Chapter-V

Inter-State Comparison of Newspaper Industry

The first Press Commission had rightly emphasized the fact that the medium and small newspapers had to develop a regional or local character as the case might be. This means more regional news, more local news, regional or local social service campaigns, to develop and strengthen its bond with its primary consumers, the readers. It has to become the paper of the people living in the district or region. Of course, it should carry national and international news; but in brief: "In this we can learn from the experience of the United States where local newspapers play a very significant role in their restricted fields". (1)

(1) Advertising and Small Newspapers: by Subrata Sanyal 1964, page: 18
The major English daily in the entire north-eastern region is The Assam Tribune with its present total circulation of about 40,000. The paper is being published on an average with six pages and occasionally 8 pages. This 42-year-old daily is still having such a poor circulation although the entire region with a total population of about two crores consider it to be the only major daily from the region itself. However, one cannot overlook the fact that the region is not highly populated. According to 1971 census, the entire north-eastern region has a total population of 19,581,000 of whom 17,735,000 live in rural areas while only 1,846,000 live in the urban and semi-urban areas. (1) Secondly, there is the lack of proper communication facilities; the morning newspapers from Gauhati cannot reach Itanagar, capital of Arunachal Pradesh or Imphal, capital of Manipur, the same day. There is daily air service between Gauhati.

(1) Statistical Handbook of Assam.
and Imphal but not between Gauhati and Imphal. This is because the rural people are not interested in English newspapers. Hence the circulation of The Assam Tribune remains poor and because of this, the organization as an industry could not grow rapidly.

Here we can compare the Assam Tribune organization with certain similar English dailies appearing from different parts of the country. Take for instance, the Deccan Herald. This English daily, first started in 1948 from Bangalore, is one of the major English dailies commanding a total circulation of 89,670. (1)

Behind the growth of the newspaper must be certain factors like better communication facilities, higher percentage of literacy in the region and bigger population. Whereas the Hindu, the noted English national daily from the South, having started its new edition

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(1) Press in India, 1977.
from Bangalore since 1970, has now been commanding a
total circulation of that particular issue of 25,655.(1)

An old English daily, Searchlight, which started
appearing from Patna since 1919, is still struggling
with its 18,461; but another English daily, Indian Nation,
being published from Patna since 1970, commands a
total circulation of 54,720 copies per day.(2)

According to the 21st report of the Registrar of
Newspapers for India, 1977, "Even though the number
of dailies in 1976 showed a marginal increase to
875 in 1976 from 835 in 1975, their circulation fell
from 9.383 million to 9.338 million, that is by
45,000 copies. Their share in the total circulation
of all newspapers also decreased from 38.4 per cent
in 1975 to 37.8 per cent in 1976. Another point that
emerges from available data is that in spite of a marginal

(1) Press in India, 1977.
(2) Ibid
increase in the total circulation of all newspapers, their rate of growth fell from 2.2, per cent in 1975 to 0.7 per cent in 1976." (1)

Here we are more concerned with the medium newspapers, having a circulation ranging between 15,001 and 50,000 copies per publishing day. It is a fact that there has been a citywise concentration of the newspapers in the country. During 1976, 773 English and 438 Hindi newspapers were published from Delhi. Of the other metropolitan cities, Bombay published 503 newspapers in English and 69 in Hindi, Calcutta had 288 in English and 81 in Hindi, Madras had 197 in English and 8 in Hindi. During the year 1976, Uttar Pradesh where the number of dailies fell from 134 in 1975 to 128, lost its position as the premier publisher State for dailies to Maharashtra where 129 dailies were published.

(1) Press in India, 1977
Madhya Pradesh(78), Karnataka(76) and Tamil Nadu(66) are some of the other major publisher States. (1)

The medium newspapers are being published from the towns with a total population ranging between 100,000 and 1,000,000. The total number of such towns was 107. (2) Of these, 64 towns have either no daily newspapers or have dailies with a circulation below 5000 copies or with no accurate circulation figures available. Only 113 dailies in 44 towns keep accurate circulation figures, but majority of the dailies are in Indian languages. Of these, 58 are medium and 55 small newspapers. (3)

The Press Institute of India sent a questionnaire during 1964 to the selected 113 dailies (58 medium and 55 small) to elicit information, covering a period of three years 1961-63, on different sources of advertising revenue and their relative share of the total space.

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(1) Press in India, 1977
(3) Ibid
consumed: the percentage of advertising to editorial space; the pattern of Government advertising and advertising of consumer products; percentage of space devoted to international, national and local news; promotional activities undertaken for increasing and diversifying sources of advertising revenue and increasing circulation; rate of increase in circulation and advertising space; the organisation and administration for securing advertisements and media, readership and market information provided to advertisers and advertising agencies.

