

## ***Applause for bingeing***

With over 20 shows lined up for the year, content studio Applause Entertainment is always on the lookout for new and original ideas. Their approach is multi-pronged. They encourage pitches from storytellers, source international material (English, Israeli, Scandinavian and Korean shows, among others), and buy the rights to books (they've acquired Shiv Aroor and Rahul Singh's India's Most Fearless and Sucheta Dalal's, The Scam). "What we're looking for are stories with deep, layered plots; strong, grey characters; and opportunities to go into multiple seasons," explains Sameer Nair, CEO of Applause Entertainment, adding that while most pitches come from Mumbai and the North (Hindi tends to be the strongest market), regional markets like Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Bengali are slowly picking up. The studio has produced three Tamil crime dramas this year that are awaiting release.

One of the challenges they face is helping a generation of writers, producers and directors move away from the daily soap and movie formats. "The 10-part premium narrative drama, with multiple layers and seasons, is something we don't have experience with. So it is a learning process," says Nair. However, what is exciting is that the format allows programming for a mass of niches, rather than the lowest common denominator (as was done with television). "These niches in a country like ours, with 1.2 billion population, is pretty large. So if you say that 50 million people love crime, that's a big number. And we have many such giant niches."

While crime is the most popular genre, he says romance, drama, thrillers and comedy are close behind. For now, their original political drama, Mayanagri - City of Dreams, directed by Nagesh Kukunoor, has dropped on Hotstar on Thursday evening. That's your weekend sorted!