

# ***REPUBLIC TV TRP MANIPULATION SCAM***

*PROFESSIONAL ETHICS CASE STUDY*

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# TIMELINE OF EVENTS

## Timeline of Events in the Republic TV TRP Manipulation Scam:

**October 6, 2020:** Mumbai Police announces an investigation into TRP manipulation, naming Republic TV and two other channels.

**October 8, 2020:** Republic TV's Editor-in-Chief, Arnab Goswami, denies the allegations, calling them politically motivated.

**October 9, 2020:** Mumbai Police arrests two former employees of Hansa Research, a firm contracted by BARC, for allegedly bribing households to manipulate TRP data.

**October 10, 2020:** The police summon senior Republic TV executives for questioning.

**October 12, 2020:** Arnab Goswami challenges the Mumbai Police investigation in the Bombay High Court.

**October 2020:** BARC announces a temporary halt in the publication of weekly TRP ratings to revamp its system.

**November 2020:** Republic TV files a defamation suit against the Mumbai Police Commissioner.

**Ongoing:** Legal proceedings and investigations continue, with Republic TV maintaining its innocence and denying involvement in any TRP manipulation.

This timeline highlights the key developments in the case, which had significant implications for the media industry and TRP measurement.

## WHAT IS TRP?

**Why TRP Is A Big Deal**

**What is a TRP?**  
TRP or 'television rating point' shows what percentage of a programme's target audience viewed it. A show's TRPs increase when more people watch it.

**Why do channels chase TRPs?**  
It's all about money – a show with higher TRPs has a bigger audience, so advertisers are willing to pay more to advertise on it.

**How are TRPs measured?**  
An industry body called BARC (Broadcast Audience Research Council) installs a device called 'peoplemeter' at households participating in its survey. The peoplemeter tracks the shows being watched by listening for watermarks embedded in their audio. The BARC remote has buttons assigned to each member of the household. This keeps track of who is watching a show.

**How many households are involved?**  
44,000 households spread across the country are surveyed by BARC to estimate the viewing habits of about 20 crore TV households, or roughly 84 crore viewers.

**How is BARC's data used?**  
Every Thursday, BARC releases data comparing the viewership of different channels and programmes, broken down by audience demographics – age, education, income, etc. The number of viewers a show has and the time spent watching it form the basis for all TV channel buying and selling in the country and the advertising revenue each channel gets.

**TRP (Television Rating Point)** is a metric used to measure the popularity of a television program or channel. It represents the viewership data and helps determine which shows or channels are being watched the most.

### **Key Points about TRP:**

**Purpose:** TRP is used by advertisers, broadcasters, and content creators to understand audience preferences and channel performance.

**Measurement:** TRP is calculated by monitoring a selected sample of households equipped with a device called a "**people meter**" that tracks what programs are being watched.

**Importance:** Higher TRP means more viewers, which attracts more advertisers, generating greater revenue for the channel or program.

TRP plays a crucial role in the TV industry as it influences both advertising decisions and the programming strategies of television networks.

## **IMPORTANCE OF TRP**

**TRP (Television Rating Point)** is crucial for broadcasters, advertisers, and content creators as it directly reflects a program's or channel's viewership. Higher TRP indicates greater audience engagement, which attracts advertisers looking to target large audiences, thus boosting advertising revenue. For TV networks, TRP guides programming decisions, helping them to understand audience preferences and optimize content. It also impacts competition among channels, as higher ratings translate to increased credibility and visibility in the media industry.

## **WHAT IS THE REPUBLIC TV TRP SCAM?**

In October, 2020, the Kandivli police had registered the case after ratings agency **Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC)** filed a complaint through Hansa Research Group, alleging that certain television channels were rigging TRP numbers. Republic channel and its executives along with other TV channels were named as accused in the case. Based on the police case, the ED undertook a money laundering probe and in September 2022 cleared names of Republic TV and R Bharat news channels from the allegation of manipulating television rating points (TRP). The agency was, however, yet to conclude its probe against two other channels - News Nation and India Today. In its prosecution complaint or charge-sheet filed in September 2022, ED has named 16 accused, which included directors of Box Cinema, Fakt Marathi and Maha Movies channels and several relationship managers (RMs) employed by Hansa Research Group, a contractor employed by BARC. In the charge-sheet, the agency claimed that it has examined the role of Republic in detail and it became evident that the investigation done by the Mumbai police was "at variance with the investigation done by the ED".

ED listed some points on which they arrived at this conclusion. First, the ED said, raw data for panel households who were allegedly watching Republic TV (as per Mumbai police charge-sheet) was sought from BARC (Broadcast Audience Research Council, a joint industry company set up by stakeholders to manage television audience measurement system).

“Analysis of viewership pattern of those households showed that these households were watching channels other than republic channels,” ED has said in its charge-sheet. Second, the central agency said, panel households denied having taken money for watching Republic TV or R Bharat channels. “Their statements corroborate with raw data maintained independently by BARC,” the ED added.