The questionnaire was followed up by personal visits to 16 select towns with a population between 100,000 and 500,000, publishing the largest number of dailies and with the most rapid urbanization during the sixties. The 16 towns selected are: Vijaywada, Guwahati, Patna, Baroda, Cochin, Jabalpur, Coimbatore, Nasik, Bangalore,
Hubli, Cuttack, Jullundur, Jaipur, Varanasi, Allahabad and Shillong.

These 16 towns cause fairly representative market conditions. According to the Market Rating Indices, produced by Clarion Advertising Services Private Ltd., the towns covered ranged from market ratings 3.15 to 22.50 in relation to the Calcutta Corporation area taken as 100, and 7th to 71st in order of their ratings. The total number of dailies visited in these 16 towns came to 54 of which 28 were medium and 26 small. Of the medium papers, only six have a circulation of more than 25,000 and only one has just crossed the 50,000 mark. Only seven of the papers covered are in English of which four are medium sized dailies.

However, the PII questionnaire could not succeed in getting adequate replies, and hence there was no detailed analysis on the issues. In general, in the medium dailies, the ratio of space of news to advertising
ranged between 60 : 40 and 80 : 20 and in small daily.

90:10. There are few dailies which did not get any
advertising support.

During 1976, the small and medium newspapers in
various States and Union Territories could not fare
well. The total number of medium newspapers fell
to 234 in 1976 from 240 in 1975, while their circulation
also fell from 6.460 to 6.228 million. Small newspapers,
decayed numerically to 7,188 in 1976 from 7565 in the
previous year, while circulation plummeted from
15,608 million to 14,862 million over the same period. (1)

It is a fact that due to certain natural advantages,
newspapers both in English and regional languages, in
States other than Assam, commanded more circulation and
advertising revenues. While the Indian Nation (1930),
English daily from Patna, enjoys a circulation of
54,700 in 1976 and the Hindi daily, Aryavarta(1940),

(1) Press in India, 1977
75,629 copies per day, not a single daily from the north-eastern region can claim similar circulation.

The Jullundur Urdu daily, Hind Samachar (1948) itself commands a circulation of 52,673 copies per day while the Oriya daily, Samaj (1919) from cuttack sells 50,089 copies. Again, the Gujarati daily, Gujarat Samachar (1932) published from Ahmedabad sells 1,07,740 copies and another Gujarati daily, Sandesh (1923) enjoys a circulation of 1,01,709 copies per day. The following language dailies enjoy circulation beyond a lakh copies per day: Prajavani (1948), Kannada daily from Bangalore (1,07,791 copies), Mathrubhumi daily (1962), Malayalam daily from Cochin (1,40,394 copies), the Calicut edition of the same daily enjoys a circulation of 1,12,101 copies, the Malayalam Manorama (1938) from Kottayam (20,9841 copies), the Calicut edition of the same daily enjoys a circulation of 1,17,603 copies.
In Assam, the highest circulated Assamese daily, the Dainik Assam (1965), now enjoys a total circulation of about 30,000 (24,335 copies per day in 1976) and the Assamese weekly, the Asam Bani (1955) commands a total weekly circulation of about 40,000 copies (31,795 copies in 1976). But one must admit the fact that Assam is a small State with a total population of only 166,263.

The rural people in Assam seldom read and subscribe to any newspaper. This may because the newspapers also fail to cater to the needs of the people living in the rural areas of Assam. The vast bulk of the Indian people, more than 50 per cent, according to some estimates (such as those of Danekar and Rath in 'Poverty in India'), continues to live below the poverty line determined by any standard whatsoever. For the Press in India, the poor are virtually non-existent. They are not a part of its constituency. Advertisers are not concerned with the poor, who buy few goods. The poor...
newspapers. In fact the social universe in which the newspapers and journalists circulate comprises no more than 25 per cent of the nation's population. The remaining three-fourths inhabit the outer darkness. What the newspapers present as public opinion reflects at best the interest of this 25 per cent—more often of its upper reaches. (1)

The rural poor people are same in almost all the States in the country. If any of them read newspaper, they read only the language papers. Hence, it is generally believed that with growth of literacy, the circulation of the language dailies will automatically increase. Once there is the growth of the circulation, the very economic foundation of the paper is laid and it can serve its readers in better way.

