



The Economics Of Print Media In Sikkim: A Field Perspective

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I. Introduction:

“Roti, Kapada aur Makaan ” (english translation – “Food, Cloth and Shelter) a 1974 blockbuster bollywood movie, became a household dialogue in its era and even today it’s often heard in the land of diversity when the topic is “Basic needs of human”. In the contemporary society, the item does not end at item number 3 and embrace many packages. From that heap of packages, Media, communication and economics is the agenda.

Humans, being characterized social, needs communication and media. In a recent study published in *Nature Neuroscience*, a team of researchers led by Rebecca Saxe, a neuroscientist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, reported that social interaction is a basic human need, just like food and water. Particularly, post- pandemic, the realisation about the importance of communication and media has grown exponent.

Respectively, Milton Friedman (1942) quote goes “There’s no such thing as a free lunch” which connotes numerous senses, give a direct message about the importance of money, finance and economics, which is the basic requirement for all forms of basic needs.

Communication needs media (medium) and it can range from oral to written, verbal to non-verbal, Sadharanikaran to semiotics, Personal to Corporate, Intra to Mass, and Print to Artificial Intelligence and many more categories, styles and levels. Human’s basic need of communication and social interaction, has a hidden thirst, the thirst for fact, truth, verity, veracity, reliability, accuracy and objectivity in communication. There is where Print media tops the chart.

This form of media has a rich history in almost every region of the world. In India, the year was 1780 when the first newspaper, “Bengal Gazette” (print media) saw the light of the day. Since then the number stands to 1,46,045 print publications (Newspapers & Other periodicals) registered in India till 31st March, 2022 as per the Office of Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI) report “Press in India 2021-2022. This massive growth line shows the growth of demand for Print media among its audience.

II. Overview

As identified the hidden thirst of communication as fact, truth, verity, veracity, reliability, accuracy and objectivity. There is an urgent need to understand the economics of print media, to analyze and test whether the thirst has been wrenched with pure or adulterated water.

To understand the economics of print media means understanding the ownership pattern and the revenue generation pattern i.e. Circulation and Advertisement, which are the main and primary sources of revenue generation of print media, often termed as DUAL ECONOMY.

To order to fulfill the objective, the Print media, especially newspaper is taken into account from the Indian state Sikkim, of the north eastern region. The 22nd state is the second smallest state on India. The population of the land is 610,577 as per census 2011 with a density of 86 per kilometre. The state is divided into six district and the post populated district is Gangtok (Previously known as east district), is the main hub of print media.

Secondary data has been retrieved from two leading organization of India, Registrar of Newspaper India (RNI) and Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC). Further official website of the Government of Sikkim is also one of the sources.

Primary data has been collected with the help of Interview among 8 random weekly newspaper of Sikkim, operating from Gangtok.

III.a): DATA

In India, there are 22 official languages, recognized under the eighth scheduled of Indian Constitution. Nepali is one among that 22 language, recognized on 20th August 1992 and Nepali Language is the Lingua Franca of the state.

A total number of 24 Nepali publications are there in India, out of which 16 publications is from Sikkim, 3 from Maharashtra, 2 from Uttarakhand and 1 each from Delhi, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal.

As per the Report “Press in India 2021-2022” by “OFFICE OF REGISTRAR OF NEWSPAPERS FOR INDIA, Government of India ”

Table No.1 Total Number of Registered Newspapers as on 31.03.2022 (Language & Periodicity-wise)

Language	Dailies	Tri/Bi Weeklies	Weeklies	Fortnightlies	Monthlies	Quarterlies	Annals	Others	Total
Hindi	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	5
Nepali	7	2	71	0	2	0	0	2	84
Urdu	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
English	10	0	6	1	3	3	0	2	25
Bilingual	0	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	4
Total	23	2	81	1	6	3	0	4	120

Also, it should be noted that out of 120 registered newspaper, only 27 newspapers submitted their Annual statement in the year 2021-2022 that makes only 22.5 per cent submitting their data.

The highest circulated Newspaper is the Sikkim Express, having a circulation of 39,814 per day as per the report.

