



A STUDY OF BRANDING AND MARKETING OF HINDI NEWSPAPERS IN INDIA

Dr. Anurag Dave

Associate Professor, Department of Journalism & Mass Communication, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh) – 221005, India.

ABSTRACT

There was a time when newspaper publishing was considered as a mission. But in present era newspapers are run by the big corporates and for them newspapers are a product. At the same time competition in media industry become more intensify because technology has increased the number of content providers and made it possible for many more competitors to seek the attention and loyalty of audiences and advertisers. Therefore branding and marketing getting prominence in media industry in general and newspaper industry in particular. The present study analyzing the branding and marketing strategies of Hindi newspapers houses in India. Study is based on the analysis of three Hindi newspapers i.e. *Dainik Jagran*, *Dainik Bhaskar*, and *Rajasthan Patrika*. Study found that brands and marketing are crucial in separating Hindi newspaper companies and their products from those of competitors, in creating continuity of quality and in helping develop strong bonds with consumers.

Key words: Hindi Newspapers, Pullouts, Dainik Jagran, Dainik Bhaskar, Rajasthan Patrika, CSR Activities, Segmentation, Supplements.

A. INTRODUCTION

While print dailies are struggling in much of the world, here in India they are booming and flourishing. Newspaper revenue in India is growing at a compound annual growth rate of 8.5% in last five years. According to KPMG, an international consultancy, this is the rate that will be maintained for the next five years as well. The print share in the overall revenue pie is still remain higher than other forms of media, despite having declined from 49% in 2008 to 42% in 2014.

The newspaper industry in India is fragmented. It can be divided into three major categories: (i) English newspapers; (ii) Hindi newspapers; and (iii) Other regional language newspapers. About 90% of Indian print readers in India consume content in Hindi and regional language. According to the Registrar Newspaper of India (RNI) as per 31st March 2014, the total number of registered publication in India stood 99,660. Out of these total registered print publications in India, over 40% are in Hindi and nearly 47% vernacular. In last two decades the landscape of Hindi newspaper industry has been changing dramatically. This become quickly evident on looking at the list of most widely read dailies; among the top ten newspapers five comes from Hindi. Two decades ago Hindi newspaper market was broken down into regional strong holds with each region having its own leader. An important characteristic of Hindi newspapers was that they were owner driven business. In the words of some journalists, Hindi newspapers were running by '*Setha*' or '*Lala*' (traders). Currently, Hindi newspapers are transforming themselves from a small scale locally operated business to a corporate venture.

The corporatization of newspapers houses has changed the business model of newspapers publishing in India. Now newspapers are turned as 'Product' and readers have become 'Consumers'. In this changing scenario marketing has become an important tool for selling newspapers. Another reason for growing emphasis on marketing is that media landscape in India is becoming more and more competitive in last few years. All form of media, traditional (print, television, radio, etc.) as well as new (internet, mobile, gaming, etc.), are growing and booming in India. Therefore, battle for eyeballs and mind-space of audience in media industry becoming more intense. Revenue from advertisement is also directly related to the number of audience one has. The present study is an attempt to analyze the marketing and branding strategies of Hindi newspapers for targeting audience in fragmented and competitive market place.

B. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study is basically a descriptive qualitative research in nature. Multiple Case methods has been used for the analysis. For that three Hindi newspaper houses were selected, i.e. *Dainik Jagran*, *Dainik Bhaskar* and *Rajasthan Patrika*. Study is based on secondary data

sources. The sources of these secondary data are the relevant official documents of these newspapers, the published articles of different research works, official website of the selected Hindi newspaper houses, published online and offline interviews of the newspaper owners/ management persons, industrial surveys, investor's relation sites of the companies and annual reports, etc.

