Indian local content has global relevance

Prof. Dr. Peter A. Bruck

INDIA has become a hotbed of innovation in e-content. Few other regions around the world show similar prosperity in the agile production of new formats and new applications. India stands out particularly with the digital content production of social inclusion and for closing the content gap.

All around the world rich people can buy fancy content with fantastic multimedia and full of the finest video in the slickest layout. But is this the only way the promise of the information society becoming fulfilled?

In 2003, the United Nation's World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) defined goals for the achievement of a true knowledge society. One of WSIS' core objectives for 2013 was to bridge the digital divide, separating rich and poor countries in terms of access to telecommunication and digital networks.

Today we know that access to infrastructure is one critical issue and the provision of high speed backbones based on optical cable will influence greatly the opportunities of people in terms of education and culture, business, commerce, health and participation in government.

Yet inequalities in terms of costs persist while Internet and PCs have become pervasive for people around the globe. With six billion mobile connections worldwide, the mobile revolution has taken place. Its centres are not New York or Paris but Mumbai and Manila.

The Manthan Award has a lighthouse function in this environment. South East Asian content developers turn available technical devices into powerful knowledge tools for the masses: They create content that has a direct impact on the daily lives of millions of people. And a most positive one: e-content and net platforms support citizens in harvesting crops, transferring money, managing learning processes or starting up their businesses.

The Manthan award contributes to this dynamic by making use of the mechanisms of an independently juried contest where the best available expert views

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provide most valuable feed-back and assessment of quality, originality and innovation.

Manthan helps turning computers and wireless devices into empowerment tools. It encourages and connects the region's best digital 'actipreneurs', those people who are activists and entrepreneurs at the same time.

Mathan Award acts in the vision of the World Summit Award and the UN WSIS process - it puts local content into a global showcase. This has substantial impact on the diffusion of innovation. It opens up the possibility for social franchising, turning products that make a difference from local heroes to global shootingstars.

This booklet is also a source of inspiration in the battles against ICT-illiteracy.

I congratulate all those involved in the projects and thank those who have enabled them.

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