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Zee Melt 2015: The Big Mobile Debate

By Prachi Srivastava, afaqs!, Mumbai | In Digital | May 25, 2015



Arnab Goswami, Raghav Bahl, Vikram Sakujha and Rajiv Lochan debated on whether the mobile medium can take over as a primary medium for news and entertainment consumption, in the next four years.

The Dainik Bhaskar-IAA Debate at Zee Melt 2015 saw a full house with industry stalwarts Arnab Goswami (editor-in-chief, Times Now), Raghav Bahl (founder, The Quint.com), Vikram Sakujha (group CEO and equity partner, Madison) and Rajiv Lochan (CEO, Kasturi & Sons) as participants.

The debate, 'The Clash of the Titans', was about whether 'Mobile will be the primary screen for news and entertainment in India within the next three-four years'. Bahl and Sakujha were speaking for the topic, while Goswami and Lochan had opposite views. The debate was moderated by Sonali Krishna, anchor and editor of ET Now's flagship show 'Brand Equity'.



L to R - Vikram Sakujha, Raghav Bahl, Sonali Krishna, Arnab Goswami and Rajiv Lochan. [Click here to enlarge](#)

Sakujha opened the debate by saying that news is consumed in byte size and pieces, and going forward, it will be consumed more and more on the phone. Even for entertainment, its definition will expand and consumption will increase on mobile. Citing the famous 'Kan Khajura Tesan' initiative from HUL as an example, he brought to light the fact that mobile is the only entertainment screen in the "media dark" areas of the country. "Back in urban India, mobile will bring freedom to choice of medium. We are a majority single-TV household nation and mobile devices will massify content in India," he stated.

The media agency stalwart also added that, with growing internet penetration in the country, email will soon become the primary medium to post anything. He shared that 80 per cent of the day, someone is on the move and mobile is the medium that can capture their attention on-the-go.

Bahl, Sakujha's partner in the debate observed that certain facets of the mobile screen were not present in TV. "Mobile is the first thing and last thing you see in your day. It has broken up the prime time as on mobile - the prime time is through the day. If something happens, one gets a ping," he said.

As for statistics, Bahl shared that India has got 100 million smartphone users and is adding 5-6 million every month. He pointed out that the shift to mobile is more about consumer behaviour than the statistics. No matter how many TV sets are there, people get information first on phone. "Consumers, today, don't want to be passive and want to participate in the news through platforms like Twitter and Facebook. Also, it captures news geographically, on the go. I can find the nearest restaurant if I want to," Bahl said.

According to Goswami, the opponent, no media company has invested massive resources to provide 24X7 content on mobile. So, other mediums are TV are still been watched heavily. He argued that only 19 per cent of India has access to the internet and 8 per cent has access to fast internet speed and, hence, mobile can't become the primary device within four years.

Goswami questioned if the debaters in the opposing team understood what digitisation has done to the country. "95 million digital homes will be added from now to 2020. As for mobile, 90 per cent of India uses feature phones and not qwerty or touch phones," he asserted.

Lochan, Goswami's partner in the debate, stated that, as opposed to 700-800 million TV viewers in the country, there are only 163 million smartphone users and 70 million of them are accessing 3G and 2G. He said, "Our infrastructure is in the buffering mode and it is going to take a while to reach high quality. Imagine, if you were watching a nail-biting World Cup match, and the screen freezes!"

According to Lochan, for the next few years, there will be no revenue on news on mobile as advertisers will continue to invest heavily on the already popular mediums like TV and print.

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