

# On an Exploration of Common Challenges Faced by Newspaper Industry and Newspaper Delivery Boys in COVID 19 Lockdown in India and Studying the Hierarchical Inter-relationships

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## ABSTRACT

Present research work focuses on exploring various challenges faced by newspaper industry as well as that of a newspaper delivery boys in COVID 19 Pandemic scenario in India. Thereafter, it tries to explore the inter-relationships amongst them using ISM methodology. The research is primarily exploratory in nature with a stint on qualitative decision-making technique.

The focus is primarily on English and vernacular daily newspaper/s distribution.

## Keywords

COVID 19 Pandemic; Newspaper industry; Interpretive Structural Modelling methodology

## 1. INTRODUCTION

With a readership base of over 250 million, India is the second largest print market in the world (MRUC). However, this market is still under penetrated for a country with a population in excess of 1,200 million and highly fragmented with over 60,000 newspapers printed in 22 languages (Registrar of Newspapers of India). As per INS (Indian Newspapers Society) the Print landscape is dominated by regional newspapers which target a population of approximately 0.98 billion. Of the more than 62,000 newspapers printed, around 92 percent are published in Hindi and other vernacular languages. English newspapers focus primarily on the metro cities with a population of approximately 0.5 billion.

Decline of print and growth of online in US and other parts of Europe is completely different from emerging countries like Brazil & India. It is a fact that social media, smart phone and tablet penetration is on rise but there are other facts that are more important. Print in Brazil, India, China and Japan is growing and it will continue along with the growth of online and other media. As per the World Press Trends 2008 report, over 110 million copies sold every day in India and is the second largest market in the world. Of the top 100 paid-for-dailies in the world, 19 are from India, second only to China which has 25. News markets in Asia, Africa and South America may not have matured fully yet, but they should expect to be faced with similar challenges in the next 10 to 20 years. There are two reasons for this. One the internet penetration is so low. The other is that newspapers in India are delivered at home.

Recently, online advertising has shown a positive trend and is taking a majority of share from print advertising. One of the major reason is the increasing printing costs which serves as prime reason for profit cutting of newspaper industry. *Other*

thing which is noticed by the users are the fast pace and access to mobile phones with apps which has made the problem worse. The app is at your hand press button. Download it and start reading. No time constraint, no hassles just a nice and informative reading at your palms. Online advertising is taking away the majority of advertising revenue from print.

Present research work highlights the performance and challenges of newspaper industry [particularly English and vernacular daily newspapers] in India. The paper is arranged as follows: Section 2 gives the literature review on the various challenges in two sections. The first section deals with challenges of newspaper industry and the second section deals with challenges faced by newspaper delivery boys in COVID 19. Section 3 deals with ISM Methodology and section 4 deals with the application of ISM methodology in establishing inter-relationships amongst the various challenges faced by newspaper industry in India

## 2. CHALLENGES FACED BY NEWSPAPER INDUSTRY IN INDIA

### 2.1 Some of the basic challenges faced by newspaper industry which results in limited growth of print in India are

#### 2.1.1 *Limited Literacy [LL]*

Over the years, the print industry in India has morphed into something that is quite different from most markets in the world. The first factor is literacy. For all pretensions of having English as a link language, the fact is that just over sixty percent of all Indians can read or write. Unlike TV or radio, this factor automatically limits the growth of print. The flipside is that the English language press commands a premium because of this reason since advertisers automatically value anyone who can read an English Newspaper.

#### 2.1.2 *Higher gap in the advertising rates [GAR]*

Gap in the advertising rates between English and non-English publications have been narrowing over time, because of the rise in purchase power, across the country. Higher gap serves as major barrier as people will prefer non- English publications.

#### 2.1.3 *Strong sense of nation [SSN]*

Another notable factor contributing is the strong sense of nation in India . Newspapers like The Times group, The Hindu, Hindustan Times all strive to be national papers in English. The growth for even large Indian language groups, such as DB Corporation or Jagran, hinges on their ability to offer a national or pan-regional footprint. This is not how the market developed

elsewhere in the world.

#### 2.1.4 Over-dependence on advertising [ODA]

It distorts the market and makes the industry more vulnerable to a slowdown. It is debilitating for publishers to sell for Rs.1.00 – Rs.5.00, newspapers that cost anywhere between Rs.15.00 – Rs.20.00 a copy just to produce and this does not include fixed costs. That means circulation brings in just about 5-15 percent of the revenues for English language newspapers and about 30-45 percent for language ones.

#### 2.1.5 Falling or dropping time Spent on print and digital media [FDT]

According to IRS data, the daily time spent reading print fell from 32 minutes in 2000 to 28 minutes in 2012 even as the number of readers grew from 232 million to 351 million. However, this has to be studied against the time spent on other media. As for the internet, until India's literacy, electricity and broad band problems are taken care of, it is a long way from being a threat to any media, let alone print. One can argue that if TV, which depends on electricity, could reach 153 million homes and over 700 million people, why can't the internet? According to Hansa Research and Indian readership Survey (IRS) newspapers reach just over 35 percent of Indians. The most worrying part is that the average time spent on reading print media is declining whereas time spent on Internet is increasing [ ref ] .