C. FINDINGS

C.1 Pre-Launch Survey and Study of Consumer Preferences

Traditional approach for launch of a newspaper was to produce a good paper and wait for readers to subscribe. This approach was challenged by the *Dainik Bhaskar* in 1996. The newspaper decided to expand outside MP, and identified Jaipur, the capital city of Rajasthan, as the market with the highest potential. Before launching his newspaper *Dainik Bhaskar* did an exhaustive survey of 200,000 potential newspaper buying households in Jaipur. Instead of outsourcing the task of surveying households, it set up an in-house team of 700 surveyors. The team was highly trained in customer engagement, and was trained by experts in body language, grooming, posture, approach methods, social norms and rules etc. Based on survey feedback, the newspaper was designed. Subsequently they went back to each of the households surveyed, to show them a prototype of the newspaper and gave them the option to sign for an advance subscription. The customers were offered a subscription price of Rs. 1.50 (as against the newsstand price of Rs. 2) and a refund in case of dissatisfaction. When *Dainik Bhaskar*'s first launch outside MP happened in Jaipur on 19 December 1996, it entered the market as No. 1 newspaper with 172,347 copies. *Rajasthan Patrika*, the former No. 1, had a circulation of just 100,000 copies at that time. After the successful entry of *Bhaskar* in Rajasthan the strategy of pre-launch survey become common phenomena for all the Hindi newspapers. The Hindi newspapers are now investing in brand building activities and in promotion of their corporate identity. Since consumer is in the centre of brand-building activities, therefore, they continuously study the consumers (readers) preferences. For instance, when *Bhaskar* entered into Chandigarh market, the pre launch customer survey showed that readers in Chandigarh preferred a newspaper in Hinglish (the spoken language, a mixture of Hindi and English) to pure Hindi. *Bhaskar* had adopted that mixture of language in its newspaper to meet the demand of the audiences. Similarly *Rajasthan Patrika* also conducted a survey in Bhopal, touching more than 10,000 households before launching their newspaper. The major objectives included charting out readers' preference, expectations, locate dissatisfaction areas and create brand awareness. When asked, what kind of newspaper they wish to have for their city, more than 90% of respondents opted for 20-22 paged newspapers at Rs.1.50. This intensive survey proved to be a major guiding tool for the launch. Similarly in a study, *Jagran* found that the font size of the newspaper is not convenient for the readers of

60+ ages, it increased the font size by 33%. When Jagran entered into the Haryana market first they decided to publish newspaper in Chandigarh and distribute it in different parts of Haryana. But during survey Jagran found that people of Haryana are not in favour of a newspaper not publishing from their land and coming from outside. Therefore, Jagran had changed its policy and decided to setup press in Panipat and Hisar.

C.2 Price War and Free Gifts

To woo the readers Hindi newspapers are engaged in price war. Reducing price becomes a common marketing strategy of Hindi newspapers. Competition for circulation and readership often resulted in reduction of cover price of the newspaper. Entries into newer geographies reduced cover prices drastically in some cases. When *Dainik Bhaskar* entered Ranchi, Hindustan, *Dainik Jagran* and Prabhat Khabar reduced their cover price to Rs. 2 from Rs. 3 and 4. Before the entry of *Dainik Bhaskar* and *Dainik Jagran* in Haryana market the price of Punjab Kesari was Rs. 3 but both new newspapers entered into the market with a half price Rs. 1.5. As per CMC report the average cover price of a daily in 1983 was Rs. 0.55. 20 years later average price of a daily has hardly increased four times. In 2008 it was around Rs. 2, despite the number of pages increased significantly.

Moreover, the Hindi newspapers are also enticing consumers by offering schemes and gifts. *Dainik Jagran* offered several schemes in his footprint area like "Jagran Aya, Uphar Laya", "Khelo Jagran Tambola", "Jagran Dhamaka", etc. Likewise, *Dainik Bhaskar* started several new schemes for his footprint area – "Jeeto Panch Crore", "Har Mahiney Malamal", "Kiske Honge Sapane Sakar", "Ek Kilo Sona - Ek Kilo Chnadi", etc. Rajasthan Partika is also not far behind in launching several schemes for its readers like "Scratch and Win", "Utsav Uphaar Yojna", "Mansoon Dhamaka", etc. are some of the examples.

