



A STUDY OF NATURE AND PROCESS OF MEDIA CONVERGENCE IN THE HINDI NEWSPAPER INDUSTRY IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

India is one of the few newspaper markets in the world that is showing a climbing graph, especially due to rapid growth of the Hindi newspapers. But the attention and time spent by the consumers is splitting among the various media options available to them to obtain information and entertainment. The revenue from the advertisement is directly related to the numbers of audience one has. Therefore, the Hindi newspaper houses are strengthening their presence across media channels. At the same time the Hindi newspapers are involved in the process of convergence that is enabling them to target their audience with specific content through multiple channels. On other side they are providing different options and choices to the advertisers to reach their target customers in the best manner. The research has found that the convergence model that one encountered generally are different from the convergence model that has emerged in the Hindi newspapers.

Key words: Hindi Newspapers, Convergence, Cross-ownership, Multiple-editions, Multiple-publications, Multiple- channels.

A. Introduction

Newspapers are the oldest and most important medium of modern mass communication. But the traditional newspaper publishing landscape has changed in the past two decades. Technological and demographic development, deregulations, and convergence of different information and communication markets have left an important mark on the configuration of the traditional newspaper publishing industry. Newspaper industry is facing a tough competition from traditional (Radio, TV and Film) as well as emergence of new mediums (Internet, Mobile, Gaming, etc.). Now endless choices are available to the audience to obtain information and entertainment at a relatively fast pace and in more real time than newspapers. Digitalization of content and convergence blurred the boundaries of geographical as well as traditional medium based markets. Newspaper companies will have to find their way in the information and communication landscape. This information and communication landscape is a playing field larger than the traditional newspaper publishing field. These new developments are not just posing threats to the newspaper publishing industry, but also creating new opportunities for newspaper publishing companies to engage in profitable new ventures and businesses. To cope up with the challenges and avail the opportunities posed by the changing scenario of media space, the management teams of newspaper companies have to be more proactive and strategic in their approach. The purpose of this paper is to study how the Hindi newspaper industry in India responds to the challenges arising from technological change and socio-economic transformation. For the newspaper industry, media convergence represents enormous possibilities but also challenges to utilize new platforms and contents to serve new consumer needs. In this paper, we examine industry responses to the challenges of media convergence by looking at selected Hindi daily newspapers and their strategic choices. More specifically, study look at the business models, the ways in which value is being created and delivered, and the strategic planning.

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. Media Convergence and Hindi Newspapers

In a broad sense, media convergence refers to the general trend where the boundaries between previously separate sectors of media, telecommunications and information technology have become increasingly blurred and different sectors of the media industry have become more interconnected. This convergence is particularly promoted by the Internet and the digitalisation of all media content, but its implications can be discussed on several levels, including technologies, industry structure and strategies, media ownership, media contents, journalistic practices and media education (Gordon, Rich). For newspapers, convergence has created possibilities to create content that combines different multimedia elements (text, photographs, audio, video, graphics, social networks, etc.) and to distribute these products across different media platforms. Many of these new forms of media production also challenge the traditional conceptions of one-way communication and create new modes of audience engagement and participation.

But convergence is not an end-result and just a technological phenomenon, it is a process. The process can be strategically planned. It is influenced by the development of technology, changing consumer preferences or trends in society and market forces. The perception and background of the people making decisions in media organization also play a key role. Therefore, no media group around the world produce the same form of convergence and in that line a range of business models are available (Anurag June 2011). Hence, when analyzing media convergence in various countries societal factors as the structure of the newspaper industry have to be noted.

India is, for example one of the few countries in the world where newspaper circulation is growing, especially the circulation of the Hindi newspapers. In contrast to the West where the picture of newspaper industry is gloomy, newspapers in India are showing a climbing growth. Faster economic growth, growing literacy rate, low internet penetration, low print penetration, growth of small towns, growing purchasing power of Indian middle class, increasing advertisement expenditure as percentage of GDP are some of the factors that are helping newspaper industry in India to grow.

