Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, producers are looking at Hindi and regional languages to make a niche on comparatively less crowded space.

Most of the major broadcasters typically are interested in acquiring content for South Asia or APAC depending on the type of content. Hence, India not only gives producers a large market to distribute but at the same time gives an entry for content showcase to South Asia or APAC – provided the content has global appeal.

**Other Content**

Discounting the children's content, the content tends to be largely family-focused with a skew towards women viewership. Family dramas, reality and music based shows, game shows form the crux of non sports and non-news broadcast content.

Formats have been increasingly working for broadcasters and they are on the lookout for established working models in other territories.

Most content produced for a particular language is compartmentalised and does not transcend different regional language markets with an exception of feature films.

**Theatrical Content**

Indian theatrical market is one of the largest in the world. While the average ticket prices continue to be way below average prices of other major established markets, Indian box office makes up for it in numbers.

Unless your feature boasts of A-list star cast, if you are looking to distribute your content theatrically in India, be prepared to shell out for P&A or the Prints and Advertising. Furthermore, it is hard to negotiate a minimum guarantee unless you are backed with substantial numbers in other territories – more so for animated content.

Most international content is largely distributed through multiplexes in Tier 1 cities so English would work as the main language for release followed by Hindi for the Northern India belt for a larger release.

**Digital Content**

Digital consumption in India is exploding exponentially. Aggressive market competition spearheaded by Reliance's Jio disruption and rate drops followed on by BSNL, is only going to fuel this up.

With larger consumption on YouTube and Facebook, multitudes of international and homegrown OTT and VOD platforms such as Netflix, Hotstar, VOOT, OZEE, Alt Balaji, HOOQ, Sony Liv, #fame vie for the market share.

Predominant content of consumption of YouTube and Facebook tends to be short form content and preschool. Other OTT and VOD platforms are targeting feature films, edgy documentaries and international soaps.

Preschool content consumption is largely through online platforms such as YouTube since usually the content consumption is on demand and ease of use in consumption through handheld devices.

AVOD and SVOD currently lead the monetisation trend while TVOD trails without substantial increase in the recent years.
Gaming

Console market still continues to lag compared to the global market, and larger consumption of gaming content is digitally through handheld devices. Casual gaming, puzzles and strategy, action (with a larger focus on FPS), MMORPG, Card Based games are the leading gaming genre.

Paid apps/games do not work well in the price sensitive Indian market. Top mode of monetisation continues to be advertisement followed by in-app purchases. However, with in-app purchase at less than one percent of the user base, much is left desired.

With lower user acquisition costs, Indian gaming market is a right fit for games requiring larger user base such as MMORPG or online gambling/card games. However, it must be noted that the average revenue per user (ARPU) is substantially lower than other major markets.

India is an exciting market to be at and the real potential of the digital revolution is on the threshold of unfurling. Considering one of the largest and youngest population in the world with growing spend capabilities, India becomes an important market also from the point of view of establishing a brand for merchandising opportunities.

The author is the CEO of Bhasinsoft, a Bengaluru-based studio producing IPs in animation, apps and games.

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In 2013, I wanted to create a small art work for my two-year-old daughter. So I made an animated video of around two minutes and showed it to her. She loved it and watched it repeatedly so I uploaded the same on YouTube and it got around 300,000 views,” says Chandar.

Chuchu TV Management team wins first one million subscribers award from YouTube

The company is behind Asia Pacific’s most watched YouTube channel with a subscriber base of five million, with three million average views per video on its channels. The five million figure includes subscribers in the US, UK, Philippines, Vietnam and around the world. ChuChu TV, founder and creative director, Vinoth Chandar expresses his journey from a startup to this peak stature.

“ChuChu TV: Chugging its way to success”

The company is behind Asia Pacific’s most watched YouTube channel with a subscriber base of five million, with three million average views per video on its channels

Chuchu TV started in February 2013 with 5000 subscribers. That number ballooned to 15,000 to 20,000 subscribers by the end of that year. And today in three and a half year’s time, the subscriber count has grown to over five million and is increasing at an exponential rate. He reveals his success mantra saying, “Content is the king. We haven’t followed any marketing strategy as such; we just try to do good content.”

