



Study of impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Print Media in Maharashtra

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ABSTRACT

India has been combating the corona virus disease also known as COVID – 19 pandemics from two years. This pandemic has affected not only India but also the entire world around. Several measures were imposed by the Government in order to stop the spread of this pandemic. During the first wave of COVID – 19 pandemic, strict lockdown was imposed in Maharashtra state. In order to stop the spread of the pandemic the newspapers printing and distribution were also stopped. This protocol had a very bad impact on Print Media. This research paper highlights the impact of the coronavirus disease pandemic on the print Media which is of Maharashtra State in India. The present paper starts with the introduction followed by the company profile. Later the research objectives, research type and the method of data collection have been stated. The analysis of challenges faced by the Print Media has also been discussed followed by the conclusion.

KEYWORDS: financial crisis, salary deduction, lockdown, pandemic, Print Media.

1. INTRODUCTION

In India, the print media started as early as 1780. [1] Hicky's Bengal Gazette, English language weekly newspaper published in Kolkata on 29 January, 1780, was the first Indian newspaper. James Augustus Hicky had fought for the freedom of expression in that time and was convicted by British rule. After the 1990s in the process of globalization in India, the first newspaper in Maharashtra was Darpan, started on 6th January, 1832 by BalshshtriJambekar. [2] Now newspapers have changed their aim & object and become a commodity. That emerged the management of print media more commercial by ownership [1]. According to RNI (Registrar of Newspapers for Indian) there are 1, 10,851 registered publications in India as of March 2016. The

country's print media industry has been slapped by several crises like global recession and inflation but through all of these print media industries are preserved. The current COVID-19 has broken the backbone of print media industries and newspapers organization[1].

The importance of Print Media is highlighted in the following points:

- i. *Create awareness-* Printed media can create awareness among the people and update with the current situation going on. Like products, brands and current affairs[3].
- ii. *Create Credibility-* Print media is important to create credibility. Investing in printed material signals to customers that you are serious about your business

and that you offer a worthwhile product or service to the people [3].

- iii. *It's flexible in nature*- Print media has a longer lifespan. Rather than spending a few seconds on a site and then moving on another, the print material we can store & also be passed onto friends or colleagues, maximizing the reach of your campaign[3].
- iv. *Link to digital campaigns*- Print media played an important role to link paper with online content by including the use of a QR code, e-commerce website & online service providers for more information or to make an online order[3].
- v. *Introduce new Brand*- Print media play very important role to introduced new product in the market especially its effects on rural areas because there is lack of internet connectivity so people refer printed material like newspaper, magazine[3].

However, there are certain demerits of Print Media also. [4] These are as follows:

- It is not useful to the global audience because it's limited to local audiences.
- It requires multiple exposures to protect.
- Requires a lot of planning for preparation of printed material
- Difficult to target a specific audience because it's general in nature.
- Higher cost and time-consuming work.

OBJECTIVES

- To study the challenges faced by Print Media in COVID-19 pandemic situation.
- To study the overall Impact of COVID-19 on the Print Media business.

2. RESEARCH TYPE

The present research is a Descriptive Research which includes surveys and fact-finding enquiries of different kinds. The major purpose of descriptive research is description of the state of affairs as it exists at present. For the present research, the impact of COVID-19 Print Media in Maharashtra State has been studied as they existed in the year 2020 during the first lockdown in India [3].

3. CHALLENGES FACED BY PRINT MEDIA COVID – 19 PANDEMICS

Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), which causes coronavirus disease (COVID-19), was first identified in December 2019 in Wuhan city, China, and later spread worldwide. The first SARS-CoV-2 positive cases in India were reported in the state of Kerala on January 30th, 2020. Subsequently, the number of cases drastically rose. [5] As of May 8th, 2020, Maharashtra, Delhi, and Gujarat states were reported to be hotspots for COVID-19. To impose social distancing, the "Janata curfew" (14-h lockdown) was ordered on March 22nd, 2020. A further lockdown was initiated for 21 days, starting on March 25th, 2020, and the same was extended until May 3rd, 2020, but, owing to an increasing number of positive cases, the lockdown has been extended for the third time until May 17th, 2020 Nineteen districts in Uttar Pradesh are identified as hotspot districts, and this was followed by 14 and 12 districts in Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, respectively. The complete lockdown was implemented in these containment zones to stop or control the community transmission.

