NEWS... AND THE MAD APP RUSH

Web news publishers simply love their mobile apps – why?
A look at the role apps play in the dissemination of news online.

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If you access a piece of online content through an app, as opposed to a web browser, does it mean you are more loyal to the source of that content, or that you will engage with that information at a deeper level? Probably not.

However, if you visit a specific platform to access important information on a regular basis, then does it matter whether you receive it through an app or a mobile site? Maybe. And this is especially true when the act of accessing the information is inherently repetitive, or as I like to put it, ritualised.

The behaviour in question here is something we’re only too familiar with: the act of checking the news online. As comScore’s Kedar Gavane once said, “Indians just love to read the news!”

This fortnight, we explore the role of the much fussed over mobile application in the dissemination of news online. Despite the fact that most news websites are now designed for easy navigation and reading on the mobile screen, publishers continue to invest time and money in improving their mobile apps. Why?

This was the subject of one of the panel discussions I moderated at Digipub World, our annual convention on the business of web publishing, in 2017. And it’s even more relevant today. Turns out, the behaviour of people changes when they access the same news content through a mobile website versus through a mobile app. What exactly is different? The time spent on the content, the number of pages explored, the level of engagement, and the long term affinity towards the news brand.

The app race is a tough one, though. That’s because a news app doesn’t just compete with other news apps for space on a user’s mobile screen; it competes with news aggregator apps as well as apps from other segments like banking, shopping, utility, food, ticketing, and entertainment.

Question is: What makes the race worth it?

Ashwini Gangal
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About a year ago, accommodation-sharing online company Airbnb launched its first wide-reach advertising campaign in India. Over several glossy spots, celebrity couple Saif Ali Khan and Kareena Kapoor wooed Indian travellers to sample a new kind of vacation.

In its latest campaign, the brand has released two films that look far more real and relatable featuring actual travellers who used the platform. One is about an Indian family vacationing in Goa (‘Freedom in Goa’) and the other is about a young lesbian couple on a trip abroad (‘Together in Berlin’). Interestingly, both films are celebratory and dialogue-free. The like-visuals are crafted to resemble a traveller’s handycam footage and are accompanied by a background score of old Hindi movie songs.

Unlike films by OTA brands, the segment Airbnb is trying to get a share from (arguably), these ads don’t include shots of the online booking app or make any mention of deals, discounts, ease of booking or cashback.

The campaign has been created by Wieden+Kennedy and produced by Park Pictures. Both spots are on TV.

The brand appears to be trying hard to break down the psychological barriers that prevent Indian families from using Airbnb, as opposed to staying at regular hotels. So, is the “family” a pain point Airbnb has struggled with in India?

“Family is one group Airbnb wants to reach out to and it is increasingly leveraging travel as a means to grow and bond. Parenting has evolved and couples now want to play an active role in the development of their children, rather than being passive facilitators. Travel becomes an important canvas for this means of development,” answers Varun Raina, marketing manager, Airbnb.

“We think a lot of Indian families can relate to the Govandes (protagonists of Goa film), especially those who want to play a part in their children’s development...” he adds.

Raina, who has been with Airbnb for over two years now, has worked at marketing companies like RB (Harpic), Nestle (Nescafe) and PepsiCo (Lipton) in the past.

About the film featuring the lesbian couple, Raina states “Malvika and Karuna’s (protagonists) story is one of the many non-conformist, independent-minded couples from the Airbnb community. Their outlook is compelling and authentic, which is why we felt this will resonate very well with our audience. Our intent was to simply focus on their relationship and travel experiences as a couple and not on their sexual identity.”

Raina feels India has a progressive travel mindset and that the existing travel market may not have evolved in tandem with people’s needs and nuanced tastes. About the demographics of Airbnb’s TG in India, he says, “We cater to people who aren’t satisfied being passive facilitators and this mindset prevails across demographics. We want to reach out to every type of group and appeal to their unique needs.”

Some experts feel the SaifKareena campaign positioned Airbnb as a brand for the affluent traveller. Today, the consumer knows a lot about the lifestyles of celebrities and while the ‘Nawabi’ couple might have brought the brand closer to many Indians, it could also have alienated some segments of the population. The new campaign looks like the brand’s attempt to speak to a larger chunk of the consumer pool - the masses, if you will.

Raina clarifies, “Saif and Kareena’s story was very much a part of the same thinking - giving people unprecedented access to travel, on their own terms. Despite having the means and access to the finest things in the world, there was still a gap when it came to spending time together, the way they wanted to. Their Airbnb in Windsor became a perfect sanctum and gave them time to live and roam the way they could not in their everyday lives.”

NICE ENOUGH?

Naren Kaushik, ECD, Happy mcgarrybowen, who feels Airbnb went off-track with its last campaign with Saifeena, thinks these new films work perfectly. He finds them simple and true. Commenting on the brand’s shift from celebrity endorsement to real life travellers’ experiences, he goes as far as to say, “Thank God. They (Saif-Kareena) are big stars with a lot of pull and fan following. But personally, for me, Airbnb is a brand where the endorsement should be by the consumer and not celebrities charging money, who, in all probability, will never use Airbnb! If the brand is about experience, it’s wise to show it through realistic ones.”

About the ‘no conversation format’, he adds, “Eventually, the message needs to come through. This campaign is like an edit of all the video clips one might take on a trip. What can be more experiential than that?”

Ramanuj Shastry, former chief creative officer, Saatchi & Saatchi, and co-founder and director at Infectious Advertising, feels the films are successful in delivering the ‘Airbnb is for everyone’ message. Will it get people to bypass a MakeMyTrip - a heavy advertiser - and try a new kind of accommodation format? He responds, “Most online hotel booking ads are oppressive, not aggressive. Being loud is not necessarily being persuasive.”

Appreciating the execution and treatment of both films, Shastry says, “Well, if an ad can say what it needs to without a conversation, more power to the ad.”

