

Nov 04, 2016 by *Navdeep Suri*

The India Is...Global Video Contest ^[1]

October in India means many things. The start of a busy festival season, the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi, and this year, the advent of the F1 races in Delhi.

At our Public Diplomacy Division, we have started October with an important new initiative. After several months of preparation, our “India Is...” global video contest is operational. Let me first start with a disclaimer. It wasn't a “eureka” moment that produced the idea. It draws inspiration from the “Democracy Is...” contest that was run by the U.S. State Department. In our case, we have opted to focus the contest on India by inviting participants to submit three minute videos on our website. By way of guidance, we have suggested three distinct themes:

India Is... Colorful
India Is... Creative, and
India Is... Wherever you are

As a public diplomacy exercise, we hope that the “India Is...” contest will encourage people to think of India in creative, interesting and hopefully positive ways. We are looking at it as a three year program where our funding can be supplemented by corporate resources as the campaign gathers steam.

With an eye on drawing participation of young people into the contest, we have planned a marketing campaign across social media including Facebook and Twitter in particular. I am thrilled that both Dr. Shashi Tharoor and eminent film maker, Shekhar Kapur have come on board as brand ambassadors for the program. They have already been generous with their time and the short videos recorded by them are motivating and inspirational. I am keeping my fingers crossed that at least some of Dr. Tharoor's million plus followers on Twitter and a bunch of Shekhar's many ardent fans will be inspired to pitch in.

Shekar Kapur on New Age Filmmaking

To run the contest, we have partnered with Skarma, a relatively new Mumbai-based firm who knows a lot more about social media than me. And since we have a clear youth-centric focus, it should come as no surprise that the average age of the Skarma team running our campaign is...hold your breath...24.

Looking beyond social media and operating within some fairly tight financial constraints, we are trying to see if our visa offices, cultural centers, and tourism offices can become important channels for promoting the contest. So we've created bookmarks that have been given to our

visa offices around the world. I hope that anyone applying for an Indian visa between now and December 31st will find a bookmark in their passport, inviting them to enter the “India Is...” contest.

And if there is a contest, there must be a jury to pick winners. I am happy that we have a pretty good 6-member jury in place, ready to plunge into the action once the contest ends on December 31. The entries short-listed by them will be put to an online vote to pick the winners.

Of course the winners will get prizes. From our own modest kitty, we have provided for cash prizes of up to 7,500 USD. And our friends from the Department of Tourism have come on board to offer some of the lucky winners with fully funded trips to Incredible India.

So what are we waiting for? Lights.... Camera....let the action begin!

The India Is...global video contest is an excellent case to follow to track and demonstrate a real-time public diplomacy campaign. We hope that our readers will benefit from tracking the campaign through the CPD Blog and the India Is website.
