News Channels: Emerging Threat for Newspapers

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Abstract  Print media and electronic media both have been providing information and news to the masses. With emergence of new technologies and due to countless news channels newspapers have started facing serious threat in terms of less readership, minimum advertising revenues and public preferences. Newspapers are different in nature as compared to news channels but effects on readership are obvious. Most important factor which is causing an alarming situation is of timeliness. New Media technologies and their easy access are the elements to cause less readership of newspapers. In order to compete and survive newspaper industry has to reshape its policies, ideas and selection of content.

Keywords  News channels, Newspapers, Technology, Threat

1. Introduction

Newspapers are considered medium of record in every society. They are reliable and credible source of information about politics, communities, legal notices and the list goes on. In Newspapers, one can find the local news along with the main and important national news.

Newspapers have played their role of information dissemination as a mass medium as Heibert and Gibbons 2000 (1), have described that inexpensive printing, improved journalistic techniques and more new technologies all helped to bring great advances in the later part of the nineteenth century, ushering in the newspaper as a mass medium. Newsprint became cheaper. The printing of photographs became possible. They have further discussed the growth of newspaper industry as in the 21st century newspapers are regarded as a mature industry, one in which growth is slowing because the product has reached its capacity in many markets.

Newspaper industry has enjoyed its power as most effective medium of accessing information but with emergence of electronic media and its day to day technological advancements, newspapers have started facing a serious threat. Radio, Television and now internet has created an alarming situation for newspaper readership. Among these technology based mediums newspapers are considered old as the process of gaining information is slow. Since emergence of radio threat to newspaper readership had been felt but newspapers managed to survive in the time of radio, television and internet boom.

All over the world Print media is challenged by its counterpart, electronic media. Timeliness is the element which is giving strong edge to electronic media as television provide news of every recent happening within shortest possible time. Increasing number of news channels are struggling hard to compete for breaking the news first.

In an article by Rasool (n.d) (2) it is highlighted that only 10 percent of the population in India and just 8 percent over the world has access to the internet and rest of the 90 percent turn to newspapers, the Tv or Radio. He describes that it is Print media which seems endangered, it is the fact that the success of any media tells upon another media. It is only a tug of war going among these where the center gets oscillated between the ends.

2. Technological Advancements and Their Effects

Media world is changing very fast and this change is result of developments in technology. Selection of medium for gaining information highly depends upon and preferred due to its easy accessibility and cost. Technological development of internet and its speedy information access has challenged not only newspapers but radio and Tv as well. Audience preferences have been changed over a period of time.

Svennevig has given a hierarchy of mediums as cited in Rayner, Wall & Kruger 2001, p 10 (3)comparing those levels which influence audience preference level.

2.1. Which media are under threat and why?

This chart clearly describes the level of threat posed to newspapers by other mediums particularly cable and internet.
Table 1. Level of threat posed to newspaper industry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Portability</th>
<th>Demands on attention</th>
<th>Choices available</th>
<th>Interactivity</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Wide</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Wide</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazine</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Wide</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrestrial TV</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cable/satellite</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Wide</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video recorder (VCR)</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Wide</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video on demand (VOD)</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Wide</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Internet/Web</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Wide</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: The basic premise is that the greater the difference in attributes between a medium and its rivals, the more likely that medium is to have a loyal audience/user base. Radio on this basis faces its main threat from print rather than from television-based media. In turn, the latter face the threat of the VCR and VOD. Source: ‘A neglected medium? The future role of radio’, Michael Svennevig, University of Leeds

With advent of cable TV, viewers found variety of news channels to switch over and gratify their needs. Television has always been ahead due to its factor of timeliness and cable news channels have got clear distinction as compared to other mediums.

Heibert and Gibbons 2000 (4) stated, in the 1960s and 1970s TV news became a dominant force in America. This period saw the establishment of TV news at the local level and the expansion of the broadcast news schedule. News grew from 15 minutes of news briefs to a 30 minute program at the national network level.

3. Breaking News Concept

Now the concept of breaking news has entirely changed for the news channels. Previously news related to some emergency or unusual happening were considered as breaking news but now almost every news is considered breaking news.

