

**PRESS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**New Delhi: July 14, 2020** .....Letter dated 8.7.2020 addressed to the Chairman, Broadcast Audience Research Council [BARC] by Mr. Rajat Sharma, President, News Broadcasters Association (NBA), regarding unprecedented growth of viewership of TV9 Bharatvarsh and the frequent substantial swings in English genre. The text of the letter sent is reproduced below.



**Annie Joseph**  
**Secretary General**

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“This is to bring to your notice that for the last 8 weeks or more the ratings have been unusable. In particular the ratings of TV 9 Bharatvarsh has been more than unusual. In this regard we would like to draw your attention to the following facts regarding the unprecedented growth of viewership of TV9 Bharatvarsh and the frequent substantial swings in English

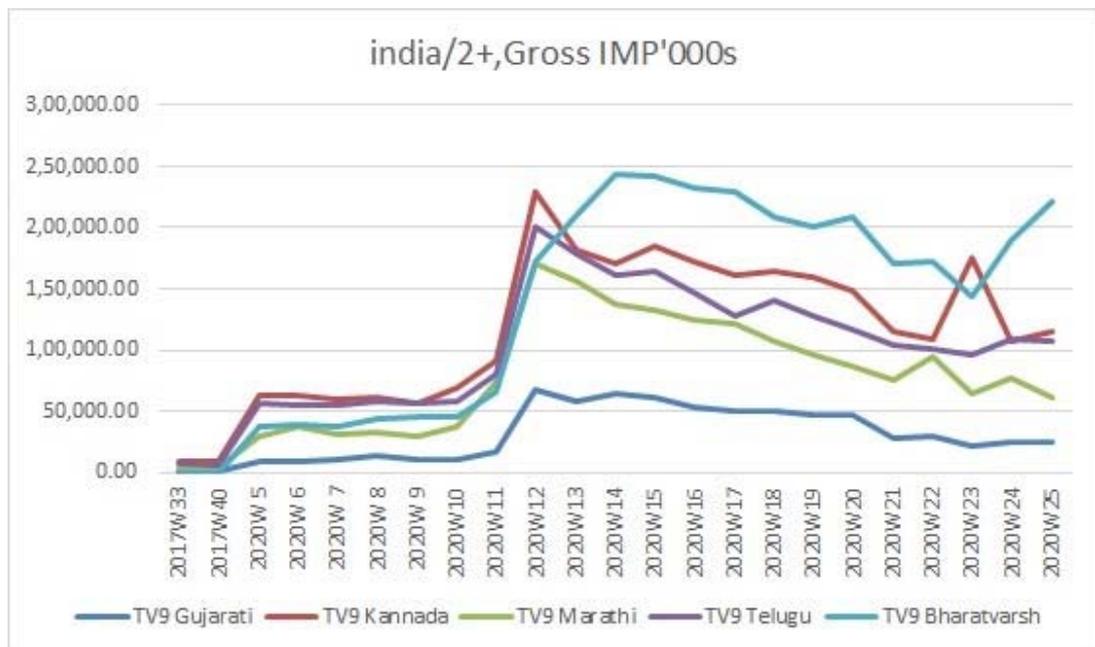
1. After seeing an all-time high during lockdown, News viewership has been declining almost consistently on all parameters. From Wk 12 to Wk 25 News Time Spend (TSV) declined by 36%, this decline is consistent for all news channels except for TV9, which has actually increased by a huge 59%.
2. While TV news industry saw an unprecedented growth in Week 12/13, with maximum TSV, oddly TV9 has got its max TSV in Week 25, when most people are back to work and unlock has happened. More surprisingly it has higher contribution from Urban than Rural.
3. It is well known that legacy brands have an advantage during LIVE and fast unfolding news events of national importance. However, this week Chinese troops related news and Actor Sushant’s suicide which were the biggest in the recent 2 weeks have not given the legacy brands as much benefit as it has given to TV9 suddenly.

4. If we compare the viewing pattern of TV9's common viewers of week 12 vis a vis Week 25, strangely viewers in Wk 12 spent 50 min on the channel (TSV) while in Wk 25 they have spent 71 min. This means that the same viewers are more interested in watching TV9 now than they did when they had all the time in hand during lockdown.
5. If we just compare viewer behaviour, New Viewers that added to TV9 in Week 12 had a time spend of 26 min however New Viewer who got added to the channel in Week 25 have a time spend of 36 minutes.
6. To reach a ranking position as high as no.2 even with landing channel support, brands have at least ranked 2 or 3 in reach. This example is phenomenal where channel is ranked no.7 in Weekly Reach in 000s, and yet No.1 in TSV and No.2 in Impressions. Other channels who have achieved this feat only recently, include R Bharat and News18 that touched no.3 on weekly reach parameter when they breached the ranking barrier.
7. BARC Rules on Landing on extraordinary surge may have missed 59 Ground interventions: TV9 Bharatvarsh is in landing on 59 headend find below state wise count. Were these tracked and trimmed from the output and in which manner? A similar table for Republic Bharat has been placed below to observe the scale of interventions in the genre, leading to subsequent unchecked rises.

