

THE ASCENT FROM PRINT TO WEB JOURNALISM IN THE PURVIEW OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

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Introduction

From the pictographic era, where communication was limited to drawing pictures and carving caves to the present digital era, in which communication is the indispensable part of virtual world, one thing that is always common is the transmission of information. For the very role of information dissemination and awareness, media is actively recognized. Print media as well as electronic media, both, work effectively in communication. The journey of mass media started from print journalism with the invention of Guttenburg's movable printing press and continues with the online/web journalism. Interestingly, this journey took a small step towards environment friendly direction i.e. forest conservation. With the evolution of print journalism, various magazines, newspaper, journals, and books started being published, which led to heavy paper consumption thereby resulting in increased deforestation.

With the grave environment issues in the present technological era, concerns for further development and upcoming generation increased. Global warming, greenhouse effect, ozone depletion, endangered species, extinct plant and animal species, and many more problems are aggravating day by day. The core issue among these is the conservation of forest which on one hand has a large dependence from the industrial sector and on the other

hand, it is the the main stream of a balanced ecological system. The growing population, urbanization and rapid industrialization in India increases pressure on the limited land. The forest lands are encroached by the development projects and population. The forest cover declined sharply over the first few decades after independence. Deforestation expedites the pace of soil erosion, landslides, danger of flooding, and scarcity of water. The flood-prone land area of India has grown very rapidly after 1971. This is evident from the above fact that forest conservation needs reconsidering our policies, innovative ideas and adopting the strategy of sustainable development which can deter the increasing trend of deforestation. To deal with the issue of environment management, Government of India, many NGOs, and corporate sector have come up with various policies, innovative concepts and strategies to promote the eco-friendly things, services and ideas.

Online journalism is a contemporary form of journalism where editorial content is distributed via the Internet as opposed to publishing via print or broadcast. Under the study, researcher would evaluate the journey of mass media from print journalism to web journalism. This would help to know the scope and effectiveness of online journalism in environment conservation.

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Under the study, researcher mainly focuses on statistics of newspaper and e-paper in India.

Objective

Researcher will have the following objectives:

- Unfold the journey from print journalism to web journalism
- In-depth study of web journalism with reference to India
- To study the scope and effectiveness of digital platform for environment issues

India and its Forest Policies

In India, against the backdrop of environment concerns, forest conservation is on the top priority. To carry out development sustainably, various policies and laws were made. The first Indian Forest Act was passed in 1865, in which detailed surveys and classification of forest is recommended. The Forest Department was created in the year 1868, later on Forest Act of 1878 and the Indian Forest Act of 1893 was implemented. The practice of “scientific forestry” was developed in which traditional practices and rights associated with forest were curtailed and the forests communities were debarred from managing their forests. The concept of van panchayat came in the year 1930, in which forests were to be governed by village council out of their remaining village forest, and out-of-state forests, provided they obtained, on a case-by-case basis, the consent of the government. The current National Forest Policy (1988) recommends increased afforestation view of the wide gap between demand and supply and the evident all round degradation of land. It also mandated that the mountainous region should have forest over 66 percent of the land area.[1]

To monitor and survey the forest resource, the Government of India constituted Forest Survey of India which conducts the assessment and

keeps the record of forest resources. The FSI and the National Remote Sensing Centre or Agency (NRSC/A) are two agencies involved in forest monitoring at the national level. Forest cover in India has been systematically monitored every two years since 1987 by FSI. The emphasis on environment conservation was built into the Eighth Five Year Plan in 1990. Other than the policies and directives of Government of India to conserve the environment, many other attempts were also taken by NGOs, different organizations, and corporate sector to bring the environment consciousness among the people. One of the known examples of saving forest is the Chipko Movement which was led by environment activists to deter deforestation and save trees. Thus from time to time such activities and steps are taken to protect the environment. Innovative ideas are now-a-days found to be more attractive and working in protecting the nature. As the technology is progressing, people have covered the journey from radio to television and now the social media, all have become an active tool to raise the people’s awareness as well as ensuring their participation. Similarly advertising has also has its journey from simple print and radio to today’s online and digital advertising. Digital Advertising has its own importance in the context of effectiveness as well as in conserving the nature.[2]

