

The Impact of Digital Media on Current Newspaper Scenario in A Developing Country

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Abstract - *The main objective of the study is to understand the changing trends in the newspaper industry and the reasons behind those changing trends. With the advent of digital media, the newspaper industry is facing serious threat. A smartphone has become much more accessible to us than newspaper, and the availability of news for free on the internet at the user's disposal based on their interests has increased the popularity of digital media among the people. In this study, we discuss the Indian newspaper industry and the birth and growth of digital media in India. We review literature to understand the impact of digital media and we analyse the response received from the survey to understand the human behaviour while consuming news. We conclude by taking in some discussion points shared by the respondents.*

Key Words: Digital Media, Newspaper, Impact of Digital Media, Journalism

1. INTRODUCTION

Newspapers have always been an important source of information about the latest happenings in and around the defined geographical area. Ever since the first newspaper 'Relation' was printed in Germany in 1605, the newspaper industry has been facing many transformations. The emergence of 'Digital Media' in around 1990s - 2000s has paved way for significant changes in the way news is consumed every moment thus changing the core of journalism - both in good and bad ways.

Digital Media has made it possible for consumers (readers) to assume a participating role by creating and disseminating information and news in real time. The content distribution, in turn, has gained many new possibilities with the widespread of media such as the Internet and cellphones. This has migrated the control over what is consumed and when it is consumed from the hands of the editors of newspapers to the consumers.

While readers make one side of the consumers for newspapers, it is evident that the major chunk of the income comes from advertisers [1]. And with the emergence and evolution of digital media, advertisers are finding it more trending, fast moving, and affordable compared to the advertising costs of a newspaper. The digital era has pushed the press towards an abyss: will printed newspapers disappear because the production process is too slow and costly? In an era of huge increase

in news and immediate consumption, the continuity of the newspaper in its physical format has been put into doubt.

Having survived the advent of radio and television, we are witnessing newspaper publications trying their best to evolve and mould themselves into the current scenario. However, the consumer's ability to choose information personalized to their interests on the internet makes the role of a reader much more active. The evolution of digital media is a considerably important factor in the history of newspapers and thus measuring the impact of the same on the newspaper industry is of utmost importance.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

- To understand the importance of digital media channels in the current newspaper scenario.
- To analyze how digital media helps in connecting with the readers of the newspaper in this present situation.
- To understand the changing trends in the newspaper industry.
- To identify reasons behind the changing trends in today's newspaper industry.

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

It is important to note that anyone can become a publisher in this age of digital media. Kevin Kawamoto explains in his book 'Digital Journalism: Emerging Media and the Changing Horizons of Journalism' that the term Digital Journalism is a juxtaposition of old and new concepts. He further narrows it down that Digital Journalism is the usage of digital technologies to research, produce and deliver news and information to an increasing computer-literate audience [2].

In an article titled 'Digital Media and The Art of Engagement' published on Wired.com, authors Tien Tzuo & Katie Vannek-Smith have expressed that digital media do not just help in disseminating the news but also in maintaining a strong relationship with the readers continually while offering them unique opportunities to engage. They have also explained that the digital media is exciting with its ability to create an entirely new advertising model to not just economically support, but to enhance the overall experience [3].

In 2013, V. Siva Raja, the then VP of Projects and Engineering for HT Media, explained in his article ‘Changing Trends in Newspaper Supply Chain’ that e-newspapers today occupy an important place in the newspaper industry, and they help in delivering information instantaneously while reducing timelines and distribution costs and innovating on products and processes. According to him, the emerging digital media like the internet and the mobile are two-way devices with active communication [4].

In her book ‘New Media, Old News: Journalism and Democracy in the Digital Age’, Natalie Fenton explores how digital media has reconfigured traditional journalism. The sheer space available online is said to open up new possibilities for news presentation that cannot be found in hard copy form. The author further explains in her book that the ability to update regularly is vastly enhanced in digital media and the multimedia format of digital media allows news to be presented in innovative and interesting ways [5].

