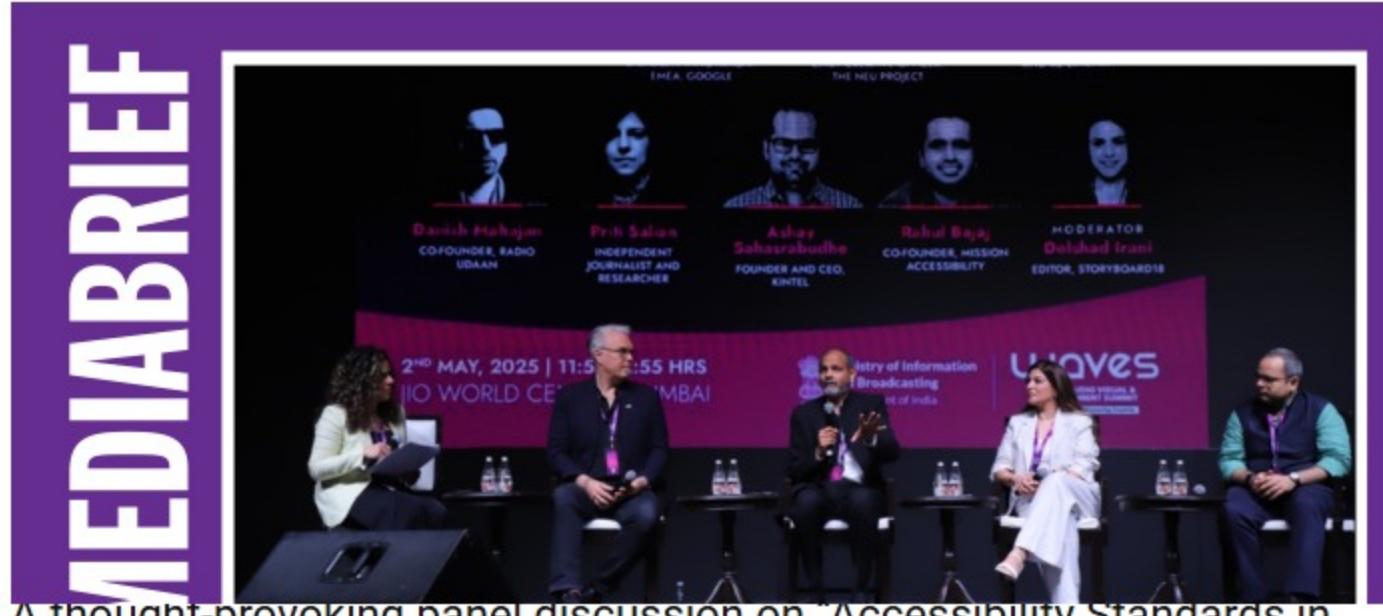


WAVES 2025 panel pushes for inclusive innovation in media accessibility

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A thought-provoking panel discussion on "Accessibility Standards in the Media & Entertainment Sector" took center stage at WAVES 2025. The session brought together leading voices from academia, technology, policy, law, and journalism to explore how accessibility in content creation and distribution is evolving—and why it must be prioritized in India's digital transformation journey.

Opening the session, Prof. Brij Kothari of IIT Delhi emphasized India's leadership in redefining accessibility. "India is not just catching up; in many ways, we are leading the conversation on inclusive design," he stated. He said that the scale, diversity and accessibility are no longer just a solution for the visually or hearing impaired—it's a universal design philosophy that benefits over 1.4 billion citizens.

Christopher Patnoe, Head of Accessibility and Disability Inclusion for EMEA at Google, offered a global perspective, noting that while few countries like the U.S. have strong legislation, enforcement often falls short. He said that the European Accessibility Act is showing promise, and the next decade will be transformative. "We're laying the groundwork now for systemic change in how accessibility is implemented", he stated.

Ashay Vinay Sahasrabuddhe, CEO of Kintel, highlighted the creative dimensions of accessibility in media. "Content is shaped through the unique lens of its creator, especially in film. To make content truly accessible, we must preserve that creative perspective—not dilute it with generic, automated solutions," he explained. He emphasized on translating the director's vision meaningfully for all audiences, including those with disabilities.

Journalist Priti Salian spotlighted how technology and AI are accelerating accessibility efforts. "We've launched an AI-based channel featuring sign language interpreter avatars, and with advancements in audio description, what once took weeks now takes just 30 hours," she said. She further stressed that technology alone isn't enough as greater governmental support, public-private partnerships, and tendering mechanisms to scale accessible entertainment in India is required.

Rahul Bajaj, lawyer and advocate for inclusive content across platforms such as theatre, OTT, and television emphasized the need for stronger legal frameworks and industry collaboration.

Danish Mahajan, Founder of Radio Udaan called for stricter implementation of existing policies and increased representation of persons with disabilities in policymaking and regulatory bodies. "Representation ensures that accessibility isn't an afterthought—it's embedded in the system," he noted.

Together, the panel underscored a collective call to action: accessibility must be viewed not as a compliance checkbox but as a creative, ethical, and strategic imperative. As India stands at the crossroads of a content revolution, accessibility will be key to unlocking its full potential for every citizen.