

Rewriting the Television Rule Book



Rian Bester, CEO, Insight TV, reveals how the broadcaster came to the forefront of the UHD television revolution, making UHD HDR programmes that appeal to its target millennial audience.

In November 2018, Christopher Nolan, the Oscar-nominated director of films including *The Dark Knight*, *Dunkirk* and *Inception*, received The Digital Entertainment Group's inaugural Vanguard Award at the 4K Ultra HD Summit in Los Angeles. The award recognised Nolan's use of technology "to deliver increased scale and resolution, enhanced colour and immersive audio to film audiences both in cinemas and in the home theatre environment." At the time, *Variety* reported Nolan commenting, "4K UHD with HDR is a mouthful, but it really puts us in a position where we can get closer and closer to a theatrical print in the home."

We at Insight TV echo that sentiment. Before HDR began to make inroads into the market, I often spoke at events where people said that 4K production was cost prohibitive. From our own experience, if you are clever about the way you produce your content, the cost differential is no longer a factor. There are far more tools available, people have figured out how to adapt workflows and there are many more service providers. When Insight TV launched four years ago, the amount of companies that provided 4K p10ut or post were limited. This, of course, meant competition was minimal and prices were high. But over time this has become more mainstream and therefore those production costs are no longer an issue.

As one of the world's largest UHD broadcasters and producers of native UHD HDR content, we leverage our experience to keep production costs to a minimum while producing content at the highest quality. We lead innovation by pushing the distribution chain harder than ever before. We are at the forefront of the UHD television revolution, making UHD HDR programmes that appeal to our target millennial audience.

Content is King

Creating relevant content to draw eyeballs is a major challenge for channels in today's media landscape. Generation-Z and millennials have formed completely different viewing habits. They are more likely to turn to their social media channels to gauge the reaction of other users and influencers that they follow for recommendations instead of relying on traditional direct advertising from media outlets and brands.

With this in mind, how do broadcasters and

brands win over millennials and Generation Z? Social responsibility is important to these demographics, and brands need to take part in conversations and topics that are meaningful to them. The key is to connect the brand to communities that are trending and to the influencers that they admire and respect. The more focused content is to the likes and dislikes of these generations, the better your chance of forming meaningful connections.

As well as creating authentic content, broadcasters and content creators need to adapt to new technologies as quickly as their audience and find innovative ways to tell their story through each new device. Continuing the story via all the different platforms is key to this. But this isn't always easy. Broadcasters need to take into account the different platforms, devices and the small communities within social media — all of which generates huge demand when it comes to content creation.

Quality is Key

We believe UHD will continue to penetrate the market at



a rapid pace, especially as more technology starts to support mobile and laptop UHD usage through faster bandwidth and development. In Q4 2018, a Futuresource Consulting 4K UHD Research and Analysis Report highlighted that nearly half of all TVs shipped worldwide in 2018 would be 4K capable, making it the year that UHD became mainstream. However, while quality matters, content is still king and to be successful in today's market it is crucial for advertisers and brands to take into account how millennials and Generation Z make their purchasing decisions. We know they're heavily guided by influencer and peer-to-peer recommendations. They are also far more likely to use ad blockers than generations before. This enables broadcasters and content owners to offer brands the best possible authentic advertising environment within the content created.

For us, this means telling authentic stories through global influencers that these generations relate to. While focusing on creating stories around trending topics that are relevant to millennials, we also provide our content to the platforms that they regularly use including influencers' and show talents' own channels, affiliate channels and advertisers' channels, events & sponsorships, experiential activations as well as Insight TV's own social media channels, VoD platform and linear channels.

A true lasting connection between the content creator, the advertising brand and millennials and Generation Z is made by monitoring and listening to the cues given. This is why we're continually studying our demographics. It's important to have an active conversation with the audience and take part in conversations that matter to them. Emphasising engagement that is authentic to each platform, as well as meaningful to each audience group, is something we strive to do in order to produce impactful content and lasting connections.

We make authentic content based on inspirational characters, highlighting topical issues and experiences that are important to this generation globally. Our production philosophy, and also our partnerships with brands such as Monster Energy, have allowed us to push the creative boundaries in terms of the unique content that we produce, incredible talents and the locations and situations in which we shoot.