Heibert and Gibbons 2000 (5) have declared news as significant portion of TV viewing. They mentioned that in 1980s and 1990s, the line between news and entertainment blurred as television news adopted more entertainment traits in the race for viewers: News became less formal, faster paced and more titillating. Americans polled in 1997 survey, 54 percent said that they tune in more regularly to TV news than to any other source of news and information and 53 percent said they trusted all or most of what local TV news anchor says.

TV news channels are considered to be credible and timely. The electronic news business is on its full peak as heavy investments are being made on opening and running news channels. The whole concept of tv news is redefined by news channel owners. Now a news channel requires to give hundred percent event coverage in order to compete others.

Wallis and Baron 1990 (6) have declared Radio and TV, dramatic and emotional media like film and phonogram.

Another aspect discussed here is of “immediacy”, and emotional prerequisite for successful communication in broadcast media is described as news ideally should be both dramatic and informative, if the purpose is to grip the viewers. Radio and TV are considered to have ability to create emotional involvement of listeners and viewers for successful communication.

Important features like emotional involvement, immediacy and dramatization have led the way for TV news to become more influential as compared to newspapers.

Continuous decline of newspaper readership is considered due to TV news dominance.

Rashdi 2010 (7) in a newspaper article “Make News not Noise” has highlighted the element of sensationalism followed by Pakistani TV news channels. She stated that in Pakistani press is relatively free. We have our shares of “Exposes” being aired mostly on the electronic media as newspapers are still habitually more cautious. Reportage on Pakistani TV Channels has only created a deafening noise which is enjoyed by audiences as spectators would a circus.

Sensational news and views are aired everyday in talk shows which seem to follow a formula of “highly effective ways to insult an opponent”. In order to gain maximum attraction of audience TV news channels are providing “infotainment”. The result of this race would end in unethical, substandard and less objective coverage of news.

Bignell 2004 (8) has shared a case study Actuality in television news which describes that TV news has overtaken newspaper industry as a dominant source of news dissemination not only in Britain but in other developed countries as well. Reason described here is that broadcasting regulations who demand balance and objectivity govern television news, not newspaper publishing. Live reporting and actuality pictures are of key considerations as well. Broadcasters feel pride when they are happening live and they hook for a potential audience in using actuality footage.
Tv channels record what is unfolding in front of the camera and iconic quality of television images are reasons to declare Tv news as transparent and objective.

The case study highlight the incident of 9 September 2001 when two boeings were flown into the side of twin towers of the world trade center in New York. The case study describes that programmes became open-ended as they continue till further information, rather than finishing at the fixed schedule. On the 11th of September 2001 the maximum audiences for news on terrestrial channels were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Channel</th>
<th>Audience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BBC 1</td>
<td>9.4 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBC 2</td>
<td>2.6 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITV</td>
<td>7.7 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Channel 4</td>
<td>1.8 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Channel 5</td>
<td>0.6 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sky News</td>
<td>0.99 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBC News 24</td>
<td>0.37 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITN News Channel</td>
<td>0.17 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above given example of live programming and daylong event or incident coverage is distinguished feature of Tv news which has threatened newspaper industry as audience demands minute-by-minute updates. The important point to consider here is that Newspaper can not compete the timeliness factor as it is a different medium of information dissemination. No doubt technology has always an edge over non-technical mediums.

Metzger 2009 (9) in “Print media runs scared, but should not panic” stated that mass market adoption of electronic media is a serious threat to print, but not deadly. Not everyone wants to read everything on computer screen or mobile device. He concluded that some newspapers and magazines will survive. Those that have a prayer would do well to focus on editorial quality and less on panicked cost cutting. Maybe journalism needs to hire a PR firm.

Morneur 2006 (10), in his article “Print vs Electronic Media” stated that most obvious difference between print and electronic media is the way people retrieve the news. Print version can be read in leisure time. However, television and radio news are scheduled.

So it can be said that newspaper do not need to match new media instead they should look for exclusives elsewhere.

A comparison of media products exposure by Rayner, Wall and Kruger 2001 (11) concludes that media are so much a central part of our daily lives. Viewership comparison with newspaper readership on an average media day is visibly alarming. Below given chart shows the percentage of time spent with mediums of information.

Newspaper readership on an average media day is visibly alarming. Below given chart shows the percentage of time spent with mediums of information.

