



**MTV WORLD
PRESENTED BY NUSRAT DURANI,
GENERAL MANAGER AND SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, MTV WORLD**

Media Management Association Speaker Event

Columbia Business School
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On November 14, the Media Management Association (MMA) and the South Asian Business Association (SABA) welcomed Nusrat Durani, general manager and senior vice president of MTV World, to address students in Uris Hall. Accompanied by popular television personalities and lively audiovisual displays, Mr. Durani described the runaway success of MTV World—a division of MTV Networks that is breaking new ground by targeting growing audiences of South and East Asian origin in the United States. By delivering the latest music and cultural trends from Asia to America while exploring Asian perspectives on life in the United States, MTV World is not only bridging global cultural gaps but also building a highly successful international business.

In July 2005, MTV—the highly successful television network that pioneered the broadcast of music videos in the 1980s and reality TV in the 1990s—did something that may emerge as its milestone of media leadership for this decade. Recognizing the growing Asian-American audience and the emerging technological capability to target niche audiences profitably, it launched MTV Desi, a premium cable channel focused exclusively on viewers in the United States of South Asian descent.

With video DJs (VJs) speaking in English but serving up the latest music and stories from the Indian subcontinent, MTV Desi was an instant sensation with young *Desis* (a term that refers to people of the Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi diaspora). *Business Week* hailed MTV Desi as “part hip-hop, part Bollywood, part Southeast Asian CNN,” while National Public Radio celebrated the move on an installment of *Morning Edition*.

This success led to the launch in December 2005 of MTV Chi, a second channel with programming from China, Taiwan and Singapore that caters to members of the Cantonese- and Mandarin-speaking diaspora, and in June 2006 MTV K, a third channel that addresses young Americans of Korean descent. Like MTV Desi, these channels have met with great success and received a passionate response from their audiences.

Leading this experiment is Nusrat Durani, general manager of MTV World. A stylish young man who seems as likely to be found on the dance floor of New York's hottest club as in the board room of MTV Networks's corporate headquarters, Mr. Durani revealed the logic behind this international business and cultural phenomenon to an auditorium full of Columbia Business School students.

According to Mr. Durani, "MTV is in the business of consumer worship. At the heart of everything we do is the consumer." Furthermore, MTV does not believe that a one-size-fits-all approach works when catering to young people. For these reasons, when MTV noticed that its audience was fragmenting with emerging South Asian, Chinese and Korean-American realities, it took the initiative to service these groups by creating the new experiences of MTV World. The result has been a significant increase in the size of the audience the network serves, as well as its penetration of that audience.

While MTV World has been effective in reaching new customers, it has also come to play an important cultural role for them. First, it has provided a powerful platform for cultural groups that are not generally recognized by mainstream media. "When we first researched this project and discovered the opportunity, the emotional response was 'I want my MTV K.' The audience wanted to see themselves on TV," Mr. Durani explained. "Growing up in the U.S. not ever having seen yourself on television is like growing up without seeing yourself in the mirror. Television up to now has been the mirror for most young people."

Second, MTV World has created a forum for exploring issues of interest to that audience in ways that mainstream media cannot. At MTV World, "we believe that it is not just about song and dance," Mr. Durani said. "We believe in being inclusive of the entire South Asian diaspora . . . and featuring a diversity of opinions and voices." For example, one unique feature of all MTV World channels is a news service that tells relevant stories from their audiences' perspective, such as coverage of the Muslim-American response to controversial Danish cartoons featuring the Prophet Muhammad.

Despite the important cultural aspects and exciting buzz surrounding this venture, Mr. Durani emphasized its serious business intent: "The opportunity for us is to be able to create compelling experiences, but also monetize those experiences so that we're still a business. Because we are, at the end of the day, a business." To this end, he anticipates expanding the reach of MTV World beyond its three television channels. "It's time for us to engage fully in all the emerging [media] platforms. We are going to deliver experiences not

just on television but also on the PC. And those experiences will talk to each other.” Mr. Durani announced that in 2007 MTV World will deploy the second phase of its strategy, which will integrate television programming with broadband and mobile telephony.

Mr. Durani also anticipates that MTV World will continue to grow according to the customer-driven strategy that led to its creation in the first place. “We will be everywhere the audience is,” he explained. “Sometimes we will follow them to new places. Other times they will follow us to new places. Our relationship with the audience . . . is the holy grail.”

Mr. Durani’s presentation culminated with comments by two popular MTV World television personalities, MTV Desi VJ Utkarsh Ambudkar and MTV Chi VJ Greg Woo. Recounting an inspiring story about his recent completion of the 2006 New York City marathon despite a fractured ankle, the latter’s comments provided a fitting summary of the afternoon’s presentation: “The energy and the spirit . . . on that day is the same energy that MTV World embodies. Our cutting-edge entertainment is hitting people in ways that have never been done before. I don’t know charts, and I don’t know graphs; I’m not very good with numbers. But I do know that that’s pretty good business.”

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