In 2008, Hurtmut Walravens explained in his book ‘The Impact of Digital Technology on Contemporary and Historic Newspapers’ how e-newspaper is a huge improvement over the printed ones. With the spread of the internet, people are now having access to news from every nook and corner of the world [6]. This does not hold good just for e-newspapers but also for social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Reddit. Jayson DeMers has explained in his article titled ‘How Social Media is Supporting a Fundamental Shift in Journalism’, published on Huffington Post, that social media networking sites are making facilities for users to document the news as it happens in real time and reach a huge number of people. He also debates in his article that we might soon witness the extinction of print media corporations. While it is a wise decision for traditional media corporations to expand into the digital horizons, the author believes it is clearly evident that many users feel that the traditional media outlets in the digital space are ‘too slow’ [7].

In his paper called ‘Cozy Journalism’, the author Steen Steensen writes, “In our digital age, anyone can do what journalists traditionally have done”. He further explains that the broadcast media gave rise to immediacy compared to the traditional printed press, and now the internet has prompted the need to broadcast news 24x7 and boosted the importance of immediacy [8].

Authors Alex Newson, Deryck Houghton and Justin Patten have explained in their book ‘Blogging and Other Social Media: Exploiting the Technology and Protecting the Enterprise’ that blogs are important when it comes to social media, and they have written in the book that the more familiar a business is with various types of social media, the better placed it will be to make the most of

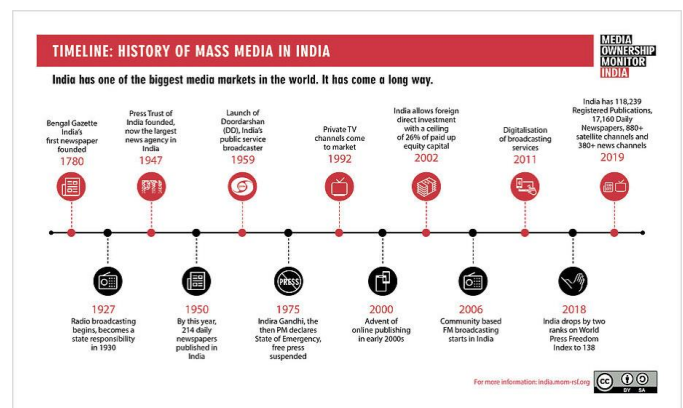
them [9]. Doug Dvorak, in his book ‘Build Your Own Brand’ explains social media as a new term that refers to media that allow for greater interactivity than the traditional forms. He also explains that blogs alone are not social media. Websites, newspapers, and magazines that become more interactive with the readers are also part of social media [10].

Stuart Allan has written in his book titled ‘Online News: Journalism and the Internet’ that the internet is viewed as an unfiltered, primary source of information and not to be distributed like the traditional news media [11].

4. THE INDIAN NEWSPAPER INDUSTRY

India is one of the biggest media markets in the world and it has come a long way since 1780. From the very beginning, the Indian press represented agitation against authorities; be it East India Company or the British Government. But the twenty first century journalism in India witnessed alliances with advertisers as well as government, slowly giving visibility to brands and becoming the country’s first line of communication.

The timeline of the Indian media started with James Augustus Hickey founding the Bengal Gazette, the country’s first newspaper in 1780. In 1927, the radio broadcasting was started in India and later, in 1947, the Press Trust of India was founded. India’s public service broadcaster Doordarshan was launched in 1959, many private TV channels came to the market by 1992, online publications were started during the early 2000s, and broadcasting services were digitalized in 2011.



[Fig. 1] Source: <https://india.mom-rsf.org/en/context/history/>

Over the last few decades, the print media in India has matured to its full capacity and is considered as a growing market in the country in terms of circulation, readership and sales. Print newspapers in India have also witnessed a significant surge in revenue [12]. As of 2019, India has around 118,239 registered publications, and among them 17,160 are daily newspapers [13]. The ever-changing newspaper market in India has witnessed the growth in circulation from 150 million in 2012 to 264 million in 2014, and this growth in circulation is attributed to the

increase in literacy rate of the country which directly led to the rise of the circulation of regional newspapers [14]. Localization of news is yet another factor which has contributed to the growth of regional newspapers in India, making newspapers a mass medium in the country and not a medium of the elite. [15].

