

MIH

# Bit by bigger byte

It breezed into the country formally, just six months ago. But MIH India is already making its impact felt in the internet business.

Chumki Sen

In September last year, Ashish Kashyap, CEO, MIH India, in an interview to **The Brand Reporter**, had said, "Our aim is to create products that this market has never seen before; shake some trees." And MIH India is right on track. And it is moving really fast.

First, the Indian arm of the US \$ 2.2 billion South African media giant Naspers acquired two websites in quick succession and then created waves by launching *The Great Indian Blogger Hunt* through its proprietary Ibibo platform offering Rs 1.5 crore in total prize money to the winners. That is serious business for blogs. But it is just part of MIH India's plans to shake up the Indian internet and digital space.

With its three-pronged build-invest-acquire approach, MIH India has a team of about 65 people working out of Gurgaon. It has also set up an R&D team in Bangalore and has acquired two companies - Bixee and Pixrat. Bixee.com is a vertical search engine for jobs and Pixrat.com is a social picture bookmarking website that allows users to collect, organise and share pictures from anywhere on the web.

What exactly is MIH up to? Why did it come up with a reward-the-blogger scheme instead of building the brand through traditional promotional activities? It is not as if MIH is trying to create a database of bloggers by showing them the carrot. Kashyap says, "The insight is - we have seen that users like seeing the statistics - on popularity, quality and viewing the blog. And all that is given pretty much upfront to you as a creator of the blog or the photoblog through Ibibo. The biggest benefit of seeing is because

be defined based on three parameters - quality (determined by the rating they get for the blogs from other users), popularity (how many people are reading and what are the page views for that blog) and activity (how many posts does a blogger make and how the blog is being marketed through e mail and SMS).

"We want to communicate our intent of sharing everything with the users. If the user is able to share and create content, we should share the money with them. Nobody has done anything like this in the country. We will also go to the

which have launched. And breaking in requires more energy than it would have required seven to eight years ago when we went into China. You need to be heard," he says.

Kashyap likes to believe that the internet business will be built on serious ground, real users and a good critical mass of user base. There will be a lot of acquisitions. The game, according to him, would be played by people who want to be in it for the long run. What else does MIH have up its sleeve?

Though MIH has IPTV and DTH in its global portfolio, the company does not see itself launching these services in India soon. The reason is simple. Internet businesses can be 100 per cent subsidiary business in India. But television and other businesses have regulatory issues in the country. Internationally MIH has an 'invest' strategy for the IPTV and DTH businesses.

What about revenues? On setting revenue targets, Kashyap is clear about his blueprint. "Firstly, this is a build, invest and acquire time. Revenues come after you generate users. This is setting-up time for us, a time for us to interact with the market over the next one year. We have very clear investment and profit and loss targets for the next five years. But for us it is clearly the user - the critical mass of usage comes before any business model," he says.

MIH is looking at promoting the Ibibo, Bixee and Pixrat brands separately and also under a bigger umbrella and is in the final stages of short-listing an ad agency. But right now, the company is working on all the products it is offering in a bid to make it better and better.

"It should be easy enough for a kid to use," sums up Kashyap. ■

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Kashyap: grabbing opportunities

The screenshot shows the Ibibo blogs website interface. At the top, there's a search bar and navigation links for HOME, MYIBO, BLOGGER HUNT, BLOGS, PHOTOS, and HELP. A prominent banner for the "Great Indian Blogger Hunt" is displayed, stating "Running now! Great Indian Blogger Hunt. Top 100 bloggers every month get paid!" and "You can be one of them. Write or show anything - absolutely anything! You don't need to be a great writer, or journalist. Connect and network with millions. Get Famous, Make friends. Re 1.5 Crore to be earned! Get paid to blog! Every month! See the pay-out." Below the banner is a table listing top bloggers and their scores.

IBO Rank	User	Blog	IBO Score
1.	bystander	Men V women	10000
2.	Mozzner	18 month do us apart	4000
3.	Arbana	Domestic violence act	3400
4.	Zaru	ibch oDVR can make your life easier	2500
5.	Wah Take	Nehru's 100's Series	
6.	All Plans		

market with traditional marketing, but more than that we strongly believe in the concept of viral. Consumers should automatically start getting engaged," says Kashyap.

Kashyap also feels that there is a huge gap in the regional language space in the country. There are no hyper local applications - not just a city but even within that city. He also feels that there are no dominant local applications, unlike in China.

MIH has been in China since 1998 and has a 36.1 per cent stake in Tencent, China's leading internet and mobile value added service provider. Doesn't Kashyap feel that MIH entered India very late? According to him, the biggest disadvantage in the Indian internet space is that there is too much clutter in the market. "There are about 100 plus brands

## Opening out

OTV will target the FMCG, banking, auto and retail sectors for advertising.