Like Kaushik, Shastry is also of the opinion that the Saif-Kareena move by the brand was a mistake. “Thankfully, good sense has prevailed...,” he adds. — ananya.pathak@afaqs.com
#1

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Why is a travel aggregator app making entertainment content? We spoke to the head - brand marketing, ixigo, to understand the move and what it says about the category. By Abid Hussain Barlaskar

O
line travel booking platform ixigo just stepped into the original content space with an all-original web series named ‘Zindagi Express’. The series is a collection of eight short (five-minute) episodes which string together creating a story with a four-member family at the centre. But that’s not the point.

The brand’s rail ticket booking app - ixigo trains - now has an ‘entertainment’ section which features the films or long-format ad content, if we can call them that. The section also offers games, news and radio.

But why would a platform, which is primarily a utility, bother to entertain users? Isn’t the relationship about pay-and-proceed until the next time the user needs a booking? Unless, of course, ixigo is trying something like Gaana, the music streaming app, that earns from ads and recently introduced videos to get users to spend more time on-screen.

And who will watch ixigo content when there are bigger, more well-funded players like MX Player, Jio, etc., providing free entertainment? Then again, Flipkart started selling air tickets and recently introduced videos to get users to spend more time on-screen.

As per the ixigo team, users spend over 2.5 hours every month on the app primarily due to the travel-related information featured on the platform. The platform facilitates over 200 million monthly travel searches, 2.2 billion monthly screen views and serves 450 million monthly sessions.

“Content is king. Today, the investment is more in terms of idea, insight and execution and it’s just the beginning. We solve the smallest user pain-points, which are probably low RoI, but have long-term benefits. We intend to create and experiment with content that appeals to the masses in Tier II and III towns. ‘Zindagi Express’ started as an experiment for us. The idea was to create relatable content which stirs emotions, triggers fun memories and entertains. April to June is peak travel season, especially for families, and what better way than to showcase the life, adventures and conflicts faced by one such family planning its vacation,” says Shuchi Chawla, head - brand marketing, ixigo.

She adds, “Our immediate objective is not on driving revenue, but to make sure that the ‘trains’ app becomes more relevant to our users, helping them during the entire trip. The biggest RoI for us is to be more useful and relevant in a traveller’s journey.”

From Chawla’s vantage point as a marketer, clubbing entertainment with travel was a ‘natural progression’. “Around 45 per cent of all travellers say they use their phones for entertainment when they’re bored, especially during train journeys which are long and mundane. Users on an average, consume three to four hours of content while travelling,” she states.

By offering entertainment as a separate feature, ixigo aims to further increase retention and engagement with its 130 million users. The brand started experimenting with content on the ‘trains’ app during this year’s IPL by introducing cricket scores. “Thanks to technology and cheap data, there’s been a vast change in how people kill time today. We saw huge interest from users and it increased our visitors’ average time spent on the app. There has been a major shift from textual content to audiovisual.

The next billion users will look out for voice-enabled features and audiovisual content. SHUCHI CHAWLA

The biggest RoI for us is to be more useful and relevant in a traveller’s journey,” Chawla signs off.

“While I am not privy to the objectives, this seems like a brand endeavour rather than a business one. The content is just another way of engaging with the brand name or platform. It could also be to enable Search better,” she adds.

Commenting on the phenomenon of a travel-based platform foraying into entertainment, Banerjee says, “Entertainment for brand building is becoming more common. ixigo’s small advertising bouquet, leads with this. However, whether it works in their favour or otherwise is something that only time will tell.”

He adds, “A travel-based app foraying into entertainment is not surprising, but what is impactful is the subject they latch on to and how they bring it out in a seamless way through entertainment. Despite ixigo’s small advertising budget, the differentiators are very evident. While the advertising is about building an intent to use the ixigo app, the series will work towards building a softer connect and a strong recall among regular audiences.”

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Experts speak

According to Debarpita Banerjee, head - FuelContent India, and president - North and East, FCB Ulka, such content will create salience and some sort of pull for eyeballs. “Brands, and especially platform/app brands, are constantly looking for ways to enable engagement with the brand name or platform. And content is one way of doing so. However, everything depends on how sticky the content is,” she says.

As per the ixigo team, users spend over 2.5 hours every month on the app.

The space has become cluttered not only because brands want to, but also because they think it is the only way out. If marketers take too much liberty, the brand will be ignored and with too much intervention, it will seem like an advert. The line between an advert and a branded piece is very thin. How ixigo benefits is subject to the number of conversations the brand will attract, post viewership,” he explains. Mitter says, “I believe that both are two sides of the same coin. After all, ixigo is also trying to bring in leads with this. However, whether it works in their favour or otherwise is something that only time will tell.”

Content is King

“Entertainment for brand building is becoming more common. ixigo’s small advertising bouquet, leads with this. However, whether it works in their favour or otherwise is something that only time will tell.”

Experts speak

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As per the ixigo team, users spend over 2.5 hours every month on the app.

“The next billion users will look out for voice-enabled features and audiovisual content.”
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Medimix

Fast Acting Ayurveda

After 50 years in the market, Medimix wants to make ayurveda work faster with the help of Bollywood star Parineeti Chopra. By Aishwarya Ramesh

Imagine a serene forest, a fresh waterfall, a lush meadow, the rustle of pages of an old book...

An ad film containing these elements isn’t trying to sell you an exotic vacation. It’s probably advertising for an ayurvedic product. Medimix originated as a skin care brand in 1969 in the kitchen of Dr VP Sidhan, an ayurveda practitioner employed with the Indian Railways. Since the brand is turning 50 this year, it has announced efforts to revamp its product offering and reposition itself.

Ashish Ohlyan, head of marketing and new product development at Cholayil Private Limited, the parent company of Medimix, told afaqs! Reporter, “When it comes to the positioning, we were getting lost in the sea of natural, herbal and ayurvedic skin care brands. We compete with beauty brands such as Lux and Santoor, and also with brands in the health and hygiene segment such as Dettol and Lifebuoy, which have also introduced natural ingredients into their products. We had lots of discussions with consumers to figure out their needs and how we can fill this need gap.”

On fast acting ayurveda, which is the central focus of the newest campaign, Ohlyan said that during discussions with consumers, the brand found that people perceive old Indian practices like ayurveda and homeopathy as slow. “If ayurvedic ingredients are fast then how can ayurveda itself be slow?”

