



MUMBAI: With the growing number of avenues available for news consumption in India, viewers are often puzzled about which source to trust. The explosion of digital, television and print media has changed the way of news consumption.

And discussing how news had moved avenues with changing time were Indian Express whole time director Anant Goenka, BBC World News television presenter Ros Atkins, Extentia Information Technology CEO Umeed Kothavala, Inshorts founder Azhar Iqbal, The Wire founding editor Siddharth Varadarajan, Zee Media Group CEO Bhaskar Das and CNN International chief New Delhi bureau Ravi Agarwal. Moderating the session was MxM India

editor-in-chief Pradyuman Maheshwari.

Over the years, we have seen news moving from print to magazines to TV and now to digital platforms. Shedding some light, Zee Media's Das said, "That the market is supposed to move, is a basic axiom. The problem that the majority of the houses are facing is that they are stuck to one business model. With digital, there are multiple ways of making money. Monetisation moves from format to format. In the end, it's not about the medium. You can't compare a conventional way of system with a realistic model. There are four monsters like Google, Facebook, Apple and Amazon. They make money. There will be monopolistic tendencies."

Indian Express's Anant added, "Digital has arrived. Our revenues have increased over four years and I see print is going to be there for a long time. I can say that Indian Express can survive digitally with the same reportage and structure. But I think in digital you can't just stick to advertising. That will not be much. You will have to get audiences to pay for content.

"Every story is different, and depending on the story, we file digital first or print first. The best investigative story we like to give to print first; exclusivity is a one minute word. At the moment we find it is exclusive on the web only for a minute. Also if it is time critical to break the story, then we do break it on web", he explained further.

Das said, "The audiences that consume newspapers today they were born before 1970 and are not post 1990 born. At the same time, most of the stars want to see their names in newspapers.

The Wire's Varadarajan added, "With digital the ability to tell stories has enhanced due to the enhanced interactivity. The viewers can consume content according to their convenience on digital platforms. Every TV channel and newspaper today recognises digital as the future. But the old adage of dollars for print, dimes for digital and pennies for mobile still holds true for most organisations."

Inshorts Azhar Iqbal when asked about how his news application was working and what was its future replied, "We are not making any money as of now. I don't know how are we going to perform in the future. We are focused on 'time is money'. As long as we can attract eyeballs, we will be able to monetize".

Adding, Extentia Information Technology's Umeed Kothavala said, "Digital and technology have changed the context of consumption. Along with monetization, organisations also need to keep track of the growing power of social media, citizen journalism and also the fact that there are many more options for people to get their news from".

Anant took on Inshorts Azhar Iqbal, making his displeasure known at the latter copying news from Indian Express without the media group's consent and rehashing it into a 60 word article for Inshorts' usage.

On the entertainment front, Varadarajan commented how a majority of entertainment news in the print sector was paid for by artistes and hence they would always prefer their exclusive interviews to be printed in the print medium rather than digital.

CNN's Agrawal said, "Digital news is the present, not just the future. It is the present and is very important for us. CNN International looks at providing content globally. We don't have a print medium. The news that we cover is from a global perspective and the information can be accessed by all the people irrespective of the geography. We as an organisation think of being the first to put out the news. We then decide on how news can be distributed across the various delivery platforms."

BBC's Atkins pointed out that if BBC didn't provide relevant news to the audience, they would not come to it. "On my show BBC Outsource, if there is a credible story, say from CNN, I will show it to my audience. Given that social media is expanding and that news can be accessed through it, we have to provide credible content to the audience."

The panellists also discussed the importance of maintaining the same level of credibility and gate-keeping standards on a digital platform as on traditional print or television platforms.

Voicing his opinion, Varadarajan said, "There are two things which are important - credibility and reliability. One should always try to achieve both these elements. If you can't pick on one, than you should always give preference to credibility".

"We get higher fee from most of our advertisers because the news that we are providing is credible and they know this", added Das.

When television came in, the pundits said that it was the end of print. When roll out of the internet, they said that print and television would not be able to compete. All the mediums have so far been able to co-exist, and even grow. With so many upcoming digital avenues, what will be interesting to see is how print will retain for itself its space in the ecosystem and how digital will be a game changer that it is already has become.