

मटि अखबार में इसके डटिर आर. सुकुमार क आज क कलेख छपा है. इसमें उन्होंने बजिनेस न्यूज चैनलों की महिला कर्कों के छाली दखिऊ टरेंड पर कफी कुछ बताया है. कैसे कर्क अपनी टीशरट के उपरी दो बटन खोलने के ली तीन गुना सेलरी लेती है. कैसे कर्क क चयन करते समय इस बात क ध्यान रखा जाता है क उसके स्तन बड़े हों... कैसे मीडिया अब चमड़ी की दीवानी होती जा रही है.... पढ़ी सुकुमार क लेख...

A media obsession

-R. Sukumar-

: I know some women anchors on business channels. Many of them are smart -- or are on their way to getting there -- and I can't believe they agree to go along with on-the-edge wardrobe suggestions put forth by their producers :

Cleavage," he said.

I thought I hadn't heard him clearly.

He sensed my question even before I asked it.

Big ones, he said, moving his hands out till they were at least 10 inches in front of his chest.

I didn't want to get technical, so I didn't point out the obvious, that there was a difference between the two things he had described. His meaning was clear, though. The person, who worked for a business news channel, was telling me why the channel had hired a certain anchor for its morning stock market show.

I didn't want to hear more though my friend from the channel seemed keen to share with me the unsavoury specifics of what day traders and brokers do when they watch business news channels.

Written by R. Sukumar
Monday, 01 August 2011 09:58

I didn't pay much heed to what he said till another person, from another business news channel, told me the same story.

She got three times her current salary, for agreeing to leave the top two buttons of her shirt unbuttoned, he said, referring to an anchor who had recently switched channels.

I have more or less reproduced their words as I remember them from our conversations, and I apologize if I have offended the sensibilities of some readers of this paper. Mint remains a family paper.

I was reminded of these conversations in the wake of the coverage papers and channels devoted to Hina Rabbani Khar, the photogenic foreign minister of Pakistan. Even by the standards of the near-saturation coverage any visit by a Pakistani foreign minister to this country receives, this was a bit much.

So, is the media obsessed with looks?

The simple answer to that is: Yes, a lot.

Is the media obsessed with shows of skin?

Yes, a lot.

You do not need to possess an IQ of 130 to figure this out; a casual perusal of newspapers, including some large English-language ones, will throw up a bunch of pictures of women who must be perennially cold given their dress sense, and used entirely out of context. A similar casual run-through of television channels will show, in many channels, young women dressed for a night out and reading the news.

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There are some media companies that do not do this. Since this column is, at one level, all about losing friends and offending people, I am going to go ahead and name the good ones. I have not seen any of NDTV's channels do this, nor Times Now and CNN-IBN. And the business channels are the worst offenders.

Why would they do this?

(Sorry, silly question; let me try again)

A senior editor at a popular US business channel once told me that his company had a simple rule for women anchors: high necks; comfortable hems.

Then, India isn't the US (although I still can't understand how respectable media companies can indulge in blatantly exploitative behaviour).

I know some women anchors on business channels. Many of them are smart—or are on their way to getting there—and I can't believe they agree to go along with on-the-edge wardrobe suggestions put forth by their producers.

After all, you don't find the men anchoring shows on these channels modelling themselves on actor Hrithik Roshan (the word button probably doesn't exist in his vocabulary). They are all uniformly dressed soberly, in dark suits, plain shirts and boring ties.

The morning slot is an important one for business channels. Their viewership peaks between 9 and 11 in the morning and then tapers off before peaking, although not to the same level as the morning, in mid-afternoon, around the time the stock markets close. Their viewership also witnesses a small spike, lower than both peaks, in the evening, for prime-time business news. The programming on all channels remains the same during market hours, a mix of stock tips, market moving news, and interviews with in-house or external experts (some of whom are of dubious integrity, but that's a different story).

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Most viewers watch these channels with the mute function engaged; they are interested in the tickers and the stock charts, not what the anchor is saying. And as any level-headed financial adviser will tell anyone who cares to listen, most business channels are aimed at day traders and punters, not long-term investors (shameless plug: read Mint's personal finance section, Mint Money, for that).

Under the circumstances, it isn't surprising that the channels choose to differentiate themselves on the basis of how their female anchors look. It isn't surprising but, in my book at least, it isn't condonable.