5. THE EVOLUTION OF DIGITAL MEDIA IN INDIA

The boom of television and the advent of internet took the entire nation by storm between 1991 and 2006. Many news channels started rising in English and regional languages covering news 24x7, both at national and local level. The internet and the social media made news more accessible to every person. It had its effect on the newspaper industry as people became hungry for new media choices, thus forcing almost every news publication to have an accompanying news website.

Over the last decade, the newspaper industry has embraced the advent of digital media the way it did back in the 80s, 90s and early 2000s for TV and Radio. However, the digital media scenario is evolving swiftly thanks to many factors including the introduction of free 4G by telecom operators like Reliance Jio and rapid growth of smartphone sales. These have proven to have influenced the human behaviour when it comes to consuming news not just in Tier 1 cities, but also in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities and even in the rural parts of the country, thus making it more challenging than ever before for the traditional newspaper sector in the country. Surprisingly, the rural mobile internet users are very high compared to that of the urban areas in the country [16].

A combined study by ShareChat and Nielsen India on India's next billion internet users points out that nearly 73 percent of the internet users sign into social networking platforms every day, with videos being the most preferred content. India has around 325 million active YouTube users, 346 million active Facebook users, 400 million WhatsApp users, and on the other hand, there are around 110,851 registered newspapers and periodicals in the country, and yet their combined circulation is just over 240 million copies [17].

As people start embracing smartphone and consume news digitally even in the rural areas, it cannot be denied that the print sector has taken a hit in the country, even while projecting a solid growth trajectory. Going forward, the challenge for the Indian newspaper industry is to devise innovative engagement strategies and retain their audiences through digital platforms, while still generating revenue via advertising and subscriptions to help them continue the print editions.

6. PROBLEM FORMULATION

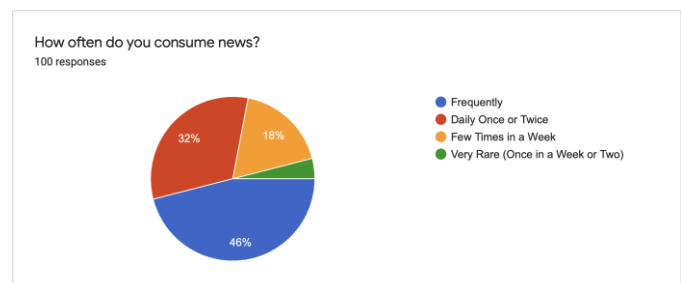
Newspaper industry significantly started growing since its early inception in the seventeenth century and ever since then, there have been considerable changes happening in the industry. The digital media started invading the newspaper industry during its emergence from the early 1990s with significant upgrades in the media making it possible for the people to connect and communicate easily throughout the world using the social media sites.

The problem arises with the question that, though newspaper have been embracing the evolution of digital media, how successful can a newspaper be with all these invasions of digital media taking place and would the printed form of newspaper really succeed in this current scenario with the intervening new media. We need to understand what type of impact the ever-changing digital media sector has on the newspapers in the present-day situation.

7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study, we have collected both primary and secondary data which have been studied carefully to arrive towards better research. Primary data is collected in the form of survey questionnaire where news consumers were asked multiple questions to understand the human behaviour when it comes to consuming news. Secondary data is collected from literature and other research papers and journals, and articles from industry experts.

A survey was devised on Google Forms to collect views and thoughts on a multitude of aspects regarding the human behavioural traits while consuming news. The questionnaire was shared with a total of 100 people of various age groups, professions, and from different cities in India.



