

# Let's sell journalism.

Because great journalism is a great product.

Rohin Dharmakumar, CEO, *The Ken*

# About *The Ken*

- India's first & largest subscriptions-only digital media platform
- Launched in October 2016, we publish one exclusive business story every weekday
- Our subscription model has 2 parts
  - High quality journalism = original, deeply reported and analytical
  - Premium pricing = an annual subscription is Rs.2750/\$108
- We cover technology, business, science and healthcare using a decidedly India-specific lens
- In Q4 2018, we crossed 10,000 active subscribers
- Growing at 100+% annually for the last two years

# Fewer, deeper stories



5G Fuss

## India, the middle kingdom for 5G, is battleground zero for Huawei and Samsung

With over 1.1 billion subscribers and 90% of its equipment imported, India is make-or-break territory for 5G global telecom equipment vendors

SEEMA SINGH

5 Feb 2019

Three large and powerful telcos – Airtel, Jio, and Vodafone-Idea – engaged in a deathmatch

6 Comments



Bully alert

## Google the dealer meets Google the player

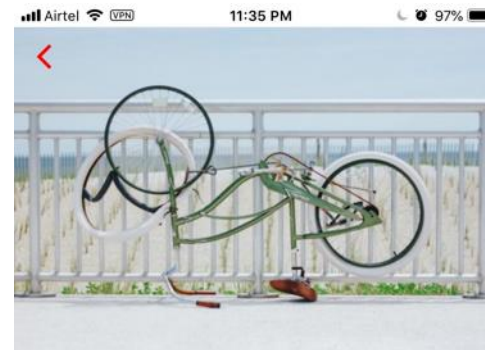
The Google Play Store is turning off the tap on apps asking for SMS and call log permissions. While that plunges apps into a data drought, Google's own products may gain a competitive edge

ARUNDHATI RAMANATHAN

17 Jan 2019

Google's move to stop Android apps from reading SMS and call logs is a step towards user privacy

9 Comments



Urban Mobility 2.0

## The spoke in the bike-sharing wheel

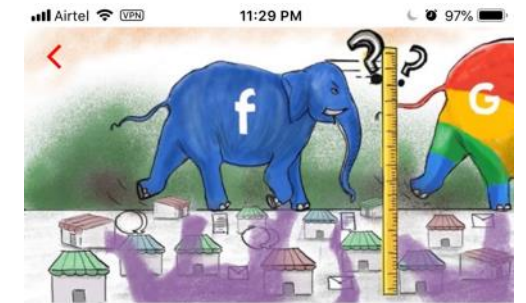
Last year, mobility startups entered India with the hope that bicycle-sharing would fix daily commute in cities. Today, they're pivoting to electric scooters in a big way. Will these startups ever snap out of the experiment phase?

SALMAN SH

29 Jan 2019

VC-led bicycle-sharing startups in India are waking up to the realities of product-market fit

8 Comments



Call me by your revenue

## Exactly how big is Facebook in India?

For a social media company that has close to 294 million users in India, the largest user base in the world, few seem to know the scale of Facebook's operations in the country. Fewer still are certain if whatever little they know is correct. Knowledge plummets even further; nobody is actually quite sure of the size of the overall digital advertising market

ASHISH K. MISHRA

6 Feb 2019

If you start asking knowledgeable people for Facebook's business revenue in India, you'd be surprised by the various numbers you collect

4 Comments

# Subscriptions or bust

- 100% focus since day 1
- No trials
- No leaky paywalls
- No ads
- No syndication
- No discounts

# The traditional journalism construct

- Ignorance, distrust and antipathy between editorial & business sides
  - From editorial towards business models and revenue
  - From business towards journalistic ethics and craft
- Strict “Chinese walls” between functions
- No common ground on what the product is
  - Is it the journalism?
  - Or is it the readers?

# But, product tail wags the journalism dog



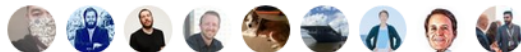
**Chris Fralic** ✓  
@chrisfralic

Follow

I just cancelled my [@WSJ](#) subscription after being a reader and subscriber for 39 years. Because they don't recognize me across my phone or tablet and force me to log in every time. The app works but links from Twitter or elsewhere don't open the app or deep link. Bye Bye.

7:57 PM - 11 Feb 2019

74 Retweets 1,167 Likes



128 74 1.2K



**Walt Mossberg** ✓  
@waltmossberg

Follow

1/ This is 100% right. I pay to subscribe to [@nytimes](#), [@washingtonpost](#), [@WSJ](#), [@NewYorker](#), [@WIRED](#), [@VanityFair](#) and others. All fail to recognize me as a subscriber, especially when I link to a story from within, say, Twitter. This is a huge fail & a threat to the sub model.

**Jim Boren** ✓ @jboren4507

I'm a big believer in paying for the news you read. But if news sites are going with paywalls, they should work properly. I have digital subscriptions to [@LATimes](#) & [@WSJ](#), but both often block me while I'm signed in. Happening now & customer service AWOL. [bit.ly/2nt48gS](https://bit.ly/2nt48gS)

10:07 AM - 17 Feb 2019

64 Retweets 541 Likes



34 64 541

# Instead, journalism as a product

- Journalism was, is and should be a product
- Product, engineering and marketing are distinct but connected
  - All share a common objective with editorial: win & retain subscribers
- Break “Chinese walls”, but ethically
  - Collaboration is *not* interference
- Managed and run like a SaaS company
- “Journalism as a Service”, or JaaS

# Multiple products

- The best guarantor for independent journalism = a strong, diversified and sustainable revenue model
- Multiple sources of revenue, each growing at 100+% annually
  - Retail subscriptions
  - Corporate subscriptions – over 5 dozen companies are subscribers
  - Campus subscriptions – world's best b-schools are subscribers (HBS, ISB, IIMA)
  - Patron subscriptions
- Recurring revenue as a percentage of total revenue is growing



# In control of our growth channels

- 100% of visitors and subscribers acquired organically
  - Zero paid acquisition till date
- Diversified reader acquisition
  - 25% via own emails
  - 25% via direct visits
  - 25% via search
- Not dependent on platform gatekeepers

# Q&A

Rohin Dharmakumar

CEO, The Ken