He also emphasised on the fact that the brand has been established in the curative domain and the communication over the past years has been centered about keeping pimples and skin infections away. “We have also roped in Parineeti Chopra, National Award Winner, as the face of the brand and we have upsed our media spends significantly,” said Ohlyan.

He gave an approximate breakup of Medimix’s media spends – 80 per cent on TV, 10-12 per cent on digital and the rest on OOH advertising. “Our key markets are Maharashtra and the North Indian belt. In India, you can’t ignore TV. Despite digital media coming up in a big way, TV still remains the biggest reach driver. Also, the cost of reach is much lesser than digital media. However, since we are targeting millennials, we can’t stay away from digital media. We have started investing in digital and increased our spending on this medium significantly. Digital, which used to be 2-3 per cent of our total media budget, will get a double digit pie going forward.”

Ohlyan revealed that millennials account for 44 per cent of Medimix’s total consumption. “Millennials today demand authentic products. Right from organic food to natural skin care products to original Netflix content – it’s a result of their demand. Till few years back, no one could have imagined start-ups in FMCG space. But now start-ups are giving a big fight to big FMCG companies. They are looking for choices which answer their needs. We have an existing loyal consumer base and it is imperative to get millennials in our loyal base for next round of growth.”

He said that soap is like a ritual and once users are habituated to it, they won’t change no matter what. “Nobody says tomorrow I have a party, let me buy a new soap. It works only as a ritual on a long term basis. They’re trying to be relevant and find a way to do that. The issue is not that they’re targeting millennials. The problem is that they’re not clear in what they’re trying to say. Why do I need fast ayurveda in soap? I understand a pimple cream having fast acting ayurveda but in soap - it doesn’t make sense. Changing the look and feel of a product is not going to help because this is a category where you need to be clear about what you stand for. Soap, at one point, was a woman’s cosmetic. Now, everyone uses cold cream and various things. I don’t even know where soap finds a place in a beauty routine.”

Medimix’s media spends – 80 per cent on TV, 10-12 on digital, rest on OOH advertising.

Chakravarthy also spoke about other strong players in the segment and pointed out that Hamam was unshakeable for a very long time. “Chandrika always emphasises on it being an ayurvedic soap. Santoor is another soap that has always worked with the promise of young-looking skin with natural ingredients. Medimix does not know what it’s been doing for a very long time.”

Prabha Prabhu, former CEO of Madison World, believes the ad and the campaign will work. She spoke about the relaunch of Cinthol in the 1980s in a new packaging with ads featuring Vinod Khanna and it was a roaring success. “When your market and consumer change, you need to change with them.”

On the millennials as a segment, she pointed out that they have strong preferences and want more healthy things. “They want natural, organic, ayurvedic products. That’s why you’re seeing so many products coming out with these ingredients. We all know what ayurveda means – it’s understood over the years thanks to the imagery of the forest, the herbs, the book turning, etc. But the general view of ayurvedic products is that they don’t work fast. Here, you’re talking about fast acting ayurveda. I don’t know if there is reason to believe that this is enough. The challenge is to promote it correctly to the right target audience.” Prabhu pointed out that Medimix is doing a good thing by using a celebrity to endorse the brand because that works well in India.

“Millennials today demand authentic products. We have an existing loyal consumer base and it is imperative to get millennials in our loyal base for next round of growth.”

Ashish Ohlyan

afaqs! Reporter, June 16-30, 2019

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HAJMOLA

Topical Ad Game

The brand has taken to meme culture with timely puns on current affairs and trending subjects with the hashtag #BaatHajamNahiHui. We spoke to Dabur India’s Ajay Singh Parihar about it. By Ananya Pathak

Lately, Dabur Hajmola’s march into the meme world is becoming hard to ignore. The hashtag used by the team is #BaatHajamNahiHui, an allegory for events hard to digest, metaphorically and true to the brand promise, literally as well. Such news and trend-based topical have, for years, been the preserve of Amul. Ajay Singh Parihar, marketing head-OTC healthcare, Dabur India, says Hajmola’s topical posters and accompanying hashtag have roots that go back to the 1990s. “Back in the ‘90s, Dabur Hajmola came up with a series of ads hinged on ‘Baat Kuch Hazar Nahi Hui’, casting Bollywood actors and cricket players from the time. Back then, television was the only medium to reach consumers. As a brand, we have wanted to communicate with our consumers more. In a brainstorming session, we decided to revisit this old tagline in a modern avatar. And what could have been better than launching it as a hashtag in times when anything can go viral overnight.”

Dabur’s recent topicals include those on JCB Ki Khudai, ‘traffic jam’ at Mt. Everest, Arnab Goswami’s ‘Sunny Leone’ slip of the tongue, ‘Sunny Leone’ slip of the tongue, an unsaid rule of ‘one meme per week’. However, as soon as we spot a relatable subject going viral, we try pitching in. If it is a ‘chatpati khabar’, it is our thing. If not, we let it pass. We are focusing more on quality rather than quantity.”

Experts feel Hajmola must build a long-term digital property around this game of punning.

However, Parihar does err on the side of caution. “We avoid getting into areas of conflicts or taking up subjects involving individual personalities or politics. We do not want to take sides and be called ‘a biased brand’. We are very careful not to hurt anyone’s sentiments. As long as it sinks in with our ideology, it works for us.”

About the longevity of the hashtag, he tells us, “The hashtag has, so far, received a good response. Dabur plans to build on this property. Communication is an inherent part of the brand. We are kicked to take this forward in more creative ways in the future. So far, we have punted on trending subjects and soft news. We are not against taking up hard news topics. For now, with the ongoing World Cup, there will be more opportunity to find pegs to pun on. We are focusing our attention on that.”

To Parihar, being compared with Amul is a compliment. “Our ideology is completely different from Amul’s. They’ve been dominating this territory (of news-based topicals) for long and have come up with great puns over the years. But we have a different point of view. Our idea of punning is chatpati, like our product. We are grounded to this idea... Humour is an open domain; it is universal. Whoever is able to connect with the situation has a go.”

