



## **Rural Readers are Perceptive - Small things make a difference to Daily Circulation**

**DR.VIKRAM V. \***

### **Abstract**

*As newspapers thrive in rural areas, what kind of Changes are they causing? These days, rural readers are aware and they need their newspaper copies to cater to their tastes, to be on time. In recent times, publishing houses are undertaking numerous activities to cater to the rural pockets. To mention few; increasing distribution centers, using an improved road network to reach newspapers further into the hinterland by early morning, and hiring stringers to send news from very local centers for separate district pages. Publishers are making an aggressive push to increase their circulation in the untapped regional pockets. They have fine-tuned their publication and delivery schedules to reach their newspaper by 6 a.m. to villages in every district of the State. Because of the intense competitions from the publishing houses and increased demands from rural readers, they have developed the habit of reading and rapidly becoming perceptive. Rural readers have become smart enough; "Because of the competition in the market, they will drop one paper if the hawker brings it late and take another. Earlier, they had limited choice. Today, readers are aware and want papers to cater to their tastes, to be on time. Small things make a difference to daily circulation.*

**Key words: Rural readers, Circulation, Publishing house, Reading habit.**

### **Introduction**

The Print Media is one of the most important pillars of democratic system in India, which is the largest democracy in the world. The prominence of people's access to information cannot be undervalued in a country like India. As many as 1,14,820 publications (Newspapers & Other periodicals) have been registered in India till 31st March, 2017 witnessing a constant growth of the Print Media. Print media continues to empower the common man to assert his right and to participate in strengthening the democracy. The growth in the number of registered publications as well as their circulations justifies that, growth of audio, visual and digital has not badly affected the print media. In the report of annual Statements to the Registrar of Newspapers for India 2016-17 shows that, there is great affinity towards the regional language publications.

**"How India's Newspapers Are Winning Rural Readers". - Small things make a difference to daily circulation.**

### **Opportunities for regional language publications.**

1. The aggressive marketing drive undertaken by the print media, in hundreds of villages to penetrate a largely untapped area. In rural India, they realized, opportunities are aplenty, thanks to the rise in the literacy rate, the spread of education, and an increase in family income of sections of the people benefited by development schemes.
2. In tier II and III cities; towns and villages would continue driving the growth of newspaper industry. Newspaper and print industry will continue to witness regionalization both in terms of language and geography in South India. Average penetration of newspapers is low in the country and stands at approximately 15 percent. However, the penetration numbers are as high as 70 percent in cities. While as low as 5 percent in the countryside. Literacy stood at 73 percent, according to the 2011 and is expected to

\* Assistant. Professor, Department of MBA, JNN College of Engineering, Shimoga



continue its upward growth. Even among the literate population, the penetration of newspapers is low. As an indicator of the level of under penetration in regional markets, only 30 percent of literate population in South India (Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu) read newspapers. This indicates a huge potential for newspapers to expand with respect to their readership base.

3. Newspapers have more recently begun moving closer to their Readers. One example is the DainikBhaskar group in Bhopal, in the central state of Madhya Pradesh. Its brand stable includes 42 editions of DainikBhaskar (one of the most-read Hindi news dailies), Business Bhaskar and Gujarati daily Divya Bhaskar. The group's language papers are now printed in 40 locations, compared with 13 a few years ago. The strategy has helped shrink average delivery time from seven hours to four hours, and papers are now supplied within a 200-kilometer radius of where they are printed, instead of the previous 350 kilometers.
4. According to Associate Editor of The Hindu reporting to BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) News, in a program called "Newspapers: Why India's Newspaper Industry is Booming," he said that, now has a number of regional editions, which contain national content alongside pages of localized news relevant to the distribution area. "We have to expand and open more editions," This is a large country so you need to have multiple printing centers. More and more newspapers are reaching out to places where they haven't before.
5. The introductions of new technology into the production process has helped and fasten the operation and paved the way to a massive increase in added value marketing and publishing activity through numerous editions, special targeted supplements and new titles exclusively in rural areas. A newspaper in India has great opportunity, especially in small towns and non-metros, from where the maximum growth in newspaper readership and circulation will come.
6. Indian newspapers thrive is the absence of digital competition than compared to western market. Indian papers are low-priced, costing between 3 to 5 rupees daily. There are only few stalls in India which sells less than 5% of papers which is sold through counter, and home delivery is free, paid for by the publishers. The actual price of each paper is even lower, because

of what Indians call raddi, their recycling program. Subscribers save their newspapers, which are picked up by raddiwallahs each month; the customer receives about eight to ten rupees per kilogram, and the raddiwallahs sell the bundles back to the paper companies to be recycled.