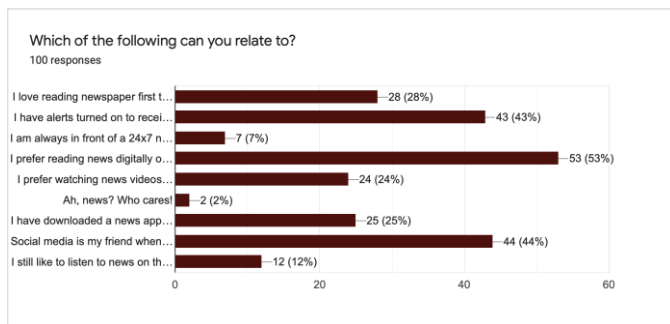
[Fig. 2]

It is observed that 46% of the respondents are frequent consumers of news [Fig. 2] while 32% consume news daily at least once or twice. Only 18% of the respondents consume it very few times in a week and 4% consume it very rarely.

While the responses give us an insight over how digital media has impacted the consumption of news, this study also examines the existing literature in the form of books, articles, reports, and previous studies, and offers an analysis of the impact of digital media on the current newspaper scenario in a developing country like India.

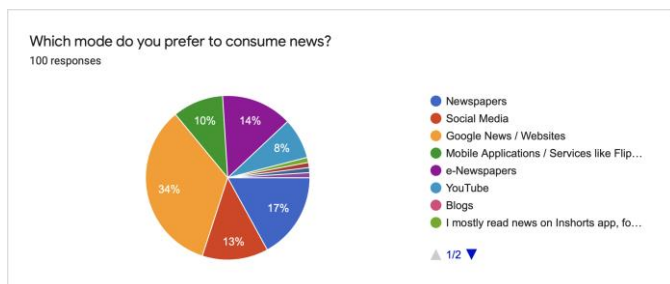
8. DIGITAL MEDIA VS PRINT MEDIA

It is clearly evident from the survey (Fig. 3) that more than half of the respondents prefer reading news digitally, especially when they are commuting to their office or school. The other major chunk of respondents mentioned that they consumed news on social media platforms and have turned on alerts to receive updates on topics that interest them.

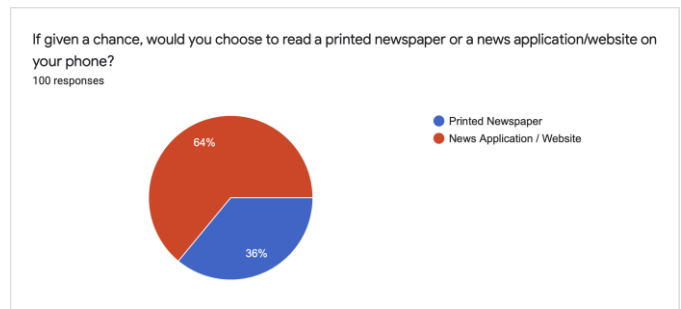


[Fig. 3]

We can understand from Fig. 4 that most of the respondents prefer Google News, websites, e-newspapers, social media, and mobile applications over newspapers to consume news. On the other hand, 64% of the respondents selected news application/website and the remaining 36% mentioned they would prefer the traditional printed newspaper. [Fig. 5]

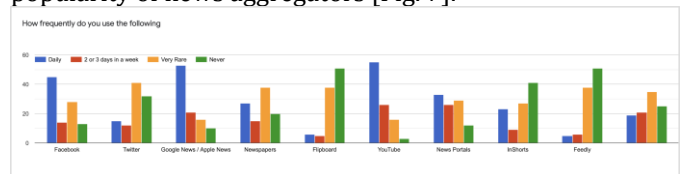


[Fig. 4]

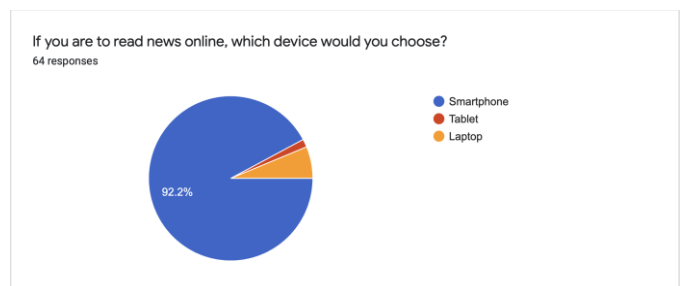


[Fig. 5]

A whopping 92% of the respondents selected 'smartphone' [Fig. 6] making it a clear winner among preferred devices to consume news online. It is also worth noting that more than 50% of the respondents use Google News and/or Apple News on a daily basis showcasing the popularity of news aggregators [Fig. 7].