EXPERTS SPEAK

Sumit Negi, executive creative director, Dentsu Webchunney, feels Dabur’s hashtag is based on a colloquial term and is, hence, easy to comprehend. He is of the opinion that a hashtag only gains popularity when it reflects shades of our everyday life and can consequently be used for tagging general posts and tweets. On both counts, he appreciates Hajmola’s hashtag.

Nevertheless, he cautions, “Using this to pun on trending issues is a different discussion. Hajmola has been a part of our lives for decades and I’m sure it controls a big chunk of the category. As a brand, its communication is on the lighter side of life, so punning can be a valid arm for their digital extension. But the thing with puns and memes is that people are also doing the same on social media every day and sometimes, far better than brands because they have the freedom to say what they want. So, until or unless a brand’s take on trending issues is very different, the fear of getting lost in the crowd is quite high.”

Negi feels it’s premature to compare Hajmola’s memes to Amul’s iconic topicals. Of course, Hajmola can’t compete with Amul’s legacy just yet, but trends are far game on social media. And regarding a brand having ‘thumb rules’ to try and compete with the best, he says, “Remember that viewers are always looking out for fresh perspectives and a different take. Just punning is an easy way out; brands should think of a fresh approach.”

Mithun Mukherjee, associate creative director, Grapes Digital, feels Hajmola’s hashtag is bang on. “Seldom do brands manage to come across a popular colloquial phrase that actually fits in with the brand language and imagery so well.”

He points out that since “moment marketing” and “slice of life conversations” have become the mainstay of brands on digital platforms, having a phrase that ties back to trending conversations makes sense to the brand’s heart.

Trending hashtags have short lives. But experts feel Hajmola must try and build a long-term digital property around this game of punning. For that, the tonality must be consistent over the years to come.
MEET THE JURY

Anand Chakravarthy
Essence

Anita Nayyar
Havas Media Group

Chandramohan Mehra
Bajaj Allianz Life Insurance and Bajaj Allianz General Insurance

Jaskaran Singh Kapany
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Josy Paul
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Lux was glamour personified. Lux was about the private moments of the star. The star on a pedestal. Distant but alluring. The Lux soap advertisement showcased the glamour of the female star in Indian cinema and gave the consumer a peek into her life," writes strategy consultant Prabhakar Mundkur (who previously worked on the brand from Hindustan Unilever as an adman), in an article on a trade media website. But the brand’s latest ad campaign is worlds apart from its “glam” image.

The latest communication, a video from the campaign ‘Lux - The soap with a lump’ has neither the golden/pink overtones nor the rose petals and saffron. It is also devoid of the milk and sandalwood. The film is rather gloomy and features no celebs, but deals with the very serious issue of breast cancer awareness. As part of the campaign, HUL reshaped the Lux soap bar and added a lump. The campaign was ideated and crafted by Wunderman Thompson India.

The initiative was presented at the breast cancer screening camp conducted by the Indian Cancer Society (ICS) at Vasai, Maharashtra. Women of different age groups were given the soap along with a leaflet educating them on the importance of breast cancer awareness. HUL’s future plans include a collaboration with the ICS in spreading breast cancer awareness and education among women across India. The soap with the lump has only been designed for the campaign and won’t be available to consumers. However, what’s unusual is HUL’s choice of brand for the campaign. More so since it already has soap brands like Dove (known for its ‘real beauty’ campaigns), Lifebuoy (leaning towards healthcare), Pears (known for its mother-child ads), any of which could have been a more obvious match. Also, Lux’s shift in terms of advertising is nothing less than radical.

TURNING TO EXPERTS

Brand and consumer expert, Sita Lakshmi Narayan Swamy, says, “Any brand doing its bit for women’s issues like breast cancer is a welcome move. Since soap usage is tactile, bathing is a great time to check for a lump. That being said, from a brand fit perspective, this move from Lux is surprising; Lux has always been about glamorous beauty featuring iconic film stars. It has never been positioned around holistic beauty or health. A brand like Lifebuoy (with roots in hygiene) or Dove may have been a better fit for innovation of this nature.

“I have read that the soaps are not going to be retailed across the country, but only in the awareness camps. If the brand really was rooting for the cause, then, perhaps, the soaps would have been put out in the mass market, across the length and breadth of the country. I wonder if they are worried about doing this since the entire family generally uses the brand and that could, maybe, affect market share. So, this rather selective distribution ends up being a rather tentative, sitting-on-the-fence kind of effort if the brand wished to start a conversation. As a marketer, I am surprised by the lack of brand fit. As a woman, I think it may be a loss of a great opportunity for HUL to be able to put all its marketing, distribution and communication muscle behind a brilliant innovation such as this, to actually make a difference to countless women,” Swamy signs off.

Ramanujam Sridhar, CEO and founder, Brand-Comm, says, “Brands today have been continuously talking about the common good. Brands like Red Label are talking about very sensitive issues like religious harmony. It is more of a global trend where companies are increasingly concentrating on not just financial good but also good for the community. This is one more step in the overall direction of social responsibility. There is a huge gap in cancer awareness in India and such a campaign and innovation is a significant step towards telling the world - ‘I am actually serious about my consumer’s health.’”

He adds, “Lux has been a leading brand both globally and in India and has been driven by celebrity endorsements. Today, brands are continually trying to stand apart; this could be an attempt to be different but do it with a conscience and social responsibility, which is becoming increasingly important today.”

abid.barlaskar@afaqs.com

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Over the years, social media has established itself as the largest driver of mobile traffic for many a web publisher. In the spring of 2015, Facebook announced the launch of ‘Instant Articles’ for publishers with a promise to deliver a seamless user experience to its readers. The social media giant claims this offering makes the process of clicking a link and opening the page 10 times faster than usual. In 2016, Google followed suit by launching Accelerated Mobile Page (AMP); the open source AMP gave news publishers a well-distilled way of formulating their pages. That they loaded faster and served the cause of discoverability in Google search results, helped.