### **Usage of Technology in Newspaper Companies**

In order to be competitive in the media landscape of today, morning newspapers need to improve the production and the distribution of newspapers as well as other processes within the newspaper companies. The use of computers is limited within distribution organizations; therefore, the implementation of computer aids to improve planning of the physical distribution and the information flow can be of importance in order for the newspaper companies to remain competitive. Few publishing houses have implemented the technology to reach the rural pockets before 6 am. To mention few;

1. Multiple platforms and new technologies: Many publishers are using multiple platforms and new technologies as channels for content distribution in order to reach their readers. However, many have still to fully review their existing business models to take full advantage of the innovation in the marketplace and the demands of readers.
2. Computer to Plate Technology: When it comes to the use of technology in transferring from print to plate is of CTP or CTF (film), it means Computer to plate technology which has replaced the traditional method of taking impression on the plates that are inserted in the machines. This process of CTP has helped the companies to reach the market much early by saving 30 to 45 minutes of process time, also ensuring quality image in printing. Where a high end computers are connected to a machine to get impression directly on the plates.
3. Real time tracking of Transportation: companies are now making use of simulation processing in a high-speed, Newspaper mailroom simulation model is assisting the newspaper companies for smother operations by the use of SIMAN station macros model, analysis tools like animation and dynamic textual, dual monitor display, run time system modification menu and pre-scheduler utility. With this modeling, the newspaper mailroom distribution system is possible to design, schedule and develop truck loading in much



sophisticated manner. For better tracking of bundles, Paper transporting vehicles are installed with GPS tracking system to track the vehicles in real time.

### **Challenges to Print Media in the Rural Areas**

1. Literacy level: One of the biggest challenges to newspapers in rural area is illiteracy. In most of the rural areas the literacy level hovers around 50%, a serious barrier to increasing circulation. Newspapers will have to look towards promoting literacy programs in order to achieve their interest of growing penetration in rural readership pockets.
2. They need to ensure good reading habits: if they want to continue growing while facing the increasing challenges from other media. In Jaipur, Rajasthan Patrika uses its delivery boys in far-flung rural belts as marketing executives as well as their reporters. These delivery boys not only book in subscriptions, but also news of incidents in far-flung villages which would be of interest to people in that region. It is precisely due to this connectivity with the local population that India's regional papers are doing so well. Since the proportion of local news is more, the papers give their readers the belief that the paper is more interested in their well-being, and this generates a higher level of loyalty to the paper from readers.
3. Effective distribution of newspaper: in rural place is a daunting task. Especially in remote areas where infrastructure is problematic can often become a nightmare. Publishers to reach in rural pockets have to be innovative to overcome the obstacles and get their newspapers to their readers. "The long distances between the various towns and villages are major challenges in terms of both fuel costs and vehicle maintenance." A few challenges being faced while distributing the newspapers are getting vendors or delivery boys is one big challenge and careful observation in not taking the papers and money with them.
4. Effective networking: Most publishers have vehicles to cover the main routes, but the secondary routes are left to the hawkers. One major risk that all publishers vouch on is that, newspaper must be on street, on time. "Timing is everything. If it reaches to the streets two hours late, suppose if the newspaper is to be of Friday's issue, the distribution figures can fall with as much as 25%". These delays and challenges add a lot of pressure to distribution process.

5. Number of Holidays: Agents delivering newspapers in rural areas has a peculiar problem of getting sufficient number of holidays, getting holiday in this newspaper distribution is very difficult; agents has to work for 360 days. Hardly, 4 closed holidays are available, which is insufficient. Even if the health is not supportive, they have to take medicine and attend to the work. It is very difficult to run the distribution business in these days.
6. Subscription collection: One of the major problems in newspaper distribution in rural areas is "collection". Every month, there will be an outstanding amount of 40% of paper bills, which won't be received on time. Outstanding amount has to be paid by the agents, there by incurring financial loss.

### **Areas of Improvement to Publishing Houses**

For effective reach of newspaper into the interior parts of rural areas, distributional activities need to be further strengthened in rural pockets. To mention few areas of improvement;

1. In rural areas and during rainy seasons, papers are delivered late. This should be avoided by providing adequate facilities to agents and delivery boy's; such that, there is no delay in any movement.
2. Agents must be given some relaxation in remittance of money to the publishers. Bill collection in rural area is ridicules and more time consuming. Keeping this in view some margin has to be provided to the rural agents.
3. The common problem is the retention of delivery persons particularly in rural areas. Frequent change of delivery boys causes delay in reach. To avoid, these newspaper publishers must take a bold steep of appointing delivery boys with well-structured reward. The interest taken in appointing agents must be extended to the appointment of delivery boys as well. As far as possible, the delivery chain must operate on a permanent basis. Otherwise the whole thing has to be outsourced to an efficient organization.
4. Insurance coverage may be provided to delivery boys. A small percentage of subscription amounts may be devoted for this purpose.
5. The common complaint from most of the rural readers is that, local news coverage is given least importance. Therefore, it is suggested that, one page must be



devoted exclusively to each taluk. This would definitely expand reader base.

## Conclusion

Newspaper industry is one of the fastest expanding economic activities in the present rural system. Its existence is indispensable. Its role is so significant not only in conveying news to people but, also in keeping an eye on administration and governance of the state system. Therefore, it is essential to examine the problems confronting newspaper in rural pockets and industry in particular and take measures to overcome the obstacles. The delivery system has to be made very

effective such that, newspapers reach homes in the early hours of the day. There is ample scope for expanding reader's base in rural areas. Aggressive and penetrating marketing has to be done to convert a larger population into readers of newspapers. It may be noted in a country like India in terms of storage of information and back reference newspapers have an edge over e-platform more over the competition from digital media is negligible compared to western market. If publishing houses take necessary measures to reach the market early and to put to practice, there is no doubt in further fast expansion of newspaper industry in rural market.

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