

## **A Study on the Persistence and Growth of Print Media in Tamil Nadu amidst the Rise of Digital and Social Media in the Recent Times**

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### **Abstract**

Print and electronic media platforms have a very important role in ensuring development communication in a country. In India, the government utilizes print platforms to ensure a widecoverage of messages through various newspapers and other similar publications. Print media platforms are a form of traditional media platforms which have a very important role in the process of development communication. The benefits of the print media platforms in India have been mostly influenced by the historical experience of the platforms and also with their association with the freedom movement and also with movements for social reforms and progress. Today the print media platforms, in both developed and under-developed countries are using many modern and highly developed technologies and they also face very strong competition from electronic media platforms. This study studies the circulation trends of the print media: newspaper and magazines in Tamil Nadu and also discussed how the role of print media in recent era. It also concentrates on what is the impact of new electronic media on the print media.(Zacharias, 2021).Tamil Nadu is a leading example in this aspect; with regards to the consumption of news, awareness of news and consciousness of politics and political affairs. This study tries to explain some of the causes behind this dip in growth internationally and the rise in news consumption in India and nationally at the same time. It has adopted a mixed methodology consisting of survey questionnaire, in-depth interviews with publishers, editors and journalists and content analysis of selected print media outlets.

**Keywords:** *Print media, Electronic media, Social media and People*

### **Introduction**

In order to communicate with each other human being is using means of verbal and non-verbal for centuries. Communication is used as a means to promote empowerment tool in developing societies. It is also used as a means to ensure the participation of the citizens in the development activities and processes in the countries. Millions of people in developing countries are excluded from a wide range of information and knowledge, with the rural poor in particular remaining isolated from both traditional media and new information and communication technologies which would improve their life.

There are two words in development communication, development and communication. The meaning of these two words is: - communication is a message understood or sharing of experience. Development is about change. It is about changing for the better. It could also be about social or economic changes, growth and development.

When we refer to development communication, it is about such communication that can be used for development. It is also about utilizing communication to change or enhance some aspects. The messages which are designed to transform the behaviour of people or for improving their quality of life can be termed as development communication and these messages used to change the socio-economic condition of people. Therefore, development communication can be defined as the use of communication to promote development. Print and electronic media platforms play a major role in the process of development communication of any country. Even after the emergence of electronic media platforms such as radio and television, the print media platforms have not lost their special and relevance. They have the advantage of creating a better and sustained impact in the minds of the readers with more detailed reporting and analysis.

The contribution of print media in providing information and transfer of knowledge is remarkable. Now-a-days, print media is faster than all ever before due to amazing advances in technology in recent years. Technical breakthroughs alter the way we perceive the universe and manner in which we communicate with one another. So it's become important to study recent trends of print media- newspaper, magazines, booklet etc in the development communication of country and worldwide.

### **Need for the Study**

Despite the rapid growth of social media, print media continues to hold significance in Tamil Nadu. However, the industry faces challenges in adapting to the changing media landscape.

The need for this study arises from the following factors:

1. Limited research on print media resilience: Existing studies focus primarily on the decline of print media, neglecting its persistence and growth in regions like Tamil Nadu.
2. Regional perspective: Tamil Nadu's unique cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic context warrants a localized study to understand print media's role.
3. Impact of social media on traditional media: The rise of social media has transformed media consumption patterns, making it essential to investigate its effects on print media.
4. Industry relevance: Print media outlets seek strategies to remain relevant and sustainable amidst digital disruption.
5. Policy implications: Understanding print media's persistence and growth informs policy decisions on media regulation, censorship, and public outreach.
6. Knowledge gap: Existing literature lacks empirical evidence on the current state of print media in Tamil Nadu, its challenges, and opportunities.

This study aims to bridge these gaps by exploring the persistence and growth of print media in Tamil Nadu, providing insights for stakeholders, policymakers, and media scholars.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the key factors contributing to print media's persistence in Tamil Nadu?
2. How have the social media platforms affected print media consumption and advertising revenue?

3. What policies and actions have the print media platforms used to be relevant?
4. What are the policy implications which have emerged from the continued importance of the print media platforms?

### **Objectives**

1. To examine the current state of print media in Tamil Nadu.
2. To analyze the impact of social media on the print media industry.
3. To identify factors contributing to the persistence and growth of print media.
4. To study and explore the policies and actions utilized by the print media platforms to remain relevant

### **Review of Literature**

#### ***Global Decline in Print Media: Circulation and Consumption***

The Western media platforms had seen a severe decrease in news consumption in the general and print media platforms from the mid-1990s onwards. The weekday print circulation (excluding readership) had dropped from 60 million in 1994 to 35 million (both print and digital circulation) in 2018 in the United States of America. Britain seems to have followed suit. Newspapers have gradually in circulation by 6-10 % annually from 2005 and 200 local and regional newspapers have disappeared or ceased publication since then. This disappearing trend has caused so much concern that former Prime Minister Theresa May had described it as a “danger to democracy” (Singh, 2019).

#### ***Trends of Indian Print Media Publications: Producing A Different Trend as compared to the Global Trends of Decreasing Print Media Readership***

Whereas circulation figures for print publications have declined in most developed markets, the Indian case demonstrates a rather unusual spike according to the 2017 report of the Audit Bureau of Circulations Report (ABCR) (Zacharias, 2021). According to the report, the average number of print media publication copies in India has grown from 2.37 crore from 2006 to 2016 (Zacharias, 2021). This shows an average growth from 3.91 crore copies per day in 2006 to 6.28 crore copies per day in 2016.