Many of our shows, including those in our recent March *Speed Seekers* series, are shot in difficult-to-reach locations around the world. Two of the key shows from this series are *Morbidelli Rising*, produced with Monster Energy, and *Endurance: 24 Hours at Spa*, produced inhouse by Insight TV.

Morbidelli Rising charts legendary racer

Franco Morbidelli's Moto GP track debut, revealing his mentoring and relationship with motorcycling legend Valentino Rossi, his home life, the nerves and pressure leading up to his first race, as well as their intense training sessions at 'The Ranch'. *Endurance: 24 Hours at Spa* goes behind the scenes, featuring personal stories of world class amateur and professional drivers – including F1 legend Rubens Barrichello – from six leading teams who fiercely battle to last 24 hours at this notorious circuit. The challenging environments and tremendous speed combined with the specific camera equipment that can be used in these conditions and the advanced skills required for shooting these kinds of sports in 4K is somewhat challenging. But it is a challenge that we enjoy!

In addition to high-octane shows, we also like to make high-quality provocative, shows. Our recent series, *Travel with a Goat*, sparked debates around the world with one simple question: "Freedom or feast, what would you do?" The UK's *Guardian* newspaper included a write up in its 'Monday Best TV' column and

"We are at the forefront of the UHD television revolution"

The Telegraph newspaper in the UK called it "a grime-caked travelogue confronting the ethics of eating meat".

Furthermore, we produce all of our own content and thereby own all of the rights to it, which means we can deliver our content everywhere and anywhere, and by that I mean regionally as well as taking different routes to market - including our linear channel and VoD services. This means we are not hampered by the territorial restrictions that a regional broadcaster, for example, might have.

Because we can control, trade and deliver our content across relevant routes to market via our linear and digital platforms, we are able to create the size, scale and customer base that enables us to grow rapidly.

How do we reach across those different routes to market? With linear, it is relatively straightforward: There is a mature market with satellite distribution, cable television platforms and subscriber bases who understand the value proposition that's offered to them by those operators. We operate within that environment and we continue to enjoy growing distribution across them. With digital, there is a significant shift. With an increasing range of devices to consume content and various commercial models it remains a continuous evolution.

What Does the Future Hold?

Nobody can predict how the television industry

will shake out in the next decade. Ten to 15 years ago, not many would have foreseen the rise (and recent dip) of the collective stock of FAANGs (Facebook, Apple, Amazon, Netflix and Google), and how these tech giants have impacted the industry. Netflix in particular took many broadcasters by surprise by developing an on-demand service globally that not only goes directly to the consumer with 4K UHD content, but also considers consumer interest at the programming level. Releasing whole seasons of shows at once has fundamentally changed viewing habits and as a result, broadcasters large and small are re-evaluating how they maintain relevance and consumer interest as these new services enter the market.

This direct-to-consumer proposition means that companies in the media industry that traditionally had a business-to-business model are having to reorient their business and learn how to talk to consumers. This is difficult for smaller broadcasters that don't have the same resources or global reach that the large social media or FAANG group of companies are able to command.

What we do know is that consumers are moving their subscriptions, their money and their interests to streaming platforms and working closely with partners, our VoD services deliver opportunities that meet global consumer demand.

What's next?

The rate in which technology is evolving is leaving many industries ripe for disruption and the television industry is a classic example. The next phase for the broadcast and media industry is 8K and, right now, 8K is a marketing showcase for the consumer electronics powerhouses to demonstrate their leading technical superiority. Today, you could go out and buy an 8K screen at the same cost as a small car, but the content is simply not there yet. Even natively shot and produced 4K UHD content in HDR with HFR and WCG is still scarce. The cost and bandwidth to deliver 4K UHD is already a challenge and almost doubling that for 8K seems very unrealistic at this point. It's likely to be several years before we see major deployment of 8K content.

But there is no doubt that technological developments happen quickly. No one could have predicted how the market would change even five or ten years ago, but these are exciting times. For channels to survive they need to understand their target audience, interact and listen to their likes and dislikes, adapt to that and provide all their content in the highest quality on every device. No pressure!

As Christopher Nolan famously said: "Breaking rules isn't interesting. It's making up new ones that keeps things exciting".