The growth of newspaper market in India is basically due to growth and expansion of the Hindi newspapers. The growth rate of the Hindi print market for the year 2012-13 was 10.5 percent (FICCI and KPMG, 2014). The Hindi print market has seen both advertisement and circulation revenues grow. This growth is leading the Hindi newspapers houses to break their geographical barriers, diversify into market beyond their strongholds and increase their footprints across the Hindi belt. They are also widening their product portfolio by taking

new initiatives both in print and as well as in alternative media platforms. Some Hindi newspapers focus on long term value creation by venturing into other segments from being mere print media players. The studied three Hindi newspaper houses (*Dainik Jagaran, Dainik*

Bhaskar and Rajasthan Patrika) are basically in the business of Hindi newspaper publishing but also transforming into multimedia house. The following table shows the wide spectrum of media product offerings of these newspaper houses (Anurag August, 2012).

Table: 1
Cross-media presence of Hindi newspaper Houses¹

Newspaper House (Mother Brand)	Other Newspapers	Magazine (Segment)	TV	Radio	Internet & Mobile	OOH	Event & BTL	Others
Dainik Bhaskar (37 Edition)	Divya Bhaskar (Gujarati Daily) Divya Bhaskar (Marathi Daily) Business Bhaskar (Hindi Business Daily) DNA (English Daily) DB Star (Tabloid)	Aha Jindgi (life style), She (women), Bal Bhaskar (kids), Lakshya (teenagers)	BTV (Part Owner) Cable Network	MY FM	IMCL www.bhaskar.com www.indiainfo.com www.myfm.com 54567	I Media Corp. Limited	DB Activation	3D Syndication, Publication
Dainik Jagran (37 Edition)	i-Next (Tabloid) Cityplus (Infotainment Weekly) NaiDuniya (Hindi Daily) Midday (Afternoon Daily) Inquilab (Urdu) Midday (Gujrati) Dainik Jagran (Punjabi)	Sakhi (women), Josh (teenagers), Junior Jagran (Kids)	IBN- 7 (Part Owner)	Radio Mantra	www.jagran.yahoo.in J9 www.khojle.com 57272	Jagran Engage	Jagran Solutions	Research & Publication, Education, School of Management & Mass Communication
Rajasthan Patrika and Partika (36 Editions)	News Today (Evening Daily) Daily News (Compact)	Balhans, Chhotu-Motu (kids and children)	Sky TV, Channel - 24 Cable Network	Radio Tadaka	Patrika Online www.patrka.com www.rajasthanpatrka.com Patrika Mobile 56969	Planet Outdoor	Media Max, Patrika Events	Yellow Pages, Research & Publication, School of Management & Communication

¹ Source: Dave, Anurag, Moving Towards Multiple Media Business: A Study of Hindi Newspaper Houses in India, Prabandh & Tanqniki, Management Research Journal, LNCT-MER, Indore , p.418

In one way the cross-media expansion of media farms looks like divergence but another perspective is that it is a process towards more efficient management of the media value chain and therefore, it is convergence. In fact, divergence and convergence are like the two sides of a coin.

C.2 CONVERGENCE MODEL OF HINDI NEWSPAPERS

The convergence models that one encounters generally are different from the convergence model that has emerged in the Hindi newspaper.

The convergence model for the Hindi newspapers can be present through the following digram-

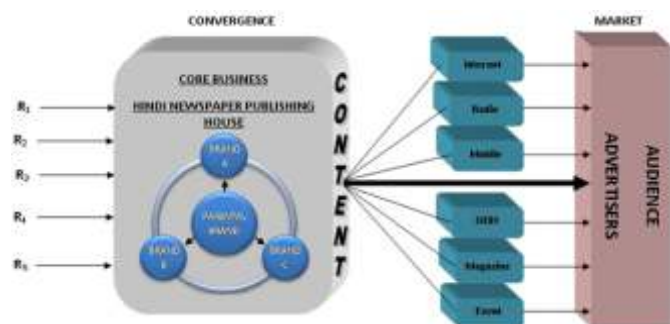


Fig. 1

The convergence model of the Hindi newspaper Houses

Legends:

- R₁: Reporters
- R₂: Bureau Offices
- R₃: Correspondents
- R₄: Agencies
- R₅: Syndicates

The core strength of the Hindi newspaper houses is content creation. They have a huge flow of content, both from internal and external sources. The large network of reporters, stringers, writers, correspondents and bureau offices creates a content data base for the newspaper publications. The Hindi newspapers also subscribe wire services, news and feature agencies and syndicates. The ability to create content is leveraged by the Hindi newspapers. They are involved in the process of convergence that can make use of content on multiple-editions, multiple-channels and multiple-brands.