Today, Facebook and Google extend Instant Articles and AMP, respectively, to all web publishers. Despite that, each time news dotcoms release commercial films, they invariably punctuate the message with a plea we are all familiar with – they implore users to download the mobile app. In an era of well designed, adaptive and responsive mobile-friendly websites, why are web publishers in the news space so gung-ho about the mobile application?

Does the amount – and equally importantly, the type – of traffic differ significantly when the conduit for it is the mobile browser versus the mobile app? Is it really easier to monetise traffic on the app? Or do the reasons for publishers’ collective obsession with the app transcend traffic and revenue-related arguments – and take us into the realm of intangibles like loyalty, commitment and long-term branding? Or maybe the app experience is simply more – how should we put it? – convenient, for both publishers and consumers?

Turns out, there is merit in all these arguments. In fact, experts corroborate that the behaviour of users varies when they consume news content on a mobile site versus on an app, both in terms of the time they spend reading/watching it, as well as their readiness to psychologically ‘commit’ to the content.

FIRST, A QUICK LOOK AT THE LAY OF THE LAND…

Global consulting firm EY projects that India will have 2.2 billion networked devices by 2022, of which 38 per cent (849 million devices) will be smartphones. As per web analytics service StatCounter, between May 2018 and May 2019, mobile dominated 71.89 per cent of the total web traffic in India, while desktop’s contribution was 27.66 per cent and the share of tablets stood at 0.45 per cent.

People who land on online news content through an app, as opposed to a mobile browser, actually behave...
differently. And these behaviour patterns have very real consequences for publishers.

Citing the example of TV18’s business news brand Moneycontrol, a platform on which an average user typically lands around eight to 12 times a day, Singhvi explains, “The time spent on the platform is far higher in the case of an app user. We have also observed that while a user on the mobile browser reads one story and moves on, our app users explore multiple pages, like stock prices, portfolios, analysis and all, in a single visit.”

“App users,” concurs Suparna Singh, Group CEO, NDTV, “are more engaged and consume a lot more data. On average, app users consume 20-30X more content than users coming to our mobile site. They login more frequently and in each session, they consume more content than people coming to our website.”

Of course, social media continues to drive traffic to the websites of digital news publishers, but there’s a difference in the way news is consumed when that happens. Specifically, a social media platform is unable to curate news stories based on a reader’s interests. reasons Gautam Sinha, CEO, Times Internet, “it’s a ‘hit or miss’ experience for those who want to bookmark articles they want to revisit later, as the links often get lost in constantly updated Facebook or Twitter feeds.”

APPs AND THE MONETISATION GAME…

All arguments about browser versus app traffic, and the behaviour of the two kinds of users therein, finally come down to one pertinent question: Which kind of content is easier for publishers to monetise – browser or app? The answer is multimodal.

Over 40 per cent of all ad insertions across digital platforms were banner ads in 2018, followed by HTML5. Video insertions were at 22 per cent, which, according to EY, have more than doubled over the last two years as they tend to garner higher ad rates for publishers. Banner ads were most prevalent in 2018.

“For publishers in India, despite the growth of mobile traffic, monetisation is still predominantly higher on desktop,” says Network18’s Singvi, adding nevertheless, “But of all mobile traffic, app traffic is significantly more valuable. So, the revenue coming in on the app is higher than that on the mobile browser.”

Others, like Times Internet’s Sinha, believe that both news apps and mobile web platforms offer similar opportunities in terms of the most common methods of monetisation, which include subscription, advertising, sponsored stories and events. “However,” he concedes, “since a user is often more engaged on the app, upselling premium products is easier and more effective there than on a website.”

NDTV’s Singh considers her app users her most “premium users”. About them, she says, “They consume a lot more content, which, in turn, generates the most revenue for us, per user. Advertisers, especially premium brands, are very keen to own the NDTV app audience and are willing to pay a premium for this.”

NEWS APPS AND MOBILE REAL ESTATE…

Interestingly, in this context, ‘premium’ has connotations beyond revenue and monetisation – in an intangible context of brand love and loyalty. After all, it’s an era in which brands across types and segments fight for precious space on our crowded mobile screens. The act of downloading and installing a news app is a grand show of commitment that publishers simply cannot ignore. News apps are heavy, and though the storage capacity of most smartphones is better than it ever was, the variety of apps available for download has increased too. The NDTV app doesn’t compete with just a Times of India app; rather, both compete with one another as well as with a PubG, a Need for Speed, a Bumble, a Swiggy, and a Dineout, an Ola, and numerous other apps we are convinced we need. Not to mention the emerging rival category of news aggregators like Dailyhunt and Inshoht. “Your app needs to make space in the user’s mind. Only then will it find space on the phone,” says Singvi. Of course, quality control and a sharp product offering always help.

“You need to ensure your app is differentiated and is the go-to destination in your genre. That’s the biggest challenge,” says Gaurav Thakur, director of marketing and business development, ESPN India.

Thakur believes marketing plays a vital part in getting the app downloaded. “In all our communication, we talk about Cricinfo as a platform for all screens,” he says, adding, “But we know for a fact that the app audience is qualitatively much better and way more engaged.” All ads for the platform end with slides imploring people to download the app. Experts call this ‘call to action’ messaging.

USER RETENTION – THE ULTIMATE CHALLENGE…

Installing an app is only half the battle won. As any e-commerce marketer or product head would agree, user retention is the ultimate goal. Thakur says, “We need to ensure people do not come only during match time and go away as the match or tournament ends. Making them stay on the platform and sample other content on it is a big challenge.”

“In a bid to generate ‘stickiness’, travel aggregator brand ixigo recently launched webseries content on its app. If a bookings-led app can make long form shows to get users to spend more time on the app, it’s not hard to think of the lengths news apps could go to the same end. It’s about entertainment for the sake of commerce.

Another aspect that web publishers would do well to keep in mind is the user experience they offer on app. Sinha observes, “A majority of news and entertainment apps from Indian publishers are merely mobile-adjusted versions of their websites that fail to deliver an engaging user experience. Hence, Indians often prefer consuming news on social media rather than mobile news apps.”

It is a ‘hit or miss’ experience for a reader’s interests. “So,” reasons Singh, “it’s a ‘hit or miss’ experience for a user.”

