

## India Today expands eight local channels under the “Tak” brand and grows its digital audience

India Today is one of India's largest news diversified media companies and operates nationally across TV, print, and digital.

### OPPORTUNITY

India Today already runs several very successful YouTube channels that cover national and international news — the largest, “Aaj Tak” (loosely translates to ‘up to the minute’) has over 40M subscribers. But the brand wanted to offer more local content in native languages to audiences in additional markets. It saw an opportunity to expand its local presence through eight YouTube channels under the “Tak” brand in the languages of different Indian states and cities.

### APPROACH

India Today built up eight hyperlocal channels and assigned a local editorial team and anchor to each. The channels cover news, politics, elections, accidents, crime, entertainment, and more, in the native language of the regions, to better engage local audiences.

**Understanding audience needs:** The first thing India Today did was run a survey to understand the content requirements for audiences in local markets. It identified regional communities and looked at the gaps, challenges, and opportunities of each, then decided to focus on the following locales: *Mumbai, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, and Rajasthan.*

**Establishing the editorial teams:** India Today built up new ‘Tak Teams’ by hiring editors and producers who were experts in their region, and video editors and camera operators who had significant experience working with digital video. Each team was trained in YouTube best practices and content strategy, then supplied with editing machines, video production software, and MoJo Kits for filming on-the-go — these contained cameras, iPhones, and tripod stands, and enabled reporters to cover news in remote districts via mobile, without having to carry heavy equipment with them.

**Developing the channels:** India Today assigned each “Tak” channel an editorial team and an anchor, and encouraged them to make the channel their own by producing content in local languages/dialects. The anchors were already well known from other India Today shows, and using their star power in this way helped rapidly generate growth and drive channel subscriptions. Each channel also relied on India Today's extensive network of freelance journalists (stringers) for local content.

**Scaling up production:** The teams tailored and optimized content for mobile-first consumption. Unlike TV, digital gave each team the flexibility to experiment with different formats (e.g., vertical videos) and tools (e.g., two-way dialogue with viewers) to see what would resonate best with audiences. To drive reach and growth further, the teams adopted other YouTube tools and features, such as info cards, end screens, playlists, the Community tab, titles and descriptions, thumbnails, etc.

### RESULTS

India Today successfully expanded eight of its channels to better serve local audiences. The channels have had a big impact on overall brand performance — when compared to India Today's four established TV-brand YouTube channels, the new digital-first channels contribute:

- **34% share** in total subscribers.
- **30% share** of the video views.
- **22% share** in hours of watch time.

Overall, these new channels enhanced India Today's content distribution network.

### LEARNINGS

#### **Hire local experts who know your local audience:**

Understanding the needs of the consumer is important if you want to drive growth for your channel and brand. India Today hired editors and producers who knew their respective local regions very well — for example, the editor for “Dilli Tak” had expert knowledge of Delhi history, politics, places to visit, etc.

**Content consistency is critical:** Audiences have expectations of new content on a regular basis, so make sure you upload on schedule. Enhance your content with consistently good thumbnails, titles, headlines, and descriptions. And keep track of what's working and what's not through metrics and data, and course correct where necessary.

**Leverage your star anchors to own and promote digital channels:** One of the biggest factors of the “Tak” channels' success was the presence and leadership of well-known India Today news anchors. These anchors acted as channel ambassadors and leveraged their own star power and significant fan following to spur growth. Moreover, the anchors were given editorial freedom and operational resources to grow these channels.



**The ever-changing news ecosystem has led us to believe that video as a format would be the future of content consumption. Adding to that, YouTube's reach and vast offerings propel our ability to engage audiences across various segments.**

*Salil Kumar, Chief Operating Officer of India Today Group Digital*