#### 2.1.6 Low advertisement spends [ LAS]

Low advertisement spends was reflected in the weak advertiser sentiments. Some of the big spending sectors such as Education, Banking, Financial Services and Insurance, Telecom and Retail tightened budgets and the advertising spends remained flat or declined. The slowdown in advertising volumes was particularly more intense in the case of the English market. The share of English print advertisement volumes declined from 32 percent in 2011 to 27 percent in 2012. Vernacular dailies continued to enjoy volume growth with their share increasing from 37 percent in 2011 to 39 percent in 2012.

#### 2.1.7 Low growth opportunities due to weak locales [LGO]

Print players are looking to scale up through geographic and product expansions as well as increasing the footprint and quality of digital delivery formats. Localization of news through special editions has plenty of growth opportunities as well. So as per research low growth opportunities could be due to weak locales.

#### 2.1.8 Weak launching of supplements [WLS]

The industry believes that launching supplements in existing markets helps them penetrate further by gaining access to new readers and expanding the advertiser base. A few examples of the supplements launched during 2012 include Habitat, Watches Luxury and Beyond and Weekend Life by Hindu, Ebela, Ananda Plus and Bishoy Ashay by Ananda Bazar Partika and Yuva by Hindustan Times. There seen a negative trend associated with weak launching of supplements and hence was considered a barrier.

#### 2.1.9 Lower penetration levels [LPL]

Further, the penetration levels of product categories such as consumer durables, automobiles and financial products in these towns are substantially lower than in the large cities. Existing Hindi and vernacular players are expanding by either launching editions in new geographies or by launching sub-editions at a place, where an existing edition is already available.

#### 2.1.10 Broadening the local advertisement generation [BLAG]

Currently, most of the advertising revenues are generated from the metro cities for English newspapers and from limited cities in regional territories by the regional newspapers. Broadening the local advertisement generation especially from smaller towns and cities and effectively monetizing their reach is likely to be a key challenge for regional print going forward.

### 2.2 Challenges faced by newspaper delivery boys in Covid 19 Pandemic

Newspaper vendors & delivery boys have been hit hard by the COVID-19 lockdown. They are now deprived of the modest money they would make earlier.

Some of the common challenges faced by them are as mentioned below:

#### 2.2.1 Losing business & hope [LBH]

**In this Pandemic situation, most of the** delivery boys have had virtually no work to do during the lockdown and are now struggling to make ends meet. Usually, April to July are the four main months for them to earn as these months demands including inserts of various businesses such as school admissions, tuitions, AC repair to restaurants Due to this Pandemic lockdown, businesses are running in losses and employers are forced to at least feed their employees. Many of them have run in debt because of these and this creates a problem.

#### 2.2.2 Mis-information about Sanisters , gloves etc. [MS]

Majority of the newspaper delivery boys are facing the problem of misunderstanding or mis -information about the scarcity of sanitizers or gloves with them which make their customers scared unnecessarily .

#### 2.2.3 Payment woes & pressure to earn [ PW]

The major problem faced by them in COVID is that they are not getting payment for their work and therefore the bread earning for the family becomes difficult .

#### 2.2.4 Less relief in the absence of awareness [LR]

Many newspaper vendors want government to spread awareness so as to avoid emergence of fear associated with newspapers delivery boys . These delivery boys do not have any unions or Leader to fight their case. Usually, they demand extra- delivery charges from the customers so that they can afford some basic things.

### 3. INTERPRETIVE STRUCTURAL MODELLING METHODOLOGY

The various steps involved in ISM [9] are :

Identification of elements which are relevant to the decision maker's problems and issues. Thereafter, establishing the contextual relationship between elements with respect to which pairs of elements will be examine. After that , development of a self-interaction matrix (SSIM) which provides the pairwise relationship between two variables i.e. i and j. It establishes relationship of "Lead to" between criteria. It uses the four symbols for the type of relation that exists between two sub-variables under consideration: V for the relation from i to j but not in both directions; A for the relation from j to i but not in both directions; X for both direction relations from i to j and j to i; and O if the relation between the variables does not appear

valid. Using SSIM matrix, initial reachability matrix can be formed, it has all values in binary form. From the reachability matrix, the reachability set and antecedent set for each criterion is found (Warfield (1974)). Then the intersection of these sets is derived for all elements. The element for which the reachability and intersection sets are the same is the top-level element. The whole process of partitioning is based on establishing the precedence relationships and arranging the elements in a topological order. Then the reachability matrix is converted into the canonical matrix format by arranging the elements according to their levels. After that, factors are classified in various categories like autonomous, dependent, driver and linkage. Finally, Development of Diagraph/ ISM from the canonical matrix form.

