Mobile will not be the primary screen for news and entertainment in India within next 3-4 years: IAA Debate consensus

Zee MELT 2015, the two-day festival of creativity in advertising and marketing created by Kyocera in partnership with ZEE, GroupM and D&AD, concluded its first day. The festival held at Nehru Centre in Mumbai, offered a plethora of choices of events, such as workshops, seminars, showcases and the main conference.

One of the highlights of the first day’s events at MELT 2015 was the IAA Debate. The debate was on the topic ‘Mobile will be the primary screen for news and entertainment in India in the next three-four years’. There were four prominent speakers from the media industry arguing for and against the motion. The speakers for the debate were Abhijit Gosewali of Newshour fame from Times Now, The Hindu’s Rajarshi Loshan, NDTV’s Founder and former MD Rajat Bhatia and Vikram Sethia of Madison.

The four speakers were divided into two teams. One team consisted of Abhijit Gosewali and Rajarshi Loshan who spoke against the motion. The opposing team had Rajat Bhatia and Vikram Sethia who spoke for the motion. The debate was moderated by Gourav Mathur, who called its format a bit tussled. The IAA debate was in its 6th edition and IAA recently celebrated its platinum jubilee. The session of MELT 2015 was presented by Darrin Bhansali.

The debate kick started with the moderator explaining the format, rules and rounds of the debate. It was divided into two rounds, under each speaker and over 7 minutes to speak in the first round and the opposing team.

Every day,
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Abhijit Gosewali started by saying that mobile is already the primary screen for news in India and that the consumption is being drastically reduced because of the cost of internet by users going on to shopping and other activities. He also mentioned that mobile will also become a bigger part of consumption in terms of being consumed on mobile screens.

Rajarshi Loshan, speaking on the other side, said that the consumption has gone down for TVs, and that mobile consumption and especially mobile usage has gone up, which is now leading to usage of multiple screens by consumers. He further added that both consumers and audiences are looking at an interactive device and how their go-to device has become the mobile.

Due to the need of emergency of new consumption, people are ending up using mobile screens more. He also mentioned about how the content available on mobiles are personalised and customised for the user which makes it all the more believable.

Rajarshi Loshan gave an example of how people are using mobiles in India. He also pointed out how the opposition was going off basis by not concentrating on the operational words, primary screens, India, news and entertainment and in 3-4 years. He started his counter arguments by saying, ‘Love the truth, pardon the error’. He supported his arguments mainly stating facts about how in India, people are still addicted to watching television, rather than mobile phones for accessing news and entertainment. The data given by him showed Indian viewers who watched television, their reach TV has decreased compared to smart phones which is needed for getting news and entertainment from phones. He added that the content which is created in India is still majorly for print and TV and not mobiles. His arguments were inclined towards TV still being the primary screen in India for news and entertainment.

The second speaker presenting for the motion of the debate was Rajat Bhatia. He first countered Amab’s point wittily saying Abhijit’s arrow was off the target and not news. His entire argument was based on a simple point that it’s all about consumer behaviour. Consumers are the market and the market will decide the future of news and mobile phones has already given up many TVs. He spoke about how some features of mobile phone like portability, easy access, easy availability of content are not available on TV viewing.

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Rajarshi Loshan from The Hindu. He gave his arguments against the motion of the debate, ‘Mobile will be the primary screen for news and entertainment in India in the next three-four years’. He kept it very simple by emphasizing on the key operational words, personal screen, 3-4 years, and news and entertainment. He started off by saying traditional screens still outnumber mobile screens as far as primary screen was concerned specially in India. Network issues were a major issue and he specifically mentioned about how few (India) are still in the buffering stage for accessing the internet and that impacts user experience. Due to easy access of news and entertainment on TV and no interruptions in terms of internet speed, fast loading of contents, TV screens are preferred over mobile screens in India. Also because the usage of smart phones is speculated to go down in future years also, he concluded that mobile will not be the primary screen for news and entertainment in India in the next 3-4 years at least.

During the conclusion round, one member from both the teams emphasised on their previous mentioned points to further build their arguments stronger. The moderator left the result to the audience who were very keenly listening to the debate. The audience voted in favour of the motion and believed that mobile may become the primary screen for news and entertainment in India by 2040 but definitely not in the next 3-4 years at least.

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