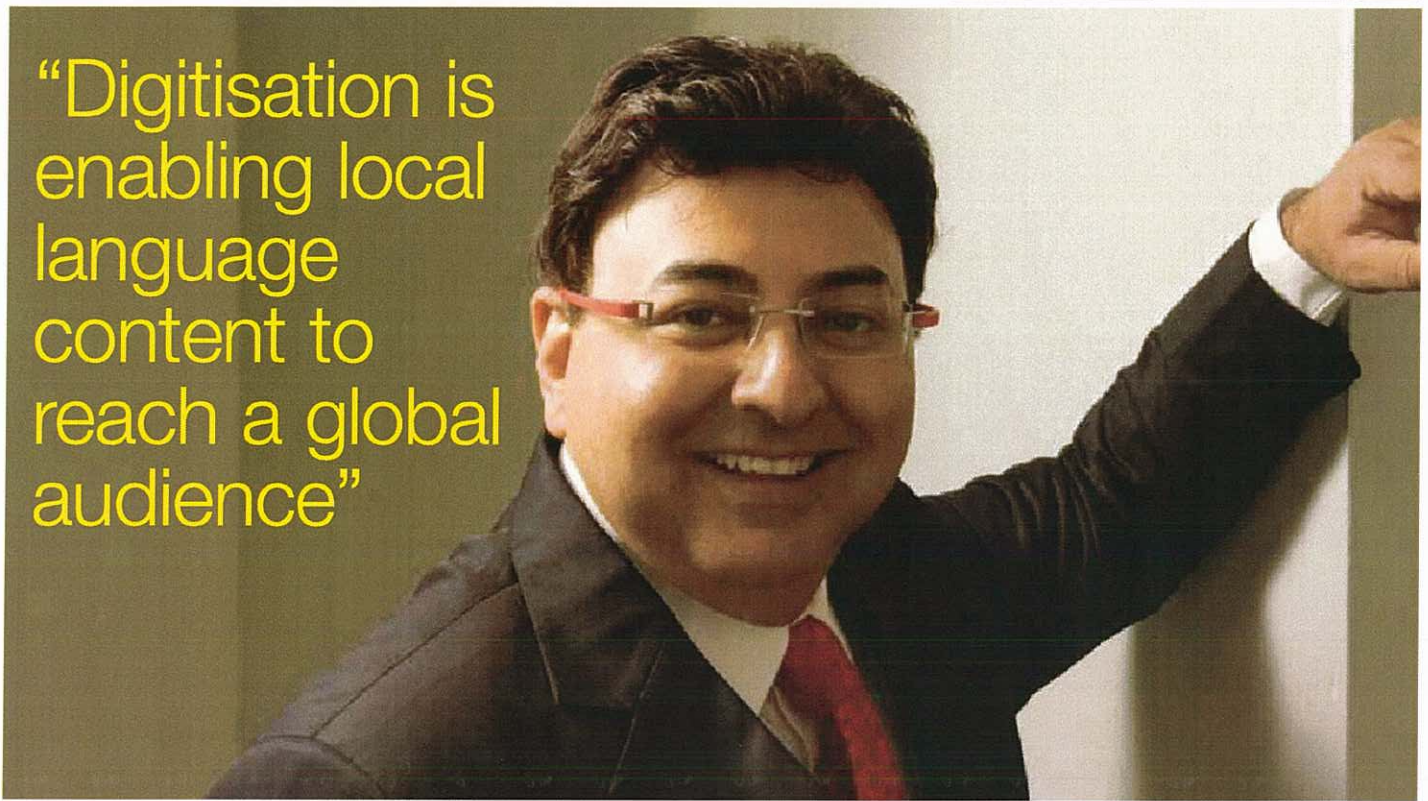


Spotlight on India

“Digitisation is enabling local language content to reach a global audience”



India's digital economy explodes

IBC2013's special curtain raiser was an action-packed centenary celebration of one of the most creative, and certainly the most prolific, dream factory on Earth – Indian Cinema.

Mohinder Walia
CEO Mumbai Media City
/Golden Bird Entertainment
Region: India

Interview by **Carolyn Giardina**

Synonymous with the song and dance razzamatazz of Bollywood, the country's filmmaking is far greater and more diverse than we may imagine. Accompanied by sumptuous clips from movies past, present and forthcoming, IBC delegates were able to feast their senses on the vibrant history of this most remarkable filmmaking nation.

Mohinder Walia, MD of LA and Mumbai production company, Golden Bird Entertainment, helped produce

the event.

From *Raja Harishchandra*, the first black and white silent film released in 1913, through to the critically acclaimed masterpieces of director Satyajit Ray, Indian's passion for the moving image has seen it explode into the one of the world's largest film industries with a staggering 1000 films released annually and up to 3.6 billion in ticket sales.

New releases have an increasingly strong international flavour in their choice of stories, locations and globally recognised talent with directors and producers ever more

adventurous in exporting Indian storytelling worldwide.

What's more, the growing wealth of India's 1.6 billion young, predominantly English-speaking populace make it a territory that simply cannot be ignored by any overseas studio or exhibitor.

The second screen will be the growth driver for content consumption in India, believes Walia. "However, broadcasting could still expect a quantum leap in the number of channels. Today there are approximately 600 operational TV channels in India, which is going to become 1200 in the next five years," he said.

The country is also experiencing growth in digital cinema. "We have achieved digital in almost 80% of cinema theatres countrywide; 100% will be achieved soon," he reported. "Digitisation in theatres is helping everyone save on distribution costs, and they are using that money to produce

more content ... rather than on infrastructure and workflows."

Additionally, the digital shift is enabling local language content to reach a global audience. "It becomes easier to distribute content all around the world and capitalise on markets for local content, and I'm talking about Hindi content, primarily Bollywood," the exec said. "Digital does help with distribution outside of India. Same for HD broadcasting – the clarity makes local content more attractive for the Western world."

With all of this in mind, Golden Bird Entertainment is building Mumbai Media City, which Walia describes as a "one-stop shop" with facilities for film and TV production, post, VFX and animation, including five soundstages, an auditorium, hotel for housing crews, broadcast play-out and up-linking/down-linking, and space for industry events.

Walia says this would also include a content management facility "that will help with digitisation of content and archives as well as newly-produced content from broadcasters and movie studios.

"That will help these companies monetise that content across new media and mobile platforms, not just in India but worldwide. This is part of our effort to help the industry in its digitisation process and be a part of the new digital economy in India."

Mumbai Media City – based in the Kandivai West section of the city – is expected to open in 2014, and while Golden Bird's work is currently focused in India, that might not be the case for long. "We are exploring opportunities to set up such Media Cities in other countries, and we are talking to [representatives from] a couple of countries about developing this."