### 3 METHODS OF **MANIPULATION**

<p>➤ Cops said ratings were manipulated using three methods: <b>'Outlier, meta rules and channel audience control'</b></p>	<p>suppressing data from that particular home</p>
<p>➤ In the <b>outlier</b> method, whenever there was any sudden spike or drop in viewership which differed significantly from other observations from previous viewership trends in a particular market or target group, BARC used to identify it as an outlier. So for any unexplained spike or drop in viewership, BARC started</p>	<p>➤ <b>Meta rules</b> were rules governing application of the outlier policy to identify anomalous viewing. These rules were used to identify any unexplained activity at any household/ individual level and defined how to deal with outliers</p>
	<p>➤ <b>Channel audience control</b> refers to attempts by channels to find panel homes and bribe them to watch a particular channel for extra time</p>



Text: Gaurav Laghate

### KEY ACCUSATIONS

The key accusations in the Republic TV TRP manipulation case involve allegations that the channel artificially inflated its TRP ratings. The Mumbai Police claimed Republic TV, along with other channels, paid individuals in homes with BARC's "people meters" to keep the channel on for extended periods, thereby boosting viewership data. This manipulation allegedly helped attract more advertising revenue by falsely portraying the channel as more popular than it actually was. Republic TV denied the accusations, calling them politically motivated.



# QUESTIONED EARLIER **MANY TIMES**

➤ Ghanshyam Dilipkumar Singh (44) became the 12th person to be arrested in the TRP scam so far

➤ He is distribution head of AGR Outlier Media Pvt Ltd, the company that operates Arnab Goswami's Republic TV

➤ He was summoned and questioned earlier by police in the case on several occasions

➤ Police are probing the role

of six channels -- Republic TV, Fakt Marathi, Box Cinema, News Nation, Mahamovies and Wow -- for inflating viewership figures

➤ To measure TRPs, the Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC) has installed barometers in homes of select audiences; BARC had given contract of monitoring the barometers to Hansa Research

## MUMBAI POLICE INVESTIGATION

The Mumbai Police launched an investigation into the Republic TV TRP manipulation case in October 2020, following a complaint from BARC (Broadcast Audience Research Council). The police alleged that Republic TV and other channels were involved in manipulating TRP data by bribing households with BARC-installed "people meters" to keep specific channels running continuously. The investigation revealed that certain individuals, including employees of Republic TV, were part of this scheme to artificially boost the channel's viewership ratings.

As part of the probe, police arrested several individuals, including distribution heads, and interrogated Republic TV's Editor-in-Chief, Arnab Goswami. The investigation also involved tracking financial transactions to establish the payments made for manipulating the ratings. Republic TV strongly denied the allegations, calling the investigation biased and politically motivated.





## REACTIONS FROM REPUBLIC TV



Republic TV strongly denied the allegations in the TRP manipulation scam, calling the investigation politically motivated. The channel's Editor-in-Chief, Arnab Goswami, repeatedly claimed that Republic TV was being targeted because of its critical stance on certain political figures and its independent journalism. The network emphasized that they had never paid anyone to manipulate TRPs and accused the Mumbai Police of conducting a biased investigation. Republic TV also pointed to its consistent popularity as evidence of legitimate viewership and fled legal cases to challenge the allegations. The network's response was marked by a mix of legal defenses and public statements asserting their innocence while framing the probe as an attack on media freedom.

## IMPACT ON MEDIA AND ADVERTISING



### Unethical Practices in the Industry:

The Republic TV TRP manipulation scam exposed significant unethical practices in the media industry. Allegations revealed that the channel engaged in artificially inflating its TRP ratings by bribing households with BARC-installed "people meters" to increase viewership data. Such manipulation undermined the integrity of the rating system, misleading advertisers and the public about the channel's actual popularity. It also sparked broader concerns about media ethics, as channels are expected to build viewership based on content quality, not fraudulent practices. This case highlighted how chasing higher ratings at any cost can compromise journalistic standards, damage credibility, and distort the competitive landscape in the television industry, ultimately eroding public trust in the media.

The Republic TV TRP manipulation scam had a significant impact on both the media and advertising industries.

**Loss of Credibility:** The scam damaged the credibility of Republic TV and the broader television rating system, leading viewers to question the authenticity of TRP data.



**Advertisers' Trust Eroded:** Advertisers rely on TRP ratings to allocate their ad budgets, and the manipulation led many to reconsider their trust in TV channels, shifting their focus to more reliable platforms like digital media.

**BARC Overhaul:** Following the scandal, BARC (Broadcast Audience Research Council) temporarily suspended the release of TRP data to review and improve its rating system, reflecting the need for greater transparency and accuracy.

**Media Ethics Debate:** The case intensified discussions around unethical practices in the media industry, prompting calls for stricter regulations.



## CONCLUSION

The Republic TV TRP manipulation scam highlighted the vulnerabilities within India's television rating system and exposed unethical practices in the media industry. While Republic TV denied the allegations and framed the investigation as politically motivated, the case raised significant concerns about media integrity, transparency, and the reliability of TRP data. It led to a temporary suspension and overhaul of BARC's rating system, underscoring the need for stricter regulations. Ultimately, the scandal damaged the channel's credibility, eroded advertiser trust, and sparked widespread debate on media ethics and professionalism. The full legal and financial impact on Republic TV remains ongoing, but the case has become a landmark moment in addressing media accountability in India.



## Market Share (%)

BARC | All Time Band | NCCS AB M 22+ | India

Channel Name	Weekly GTVTs'000		Market Share (%)	
	WK12	Wk13	WK12	Wk13
Republic TV	1,962	2,082	33.34%	36.85%
Times Now	1,375	1,284	23.35%	22.72%
India Today TV	1,190	1,182	20.22%	20.92%
CNN News18	848	653	14.41%	11.55%
NDTV 24x7	454	426	7.71%	7.54%
News X	57	24	0.97%	0.42%
Total Genre	5,886	5,651	100%	100%

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***THANK YOU***