The channel does not have any sponsored adverts as it a channel for kids so it does not want to disrupt the attention span. Moreover, subscribers are global and the top most viewership is from the US so putting a sponsored Indian advertisement does not seem ideal. Therefore, the main revenue generation of the channel is from YouTube’s ads. However, the audio of the videos is available on all online audio stores like iTunes, Google Play and so on.

Chandar believes that the upper hand of venturing into digital platforms is the freedom of creating your own content. Thus, you don’t need to depend on any artists or get your content approved by broadcasters. He says, “In 2020, India will be 10 times bigger as a digital player. The digital disruption wave has just started. New OTT players such as Netflix, VOOT and Amazon Prime are coming in, even broadcasters are starting their own OTT services, therefore this is going to be big. In future, probably there will be one subscription package where you can watch content on TV and also on the OTT service. TV is also growing but this kind of digitalisation will be an additional facility for the consumers.”

The paramount advantage of digital platforms is that they are available on mobile phones. The whole digital service is personalised for example if you are using Netflix then you have the world in your hands. Therefore you can see privately what you want to see. Broadcast is a big industry and it has taken long years for TV to grow to such a stature. TV will be there but more for a family entertainment kind of viewing; digital will take over TV at some point of time,” he adds.

Goo digital to grow digital. And, a company which has understood this extremely well is the Chennai-based ChuChu TV Studios. The company is behind Asia Pacific’s most watched YouTube channel with a subscriber base of five million, with three million average views per video on its channels. The five million figure includes subscribers in the US, UK, Philippines, Vietnam and around the world. ChuChu TV, founder and creative director, Vinoth Chandar expresses his journey from a startup to this peak stature.

The company is behind Asia Pacific’s most watched YouTube channel with a subscriber base of five million, with three million average views per video on its channels
Having started his career as a Flash and Photoshop designer, Chandar would initially try his hands out in Flash animation. He also has an IT background as he worked in an IT firm prior to starting this venture. Partnering with his Chartered Accountant friend Krishnan, Chandar planned the way ahead for content creation during the initial stages. He explains, “Krishnan has been helping with the storyboarding, designs and concepts. We both jointly head the creative team at ChuChu TV.” Most of the lyrics for various nursery rhymes have been penned down by Krishnan.

Also since it is a digital platform, the team constantly keeps a tab of the comments, responses and opinions of the audience on YouTube as well their social media channels. Feedback is taken from parents and viewers which helps them come up with new concepts and thus ideate better for the next video.

“We want to be a kid’s brand not just a YouTube channel. We want to produce a lot of content and be on all platforms. We are gradually entering into merchandising to increase our branding and are considering some level of outsourcing as well. Also, we want to increase the number of channels and come up with regional channels for the Indian audience.”

In his parting words, Chandar says, “Don’t create content just for the sake of it, create quality content which can prove beneficial and grab the attention of your audience.”

India’s animation story faces two criticisms: first that storytelling is far ahead of reality, and second, that incremental reforms represent a lack of courage.

You cannot put lipstick on a pig. Harvard historian Samuel Huntington remarked that the gap between India’s ideals and reality is not a lie but a disappointment. We have always been a 10-horse power engine running on two, and confidence is not a mathematical state but an emotional one. India doesn’t need a “realistic” plan, but a multi-year vision far ahead of our reality.

Therefore the question is “can India be a superpower in the field of animation?” and the answer is an emphatic, yes.

But, the task is cut out and we need to be patient, while at the same time working hard on getting the scaffolding in place.

For India to be a superpower in the field of animation, our ambitions and goals must be larger than our pockets, or our current capabilities. Progress needs the useful delusion that economist Albert Hirschman called the “hiding hand,” under which people grossly underestimate the real odds of failure. Given the guaranteed time lag between big vision and reality, success is the art of staying alive long enough to get lucky; Richard Attenborough’s movie Gandhi was released 20 years after it was proposed in 1962, Lupin took 33 years to reach a market cap of Rs 1,000 crore but reached Rs 90,000 crore in the next 15, and Infosys took 23 years to reach its first billion dollars in revenue but reached the next in a few months.

**Before we start looking at the future, let’s step back into history...**

*Ek Anek Aur Ekta*, a short traditionally animated educational film released in 1974 from the stable of Films Division was truly a landmark animation film. The film is presented as a fable meant to teach children the value of unity, and was frequently broadcast on India’s state-run television station, Doordarshan. The first Indian animated television series was *Ghayab Aaya*, aired in 1986 and directed by Suddhasatwa Basu. The first Indian 3D and VFX was done for the television series *Captain Vyom* by Ketan Mehta.