Table No. 2. Publications/circulation which filed Annual Statement for 2021-2022 (language & Periodicity – wise)

Chapter 9: Press In States And Union Territories

Table No.9.30(b)
Circulation of Newspapers
 (Language & Periodicity-wise)

SIKKIM

S.No	Language	Daily		Weekly		Fortnightly		Monthly		Quarterly		Annual		Others		Total	
		Number	Average Circulation	Number	Average Circulation	Number	Average Circulation	Number	Average Circulation	Number	Circulation	Number	Average Circulation	Number	Average Circulation	Number	Average Circulation
1	Hindi	4	46897	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	46897
2	Nepali	4	70303	12	15950	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	86253
3	Urdu	2	31400	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	31400
4	English	5	109146	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	109146
	Total	15	257746	12	15950	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	27	273696

Source: Annual Statement 2021-22

III.b) Ownership:

As per the Report “Press of India 2021-22, a total nine number of ownership is mentioned and they are: Central Government, State Government, Educational, Political Organization, Society Trust, Individual, Public Ltd, Private Ltd Firm and Others.

Out of which 26 newspaper claims to have individual Ownership (weeklies newspaper) and 1 newspaper claim under Private Ltd Firm.

AUDIT BUREAU OF CIRCULATIONS

Table No.3: Language wise certified circulation figures for the Audit periods July-December 2022 & January-June 2022 , As on 11th April, 2023

ABC **AUDIT BUREAU OF CIRCULATIONS**

Language wise certified circulation figures for the Audit periods July-December 2022 & January-June 2022
As on 11th April, 2023

LANGUAGE	DAILY NEWSPAPERS		WEEKLY NEWSPAPERS		MAGAZINES	
	Jul-Dec 2022	Jan-Jun 2022	Jul-Dec 2022	Jan-Jun 2022	Jul-Dec 2022	Jan-Jun 2022
Assamese	75,102	4	90,411	0		
Bengali	1,829,147	10	1,302,369	0	325,188	1
English	3,057,588	80	2,385,216	57	1,051,880	40
Gujarati	802,942	7	43,287	1		
Hindi	14,019,102	102	13,137,402	137	750,491	18
Kannada	1,785,000	40	1,702,126	26		
Khasi	13,884	1				
Manipuri	3,909,872	36	3,652,362	36	215,448	2
Marathi	26,576	1	25,301	1		
Murshahi	2,813,880	38	175,388	4	247,558	4
Nepali	27,139	1	26,080	1		
Oriya	221,790	1	229,087	1		
Punjabi	447,710	0	407,520	0		
Tamil	1,890,783	36	1,821,002	26		
Telugu	2,741,338	80	2,592,788	81		
Urdu	99,004	0	91,148	0		
Total Certified Circulation	31,488,990	480	27,734,796	367	2,816,574	63

As per the government data from the Government of Sikkim official website, the total expenditure on print media by the government is as follows: (only three years data available).

Table No.4: Media-wise Expenditure Incurred on Campaigns undertaken by BOC in Print and Electronic Media from 2017-18 to 2019-20 (From: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting)

Published On: **26/07/2021**/ Updated On**08/09/2021**

Media-wise	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Print	462.22	301.03	129.18
TV	109.87	123.11	25.68

Statistics show that there is great affinity towards the regional language publications among readers and that is why such publications are venturing out to bring editions from other cities where there is sizeable population of the people speaking respective languages.

Analysing the data, it is clearly visible is **Weekly newspaper** has the highest number of registration and owned by **Individual**.

Individual Ownership:

Definition: Individual Ownership is basically more common among weekly newspapers. The owner usually is the editor, printer, publisher and manager, etc. He does the entire work himself and when necessary serves in almost any position in the plant. (Aggarwal & Gupta, 2001)

Advantages

- 1) The owner makes all decision related to business and editorial policies.
- 2) He is given absolute control of newspaper
- 3) He receives all profit and bears losses whatever occurs
- 4) He keeps intimate connections with the newspaper
- 5) He maintains secrecy in operations
- 6) He makes quick decisions.