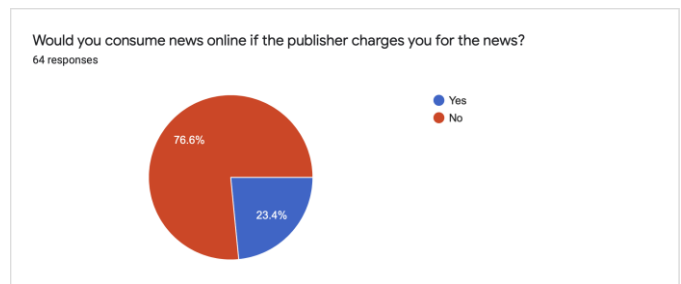


[Fig. 6]



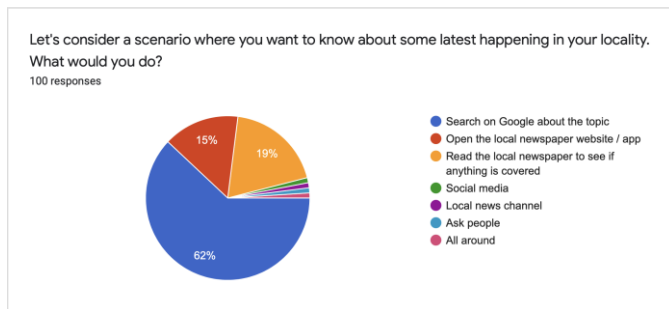
[Fig. 7]

Interestingly, nearly 3/4th of the respondents who favoured online news consumption on a day-to-day basis mentioned that they would be no longer consuming news online if the publisher starts charging for the news. This clearly shows that free delivery of news is one of the most important factors that accelerates online news consumption [Fig. 8].



[Fig. 8]

Lastly, 62% of the respondents selected Google Search as their preferred mode of gathering information about the latest happenings in their locality [Fig. 9].



[Fig. 9]

9. DISCUSSION

Summary based on the survey research is as follows:

- At present, digital media plays an important role to consume news. People tend to spend more time with digital devices as per their convenience.
- Digital Media allows users to select the type of news based on their preference, and these updates are just a tap away. Since life has become so busy today, people do not wish to spend time particularly to consume news. Digital media helps you to consume news anywhere and at anytime.
- Digital Media helps users to assess the facts rather than just listen to opinions, and also offers real-time information.
- One of the key factors that is influencing people to consume news digitally is that it is offered for free of cost by most of the portals unlike obtaining subscription to one newspaper! Nearly 77% of the respondents expressed that they would not be consuming news online if the publisher started charging money for the content.

10. CONCLUSIONS

Gone are those days when we had to wait for the 9:00 PM news program or to get a copy of the newspaper the next morning at 6:00 AM. While news channels do offer round the clock information, they do not provide the opportunity to consume news based on our preference and interest. And thus the digital media started growing in popularity, especially among the youth.

The digital media clearly has its impact on the current newspaper scenario. Though some people tend to still favour the print media, many are of the opinion that the digital media has become part and parcel of our lives along with the most favoured device, the smartphone. Unlike newspaper, people carry smartphones everywhere and continuously consume data. Ofcourse, it is worth noting that free access to news is also a key factor why digital media is becoming popular.

It is advisable for any news organization to surf the digital media trend by creating more possible interactions on the digital space without charging for the content, and by relying on their income through advertisements.

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BIOGRAPHY



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