## 4. CASE EXAMPLE

Ten challenges discussed above in section 2.1 viz. Limited Literacy [LL]; Higher gap in the advertising rates [HGAR]; Strong sense of nation [SSN]; Over-dependence on advertising [ODA]; Falling or dropping Time Spent on Print and Digital Media [FDT]; Low advertisement spends [LAS]; Low growth opportunities due to weak locales [LGO]; Weak launching of supplements [WLS]; Lower penetration levels [LPL]; Broadening the local advertisement generation [BLAG] are further studied for possible inter-relationships with the help of ISM methodology. Similarly, the four challenges studied in section 2.2 could be studied in the similar way.

### 4.1 Structural Self – Interaction Matrix [SSIM]

This matrix gives the pair-wise relationship between two variables i.e. i and j based on VAXO. SSIM has been presented below in Fig 1.

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### 4.3 Construction of Initial Reachability Matrix and final reachability matrix

The SSIM has been converted in to a binary matrix called the Initial Reachability Matrix shown in fig. 2 by substituting V, A, X, O by 1 or 0 as per the case. After incorporating the transitivity, the final reachability matrix is shown below in the Fig 3.

#### 4.3.1 Limited Literacy [LL]

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The SSIM has been converted into a binary matrix called the Initial Reachability Matrix shown in fig. 2 by substituting V, A, X, O by 1 or 0 as per the case. After incorporating the transitivity, the final reachability matrix is shown below in the Fig 3.

**Fig 1: SSIM matrix for pair wise relationship amongst barriers**

S. No.	Barriers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
		LL	HGAR	SSN	ODA	FDT	LAS	LGO	WLS	LPL	BLAG
1	LL	V	V	O	V	V	V	V	V	V	V
2	HGAR		A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A
3	SSN			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
4	ODA				X	X	X	X	X	X	X
5	FDT					V	A	A	A	A	V
6	LAS						A	A	A	A	X
7	LGO							V	V	V	V
8	WLS								X	A	A
9	LPL									X	X
10	BLAG										V

**Fig 2: Initial reachability matrix**

S. No.	Barriers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
		LL	HGAR	SSN	ODA	FDT	LAS	LGO	WLS	LPL	BLAG
1	LL	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2	HGAR	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	SSN	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
4	ODA	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
5	FDT	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1
6	LAS	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
7	LGO	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
8	WLS	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0
9	LPL	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
10	BLAG	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1

**Fig 3: Final reachability matrix**

S. No.	Barriers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	D.P
		LL	HGAR	SSN	ODA	FDT	LAS	LGO	WLS	LPL	BLAG	
1	LL	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
2	HGAR	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
3	SSN	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
4	ODA	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
5	FDT	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
6	LAS	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
7	LGO	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
8	WLS	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
9	LPL	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
10	BLAG	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
	De.P	1	10	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	

D.P : Driving power ; De.P : Dependence power

### 6.4 Level Partition

From the final reachability matrix, reachability and final antecedent set for each factor are found. The elements for which the reachability and intersection sets are same are the top-level element in the ISM hierarchy. After the identification of top-level element, it is separated out from the other elements and the process continues for next level of elements. Reachability set, antecedent set, intersection set along with different level for elements have been shown below in table 4.3.1.

Table I. Iteration I

Reachability set	Antecedent set	Intersection set	Iteration/ Levels
2	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,	2	I
2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10	3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10	3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10	
1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10	1	1	

Table II. Iteration II

Reachability set	Antecedent set	Intersection set	Iteration/ Levels
3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10	3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10	3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10	II
1,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10	1	1	

Table III. Iteration III

Reachability set	Antecedent set	Intersection set	Iteration / Levels
1	1	1	III

### 6.5 Driving power and dominance diagram

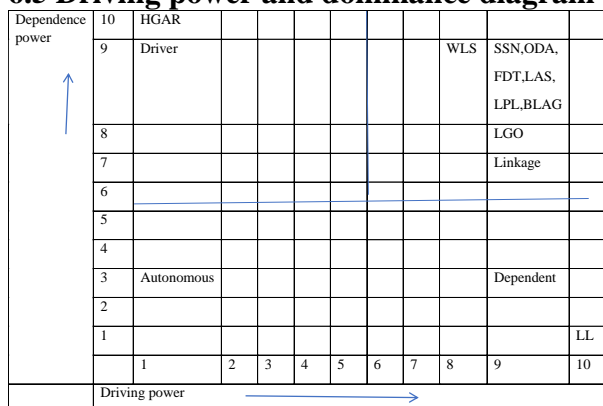


Figure 1: Driving power versus Dominance Diagram

### 7. CONCLUSIONS

The paper first reviews the various challenges faced by newspaper industry which results in limited growth of print in India in developing country such as India. It then study their inter-relationships amongst them with the help of ISM methodology

### 8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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