Often, readers download news apps because of the sheer convenience they offer. For example, apps afford the option of saving articles for later reading or reading in offline mode.

IT ALL COMES DOWN TO BIG DATA…

There’s no denying the fact that apps offer publishers priceless information about users, which, in turn, enables the latter to customise and personalise their offering, down to the individual. Being on a person’s mobile is like having access to his virtual universe.

“On the ESPN Cricinfo app, for instance, if someone declares he is a fan of India, or Mumbai Indians or Royal Challengers Bangalore, then he would get recommendations as per that area of interest. That is something you cannot do if you do not have an app,” says Thakur. For Cricinfo, users spend a staggering 400 per cent more time browsing the content when they come through the app as compared to the mobile browser.

Finally, can mobile-friendly, well designed, responsive websites, coupled with upgraded web browsers and up-to-date social media tools negate the need for news publishers to invest in apps? In a word—no, answers Sanchit Vir Gogia, chief analyst and founder-CEO of Greyhound Research, a technology and innovation research and advisory firm.

Gogia is of the opinion that content-based websites that do not have many occasions for user interactions can manage to run with responsive websites. But news publishers do need apps, eventually. “Over time, as news publishers develop a dedicated reader base, having an app becomes imperative. It helps maintain a relationship with users…” Here’s where there’s little difference between news publishers and marketers of regular consumer-facing brands; it’s all about understanding the end user better over time and building a personal relationship with each one. This also helps news publishers build their own brand over time.

“An app,” opines Sinhu, in this context, “should enable users to express their interests and thoughts on certain articles, with their friends and family. This way, we will be able to offer an engaging experience that is different from the experience of merely reading the news on the mobile web.” This builds consumer loyalty over time, goes his argument.

SOURCE: TAM AdEX
The fifth edition of afaqs’ Foxglove Awards 2019 was held at Verben A Brewpub & Skygarden in Mumbai on June 6. The awards saw a total of 110 unique entities participating and was judged by 35 jurors and 24 grand jurors. (The full jury list can be found here: https://foxgloveawards.com/jury.html.) This year saw the addition of new categories - Best Use of Transit Media, Best Use of Cinema Advertising, Best Non–Traditional Outdoor Media, Best Digital Brand Video (Campaign), Best Use of Facebook, Best Use of Snapchat, Best Use of Instagram and Best Use of Twitter. Eighty-three awards were handed out in the National category and 63 in the Regional category. As far as Golds go, 27 were handed out in the former and 29 in the latter.

Here’s a closer look at the Gold winners in the National category:

Inextis Events won a Gold for its work with Axis Bank on the flashback film festival in the category ‘Best Brand Activation’.

Brandmovers India work on Biba - change the question won a Gold for ‘Best User Generated Content’.

ADK-Fortune Communications won an award for its work on Ghadi detergent. Its entry titled #SaareMaaSdiDhalado won Gold for ‘Best Brand Integration’. The entry also won Gold in the ‘Best Digital Brand Video (Single)’ and ‘Best Brand Integration’ categories.

‘Best Branded Content Campaign’ saw two winners – Max Publicity and Communications, and Infections for OSRAM – Save the ocean and Bat Ghar Ki. Respectively, Max Publicity Communications’ work on OSRAM – Save the ocean also won it a Gold in the ‘Best Non-Traditional Outdoor Media’ category and a Gold in the ‘Best Traditional Outdoor’ category.

WATConsult won a Gold for its work on SBI Life, #MainseHum Real Life Real Stories – Navrati for ‘Best Content Marketing Launch’.


ADK-Fortune Communications won Gold for its work on #ShutThePhoneUp in the ‘Best Digital Brand Video Campaign’ category. The same entry also won Silver for ‘Best Brand Integration’ category.

The Fully Festive GIF Pack was made for Reliance Trends by the agency Brave New World and it won Gold in the ‘Best Use Of Instagram’ category. It also won Gold under ‘Best Innovation In Digital’. Brave New World also won Gold for its work on the She sessions in the ‘Best Use Of Facebook’ category.

In the ‘Best Microsite’ category, 20FIVE India Lab won a Gold for its work on Accenture ‘s International Women’s day campaign 2018. Another entrant who won Gold in this category was the Brand Experience launch microsite for Flipkart Supermart Select by Oddinary Marketing India. The same site also won Gold in the regional category in ‘The Best Microsite sub-category.

The Gold in the ‘Best Native Advertising/Sponsored Content’ was won by LIQVD ASIA for its project ‘Vibes don’t lie’. LIQVD ASIA also bagged Gold for its work on Khabrein Khul Bolge! in the ‘Best Online Integrated Campaign’ category.

Purple Phase Communications won Gold in the ‘Best Packaging Category’ for its work on Whiskers Packaging - Make a Bold Statement. The agency Infections won Gold for Chak Chak Chhao in the ‘Best TVC’ category.

Jabong Spring-Summer Runway by Happy mcjaproyb_logo also won Gold in the same category.

Social Kinnect won Gold for 500 Festive Stories in the ‘Best Use Of Influencer Marketing’ category.

Eros Now won Gold for ‘Best Use Of Social Media For Content Distribution’ with its entry TUMBBAD. The Small Big Idea also won Gold for their work on the film Badhaai Ho in the category ‘Best Use of Twitter’.

Roadrunner productions won Gold for Ek Naiy Muskaan in the category ‘Best Use Of Video For CSR’.

AND NOW, A CLOSER LOOK AT THE GOLD WINNERS IN THE REGIONAL CATEGORY


The magic Christmas tree by Times Internet won Gold in the ‘Best Use Of Social Media For Content Distribution’ category.

Bauua on Twitter by White Rivers Media won Gold in the ‘Best use of Twitter’ category.

White Rivers Media won Gold in the ‘Best Use Of Social Media’ category for CSR with its work for Viviana Mall to stop acid sales.

Social Kinnect won Gold in ‘The Best Use Of Video For CSR’ for its entry Recycle more waste less.

Popkon Creatives won Gold for ‘Print Ad/Singel’ category for its work on Pling Cassava Ad With Kim & Trump.