Disadvantages:

- 1) The owner is liable for the newspaper's entire debt.
- 2) Unlimited liability is placed on the individual owner
- 3) Individual ownership is not adaptable to an expanding business
- 4) In case of owner's death decline in business is evident
- 5) Long term loans may be difficult to obtain, since creditors must consider the life expectancy of the proprietor
- 6) Success of the newspaper depends heavily on the ability and credit status of the owner

IV: INTERVIEW DATA:

Sl No.	Questions	O1	O2	O3	O4	O5	O6	O7	O8
1	You the owner of the newspaper Yes1 No2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
2	Any other person recruited Yes1 No2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
3	Why Not recruited Financial Issues 1 Staff Issues 2 Others 3	1	1	1	2	1	1	3	1
4	What is your role in your newspaper Reporter1 Editor2 Distribution3 Revenue department4 All5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
5	Apart from field reporting, what are the other sources of news News agencies1 Press Release2 Freelancer3 Others4 All5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
6	How many pages are there in your newspaper	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2

	21 4.....2 6.....3 8.....4								
7	What is the circulation data of your newspaper Less than 500 copies per day1 More than 500 copies per day2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
8	What is the price of your newspaper Less than Rs.51 More than Rs.52 Equal to Rs.53	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	1
9	What is the advertisement rate in your newspaper Less than Rs.250 per sq. cm1 More than Rs.250 per sq. cm2	1	1	1	4	1	1	1	1
10	How are the main advertisers Private1 Government2 Both3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
11	Who are the main advertisers Private1 Government2 Both3	2	2	2	2	1	2	3	2

V.RESULT:

Analysing the interview indicates that the definition of Individual ownership fits tightly in this category where one single person multiple roles in the newspaper, right starting from report collecting to editing, distribution to revenue generation. Though in the advantage and disadvantage category, there is no discussion about the quality of news, which is the core of any news, gets massively hampered when managed by one single person.

The Dual Economy pattern is not a new thing. Though circulation and advertisement are the two sources of revenue generation, circulation hardly covers the cost of product (newspaper) as the production cost is comparable higher than the price of the product. The price is kept low because of the Basic Human Right to Information. It is the revenue department that keeps the organization alive/survive. However, advertisement is related to circulation, as higher circulation attracts higher sponsor of advertisement due to requirement to reach maximum audience.

However, here it can be seen that the weekly newspaper just fulfil the minimum criteria of 500 copies per day circulation as laid down by the Government of India, especially for selected states of India, in which Sikkim is also incorporate (others state are Jammu & Kashmir, Adaman and Nicobar Islands, Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Manipur, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh) In other parts of India, the minimum circulation requirement is 2000 copies per day as per the Central Bureau of Communication (DAVP- Directorate of Advertising and Visual Publicity)

However, the last two question indicated that majority of the sponsors are the Government organization/wings, who helps the weekly newspaper to survive with these little number of circulations.

Apart from the above indication, there is another new angle, i.e. employment. During the interview, the reason of the massive growth of weekly newspaper is Sikkim under Individual ownership was found to be substitute for employment. The government sponsored advertisement does not only help to generate revenue for the survival of the weekly newspaper but also act as an employment to the owner.

However, this weekly newspaper cannot fully fulfil the duty of the fourth estate of democracy, because of the ownership pattern, which directly hamper the quality of the product.

VI. CONCLUSION:

The Media Ownership Monitor India, 2018 report examples such as, Asianet News Malayalam and Suvarna News Kannada, are owned by Asianet News Network Limited, or ANN. But is majorly owned by Jupiter Capital, a company owned by Rajeev Chandrasekar, Member of Parliament from India's ruling party, the Bhartiya Janata Party or BJP. The Darda brothers, former Ministers of the Indian National Congress government in Maharashtra and in the previous Congress led regime at the Centre, United Progressive Alliance (UPA) own Lokmat. The biggest media conglomerate in South India, the Sun group is run by Kalanithi Maran, the grand-nephew of the former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Muthuvel Karunanidhi of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam. News live, a prominent news television channel in the eastern part is run by Tinika Bhuyan Sarma, the wife of the minister in the BJP government in Assam,

Himant Biswa saran. Sakal, a prominent Marathi newspaper is run by the family of Sharad Pawar, President of the Nationalist Congress Party” establishing the relation between media and political organization.

The relation between the duo is not a new thing, Worlds is full of example, right starting from World War time when Germany and United States of America used movie/cinemas for war propaganda to been used presently is election campaign. Huge amount of funds is been utilised to create public opinion favouring the sponsoring party.

The basic need of human for communication is met but as the curiosity about the purity comes in question, it is the economics that needs attention.

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SIKKIM GOVERNMENT

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