The first Indian 3D animated film was *Roadside Romeo*, which was a joint venture between Yash Raj Films and the Indian division of the Walt Disney Company. It was written and directed by Jugal Hansraj.

This film was widely anticipated with bated breath and was supposed to change the fortunes of the Indian animation Industry but turned out to be a cropper at the box office.

**Fundamental Issue**

We have lost the art of storytelling. “There aren’t many Indian cartoons that cater to the Indian audience below the age of 14 years.”

My parents used to discourse stories and put me to sleep, today we have lost the art of storytelling. Storytelling is essential to a compelling narrative, we need to discover that again. When my children come to me seeking stories, I negotiate with them and ask them to watch television. We should start discovering the art of storytelling once again.
Storytelling should be a part of our curriculum from primary education itself with strong artistic fundamentals.

There needs to be a coherent collaboration between government bodies and private Institutions.

**Government Role**

Just like the difference between a list of ingredients and a recipe, successful reform needs sequencing, proportioning and prioritising.

The results are slowly trickling in for states like Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh where the governments are bullish.

What government needs to do:

1. Increase awareness about AVGC and opportunities in the sector in various cities and districts by holding workshops and training sessions for skilled artisans, students and graduates at different levels.
2. Annual summit should be organised for animation, visual effects, gaming and comics (AVGC). This should gather all relevant stakeholders under one roof.
3. Incentive and Tax rebate for start-up ventures in animation and gaming.
4. Education and easy access to loans.
5. Sending delegations to international trade fairs and summits at subsidised rates.
6. Setting up creative infrastructure and labs.
7. Subsidies based on milestones.
8. Encouraging start-ups (Incubators).
10. To attract FDI and global production house to set up their offices in India.
11. Government land at subsidised cost for setting up animation and gaming studios.
12. Service component to be reduced for academia.
13. Television channels to earmark a certain percentage of airtime to broadcast regional content in animation.

Currently, we don’t have a benchmark for animation education and training, the entry and exit gates are wide open, we need to have a lighthouse centre – government-funded and privately-run – which will set benchmarks. This will have tight entry and exit barriers leading to better quality of placement.

India has always been more economically complex than other emerging nations – we make everything and do everything even if we don’t always do it at scale or well – and we are a 10 horsepower engine operating at four horsepower. Our problem is not capacity but capacity utilisation.

We need a massive deregulation of higher education by ending the existing regulatory regime. We need to encourage more biodiversity in institutional forms and innovation in delivery; the current system leaves little space for either.

We also need to end the apartheid against distance and online learning; all universities must be allowed to freely sign up students nationally and UGC must end its dated war against off-campus centres; we need all the capacity we can get. Of course, technology has been a disappointment; we all know it matters in education, we just don’t know how. But, as the economic historian Carlota Perez suggests in her book ‘Technological Revolutions and Financial Capital’, technology innovations take much longer to become useful than we think, but we are probably a few iterations away from something that works. More importantly, it is unfair that global MOOC (massive open online courses) like Coursera, Edx and Udacity can freely sign up students in India but Indian universities cannot operate outside their state.

Currently, our education regime is over regulated but under-supervised and we need to reimagine the role of regulators like UGC and explore university partnerships in some areas with the new sector skill councils.

We need to create more IPs. One such company which is doing exemplary work is the Toonz Media group. Toonz Media Group was set up almost two decades ago when the animation industry was non-existent in India. And today, Toonz stands proudly as an imposing IP creator, animation producer which generates over 5,000 minutes of content a year and a YouTube channel owner with over 100 million views per month.

Indians are the senior most storytellers in the world and we have a wealth of stories from our folklore, mythologies and epics which would have universal appeal if developed in a proper way.

Toonz Media Group has successfully managed to exploit the mythology and epics of India and that led to the birth of their first IP Tenali Raman.

While doing numerous co-productions with the international broadcasters and doing service work for quality creative studios, Toonz saw an immense possibility in producing animated content in India at a considerably low cost, yet maintaining great quality. This opened new doors and was achieved solely by custom-created production pipelines and financial plans by the Toonz experts.