C.2.1 Multiple- Editions

The process of convergence is helping the Hindi newspapers in managing multiple- editions. In all Hindi newspapers, a central desk or corporate desk works at the headquarters of the newspaper under the supervision of Editor in Chief or Group Editor. The central desk is responsible for the preparation of the content that is common for all the editions. Generally international, national, sports, business and commerce pages, and the soul of the newspaper - 'the Editorial Page' are prepared by the central desk. The centrally produced contents are sent to all the editions. Editions wise, amendments have been made in these pages to include content of local or regional prominence. The content for non local supplements is also created centrally. Generally supplements are prepared much before the main newspaper of the day.

The Hindi newspapers under this study have multiple state presences, therefore, state specific important content are prepared at the state headquarters. These contents are used by all the editions in that state with modifications.

For every edition, a mother-edition is prepared with the combination of centrally produced contents, state specific contents and, important local and regional contents. The pullouts or pages for the city edition are prepared separately by the city desk. Each edition has some sub editions which cover the city specific news of the surrounding cities of an edition and are not common in other sub editions. Pages for sub editions are prepared by the regional desk separately. These sub edition pages or city pullouts are added with the mother edition.

C.2.2 Multiple-Brands

In all the three Hindi newspapers the centralised repository of pictures, texts and other content is used for other brands by re-editing the content as per the nature of a particular brand. Therefore, less efforts and investment is required for content gathering and content creation for a second brand. This strategy helps these newspapers to target the niche audience. Second newspaper in the same market is also creating an entry barrier for the prospect competitors. Another strategy is content sharing that reduces the cost of content. The Hindi newspapers are also applying content sharing tie ups with other media houses. For example *I-next*, a tabloid of *Jagran* group, and *News Today* an evening of *Rajasthan Patrika*, have a content tie-up agreement with *Mid-Day*, an afternoon newspaper in Mumbai. Every day, when *Mid-Day* is prepared for publishing it is digitally transferred to both the newspaper and there *I-next* and *News Today* can pick up the news/ stories as per their agreement. The *Mid-Day* has an expertise in the field of entertainment, gossips and films, and the nature and treatment of the stories are similar in all the three newspapers. Hence, it is easier for *I-next* and *News Today* to adopt stories from *Mid-Day* and get the benefit from the expertise of *Mid-Day*.

C.2.3 Multiple-Channels

The Hindi newspaper houses like *Bhaskar*, *Patrika* and *Jagran* provide laptop to the reporters to file news immediately without wasting time from any location. This helps web edition of newspaper to provide news at real time. Television and other websites are also used for current news and information to update the websites. The central repository or content database carries text, images, moving images, audio, video, etc., both from the internal source (like video news from cable TV arm, feature content of the newspaper and magazine, etc.) and the external sources (like wire services, syndicated services, agencies, etc.). Through repackaging of the content all the Hindi newspapers are publishing content in form of e-paper, PDF, WAP, RSS Feeds, Web, e-mail, SMS, Mobile/ PDA, etc.

The Hindi newspapers are also leveraging their huge infrastructure and ability to create content for the other media related business like Radio, Events, Local Television, OOH, etc.

This strategy is enabling the Hindi newspapers to target their audience with tailored and specific contents through multiple channels. At the same time they are providing options and choices to the advertisers to reach their customers in the best manner. Advertisers are also looking for complete customized package or tailored solutions that could fulfill their needs and requirements. By integrating their multiple channels the Hindi newspapers are providing a 360° solution to the advertisers. A complete package, that could server advertisers in better manner.

D. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The following recommendations are suggested for application of convergence more effectively

- The Hindi newspapers need to invest more on automation and content management systems;
- Journalists should be trained for the new media environment infested with multiple platforms and brands. They must develop abilities to produce versions of the same content as needed for different platforms;
- The sales team needs to be reorganized so that they can sell cross-platform. They should be more innovative and flexible to negotiate

with the advertisers with regards to deals;

- New ways of collaborations with other media houses should be explored to maximize the use of content, increase audience reach and strengthen their proposition;
- Research activities are necessary to find out readers' needs and preferences. Niche products and media mix should be developed accordingly. More investment must be made in Customer Relationship Management (CRM).

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