During the lockdown all offices and businesses were closed. All public places including schools and colleges were also closed. Only the necessary services like hospitals, pharmacies, groceries, vegetables and dairy businesses remained open with strict observance of pandemic lockdown norms. Since Print Media does not come under essential services, it was also closed. Because of this, all the stakeholders of this business have suffered a huge loss. [6]

Print Media was faced with high production cost in the pandemic COVID-19 and it's difficult to publish newspapers physical copy due to lack of income. The newspaper industry has been in steady decline by a loss in readership and advertisement revenue which have been moved to other media, most notably digital. The poor economy impacted a number of core newspaper advertisers such as retail, movies and promoting community events. These categories cut back on their marketing budgets, accelerating declines in ad revenue and its all ultimately effects on salaries of employees.

A. *Disruption Of Newspapers in Lockdown Situation*

Print Media paper faced problems in distribution of newspapers in pandemic situations. So, the company is

fighting for revenues and it is difficult to run their production houses [6]. Direct advertising sales were highly affected by social and physical distancing[1]. A lot of rumors and misinformation were spread on social media due to newsprint industries that suffered a loss in production to distribution process. Newspaper vendors and delivery boys avoid stepping out due to fear of the local authority stopping on roads. And also, some of them fear about COVID-19 infections. The Central Government of India has declared and included print Newspapers as an essential services category. The ministry of Information and Broadcasting has laid out steps to ensure the operational continuity of print and electronic media during overall COVID-19 outbreaks. [7]

B. Impact on readership and salary of employees

The newspaper industry has been declined by the loss of readership. [8] Many people used E-paper due to fear of spread of COVID-19 but it's not possible everywhere used E-paper due to lack of Internet connectivity. So it's ultimately impacted on readership of newspaper. In this worst situation some print media businesses completely shut down and many of employees lost their jobs and also faced the problems of salary cuts and leaves without pay for employees [9].

Later the news channels declared salary cuts between 10-40% from 1st April 2020 for three months. The salary cut is applicable for those employees whose salary more than Rs. 50,000 per month [10].

For example, Sakal Times, the city-based English Daily and Gomantak Times owned by the Sakal Media Group has announced its closure citing financial crisis. The decision had rendered around 50-60 employees, including sub editors, reporters, designers and features writers lost their jobs [7].

C. Financial Crisis due to lack of Advertisement

The main source of revenue generation of Print media Group is advertisement but during the COVID-19 pandemic all social, political and cultural events and sport competition were either suspended or postponed.[11] Many businesses were shut down on festive occasions so it's highly affected by the advertisement of new products and designs.[1] It's a reason that the newsprint Industry faced a huge and unimaginable financial crisis.[12] Many employees

faced salary deduction problems and some of lost their job.

4. FUTURE SCOPE AND CONCLUSION

The Print Media has found itself in a substantial recession due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Primary revenue source of Print Media is that advertisements have almost stopped. There was disruption of Newspaper distribution by multiple lockdowns. Due to fear of the spread of COVID-19 many people stopped purchasing the newspaper so the selling of newspapers ultimately reduced. Due to accidental exposure to COVID-19, the positive cases were found in print media businesses. This has impacted its production and distribution. This had a direct impact on sales and the salaries of the employees. Many of employees have lost their jobs and faced pay cut of salaries. Some of print media shut down operations due to COVID-19. It has been found that with the advancement of Information Technology the Print Media is already going through a tough time. The COVID-19 pandemic had the additive effect on the low business of print Media. The research on COVID-19 has found out that the newspaper does not cause the spread of this virus. Hence, the Government directed the Print Media to start the printing and distribution of newspapers. This has led some relief to the entire Print Media.

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