The event was sponsored by HT Digital Streams.  

Gold winners are all smiles at the Foxglove Awards 2019 held at Verben A Brewpub & Skygarden in Mumbai on June 6

The event was sponsored by HT Digital Streams.

35 Agencies Strike Gold

Max Publicity & Communication won the maximum number of Golds (6), followed by Brave New World (3) and ADK Fortune (2). By Aishwarya Ramesh
An Event to Remember

A few snapshots from the Foxglove Awards 2019 held in Mumbai recently.

The wall of fame for regional category winners

A few awards waiting to be taken home

A jubilant moment at the fifth edition of the awards

National category gold winners searching for their respective awards

Nearly 35 agencies won Gold at the awards

Winners strike a pose with the awards that they have won
Creating Artwork out of Air Pollution

Aditya Birla Group’s World Environment Day-themed ad makes that a reality. Read on to know how. By Deepashree Banerjee

A t a time when air pollution is the largest environmental health risk in the world, creating art out of toxic air seems like a pretty good hook for any brand. The campaign titled #FilterTheFuture by the Aditya Birla Group focuses on the adverse effects of air pollution and how it affects everything around us - from heritage monuments and human health to flora and fauna. The campaign, conceptualised and executed by Tonic Worldwide, for the Mumbai-based multinational conglomerate, aims at helping consumers identify their fears for the environment and act upon it.

The campaign (marking June 5, World Environment Day) features four eco-conscious influencers from different walks of life - heritage enthusiast Akshay Shetty, wildlife photographer Nishank Joshi, fashion designer Jeena Gupta and environmentalist Sumaira Abdulali. Each one talks about the adverse effects of air pollution and their biggest fears for the environment.

At the very end of the video, each of their fears is represented in the form of sketches made with ‘air ink’, created by recycling air pollution emissions.

“The core of the campaign was to find the right insight as we wanted to find a hook which can make us re-look at the issue of air pollution through a different lens,” says Pratik Hatankar, head - innovations and new initiatives, Tonic Worldwide, as he gives us a sneak peek of the agency’s brainstorming sessions.

The challenge, he says, was to awaken users to the harmful effects of pollution. “We started our brainstorming by trying to find the right insight into ‘How Air Pollution affects us all’. At Tonic, we follow the process of multiple data points and the same process helped us to fine-tune the insight and select the idea. While talking to the target audience, we realised that what they really feared was the effects on things that they cherished more than themselves,” Hatankar shares.

Through the #FilterTheFuture concept, conceptualised and executed by Tonic Worldwide, the Aditya Birla Group has reaffirmed its commitment to the environment.

To give shape to the idea, the agency partnered with Bengaluru-based Graviky Labs that uses its proprietary technology, KaalInk, to capture particulate pollution emitted from vehicles and diesel generator chimneys.

Sharing some more insight on the science-meeting-art mechanism, Hatankar explains, “Graviky’s KaalInk prototype captures particulate matter emitted from direct and ambient sources. This happens without considerable back-pressure. Depending on the carbon, content pollutants from other sources are also taken in for recycling. Pollution collected by KaalInk undergoes various proprietary processes to make sure the end product is safe to use. During the final stage, the carbon is taken through another chemical process to make different types of inks and paints. The challenge was to identify what we wanted to create so that it resonates with larger audiences.”

However, globally, the carbon-to-canvas concept had already made its advertising debut back in 2017 when Tiger Beer (a subsidiary of Heineken), through one of its campaigns, brought art made from pollution-derived ink to smog-filled cities across the world.

Through the #FilterTheFuture concept, conceptualised and executed by Tonic Worldwide, the Aditya Birla Group has reaffirmed its commitment to the environment.

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The brand’s latest TVC with brand ambassador Parineeti Chopra looks to tap into a new TG with ‘fast acting ayurveda’.

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Its latest World Cup campaign has teams break into a Bollywood style dance before a ‘supposed’ Queen of England sings ‘Cricket ka crown hum le jayenge’.

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The latest ad, a video from the campaign ‘Lux - The soap with a lump’, aims to create breast cancer awareness. In the campaign, HUL added a lump to the Lux soap bar.

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**Company:** Fruit Of Summers  
**Profile:** Design visual interfaces that must abide with company policies and guidelines. Translate complex ideas into elegant, intuitive designs online. Work with an excellent sense of typography, layout and general design principles, following the given guidelines.  
**Experience:** 1 to 3 years  
**Location:** New Delhi  
**Email:** aman@fruitofsummers.com

**Profile:** Post: Account manager  
**Company:** Quotient Communications Pvt Ltd  
**Profile:** Sales-driven strategising, day-to-day interaction with clients, understanding briefs and executing them in the most creative, yet solutions-oriented manner possible. Along with ensuring client satisfaction, you will also be expected to ensure continued and increased billings on your accounts. The ability to pitch for and develop new clients will be a huge plus.  
**Experience:** 5 to 9 years  
**Location:** Mumbai  
**Email:** team@quotientcomm.com

**Profile:** Post: Senior Executive - Marcom [female]  
**Company:** Tek Advertising & Management Pvt Ltd  
**Profile:** Communication planning & business development [preparation & presentation of promotional communication plan in PPT format.]  
**Experience:** 0 to 4 years  
**Location:** Patum  
**Email:** contact@tekadvertising.com; hr@tekadvertising.com

**Profile:** Post: Client servicing manager  
**Company:** CupShup  
**Profile:** Cracking new corporate partnerships and working closely with the BD team to understand the ropes of the business. Ideating and planning BTL activities that cater to a segmented niche of elite corporates, understanding the requirements of the client and providing solutions that matter.  
**Experience:** 0 to 4 years  
**Location:** Mumbai  
**Email:** HR@cupsup.com

**Profile:** Post: Copywriter  
**Company:** Promodome Communications Pvt Ltd  
**Profile:** Conceptualising and writing ad for diverse brands, brainstorming with the creative team and giving idea on brand strategies, writing and proofreading, coordination with the art team.  
**Experience:** 2 to 3 years  
**Location:** New Delhi  
**Email:** info@promodomegroup.com

