

Cultural economics of TV programme cloning: or why India has produced multi-“millionaires”

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Purpose

Produced by a local subsidiary of a global media conglomerate, a licensed clone of *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?* achieved the highest-ever ratings in India in the early 2000s, spawning unlicensed clones among its rival channels. This paper seeks to analyse the cultural and economic factors behind this most widely acknowledged example of television format adaptation in India.

Design/methodology/approach

Through interviews with media-owners, programme producers, and advertising agencies, an insider perspective was sought on why some clones had succeeded and others had not in India's competitive television market.

Findings

As with other forms of franchising in developing and transitional economies, the industry rationales for adapting television programmes, global and local, prove to be a paradoxical mix of economic pragmatism and cultural hybridity.

Practical implications

The strategy of cloning television raises complex issues of imitation versus inspiration within the increasingly globalised media industries of emerging markets.

Originality/value

The paper examines the impetus for cloning across a variety of programme genre in India.

Keywords: [Television](#), [Franchising](#), [Globalization](#), [India](#)

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