

News monitored for: Zee Corporate

MOBILE PLAY

# Small screen, big ambitions: Airtel teams up with Zee to go exclusive

**FE BUREAU**  
New Delhi, August 20

**THE AIRTEL TV-ZEE5** partnership will see Zee Entertainment Enterprises offering subscribers of Airtel TV some exclusive content. Punit Goenka, CEO and MD, ZEE, said teaming up with telecom operators was important given their ready-made subscriber base which would allow easier spread of content. This special content is to be provided for three years in what is an exclu-

sive deal signed between ZEE and Bharti Airtel.

By offering its users customised content, Bharti Airtel hopes to be able to compete with other players such as Reliance Jio. Data from Google's Play Store show that Reliance Jio's Jio TV app has seen a higher number of downloads at 100 million users compared with 50 million for Airtel TV. Reliance Jio said in July it would set up its own production company to create original web series and short films for



Jio subscribers. Jio has already acquired stakes in content companies like Balaji Telefilms and Eros International. Airtel TV, on the other hand, has tie-ups with Balaji and Eros.

Analysts say the Zee-Airtel partnership is a symbiotic one. Zee5 today is among the weakest of apps with downloads of a mere 10 million. That puts it only slightly ahead of Vodafone Play and Idea TV, both of which have downloads of 5 million each. Hotstar, Voot and Sony Liv have higher down-

loads at 50 million. Airtel hopes to compete with Jio by accessing exclusive and a bigger library of content.

Bharti Airtel CEO Gopal Vittal had told *FE* recently that Bharti would primarily aggregate content though it would also host a few exclusive shows. Vittal believes the DNA of a production company is very different and Bharti would need to build such a DNA if it wanted exclusive content.

Continued on Page 2

News monitored for: Zee Corporate

### Small screen, big ambitions: Airtel teams up with Zee to go exclusive

Telecom operator	Monthly plans	Services
Airtel Infinity	₹399	Wynk and Amazon Prime Video
	₹499	Wynk, Amazon Prime Video, Airtel TV (Hooq, Eros Now, Sony Liv, ALT Balaji, ZEE5 and Hotstar)
Vodafone Red	₹399	Vodafone Play (ZEE5, ALT Balaji, Eros Now, Hooq, Hungama, ABP, Pogo) and Amazon Prime Video
	₹999	Vodafone Play, Amazon Prime Video and two months exclusive access to Netflix
Reliance Jio	₹199	Jio app including JioTV - 400 channels besides Hotstar

Source: Company website

“THAT’S WHY our focus is on partnerships. Our view is that content is ultimately is a partnership game,” Vittal said.

Today India has 1.13 billion mobile subscribers of which around 300 million use smartphones. They are big consumers of data, spending on average 240 minutes daily, up from 190 minutes a year ago. On average, 7-10 GB of data is consumed per month; this was only 800-900 MB in the previous year. Around 76% of consumers use mobile data to watch videos.

“Given the nascent stage of the market, we don’t see a clear winner currently, but believe Zee is late to the game relative to companies such as Eros, Balaji and Shemaroo, and needs to have differentiated content,” Bank of America Merrill Lynch wrote recently.