

# Bringing the best music listening devices under one digital roof

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Noticing a missing link for a good pair of headphones and taking it up as business opportunity is what defines the entrepreneurial instinct of Raghav Somani, Founder of Headphone Zone, India's first dedicated web portal for headphones and earphones.

The portal was born out of Raghav Somani's realisation that the big retailers had little or no knowledge of headphones or earphones. The portal also acknowledges customers about the products and what to look for. Conveying his thoughts about the business of Headphones Raghav Somani spoke to Entrepreneur India.

**Please tell us about Headphone Zone? What was the idea behind Headphone Zone? What led your interest in this audio tech business?**

After graduating with a degree in Business Management from Singapore Management University in 2010, I was keen to try my hand at entrepreneurship. From my years in Singapore, I could clearly see a big contrast when compared to India, the sheer number of people from all walks of life using essentially earphones, be it on the trains, while waiting for the bus or just sitting at the café. With the smartphone boom, every Indian had the means to listen to music in their pockets. The missing link I felt were a good pair of headphones between the ears. Seeing everyone in Singapore wear one inspired me to look further into this as a business opportunity.

Although online sellers such as Amazon, Flipkart and eBay had become really good at taking interesting new products to the hinterland of India's towns and cities, they still knew nothing about headphones.

**What was your family reaction towards your decision?**

My family is in the business of manufacturing and distribution of video tapes and associated audio-video accessories. Coming from a multi-generation family business, the family understood the risks and the opportunity associated with a niche product category. They fully supported me with the idea and honestly, I expected nothing less.

**How does Headphone Zone benefit the headphones market in India?**

When we first started with distribution and wholesaling headphones and earphones to organized retail chains in India, everyone from Croma, Reliance Retail and Big Bazaar were convinced that headphones were a category that had a large demand in India. But the problem was that they lacked information and passion for the product, which meant that consumers had a lousy experience in-store and simply bought the cheapest earphone they found. That's really where the opportunity for Headphone Zone emerged. We cater to the consumers based in 206 cities across metros to tier I, II and III cities.

**It's a bootstrap or investment led venture?**

Headphone Zone was started with an initial investment of Rs 8 lacs funded through bootstrapping. The online webstore has seen a quarterly growth of nearly 100% and the growth has primarily been internally funded. However, we're actively looking for funding opportunities and are in the process of evaluating various options that are available to us.

**Why do you think that the Headphone Zone is a community for the audiophiles?**

We believe in bringing the best music listening devices from around the world to India's passionate music listening population. This includes headphones, earphones, high-resolution music player as well as complementing accessories like memory foam ear tips, headphone stands, and more. So while Headphone Zone does cater to the audiophile and makes available the largest range of premium headphones, it also has something for every kind of music listener; from the most passionate music aficionado to the casual college going kid who just wants a good pair of headphones to use while commuting.

**Tell us about the company's journey since inception?**

The brand started out in 2011 as an exclusive headphone and earphone offline retail store and quickly scaled up to operate 6 stores in Chennai and Bangalore. Since then the focus has shifted primarily to the webstore which went online on 1st January 2015. However, since having launched our webstore, [headphonezone.in](http://headphonezone.in) over the last quarter, we have seen 50 percent sales growth. We received our first bunch of orders as soon as we took our webstore live. We're currently targeting higher sales but at a slower growth rate. [Headphonezone.in](http://headphonezone.in) is currently averaging over 3, 00, 000 visitors a month.

**What are the future plans of your company? What are your expansion plans?**

Our first priority is to take Headphone Zone to the length and breadth of music listeners in India. Headphone Zone plans to remain focused on headphones, earphones and related accessories as a category and maintain

its niche while making available several new prominent high-end international headphone brands in India. Our growth will focus on two business objectives. The first is to grow our customer lifetime value by building a secondary market for resale of used Headphones and Earphones. Secondly, we wish to expand the audience for high-end audio products with the help of our strongest ambassadors - the audiophile community.

**Would you ever consider a sellout? Are you planning any acquisition or merger in the similar space?**

We certainly would. Everything is for sale at the right price at Headphone Zone. As mentioned, there is no other company in this space and hence merger or acquisition is not possible.