**Profile:** Post: Media manager-digital  
**Company:** Vermillion Communication Pvt Ltd  
**Profile:** Experience of search, programmatic and social marketing. Reached advertiser goals through media planning, buying, optimisation and analysis. Proficiency on a variety of tools, including Google AdWords, Google Analytics, DBM, DCM, TTD, Mediamath, TURN, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Omniture, etc. Monitor and develops reports on competitor activity within social media spaces.  
**Experience:** 1 to 2 years  
**Location:** Gurgaon  
**Email:** hr@vermillion.net.in

**Profile:** Post: Account director  
**Company:** Indo Aryan Publicity  
**Profile:** Capable of heading servicing in a branch. You will be responsible for servicing the existing clients and explore new ones, and ensure viability of the branch.  
**Experience:** 8 to 10 years  
**Location:** Kolkata/Mumbai  
**Email:** info.indoaryan@gmail.com; utpal.panda@gmail.com

**Profile:** Post: Client servicing executive  
**Company:** Thoughttrains Designs Pvt Ltd  
**Profile:** Excellent communications and interpersonal skills, good command and fluency in English, understanding the market trends, client’s business and brand. Analysing the client’s briefs and delivering creative as per timelines.  
**Experience:** 4 to 6 years  
**Location:** Mumbai  
**Email:** hr@thoughttrains.com

**Profile:** Post: Art director  
**Company:** Collateral -The Storytellers  
**Profile:** Creating concept and strategies as per the brief understanding. Ensuring that desired client timelines are being met. Ability to work/think independently and lead a team, as well as ideation qualities. Passionate about delivering solutions. Must have knowledge of print and designing softwares. Good understanding of English. Ability to see the entire campaign from the start to end.  
**Experience:** 5 to 7 years  
**Location:** Mumbai  
**Email:** hatim@collateral.co.in; prasad@collateral.co.in

**Profile:** Post: Content writer  
**Company:** IdeateLabs  
**Profile:** Research, write and edit content for marketing communications, including but not limited to domain monetisation and online articles, newsletters, videos, webinars, infographics, blog posts, website content, etc. Collaborate with design, digital, search and other teams to develop compelling, often unexpected, content plans.  
**Experience:** 1 to 3 years  
**Location:** Mumbai  
**Email:** careers@ideate.email

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EVEN GOOD CAN GET BETTER!
Mercedes-Benz
Mercedes-Benz India has announced an organisational change in its sales and marketing function, effective July 1, 2019. Santosh Iyer, currently VP of customer service and corporate affairs, has been appointed as VP, sales and marketing. Iyer succeeds Michael Jopp, who assumes the new responsibility of heading the sales and marketing function of Mercedes-Benz in Malaysia. During his earlier stint as the head of marketing communications, CRM and PR, he led some of the most exciting brand campaigns and digital outreach programmes.

Spring Marketing Capital
Sandeep Balan, former head - digital marketing at United Breweries, has joined Spring Marketing Capital as partner - branded content. He will be based in Bengaluru and work closely with Arun Iyer. Balan joined United Breweries in 2012 and was responsible for driving online, social and mobile strategy for Kingfisher Beer and Heineken (India). Prior to that, Balan worked with Star India as lead - digital marketing (Life OK). He has also worked with Idea Cellular for over four years in the digital marketing vertical.

Digital

iProspect India
Dentsu Aegis Network’s digital performance agency iProspect India has appointed Abhishek Balsar and Vineet Savant as VP - analytics and director of technology, respectively. Both Balsara and Savant will be based out of Mumbai and will report to Karan Jaitapkar, EVP - technology, to strengthen the agency’s Martech division.

Zoomcar
Zoomcar has elevated Varun Jha from Senior VP to chief marketing officer and head of demand business. Jha will be a part of the top management at Zoomcar and spearhead growth, strategic alliances, API-based product partnerships, brand marketing and content. Jha will oversee the demand business and revenue generation through B2C products.

Adobe
Kulmeet Bawa, MD, Adobe India and South Asia, who has been leading the software giant’s business in the region since 2016, has put in his papers. Bawa’s next destination is unconfirmed. An alumnus of the Indian School of Business, Bawa had also worked with Sun Microsystems and Microsoft, prior to joining Adobe.

Flipkart
Indian e-commerce giant Flipkart has appointed Dina D’Souza as director - monetisation (Flipkart Ads). Prior to her appointment, D’Souza was VP at POKKT (platform for ads on mobile games via video, content and integrations). She was responsible for driving the brand advertising and monetisation business for the India region. With over 18 years in the industry, D’Souza has had stints with Microsoft, 9X Media, Yahoo! and Bennett Coleman.

Media

Hindustan Times
Hindustan Times has appointed Abhishek Verma as CEO, digital streams. Earlier, Verma was working with nexGTv (Live TV Mobile application), a Digivive venture, as COO. He was spearheading executive decision-making and long-term strategic planning for the organisation.

Ananda Vikatan
Ananda Vikatan, a Tamil media group, has roped in Chetan Rama Mehta as head of client servicing, Mumbai. Mehta, who has experience of over 14 years in advertising and marketing, has worked across more than 15 product categories. She has played an instrumental role in drafting communication strategies for global brands such as Detool, Veet, Pepsi, Mountain Dew, Honda, Vodafone, etc.

82.5 India
Effective August 1, 2019, Kapil Arora will take over as co-chairman and CEO of 82.5 India and will partner Sumantro Chattopadhyay in leading and growing the 82.5 brand and business in India. VS Srikanth, the current CEO of WPP agency 82.5 India, will move on by September-end. Srikanth has spent over 15 years with the WPP Group, working across Ogilvy offices in Chennai, Bengaluru and Mumbai, setting up and successfully running his own agency Temple and then coming back into the WPP fold to run Bates India and launch 82.5 India.

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News18.com *English* crossed a 100 million users in May, tripling its reader base in a little over two years on the back of exclusive content, in-depth analysis and minute-to-minute coverage of news developments from across the globe.

*Source: Google Analytics, May 2019*