C.3 Involving Readers in Designing Newspaper

The Hindi newspapers have increased the level of involvement of consumers in the product. The customer relationship management in the Hindi newspapers has changed their role from just passive disseminators to active engagers. Again, the *Dainik Bhaskar* did a four month qualitative research and found that the information needs of the women fall into two categories: (i) social identity needs like staying updated, creating an identity, being economically independent, and projecting a modern image; and (ii) personal fulfilment of the needs like personality development, being a home maker, life style needs and caring for the family. The outcome of this research was *Women Bhaskar*, 1-2 pages provided with mainline *Dainik Bhaskar* from Monday to Saturday. *Women Bhaskar* primarily target women of age group of 24-25 years SEC A and SEC B of tier-II town in *Bhaskar* footprint area. Beside this, *Bhaskar* has a supplement on women issues published every Wednesday named *Madhurima* for all the editions. Further, to encourage the women readers towards the brand, *Bhaskar* began *Woman of the Year Award*. In this award *Bhaskar* divided every state (in his footprint area) into zones and from every zone, women were selected for the *Year of the Women Award* in four categories: social and cultural achievements; family ideal; professional excellence; and social service. The winners at zonal level in all the categories were decided through public SMS. Among the winners of the zonal level, *State Bhaskar Woman of the Year* was decided by a grand jury. Recently *Bhaskar* initiated a club, *Madurima Diamond Club*, for women in these cities.

This exercise of *Bhaskar* achieved several goals for newspaper. First this helped them to build an image of *Dainik Bhaskar* among the women, second the group earned some money through its SMS service, third it made a ground to promote standalone magazine for women (*Bhaskar* started a magazine for women *Madhurima* in Hindi and *She* in English for tier-II cities in Hindi market) and fourth it created a data base of women in the footprint area of *Bhaskar* and that could be used for taking advertiser on board, targeting women in this area.

C.4 Local Pull-outs and Supplements

The Hindi newspapers now believe in creating a newspaper that is "by the people, for the people and of the people", which means they strive for their newspapers to address the specific needs and interest of their consumer base so that they feel an affinity with the newspaper. The Hindi newspapers provide variety of content in their paper in the form of supplements and add-ons. These supplements are carefully

designed with twin objectives: first to create multiple touch points in a family and cater to the diverse interests, needs and aspirations of the readers in a household; and second from advertisers point of view, supplements offers a focused reach to a target audience. *Dainik Bhaskar* is publishing supplements like *Madhurima* (Women's issues), *Rasrang* (Entertainment), *Bal Bhaskar* (Children's entertainment), *Navarang* (Bollywood and Entertainment), *Sunday life Style* (Life Style and Fashion) and *Subrang* (Mixed). *Dainik Jagran* publishing these supplements- *Tarnag* (Film Entertainment), *Josh* (Education and Career), *Yatra* (Travel), *Jhankar* (Life Style), *Sangini* (Women) and *Junior Jagran* (Teenagers). Supplements of *Rajasthan Patrika* are *Parivar* (Life Style), *Bollywood* (Film and Entertainment), *Chhotu-Motu* (Children's entertainment) and *Ravivariya* (Literary and Leisure Time). Some Hindi newspapers are having publications of city specific supplements for example *City Bhaskar* Jaipur by *Dainik Bhaskar* and *Just Jaipur* by *Rajasthan Patrika*. These supplement target SEC A and B of the urban class of mini metros. The content of these city-supplements generally carry the events and celebrities of the city, fashion, health and fitness mantras, personality improvement tips, etc.

C.5 Readers' Connectivity Programmes

To build a brand community, the Hindi newspapers are running several readers' connectivity programmes in a city, like organizing eye camps, blood donation camp, computer training for old age people, organising fairs, conducting contest, etc. From these activities the consumers (readers) identify with the products (newspapers) and those that grow loyalty. They are also organizing civic campaigns and reporting about them. Like *Bhaskar* has organised local interactivity programme in different cities of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. Locality-wise public meetings are arranged with the civic authority and public utility departments to find out the remedies of community issues such as electricity, safe drinking water, sanitation, road conditions, health, education, etc. Similarly *Rajasthan Patrika* organises *Jan Sunwai* in Rajasthan, to raise the questions of public amenities and governance. The *Patrika* has also appointed an ombudsman in the newspaper as *Readers' Editor* to find out the feedback, complaints and views of the readers on content and the organization. To improve civic life, *Jagran* has put up action boxes in various residential colonies where people can drop in their complaints and suggestions. The *Dainik Jagran* takes up the issues editorially, gives a platform to the peoples' voices, and gets the relevant authorities to take its note.