A Journey of Indian Journalism

An Irishman, in the year 1780, has given a start to the print journalism in India. An English weekly, Bengal Gazette, was first published on 29th January 1780. Its circulation was limited to Kolkata, but it did not last long. With the time and need, Indians too began publishing their own newspapers in English and native languages from several centers like Mumbai (Bombay), Chennai (Madras) and Delhi. The Indians used their newspapers as vehicles to

spread the message of social reforms and to arouse public opinion against the British who had begun ruling the then princely states in the country.[4]

After first war of Independence in 1857, against the revolt of Indians, British took stringent action and held the control over publication of newspapers, which were broadly divided into two: those run by the British owners, and the others who were Indian freedom fighters. For most Indian editors and publishers, journalism was a mission to make India free from the imperialists. India gained independence from the British rule in 1947 with an immense contribution from print journalism. Newspapers became strong institutions. Circulation and revenue grew up. Owners did not remain content with a single daily newspaper. The publishing houses added to their stables other dailies and periodicals meant for niche readerships. A publishing house, for example, would have a general interest English newspaper, business daily and daily newspapers in the regional language. Periodical special editions for women, children, professionals, farmers, etc started doing good business. Based on the features like travel, food, jobs, entertainment etc editions were attraction of the end users. Science and technology made it possible for print journalism to have greater coverage with great speed at affordable price. Efficient use of information technology contributed newspaper industry to reach larger masses, enhanced the business and acquired greater growth. The readership of newspapers is growing. The statistics shows also that the people prefer their regional language newspapers and that is why the regional newspapers are venturing out to bring editions from other cities where there is sizeable population of the respective language.[5] As per the data available with the Government, a total of 1,05,443 newspapers/ periodicals are registered with the Registrar of

Newspapers for India (RNI) as on 31st March, 2015. Uttar Pradesh tops the list with more than 16000 registrations followed by Maharashtra with more than 14000. Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh & Rajasthan follow in that order. Ten states have more than 5000 registered newspapers/ periodicals. Eighteen (18) States/ UTs have less than 1000 registrations each.[6] The term 'newspaper' in this case includes dailies, weeklies and publications of other periodicities.

Web Journalism and Environment Concerns

Accessing editorials, features and news stories via Internet, against print and broadcast medium, is termed as online journalism. The primary product of journalism, which is news and features on current affairs, is presented solely or in combination as text, audio, video and some interactive forms, and disseminated through digital media platforms.

Online journalism has an upper hand on print/broadcast journalism in some ways: lowered distribution costs, any time access, comparatively creative, and diverse computer networking technologies. The first type of digital journalism, called teletext, was invented in Great Britain in 1970. Teletext is a system allowing viewers to choose which stories they wish to read and see it immediately. The information provided through teletext is brief and instant, similar to the information seen in digital journalism today. After the invention of teletext was the invention of videotex, of which Prestel was the world's first system, launching commercially in 1979 with various British newspapers like the Financial Times lining up to deliver newspaper stories online through it. Videotex closed down in 1986 due to failing to meet end-user demand.[7]

Online news websites began to proliferate in the 1990s. An early adopter was The News &

Observer in Raleigh, North Carolina which offered online news as Nando. A twenty-four-hour news cycle and new ways of user-journalist interaction web boards were among the features unique to the digital format. Later, portals such as AOL and Yahoo! and their news aggregators (led to news agencies such as The Associated Press to supplying digitally suited content for aggregation beyond the limit of what client news providers could use in the past.[7]

Many news organizations based in other media also distribute news online, but the amount they use of the new medium varies. Around 1987, Indian newspaper, efficiently use computer for writing and page layout, gradually move to online edition of their papers. The year 2007 witnessed hike in internet user of around 42 million and ranked fifth among online populations. The number of online news editions is seen as especially low because of the multitude of languages spoken in India. Of the 22 languages officially recognized, only 12 of the non-English languages were accounted for in a survey of online editions.