At the moment, the medium newspapers in all the States are surviving not because of its revenue earned through

(1) The Press and the People : by Dr. [Name] article in book under same title, revised [Date].
sale of the paper, but through the revenue earned through sale of its space to the advertisers. Even in case of The Assam Tribune, the advertisement revenue is always higher than the circulation revenue. Similarly is the case with most of the other similar newspapers in other parts of the country. This is because "there is, however, a growing consciousness that small and medium newspapers are useful media for a wide range of mass consumer products and even durable consumer goods. This is evident from the fact that national advertisers provide major share of the advertising revenue of the small and medium dailies". (1)

However, the basic principle of advertising is: maximum effect at minimum cost. In assessing the value of a newspaper, it is usual to consider the mill rate or the cost of a single column centimetre to reach

per thousand of its circulation. This is where small and medium newspapers face a problem. While their advertising rates are lower than those of the big newspapers, the medium rate tends to be much higher because of the lower circulation. This acts as a deterrent to the consumption of more advertising space in these publications, unless there are other overriding factors. Other objections raised by national advertisers and agencies are poor reproduction facilities and smaller and localised circulation. There is a lack of adequate, regular and complete media information from the publications.

There is no doubt that a developing economy and growing urbanisation have been slowly but steadily expanding the market for a wide variety of products in semi-urban and rural areas. A live marketing organisation is conscious of the need to reach out to these newly developing areas and small and medium newspapers can help to some extent.
An analysis of the circulation figures of six major English dailies again showed that in eight out of thirteen States, the respective local dailies had a higher circulations than that of the six major dailies taken together. For example, the total circulation of The Tribune is much higher than that of the national dailies taken together for the State or the north-eastern region. The circulation of the so-called national dailies is strongest only around the publishing centre or centres, the circulation decreases as the paper goes further from the publishing centre. "It is obvious, therefore, that India has no 'national newspaper' in the sense the term is understood in unitary countries of the West. Thus a small or a medium newspaper can provide a valuable means of communication to many advertisers instead in the developing markets in the small towns." But this is generally true of the consumption products.

radios, bi-cycles, sewing machines, soap, time-pieces, watches, etc. which are in demand in the newly developing markets and whose production targets are very high. The consumer habits are rapidly changing in the countryside and the desire for branded products started growing. At the same time, it has to be understood that a major break-through cannot be expected with national advertisers. The small and medium newspapers are obviously not suitable media for industrial advertising, except for a very few items. So these papers have to develop other sources of advertising revenue while organising themselves, to make a greater bid for a larger share of the expanding consumer advertising.

The medium newspapers like The Assam Tribune or the Dainik Asam in Assam have already developed a regional or local character. This means, they publish more regional or local news, covering regional or local social services campaigns to develop and
strengthen its bonds with its primary consumers, the readers. The paper has been trying to become the paper of the people of its district or region. Of course, it carries national and international news, but in brief.

It is a fact that the small and medium newspapers throughout the country are facing much difficulties in increasing circulation and improving financial position due to the existence of the big national newspapers which are being published from more than one place. These national newspapers are wresting away some of the dues on matters of advertisement and avenue for increase in circulation from the small and medium papers as these cannot be direct confrontation between the two. In Assam, Bihar and Orissa, the small and medium newspapers, published from different places of the three states, cannot grow rapidly because of the existence of the major big newspapers in Calcutta. These Calcutta papers, which are published generally by big concerns
chain publications, easily intrude into the business and circulation markets of the small and medium newspapers of the neighbouring States. One cannot blame the readers for subscribing to these big papers since these big papers are being produced in a better way and in bigger form than the small and medium papers.

The big papers give more news, more views on current topics, they have a set of writers or experts to write immediately on the national, international and sometimes regional or local issues. Because of the bigger circulation, the advertisers generally go for these big papers without caring to the interest of the small and medium papers.

The regional newspapers could come up in a big way in a State like Gujarat simply because the total population in the State is much higher than those in Assam or in the north-eastern region. The percentage literacy there is also high and hence the...
the Gujarat Samachar, has by now managed to command
to total circulation of 1,07,740 (during 1976) and the
other Gujarati daily, the Sandesh also enjoys circu­
lation over one lakh copies per day. Similar is the
came with the Malayalam dailies, like the Mathrubhumi
or the Malayalam Manorama, which sells beyond two lakhé
copies per day. This is because of more population in the
area and more percentage of literacy there. With
bigger circulations, these papers can provide their
readers with more materials so that they cannot feel
anything for spending the amount to buy the papers.

The small and medium newspapers should try to
improve their quality and standard. There must be better
communication between these papers and the advertising
agencies and advertisers. If the quality of the papers
gets improved, automatically it will enjoy higher
circulation revenue as the readers will go for it.

The medium English dailies like The Assam


, the Pioneer (1865) of Lucknow, the National Herald (1930) of Lucknow and New Delhi, the Searchlight (1919) of Patna, are, by and large, facing the similar problems. The same is the case with other language newspapers having circulation below 50,000 copies per day. But with growth of literacy among the masses and also with new awareness among the advertisers in the country, the economy of the small and medium newspapers also started growing, but gradually. One must admit the fact that the medium newspapers, both in English and in any regional language, are enjoying growing popularity in all respects throughout the country.