

FACEBOOK LOOKS TO NAB TWITTER'S 'SECOND SCREEN' CROWN

SAN FRANCISCO: More than 100 million people will be glued to their TV screens tomorrow, when the Denver Broncos take on the Seattle Seahawks in America's premier sporting contest, the Super Bowl.

But two fierce rivals, Facebook Inc and Twitter Inc, will also be clashing head-to-head on a "second screen" that TV viewers will tune in for the big game.

The two social networks are jostling to be the venue of choice for fans to comment on big plays, the star-studded halftime show and of course the commercials - multi million dollar productions by major brands that are often a draw in their own right.

The Super Bowl is the biggest stage for a broader battle that has intensified over the past year between the two behemoths of social media. By dominating online chatter during events such as the American football game, each company hopes to attract users and advertisers and capture a slice of the \$70 billion spent annually on US television advertising.

Both companies can serve up new ads in real

time and can target specific audiences.

For years, the "second-screen" leader has been Twitter, which positioned its chatty, 140-character message platform as the go-to place for viewers to discuss events as they happen, from presidential debates to the Academy Awards. But Facebook, the world's largest social network with 1.2 billion users - roughly five times the size of Twitter - is now making aggressive moves to get into the real-time conversation itself.

Trending topics

"Twitter is better at engaging in the real-time conversation," said Quinn Kilbury, the brand director for Newcastle Brown Ale. "But Facebook is catching up quickly - and you can't match their scale."

This Super Bowl will be a major test for Facebook, which has spent the past year rolling out new features designed to close the gap with Twitter. The Menlo Park, California-based company has hired a team, including former TV producers, to help broad-

casters extract insights about the Facebook users watching their programming, such as how a team's fans breakdown by gender or geographic region.

For the Super Bowl, Facebook will team directly with Fox Sports, the network owned by Twenty-First Century Fox Inc, which is airing the game, to showcase pre-game chatter from Facebook and Instagram users alongside typical game stats. A specially created website will chart user data and comments in real time. The company has also actively encouraged athletes such as Carolina Panthers running back DeAngelo Williams to post commentary on the game to Facebook - athletes frequently use Twitter to sound off.

"Facebook offers a really unique experience as a place where you can go to discover great content, but Facebook also offers a very personal aspect as well," said Justin Osofsky, Facebook's vice president of media partnerships and global operations, who is driving the company to be something of a virtual sports bar where fans banter and spar. — Reuters



ALLAHABAD: Motorists drive past stray cows on a road in Allahabad. Several of India's most popular car models crumpled in independent crash tests in ways that would likely lead to fatality or serious injury, a global car safety watchdog said. — AP

SEVERAL INDIAN CARS FAIL SAFETY TESTS

SAFETY WATCHDOG REPORT

NEW DELHI: Several of India's most popular car models, including the famously small Tata Nano, crumpled in independent crash tests in ways that would likely lead to fatality or serious injury, a global car safety watchdog said yesterday. The results are an indictment of the auto industry in India, which lacks adequate safety standards, said David Ward, head of the London car-safety watchdog Global NCAP, which performed the crash tests. India has some of the deadliest roads in the world.

Drivers should be "educated and protected by regulation, but that's not happening in India," said Ward.

India's growing middle class, anxious to buy new cars, has helped fuel a booming auto industry while demanding little in terms of safety. Last year India produced 3.2 million cars, nearly twice the 1.7 million manufactured in the 2008 fiscal year. For the bulk of those sold within India, air bags and rear passenger seat belts were optional, and none was required to be tested for its ability to withstand a collision.

The lack of safety features, combined with reckless driving and shoddy roads, has helped give India a road death rate that is more than six times as high as that of the United States and nearly three times China's rate, according to the World Health Organization's 2013 road safety report on the number of deaths compared with the size of a country's car fleet.

A complex issue

Seen another way, one in 10 people killed in a road accident worldwide is Indian.