India's internet penetration is low-only 3.7%. Also, most websites are only available in English, which skews the viewership to only 10% of the population that is concentrated in urban centers. With the emergence of high speed data and faster mobile data services such as 3G and LTE, videos from some of India's best TV journalists have been made available online. Both NDTV and CNBC, two TV news reporting power houses in India, also have a strong online presence. Another emerging favorite platform for journalists is Twitter.[7]

A lot of these new websites were generic versions of the daily paper and were not edited once published. They were operated by minimal staffs. In some instances, a single editor would upload data to a third party pre-formatted interface which would allow stories

to be published under general headings such as Local News, International, Sports, etc. A large majority of online newspapers in India don't receive advertisement revenue for their web editions and, with the exception of the major papers, most websites are being operated at a loss.

Considering the environment issues, web journalism is an environment friendly development. Under Government of India rules and regulation, forest cutting is considered to be an offence and to pursue any project in India, environment clearance from the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change is needed. Government of India is undertaking an admirable step in bringing all the government offices and other services online. The known examples of such steps are the online facilities provided by the Indian Railways, Air and bus services, Banking services, Online Income tax submission, Passport making, and various services are yet to come like online driving license making etc. It is providing a digitalized platform for every government work thus reducing the scope of using papers. It is also feeding all the paper records in the digital form and contributing to quick, easy and sustainable approach. Digital advertisements have become a trend and are effective in persuasion. Mobile is a popular and easily accessible mode of propagating ads and ideas as well as various mobile technologies have also reduced the burden of carrying paper, thereby reducing deforestation (the idea which is also advertised by an IDEA mobile company). A good example of mobile in green advertising is that a passenger can show a mobile message as a substitute for an online ticket while travelling. Universities and competitive exams are also conducted online reducing the paperwork. Corporate sector plant trees, nurture them and encourage afforestation under the corporate social responsibility. NGOs are active in protecting the forest, and countering the

deforestation activities. Use of online magazines, journals, newspapers etc have reduced the printed copy of their periodic issues.

Research Methodology

This study is a descriptive study. In this study, the research methodology used is based on the secondary data. Data has been collected from a number of sources like books, journals, research articles available online and publications by government agencies. Apart from these sources of information, newspapers and websites have also been used for collecting data.

Conclusion

In India, internet access is not as high and easy as in other developed countries. Metro cities are comparatively more equipped with easy internet access. The busy life in metro cities has led the people to access news, features, and information through internet. This puts less dependency on traditional forms of news and less pressure on forest and environment.

India State of Forest Report is released once in two years by Forest Survey of India. It provides information on forest cover, tree cover, mangrove cover and growing stock inside and outside forest areas. The 13th report in the series (2013) was released by Prakash Javadekar, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Environment, Forests & Climate on 8 July 2014, who emphasized the need for enhancing green cover and called for a mass movement for afforestation.

As per the report, the total forest and tree cover of the country is 78.92 million hectare, which is 24.01 percent of the geographical area of the country. As compared to the assessment of 2011, there is an increase of 5871 sq km in the forest cover and 422 Sq Km in tree cover in the country.

However, India's National Forest Policy 1988 aims at maintaining 33 per cent of the geographical area under forest and tree cover. The good news is that the country still has large patches of contiguous forests accounting for about 40 per cent of the forest cover.

An increase in the total forest and tree cover of the country led to the view that an overall responsible approach and human attitude from the environment perspective is needed from all the sectors of the society.

With the coming of Online Journalism, dependency on traditional newspaper has reduced and environment driven development is appreciated.

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