Toonz went ahead to launch Chotoonz – a YouTube channel for kids which grew at a quick pace to reach over 100 million views per month and viewership from over 200 countries across the globe. This unprecedented success urged Toonz to launch a preschool kids channel ‘BabyToonz’ and also two more channels, in Turkish and Spanish languages. Toonz is also in the process of launching a traditional TV channel in Russia named Malish TV which will air Russian and international animated content for the Russian kids. If successful, Toonz plans to replicate this TV model in many other countries. Toonz is already in the connected TV platform and is contemplating strategies to explore its possibilities.

Toonz Animation is now working on producing the second season of the 2D Flash show Gaju Bhai which is its own IP co-produced with Disney India. A TV feature film on Gaju Bhai has also been aired on Disney Channel.

We need more such companies in India like the Toonz group with clear vision and perseverance.

The odds are tough for India, but the odds can change with an unrealistic ambition.

*The author is the SVP of MAAC (India), a national animation, VFX and gaming educational institution.*
Minnu & Mintu

Mintu is a curious monkey. Always brimming with questions. But then, Minnu is ever patient with his replies. From solar system to our five senses to the wonders of the world – these two are there to quench the thirst of knowledge in the exquisite land of Videogyan! Join Minnu & Mintu on a trip to the VG World and let’s unravel the myths and mysteries of the world.

The Bloop Troop

Pencillati Studios bring to MIPCOM The Bloop Troop, a 1x3 minute pilot, for an animated series, involving three warriors in a slapstick humour setting. Fun begins when a Barbarian, a Knight and an Archer are brought together by their knack for finding trouble. This unique CG style engages audience of all ages and geographies. Pencillati is looking for publishing and production tie-ups for animation content.

Contact: viveksidhu@pencillati.com

Timboo ‘N’ Tusker

Ever seen an egg hunting or have you tasted a laughing fruit? You are mighty correct! It is a lot of fun and games! Our friends, Timboo ‘N’ Tusker are ready to sweat it out for anything and everything! And yes, they are pretty awesome at that! They too have challenges in front of them like everyone. The one throwing challenges at them? Well, meet Tuba, the witty and cute dragon! But, the way they overcome those will leave you in splits! Excited? We, at Videogyan, bring you the journey of these two friends and their crazy adventures!

Zool Babies

Babies are cute! We all love cuddling them and playing with them! But how about watching them embark on adventures or being a part of their fun-filled activities or even cheer for them as they participate in different kind of sports? Sounds fun right? Be it pole-vault or soccer, we at Videogyan, bring you entertaining and educational videos on varied subjects! Your companions? We love to call them Zool Babies! Oh wait, there are five of them! So just sit back, fasten your belts and get ready for a ride with us in this wonderful world of Zool Babies!
VedAtma Animation Studios

At VedAtma Animation Studios, Bengaluru, Karnataka, India, we have a sincere and dedicated team of highly skilled and creative people working endlessly with a passionate aspiration to change the face of the global media and entertainment industry with the use of traditional and digital 2D animation, 3D animation and other post-production processes. The key strength of VedAtma lies in the fact that it provides the best of all worlds, offering exemplary imaging services, cutting-edge state of the art animation technologies, diversified cultural compatibility and conducive management techniques. Though the focus is on creating global IP's, we are also in the ever-demanding area of services and are able to successfully perform in both the domains.

Digitale Studios

Digitales Studios, India's award-winning animation studio will be attending MIPJunior and MIPCOM 2016 seeking potential Animation Film and Direct to Home Special Projects. After having successfully delivered high-quality animation production services for Kids Emmy Award Winning TV Series "Bing Bunny" and the latest Home Video Special " Alpha and Omega - The Big Furrreeze" (Splash Entertainment and Lionsgate Entertainment) slated early November release, Digitales is now looking to expand its Film Production Services Unit and has already started working on a major theatrical stereo feature due release next year.

For meetings during the MIP week please contact via MyMip.

Pencillati Studios

Pencillati Studios is a content creation company specialising in animation films and TV series. Based out of New Delhi, it houses some of the best professional talent from across India. Their team has a proven track record of delivering quality animation content for various genres right from pre-production till the post-production and the packaging stages. Pencillati is looking for production tie-ups for animation content.

Contact: viveksidhu@pencillati.com.
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14 - 17 March 2017, Cannes, France

06 - 09 December 2016, Marina Bay Sands, Singapore

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