

A REVIEW ON RELEVANCE OF NEWSPAPERS IN THE DIGITAL AGE: AN INDIAN CONTEXT

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Abstract

“Pen is mightier than sword”, the newspapers have kept the pride and glory of a pen intact over years. The newspapers pen or now the keyboard is used to communicate knowledge, information, education through broadsheet to the masses. But newspapers have been facing continuous competition earlier from radio and television. But still the newspaper industry has been shining in all glory for years till the digitalization of media. The new age media is fast paced and provides instant gratification of information needs of readers. A click of a button of your laptop and you get news, a scroll on news on the mobile keeps you tuned with news 24.7. This has led to truncated edifice of many print media houses in the west but Indian newspapers are still enjoying the safe haven. But the kingdom of newspapers will be preserved if they can channelize the needs and aspirations of the youth readers. Newspapers have been transforming innovating and rediscovering themselves time and again. The papers I have reviewed to throw light on how newspapers are still relevant in the present times are- Developmental news in two leading Indian newspapers by John V. Vilanilam, Trends in the first page priorities of Indian print media reporting – A content analysis of four English Language newspapers. Technological Advancement in the Written Press and New Reading Patterns: A Press Survival Perspective in Mauritius, The Impact of New Media on Traditional Media, Is Print Readers Declining? A Survey of Online Newspaper Readers.

This paper brings out how invincible position of newspapers as soul searchers of the government and the masses has been untouched for ages. Despite the advent of new age media with a roar taking over the market within years.

Keywords- Technology, Youth, Content, Reporting, Newspapers

1. Introduction

The newspapers are a proud institution of our society. It is a vehicle of persuasion its basic function is to provide information, education and entertainment. It can be defined as a printed means of conveying important, prominent and consequential and current information. It also plays the role of ‘*watch dog*’ of the society. This paper is a review of how newspapers are still relevant in the digital age.

2. The new approach towards reporting and coverage

The role of newspapers has changed a common wisdom will hold. The news is not just information dissemination but has broadened its horizons to analyzing news and looking for fresher perspectives of news. Newspapers are as wide as life itself. It is a proud institution which helps in opinion building of masses. Sometimes the news is bad thus silver lining to it is done showing heroes of acid attack, sometimes stories of courage, love and humanity of humans and even animals. The use of news on social media and the participation of public having a voice through social media adds to the convergence of media. Every man with a mobile is a videographer and every blogger is a columnist in his own right, thus the receivers and producers are now becoming one. This is a new reality and the “Gloom in the West and the Boom in the East” in the context of print media still continues. This opens flood gates of opportunities for an inquisitive researcher to study further.

Newspapers still stand tall as the fourth estate of democracy- legislature, parliament and judiciary. Newspapers are published as national, local and regional newspapers on a daily and weekly basis. It caters to interest of all. Futuristic approach broadens relevance of newspapers

This paper is an attempt to understand whether the youth of the nation as a potential new consumer of newspapers or a new untapped threat for the future of newspapers due to digitalization.

3. Literature review

Vilanilam John (1975) in his article Developmental news in two leading Indian newspaper has attempted to understand the development news content in the two leading newspapers. The first being The Times of India which is the largest circulated English newspaper and second is Malayalam Manorama the largest circulated Malayalam newspaper. The premise of the study is the more developmental news is given coverage the more the publication is working for national development. The role of press according to the paper is development of masses through improving standard of living and socio-political-economic education. In light of the Indian Press Commission aim that Press has the ultimate aim of creating a secure social order of equality. The fall of number of articles related to developmental reporting and no effort to promote social-economic progress through articles has been noted in the paper. But as newspapers are

considered to be guardians of people's development and mobility this paper reinstates the role of press. The credibility attached to written words and its impact on masses has been emphasized in the paper. But a qualitative analysis has not been done. It is also not a recent study which is a limitation in itself.

The Trends in the first page priorities of Indian print media reporting- A content analysis of four English Language newspaper brings to focus the Indian print industry death defying sustenance despite the challenge of frothing digital media. It has been dealt by top English newspapers by changing the face of first page *content and space allocation*. *This research paper delves deep into the sweeping changes in reporting policies, advertorial space and photo placement in the four English newspapers namely The Times of India, Hindustan Times, The Hindu and The Indian Express*. The paper seeks to review the commercialization of papers and find the credibility of newspapers as the fourth Estate. The research has cited numerous authors and has applied the strong and weak markets orientation theories of Randal Beam to Indian media.

At present, market driven corporate model of print media is in operation. Manus says 'this market driven journalism may lead to four social impacts: the consumers are likely to learn less from the news, consumers may be misled, news may become manipulative and viewers may become apathetic about politics. In the comparison of papers in context of number of advertorials -The Hindustan Times < The Hindu < The Indian Express< The Times of India is used.

