

Doordarshan viewership poor despite hike in budget, expert hiring

NEW DELHI: Despite the government seeking to give a boost to



Doordarshan by recruiting expert consultants and increasing its budget, recent data show that viewership of the state-run broadcaster's channels remains poor.

The [Broadcast Audience Research Council \(BARC\)](#), a joint industry body promoted by broadcasters, advertisers and advertising agencies formed in 2012, rolled out its first TV viewership measurement ratings for the first time recently.

According to BARC, DD National is 13th of 15 [entertainment](#) channels while DD [Sports](#) is 10th of 13 sports channels. DD News is eighth of 14 news channels while DD Bharati is 10th in the list of 11 culture channels.

Doordarshan, Don't Go By Numbers



Doordarshan stopped being about numbers ever since India's cable boom matured. Its much-cited 'reach', too, is far less illustrious than it is made out to be. Later this year, BARC will come out with rural viewership numbers. The current DD numbers should go up, but the 'Real India' viewership is unlikely to be radically different. The problem with DD is incentive. As a laggard, it should stay out of the numbers game. As a public broadcaster, however, it can be a quality programmer as it once was when it was a monopoly. If smart, it can use its unique resources to set itself apart and become a popular brand destination like BBC or PBS.

The newly launched DD

Kisan, according to BARC data, is ninth on the list of 11 channels in the same category. The study was conducted in the period between May 18 and June 8.

[Jawhar Sircar](#), CEO of [Prasar Bharati](#), said, however, that the BARC data was skewed as it did not cover 40% of the country and a better picture would be provided by the complete report when it comes out.

"Most rural areas are left out in this rollout," he said. "We are not saying that we will be on top after the complete data comes out but it will be a fairer analysis." Prasar Bharati is the agency that runs both Doordarshan and [All India Radio](#).

The 67 regional channels of DD show dismal ratings with most having the least viewership in the respective categories. These include DD Urdu, DD Bangla, DD Girnar, DD Kashir, DD Marathi and DD Odiya.

Last year, the government increased spending on Doordarshan and prepared for a major turnaround of the public broadcaster. Ministers were asked to give interviews to Doordarshan, which also began beaming [Mann ki Baat](#), PM Modi's fortnightly audio-only address to the nation. Several professional consultants were hired to improve content and presentation on Doordarshan in the last few months. DD Kisan was launched by Modi on May 26 to celebrate a year of the government and to reach out to farmers. Expenditure on DD rose 15% to Rs 1,850 crore in FY15 from Rs 1,608 crore in FY13 while revenue declined 13%.

"The revenue this year of DD and its channels has just been about `993 crore, which shows a downward trend," an official said.

Information and broadcasting ministry officials said they were aware of the report of DD's viewership not picking up and were taking steps to ensure corrective measures were taken by Prasar Bharati to improve content. "The figures have been revealing. There is a big gap between expenditure and revenue of all Doordarshan channels. So much that the revenue of [DD Goa](#) is hardly Rs 2 lakh while the expenditure runs in crores," an official said. He added that meetings between concerned officials have been planned in the coming week to fix accountability for DD's dipping viewership.