Source: AS Media Studies: The Essential Introduction

Figure 1. Comparative use of media by public

Rayner, Wall and Kruger 2001 (12) has further highlighted the future of news by concluding that in recent
years news delivering ways have tremendously changed, we have 24 hour news channels. We do not have to wait for a news bulletin broadcast at a specific time. The question which arises here is that audience do not want to wait for a specific time news bulletin on TV, they have access to specialized news channels then who is going to wait for next day newspaper containing old news stories with minimum space for information.

TV is enjoying the power as a massive medium, containing huge number of audiences across the globe. The massiveness again is a technological edge over the mediums as newspapers have very specified and targeted readership across a particular geographical area.

Walker 2010 (13) has quoted the message from Audit Bureau of circulation1 which states that newspapers are dying. It further stated that the average drop of newspaper circulation nationally was 8.7 percent.

He stated that The Washington Post, which is connected to their capital saw a 13.1 percent drop in circulation. The New York Times, newspaper of elites, had a drop of 8.5 percent, which is a continuation of a long, steady drop in that leading establishment newspaper. Other big newspapers, like the San Diego Union-Tribune, took a staggering 23 percent drop in circulation.

The medium continuum given by Heibert and Gibbons 2000 (14) clearly highlights the status of TV as a massive medium and newspapers as lacking the power to compete.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Intra and inter-personal</th>
<th>2. Small group</th>
<th>3. Large audience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. Newsletters and on-line media</td>
<td>5. Specialized magazines and books</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Local radio and television</td>
<td>7. Local newspapers and magazines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. National newspapers and general interest magazines</td>
<td>9. General books, sound recordings, videotapes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. National television/global television</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. The medium Continuum

It can be observed that new technological advancement opens the ways for another new method of public communication, and these new methods effect on old methods of information dissemination.

Radio, Television and then internet are the mediums to be competed by newspapers in order to survive and sustain market. Speedy and timely news trend has caused decline in readership as Annual Report of American Journalism by PEJ 2009 (14) State of the News Media showed that year 2007 ended with 8.4 percent decline in daily circulation and Sunday circulation faced 11.4 percent decline as compared to year 2001. Annual Report stated that newspaper’s ad revenues have fallen 23 percent in the last two years. According to their calculations one out of every five journalists working for Newspapers had gone or switched.

4. Importance of Ad Revenues

Ad revenue determines the success of a medium infact advertising finance journalism but percentage change in ad spending has also created a question mark for print media.

Mehra 2007 (16) has stated in an article that print companies are advertising much more on TV but growth in print ads by TV firms has been flat since 2004. She further elaborated that consumer behaviour is changing and customers need to be kept engaged and tv is the most creative and imaginative way to do so.

Percentage Change in Ad Spending by Medium -- 2007 to 2008

Table 4. Medium preferences by advertisers


5. Conclusion

Print media has always felt an undue threat, despite of this fact newspapers managed to survive and maintain reasonable readership.

Invention of radio and TV is not new, the competition among these mediums has been here for long ago. Infact each medium managed to create its own time and space, every medium has its own value, nature and power. There are so many readers who are loyal to newspaper (Print version) reading as they do not like to read electronic edition of a newspaper or even they do not prefer to watch day long live coverage of television.

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1 Audit Bureau of circulation is an independent firm that checks the average circulation of various print publications.
Aspect of Media Convergence is also of vital importance. The environment of media co-existence is emerging very fast. Newspaper organizations have to give e-editions of their papers as well. The new technologies will substitute for print in certain areas that lie along the margins of print competencies.

Phattak 2009 (17) In an article “Print Media Relevant Even in Electronic Age” concludes that there is no threat to print media due to its reliability and sheer habit of reading among readers.

Concluding, the emerging threat for newspapers posed by news channels is alarming as the circulation of many newspapers worldwide has faced serious decline over the years. Minimum ad revenues are another indicator of continuous decline but the nature of print media differentiates it with electronic media. Newspapers are required to make their own space among mass-audiences through objectivity, authenticity and reliability.

The question, whether newspaper will survive against the threats of news channels can be answered by stating that with all the threats to the newspapers there is majority of people who prefer to read newspapers. Newspapers will have to sustain and improve their readership by improving content and services. If their services will be more according to people’s preference, there is very less chance that newspapers will be diminished from the Scene.

The need of time is to reshape the ideas of information dissemination and editorial policies to compete other mediums. Newspapers are highly required to be more attractive with the incorporations of visuals and graphics.

REFERENCES