TV9 BHARATVARSH	
State	No. Of Headend
MADHYA PRADESH	13
RAJASTHAN	9
MAHARASHTRA	8
UTTAR PRADESH	8
CHHATTISGARH	5
DELHI	3
HIMACHAL PRADESH	3
HARYANA	2
PUNJAB	2
UTTRANCHAL	2
W UTTAR PRADESH	2
BIHAR	1
JHARKHAND	1

R BHARAT	
State	No. Of Headend
HARYANA	15
MADHYA PRADESH	14
RAJASTHAN	8
BIHAR	3
W UTTAR PRADESH	3
MAHARASHTRA	2
UTTAR PRADESH	2
DELHI	1
CHHATTISGARH	1
HIMACHAL PRADESH	1
JHARKHAND	1
UTTRANCHAL	1
MUMBAI	1
GUJARAT	1

8. The four big anchors on the channel are Nishant Chaturvedi, Sumaira Khan, Sameer Abbas and Dinesh Gautam. In all likelihood, they would not feature in any instant recall or Qual study. Therefore, no programming led loyalty factor can be attributed to this spike.
9. Compare GRPs below in absolute terms with its own sister channels in regional space. All have fallen in the two weeks, but TV9 Bharatvarsh has grown. So the advantage of network is also negated.

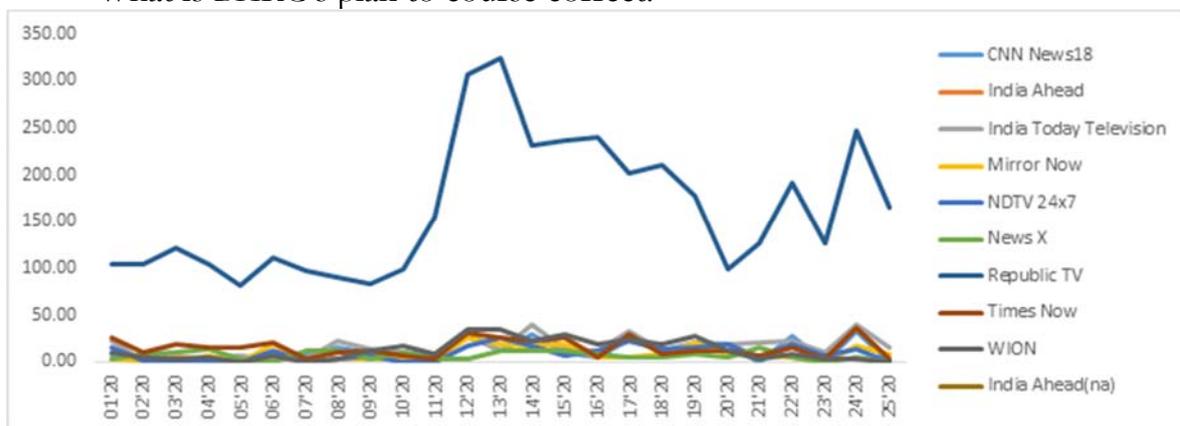


10. As per BARC's BIO News, TV9 Bharatvarsh has very little On Location coverage.

Channel	BOTH	IN STUDIO	ON LOCATION
Aaj Tak	78543	174052	46738
India TV	81488	231077	3490
News 24	60876	207688	13039
News Nation	111047	179209	26650
News18 India	90479	192512	33504
Republic Bharat	56899	220394	7588
TV9 Bharatvarsh	90337	262918	6152
Zee News	119055	169479	13895

(Seconds in the week: Source BIO News)

11. It may be worthwhile to look at the track record of the organization and assess if any earlier instances of interventions or proven malpractices exist against it. The current floating WhatsApp's raise serious suspicion.
  
12. Besides the Hindi genre, English has been suffering the same pattern of chaos. Many wild swings in single markets, compounded with the failure of a reach outlier picking mechanism, have made the data unusable. Republic TV continues to show exceptional Coverage in Chennai market, possibly because of an Out of Genre placement next to Tamil channels in gross violation of the law. How can an English speaking market be a single channel phenomenon? What is BARC's plan to course correct?



Source: BARC, 22+ M AB, Cumulative Reach in 000s, Chennai

Several news broadcasters have written to BARC drawing their attention that every week's ratings are not in correlation to the basics of television. The manipulated data is being released week after week without taking any remedial action. These are corrupt practices, which are being done with complete connivance with BARC and the broadcaster.

Instead of looking into the problems being raised by broadcaster, we are shocked to receive an unwanted mail addressed to the President NBA from an official in BARC justifying the credibility of TV9 Bharatvarsh weekly data.

It is a well known fact that several channels of TV 9 group have been caught in the past manipulating their viewership data so as to climb up the ratings data, which had resulted in suspension of their channel data by BARC.

We demand that BARC as an industry body should conduct an independent third-party enquiry, thoroughly investigate, take remedial actions and also take action against officials involved in corrupt practices, who must be removed from the Industry body, which is losing its credibility.

It becomes pertinent to remind you that we are stakeholders in BARC and we all agreed to its creation unanimously by removing the erstwhile TAM. The sole objective was to create a transparent and neutral system which seeks to address the erstwhile prevalent weaknesses in the system and make it robust. Further, at the time of the recent change in the top leadership of BARC, it was agreed that there would be a complete review of the team and its members at BARC for complete transparency and to restore the credibility of BARC. This has unfortunately not happened resulting in the continued menace and probable scope of manipulation and corruption of data.

It is very evident that office holders in charge of measurement science are overlooking some very odd behaviour. They are clearly indifferent to the ground reality, market understanding, and maybe in their obsession to follow a hard coded rule book are failing to catch the new anomalies. The unstable data is restricted not just to TV9 but also permeates across the English news genre that is lately plagued by wild swings. If there is experimentation taking place we would like to be updated.

I must convey that the members of the NBA Board feel extremely let down. The members have been very patient but it has been too long since it was broken. Some straight answers on how BARC plans to rebuild a broken system, should be made to the members. What has been done so far to rectify the old mistakes and loop holes. As far as we can see, it has become worse and it cannot go on like this.

We look forward to your urgent response”.

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