

NEW MEDIA COMPLIMENTS MAINSTREAM PRINT MEDIA IN INDIA

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Abstract

This paper provides a comprehensive view that how with the emergence of the new media (internet) compliments the traditional print media in India and earns its respective importance.

The longevity of print media is much more than the electronic one. It is the written media, which has made history recordable and accurate. Print media is durable. With electronic media, anyone can copy any piece of information and present it as his own which is not permitted legally and leads to plagiarism. The information provided by a newspaper is usually more authentic and genuine but it is not in the case of electronic media.

Though new media in India is still at a nascent stage. The traditional media may have their own online versions; they have not fully embraced the new technology. Indian newspapers still earn revenue by advertising despite the presence of online newspapers. The two reinforce and supplement each other.

The history of print media and written communication follows the progress of civilization, which, in turn, progresses in response to changing cultural technologies.

Introduction

The advent of the new media with fast changing technology has posed a problem for the traditional print media. The technological advancements in Internet and information technologies in the last 10-15 years have brought about a structural change in the way information is aggregated, transformed, and then disseminated. Most people of the old generation prefer to get their news the old-fashioned way i.e., from newspapers and magazines. The younger generation, on the other hand, logs on to online sources for their information needs. There is genuine concern that as the older generation moves on; the old media will also gradually disappear.

The effect of new media has started affecting the circulation of newspapers. With the population of India is crossing 1.2 billion, the number of computer literates in the country is also growing and the figure has increased to around 224 million and the number of Internet users has risen to 300 million as of December 2014. This takes the penetration of Internet in India to about 19%. There are 243 million Internet users in urban and rural India as of December 2014. This number has been growing at the rate of 29% in the urban areas and 39% in the rural areas.

Although the growth seems encouraging, yet it seems the vast majority of the people are still not accessing the Internet and there lies a huge opportunity for the technology enablers to bring them on to the Internet. Despite of the immense growth of Internet usage, the penetration of Internet usage still remains low. As per the Vernacular Report published in 2012 by the Internet and Mobile Association of India, this can be attributed to the three major factors: Lack of Infrastructure (viz. no internet connection, computer etc.), Beliefs (viz. no need for internet etc.) and Lack of Knowledge (viz. not aware of Internet). There is another factor inhibiting people from using the Internet: Lack of content in the local language. Internet is available primarily in the English language.

However, in India the effect of new media on newspapers is still manageable. As per statistics published by the Registrar of Newspapers of India, Govt. of India, the total circulation of Newspapers in India is 45,05,86,282 with the largest circulated Daily: The Hindu, English, Chennai : 16,06,711; The second largest circulated Daily: Ananda Bazar

Patrika, Bengali, Kolkata : 11,81,112; The largest circulated multi-edition Daily: The Times of India, English (14 editions):47,42,671.00. The second largest circulated multi-edition Daily: Dainik Bhaskar, Hindi (29 editions):35,49,796.00.

Newspaper circulation in India maintained its upward trend clocking a growth of over 5.95 % in 2013-14 with regional language dailies accounting for a significant rise, despite uncertainty faced by the print industry in the West. Circulation of newspapers in India grew by 17.81% in 2013-14, as per the 58th Annual report of the Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI).

4827 newspapers were published from Uttar Pradesh followed by Delhi with 23451,933 and Madhya Pradesh with 2106 newspapers. In terms of circulation, UP topped the table with more than 10.14 crore copies. Delhi followed with a circulation of 6.38 crore and Madhya Pradesh at third position with over 3.6 crore copies.

As mentioned in “The Future of Print Media : Adapting to Change” by Satish Tandon, the new is not displacing the old, however; rather, it is transforming the old by forcing it to accept transparency, responsiveness and efficiency. Increased competition is making the old media to pull up its socks and provide the additional value demanded by a free market where the number of players has multiplied.

Traditional media refer to conventional means of mass communication as practiced by various global communities and cultures from ancient times. As projected by Debashish Aikat in “Traditional and Modern Media”, folk media are some of the most vibrant representations of traditional media because they reflect communication channels for, by, and of the common people of a society or region. The Old Media or Traditional Media are traditional means of communication and expression that have existed since before the advent of the new medium of the Internet. Industries that are generally considered part of the old media and broadcast are cable television, radio, movie and music studios, newspapers, magazines, books and most print publications.

New Media refer to the mass communication characteristic of recent times, or the contemporary communication relating to a recently developed or advanced technology. Modern media are now being followed by postmodern media, which relate to mass communication that reacts against earlier modernist principles by reintroducing traditional or classical style elements or by carrying modernist styles or practices to extremes.

New media is source of on-demand access to content anytime, anywhere, on any digital device, as well as interactive user feedback, creative participation and community formation around the media content. Another aspect of new media is the real-time generation of new, unregulated content. Most technologies described as "new media" are digital, often having characteristics of being manipulated, networkable, dense, compressible, and interactive. Some examples may be the Internet, websites, computer multimedia, computer games, CD-ROMS, and DVDs. As per Bailey Socha and Barbara Eber-Schmid, New media does not include television programs, feature films, magazines, books, or paper-based publications – unless they contain technologies that enable digital interactivity.