Four of five small cars popular on the Indian market last year - including the Tata Nano, the best-selling Maruti Suzuki Alto 800 and the Hyundai i10 - failed independent crash tests recently performed by Global NCAP. The findings were not unlike what safety assessors found in Brazil and Mexico last year.

Automakers said the issue of car safety is complex, involving not just passenger

safety, but also the safety of those outside the car. They said that means cars need to handle well, with good steering and brake systems while drivers must be educated about the rules of the road, and roads should be in good condition.

These are all challenges in India, where roads are often unpaved and pockmarked by ditches. City streets frequently crumble under heavy traffic, monsoon rains and hot sun. The minimal fines imposed for speeding mean limits are often flouted, with drivers peeling around corners and honking at cows, bullock carts, cyclists or anything else in their way.

Tim Leverton, head of Research and Development for Tata Motors, said Tata is looking again at the Nano's structure for ways to improve its strength, after already adding power steering and improving the car's dynamics.

In the Indian tests, only the Volkswagen Polo's 2014 model had air bags, which were added after the earlier model failed the crash test. Volkswagen said the air bags, as well as anti-lock brakes, would become standard from Feb. 1 along with a 2.7 percent price increase to offset the costs.

"We are proud to be leading the cause of driver safety," Arvind Saxena, the managing director of Volkswagen's Indian passenger car business, said in a statement.

India's biggest carmaker, Maruti Suzuki, did not respond to calls for comment.

The Polo and the Ford Figo were the only two cars to maintain their structures in a 64-kph collision, while the other three crumpled at a slower speed of 56 kph in ways that would likely lead to fatality or serious injury even with air bags.

All five cars chosen were standard, entry-level models, the sort a working class family might choose as their first car, rather than more expensive versions with additional features. About 80 percent of the cars sold in India have price tags of under \$8,000. — AP

CHINESE FANS OF 'JADE RABBIT' ROVER AWAIT NEWS

BEIJING: The Jade Rabbit did not go quietly into that long lunar night. Instead, China's troubled robotic moon rover - given voice by a government news agency - melodramatically pondered the meaning of its perhaps-fleeting existence, measured its contribution to humanity and, finally, said goodbye.

Then it shut down for the lunar night, which lasts about 14 earth days - its status unclear.

The Jade Rabbit's fans in China sent Lunar New Year greetings to the robot yesterday, wishing it a speedy recovery from a malfunction it reported before going into hibernation.

"Chinese people have been worried about the Jade Rabbit," wrote a microblogger with the username Yang Huiyan. "Hope the New Year will bring good luck to him."

The official Xinhua News Agency had carried what it described as a diary entry the rover "wrote" before it shut down.

Despite being usually staid in their coverage of national events, Chinese state media tend to put a folksy touch on certain stories that help drum up national pride. State news outlets are especially fond of giving cutesy personalities to non-human actors playing key roles in propaganda efforts, whether they are pandas returning from zoos abroad or, in the Jade Rabbit's case, the stars of its military-backed space program.

In the Xinhua diary entry, the Jade Rabbit takes on the tone of a heroic adventurer who has encountered an obstacle that might prove insurmountable, and who is trying to put on a brave face as it pines what might be its final farewell.

Heroic adventurer

"If this journey must come to an early end, I am not afraid," said the six-wheeled, solar-powered rover. "Whether or not the repairs are successful, I believe even my malfunctions will provide my masters with valuable information and experience."

The personification of the rover has been a hit with the Chinese public. Parts of the Xinhua report were quoted by an unofficial Chinese microblog account written with the Jade Rabbit's voice, and the blog was flooded with tens of thousands of sympathetic comments.

As for the rover's fate, a report Thursday by the state-run Science and Technology Daily newspaper said that would only be clear at the end of the lunar night. Calls to the space program rang unanswered Friday, a public holiday.

On Sunday, the rover said its "masters" - the space program's engineers, presumably - had found an abnormality in its control mechanism and were working through the night to fix it. It provided no details on what the problem was, but hinted that it was serious. — AP