C.6 Discharging Corporate Social Responsibility

As a corporate citizen, the Hindi newspapers are also discharging several responsibilities. This is promoting their corporate identity. Organising seminars or workshops to voice different social issues and creating awareness on the social concerns are some of the ways. For instance, *Rajasthan Patrika* is running a movement to clean up and rejuvenate water harvesting system in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. The *Dainik Bhaskar* in similar line launched the *Jal Satyagrah* initiative to conserve clean drinking water. Further, under this initiative, *Bhaskar* launched *Tilak Holi* during Holi festival, urging citizens to celebrate with dry colours in order to save water. In 2011-2012 *Dainik Jagran* ran an awareness campaign on Gestational Diabetes and its Management. All the Hindi newspaper houses have established separate division to discharge their Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSR) at a large scale. *Jagran Pehal*, *Bhaskar Foundation* and *Jan Mangal Trust* are the social initiatives of *Jagran Group*, *Bhaskar Group* and *Patrika Group* respectively. The CSR helps newspapers to expand their reach and brand in the market. For example, through *Jan Mangal Trust*, *Patrika* initiated Kargil fund for the family of soldiers who died in Indo-Pak Kargil conflict. Readers of *Rajasthan Patrika* entrusted on the company and donation of Rs 30 million were raised and distributed. This three-month campaign increased circulation of *Rajasthan Patrika* by 30 thousand copies in Rajasthan.

C.7 Industry Level Initiatives

At industry level, they are taking several initiatives to raise the standard of the profession. *Bhaskar* organises *Kritikar*, *Bhaskar Creative Awards* to promote and encourage regional creative excellence of advertising agencies. *Rajasthan Patrika* organises *Concern Communicator* Award for press advertisement on social issues and *Karpoor Chand Kulish* Award for free and fair journalism. *Dainik Jagran* organises *Dainik Jagran Summit*, a think tank leadership conclave. These initiatives established the power of brand in industry.

D. DISCUSSION

The Hindi newspapers in 21st century are transforming themselves from locally operated traders to a corporate entity. Corporatization, liberal business environment and technological advancement are helping Hindi newspapers to expand their business. The Hindi newspapers are entering into new geographies other than their strong holds to increase footprints across the Hindi belt. The expansion of key players made the Hindi newspaper industry intensely competitive. The growing competition is leading the Hindi newspapers to apply marketing strategies and develop themselves as a brand. Branding is essential to occupy the mindspace of the readers, advertisers, stakeholders and industry fraternity. In future marketing and branding strategies will become more prominent for the Hindi newspapers as the industry will move towards consolidation.

E. REFERENCES

1. Ernst & Young (2011), *Spotlight on India's entertainment economy: Seizing new growth Opportunities*.
2. FIICI-KPMG (FIICI FRAMES, 2015) *Shootingforthestar*, The Indian Entertainment and Media Industry Report.
3. Kohali- Khandekar, Vanita (2006), *The India Media Business*, 2nd Edition, Response Book, New Delhi.
4. Kohli, Khandekar, Vanita (2008), *The Future of News*, Brand Reporter, 1-15 July.
5. Ninen, Sevanti (2007), *Headlines from the Heartland*, Sage Publication, New Delhi.
6. Press Council of India (March, 2001), *Future of Print Media A Report*, New Delhi
7. Price Warehouse Report (2009) *Moving into Multiple Business Models: Outlook for Newspaper Publishing in Digital Age*.
8. Registrar Newspaper of India (2014), *Press In India*, Publication Division, New Delhi.