New Media & Its Impact on mainstream Newspapers

With the emergence of the new media (internet), it can be argued that newspapers are becoming irrelevant in terms of providing the latest news. However, both the media have their respective importance.

The longevity of print media is much more than the electronic one. It is the written media, which has made history recordable and accurate. Print media is durable. With electronic media, anyone can copy any piece of information and present it as his own which is not permitted legally and leads to plagiarism. The information provided by a newspaper is usually more authentic and genuine but it is not in the case of electronic media. Electronic media depend mainly on electricity. In areas with frequent power cuts or in the rural areas, it is not a viable replacement for newspapers. Print media is easily accessible and widely read. Anyone can buy it since it is the cheapest and available even in the remotest areas.

In a country like India, subscribing to newspapers is cheaper than taking an Internet connection. Print media is local to the city or the region and carries information about the local events.

In the recent times, print media is also available in electronic forms, called as on line newspapers. Shortly, the print media is now available at global level using the Internet on which information came in the print media format.

Positive Effects of New Media

With the advent of new media, the latest news reaches the audience in a fraction of seconds. There is no barrier of distance as well. Exchange of information has become possible on the common platform that the new media provides. New media encourages people to participate and express their views. This encourages talent sharing and learning. New media have also opened a vast scope for children to learn while enjoying. There has been an increase in their reading habits and vocabulary. The attitude, approach and behavior of the common people could also change, when exposed to media. The media conduct polls and let the public take part in social issues. Through blogging on the Internet and writing letters to the editor in newspapers, many people express their views on different political and social matters.

Negative Effects of New Media

Bogus news is a common phenomenon in new media. Over sensationalization is another danger. Unverified news often creates a lot of sensationalism in the World Wide Web. Since speed takes over authenticity, very often there is no detailed and in depth research done before publishing/ airing the news items.

The Challenges Facing Newspapers

Some observers believe that the challenge faced by traditional media, especially newspapers, has to do with the perfect storm of the global economic crisis, shrinking readership and advertising revenue, and the inability of newspapers to monetize their online efforts. As per New York Times, April 2009, newspapers, especially in the West and the US in particular, have lost the lion's share of classified advertisement to the Internet.

In the USA the situation worsened when a depressed economy forced more readers to cancel their newspaper subscriptions, and business firms to cut their advertising budget as part of the overall cost-cutting measurements. As a result, closures of newspapers, bankruptcy, job cuts and salary cuts are widespread.

Despite all these developments, Indian newspapers still attract advertising revenue. The presence of online newspapers did not abolish the print newspaper. They are reinforcing each other. In fact, the presence of the Internet will not replace newspapers. The form of newspapers may change, but not the newspapers per se. The layout may change, but the contents will still be in the form of news. Even if there is a drop in circulation, it is perhaps due to the new generation avoiding the mainstream or Newspapers.

The decline in circulation of newspapers in India may also be attributed to issues of credibility as some think that the many mainstream newspapers are government- friendly and serve as the propaganda tools. There is, therefore, a credibility problem with regard to what is written in the mainstream media. The newspapers deserve some credit as they do a better job in covering stories on local issues, which are often ignored by the online publications.

Despite the Internet is becoming a major source of news and information in recent years, newspapers in India still remain as the main and important reading and informative document for the people to rely on. The Internet is still contending with privacy issues, content accuracy, reliability, and other related concerns and, according to some observers, all these predict trouble for online news in the future. For Indians, the Internet still has to improve its credibility. The results of a study comparing the credibility of the Internet and TV among Indians revealed that television is more credible than Internet to convey the news. Generally, as past research revealed, people are less likely to rely on the media they do not perceive as credible. Therefore, credibility is crucial for the Internet.

The number of people who go to cybercafés or have their own personal Internet access is still not large enough and therefore still requires their news from print newspapers. No doubt the numbers are increasing, but people still buy and read newspapers as they are among the cheapest reading materials in the market and do not require the expense of a personal computer. Newspapers and the new media in India are complementing each other. At present quite a number of Indian newspapers have an online presence. The Times of India online and The Hindustan Times are marked examples. Both versions of online newspapers are free and thus increasing their penetration.

Change has not only swept through the political landscape but also the media environment. Some observers think that Newspapers practitioners should do some serious soul-searching and accurately feel the pulse of the nation in order to stay relevant. The credibility that the new media gained is not something, which is guaranteed to continue without any efforts, mostly Indians favor TV as compared to the Internet when it comes to issues of credibility. Perhaps among the reasons why new media appear credible are the perceptions that the traditional mainstream media in India are government controlled, coupled with the fact that the opposition found an avenue in the new media to air their grievances and reach their supporters.

India is increasingly living in an era of media convergence, distinctions between traditional mainstream mass media and the new media such as the Internet are getting more and more blurred. Despite these distinctions, there are still complementarities between the new media and traditional media. They will continue to coexist and reinforce each other particularly in India and other developing countries.

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