The overall coverage of photos was highest for The Times of India. In reporting The Hindu had highest coverage of political news, The Indian Express stood next, followed by The Hindustan Times and The Times of India. The different beats of reporting are also covered. The investigative reporting of The Indian Express is highest and The Times of India ranks high in crime reporting.

The paper seems to have provenance and validity of methodology is testified by clearly stated sample sizes and various tables and analysis drawn. A framework of codes is made for each field of reporting offering a clear comparison of the type of news items covered. It has value and significance in the field due to comparative analysis of the number of photos and advertisements covered on the first page of each four leading newspapers makes it invaluable. The limitation of

the study is paucity of evidence – The commercial aspects of the newspapers and content change not explored keeping change in readers tastes and preferences. Accountability of newspapers as a pertinent research question remains unanswered. An undeniably comprehensive analytical work which opens flood gates of further research-

- a. *Specifically studying two newspapers for overall content changes*
- b. Accountability and responsibility of newspapers as the pillar of a democracy.
- c. *Investigative journalism as an untapped beat reporting*

The research underlines that India remains a safe haven for newspapers growth despite the digital onslaught. It brings out the firsts of the newspapers change revolution be it first coloured mast head to first advertisement of Rasna right in the middle of editorial space in Saturday times of TOI. *Newspapers as the guardian of democracy and the poor man's university has been researched by umpteen number of scholars but this paper's uniqueness lies in extensive research on four dailies make it a compelling read for an inquisitive researcher.* (Betchoo, Nirmal 2013) in his article Technological Advancement in the Written Press and New Reading Patterns: A Press Survival Perspective in Mauritius the changes in newspapers have become pronounced due to digitalization. This paper has a study of survival of press in Mauritius and touching upon changes in written press and readership. This paper traces new Mauritians passion for reading has moved towards a more technological savvy approach to glaring through news. The interesting study is how despite minor decline the newspapers are still afloat. The highlights of the paper are as follows-A comparative study of newspapers world over has been touched upon Western Europe, Japan, India which brings out reading habits downtrend for youngsters and higher access is shown to internet. Newspapers' failure to innovate and adapt according to the challenges posed by the entire media is a fact which can give my study a new perspective, "How in India newspapers are still relevant?" The overview of new reading pattern in Mauritian is done. The use of online by Mauritian papers. The style and format of news is changing to magazine style and online news being accepted as old traditional paper.

The recommendations offered by the paper to upgrade to tablet news like UK newspaper, Financial Times and The Economist which have paywalls for premium content news, bring to light how online journalism can be made to be lucrative as well. The survival of newspapers is a moot point given by thispaper. The paper seems to cover everything but detail canvas has not

been sketched for each change in Mauritius. The methodology seems to be ambiguous. The biggest take away from the paper is an understanding of the global response of newspapers to digitalization especially in Mauritius.

Rajendran & Thesinghraj (2014) in 'The Impact of New Media on Traditional Media' talks about the indelible impact of social media and online media that turned over a new leaf in the media industry. This paper studies the impact of online media in India. The print media especially in the US has been hit hard by digitalization. In the US, decline in average daily circulation is 7% in last and first quarter 2018 and 2019 respectively as per latest data from Audit Bureau of Circulation. The wave of new media has still left Indian print media scathe-free.

The paper highlights- The social and online news become an inherent part of modern society. The ample amount of information and news updated is the striking feature of new media. The one-way mass communication where the receivers become the transmitters and producers is seemingly an interesting observation.

The main aim of the study is examining the effect of the social media and other online news sources on traditional print media. A gradual decline in Times of India and The Hindu in 2010-2011 has been pointed out. *The paper uses an anecdote of a case of a Facebook user who was kept behind bars for questioning the rationale behind the complete 'shut down' over the death of Shiv Sena Supremo Bal Thackeray to show the growing impact of social media.*

The methodology used is through questionnaire and structured interviews on experts. The experts in the field of Print media are targeted and interviewed. The depiction through tables points out use of various media and reading patterns of newspapers, social media and online media. *The average members and their consumption of internet, Facebook, social media is depicted through a table. It shows that an average number of people who use Facebook accounts from overall average of the total population is 1.952.*

A very intriguing study shows the people's reaction to social media and reaction on Delhi rape case to show impact and reach of Facebook topping them all. The study reveals that newspapers are trustworthy but politically biased. A comprehensive paper which opens head way for further study and gives a lot of potential scope to understand the future challenges and threats of digitalization. The article 'Is Print Readers Declining? A Survey of Online Newspaper Readers'

(2016) is a research study on the newspaper's steady growth in India where print media is flourishing, unlike in the west due to new age online media. The online news media onslaught has decimated the edifice of big media houses in few western countries. The paper studies decline in print readership due to online media. The fast-paced life has given way to click of a button news availability and live reporting 24.7. In the U.S. and U.K. there has been a paradigm shift from the traditional news reading to the new age online newspaper reading where tablets and mobile phones have replaced the broadsheet to a great extent. But the silver lining in the cloud is Indian newspapers which are still holding their ground.

The paper conducted an online study on 3183 online newspapers of India. The study reveals that the majority of the readers are still reading the traditional broadsheet. These few pointers will make the selection of the paper clear

The highlights of the study are the means of data collection is simple and methodology used is clearly stated. Readership differences are pointed out, the unique selling proposition of the article is difference in male and female readers, young and old readers and income group wise differences in readership.

Take away from the paper are the differences in readership patterns. The paper has a striking quality of bringing out the differences in reading patterns. The age group wise reading pattern reveals that young readers are more drawn to online news reading. Around 86 percent of women readers of the 15-20 age group read both media, while in this age group men readers are 79 percent.

The flourishing media in India and decline in the west appears to be a reality as put forward by this paper as well.

Limitation and gap of study is identified from a possible unexplored issue of how readers of print media have still remained loyal to the medium despite the temptations of time saving easily accessible online news. The changes in the content of news is seemingly untouched. The research paper offers an overview to understand the readership of news among various age groups and underlines the fact that youth are the new consumers who need to be maintained or allured to keep the newspapers flourishing, offering scope for my topic of research as to understand how and what has changed content wise in the newspapers. The gap of how content

has evolved in recent years to keep readers interested and how young readers can be enticed is a good point to ponder on for research.

Vasundara Priya M.; B. K. Ravi (2016) in their paper ‘The Newspaper Timeline: A study of Newspapers Past & its Present’ unfold the history of newspapers from world over and overviewing its growth and changes. The paper uses a methodology of explorative study method where the content was analyzed to collect secondary data and also the recent trends of the same medium to understand its growth and development in the contemporary scenario. The highlights of the paper are:

The history of newspapers has been traced over the years. Right from China which produced news sheets called the “Tipao” which were circulated among during the Han Dynasty (202 B.C to A.D. 221). The oldest direct ancestors of modern papers circulated in Venice in 16th Century has been mentioned. The Indian and Chinese print media is progressing as compared to rest of the world. Research groups like FICCI, KPMG, IRS, NRS, WAN-IFRA all state that South Asian regions have better future as compared to global media market. This adds to the believe that Indian newspapers have the potential to head forward with a firm footing.

4. Limitations and future research scope

“The unresolved issues give way to future solution for the same”, each research paper and each source have its own relevance to support and give further ideas of deliberation. The reason for the survival of print media and its growth has not been sufficiently answered by even the most recent studies. The extensive study of allocation of space to hard news, soft news and photos advertorials has to be covered in detail. The paper, “Trends in first page priorities of Indian Media reporting: a content analysis of four English Language newspapers”, 2010 has done study on newspapers but it covers the changes only for 30 days and also just the front page does not reflect the entire paper. The ways and means employed or not yet fully employed to engage the young readers has been touched upon by many research papers but not elucidated by any paper. The papers which mention youth as a potential challenge to the success streak of newspaper are - Is Print Readers Declining? -A Survey of Online Newspaper Reader, Betchoo Nirmal Kumar. (2013).

Technological advancement in the Written Press and News Reading Patterns: A Press Survival Perspective in Mauritius

5. A way forward- A new perspective

“Credibility, accuracy, objectivity”, are still the pillars on which newspapers stand tall despite the foray of digitalization. Newspapers have evolved from the first page changes to changing the number of editions with papers. Photos, advertorials and crispy writing style along with e-papers and online portals, newspapers have been pacing up with times. Print media has survived the onslaught of digitalization in India. (as stated in *Is Print Readers Declining? The Impact of New Media on Traditional Media, Developmental news in two leading Indian newspapers et al*). Young generation needs to be addressed before they pose a threat to the sustenance of newspapers. In Asian nations newspapers are still going strong- (*Is Print Readers Declining? The Impact of Digital media on newspapers, Comparing responses in China and United States*). Newer beats of reporting can be explored like Developmental reporting, investigative reporting and various beat reporting can be covered through qualitative and quantitative analysis (Vilani John, 1975).

6. Conclusion

It can be concluded that despite the transparent, engaging and interactive new media’s enticing cocktail, print media still hails forward flourishing and prospering. The data of 2018-2019 available shows the circulation rise in the circulation of newspapers.

Steady Growth

As many as 3.24 lakh people across 29 States were surveyed from November 2018 to April 2019

Table shows total readership of top English dailies in one month

Publication	IRS 2019 Q1	% rise (2017-19)	
The Times Of India	15,236	16.8%	Data for Hindustan Times not reported pending review
The Hindu	6,226	17.47%	
The Economic Times	3,701	19.27%	
Mumbai Mirror	2,165	19.42%	
The Indian Express	1,855	16.01%	

The invincible position of newspapers as soul searchers of the government and the masses has been untouched for ages. Till the advent of new age media with a roar taking over the market within years.

But still the newspaper stands their ground as is evident through recent reports and circulation data available. The print media has a long way to go if they find newer ways to engage youth as a reader and get more technologically ungraded and attuned to new generation's needs.

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