The ABCR has substantiated these results by saying that the print media platforms in India is developing and flourishing, despite strong competition from media industries such as television, radio and digital media. The numbers published in the report are also a proof that the development of the print media platforms is mostly due to the Indian languages.

While print media publications in Hindi recorded the fastest growth, at a rate of 8.76% from 2006 to 2016, print media publications in Telugu, Kannada, Tamil and Malayalam recorded growths at the following rates after Hindi during this period; 8.28%, 6.4%, 5.51 % and 4.11. However, English print media publications, recorded a below average growth during the same period at a rate of only 2.87 % (ABCR, 2017). Thus, India, seems to have recorded a different trend of print publication readership as compared to the global trends (Zehra, 2017).

Writer and politician Shashi Tharoor also agrees with these trends as he said that newspaper distribution in India has increased from 39.1 million copies in 2006 to 62.8 million in 2016 and it has recorded 60 % increase. While comparing this data with the corresponding data for 2015, the data illustrates while newspaper distribution grew at a rate of 12 % in the country, it decreased in many countries such as UK (12%), USA (7%), Germany and France (7%).

Shashi Tharoor also listed some reasons behind this trend such as increasing literacy levels in the country and disposable incomes in the last twenty years and the presumed authenticity of the printed word.(Zehra, 2017). In this regard, media commentator Vinita Kohli-Khandekar observed that print media publications have always sold well in the country and listed the two reasons behind that such as the supremacy of the written word and also due to the fact that the newspapers are delivered at the houses of the people in India.

Vinita Kohli-Khandekar had also observed that newspapers began declining in the Western countries due to the aspect of volition as the people had to go to a newsstand and purchase newspapers and in India, they would get the newspapers at their doorsteps. (Zehra, 2017).

India witnessed the development of many media empires till the earl 21<sup>st</sup> century despite the global slowdown of the growth of print media platforms. While the growth and development of these empires was due to their English publications and channels, what was remarkable was the development of the media in the 21 officially recognized languages. (Pande, 2020). While English newspapers occupied the lead position in the 1960s, Hindi and Tamil newspapers were second and third. However, matters started changing a lot drastically after the 1990s (Zehra, 2017).

The growth in the circulation of Hindi newspapers has been as rapid as the development in the literacy levels in mostly Hindi speaking states in India. While education levelshad increased from 52 to 74 per cent nationally from 1991 and 2011, the rise has been fast – from 42% to 69% in the Empowered Action Group (EAG) states( Zacharias, 2021; Zehra, 2017).

Shashi Tharoor noted India's increasing literacy rate as a basic reason behind a growing newspaper market. This shift in the newspaper market can be mostly growth in the literacy rates in the northern states and the Hindi speaking belt in the country. This present scenario is noticeably different from the situation in the 1960s when the Hindi speaking people were less educated than the readers of newspapers in languages such as the English, Tamil and Bengali. The present situation was very different as compared to the 1960s when Hindi speakers were mostly less literate in comparison to readers of English, Tamil, and Bengali newspapers, due to which Hindi newspapers had low distributions. (Tharoor, 2017). Presently, however, they have the highest circulations for the past twenty years and they had recorded a growth rate of 8.78% annually since 2006. (Tharoor, 2017).

While Tharoor does not have the opinion that this will last forever, he also does not think that the print media platformshave a serious problem of becoming financially unfeasible. (Tharoor, 2017). The revenues of the print and digital media advertising are expected by become steady by 2021, according to the predictions of ABCR. However, regarding the aspect of advertising revenues, he states firmly that the Indian print media publications will be in a greaterplace than the print media publications from the Western countries. The present numbers shows that the print media publications will continue to flourish in India. (Tharoor, 2017).

In this regard, he also said that India presently had the biggest number of paid newspapers globally and the paid newspapers continues to grow; registering an increase from 5767 in 2013 to 7871 in 2015. In the same period of time (2013-2015), 50 newspapers had stopped publication in the USA, which is less than 25% of the print newspapers in India.

### ***New Media Impact on Print Media***

With the emergence of the television and the new media (internet), it can be argued that newspapers are becoming irrelevant in terms of providing the latest news. However, both media have their own importance. Written media publications have a much more longer lifespan than the electronic media publications. Written media publications have made history archivable and error-free. The age of an ancient manuscript discovered while digging a historical site provides information about the historical period which it was written, which is not possible with electronic media. Print media is durable. Anyone can post their articles unnamed and share their views. It is hard to identify the actual writers of the articles. Anyone can copy any information and share it as their own with electronic media platforms. Plagiarism is increasing a lot these days. The information published by a newspaper is typically more reliable and real but this is not the situation with electronic media. Electronic media platforms depend on electricity. In the rural areas or areas with recurring power cuts, they are not a feasible replacement for newspapers. Print media publications are easy to purchase and broadly read. Anyone can purchase them since it is cheap and easy to purchase in the remote villages. Subscribing to newspapers costs less than making an Internet connection in a country like India. Print media publications are local to the cities or regions and also publish information about the local events in these cities or towns such as screenings of plays and inter-school chess competitions.

### ***Tamil Nadu: An Exemplar in Readership, Public Awareness & News Consumption***

According to the Indian Readership Survey report of 2017, 59.73% of the people in Tamil Nadu receive newspapers as compared to the national average of 16.55 %. (Cris, 2018).

In addition to this, Sashi Kumar Menon is a senior media professional who has stated that Tamil Nadu has always been driven by news and current affairs and also that the people of Tamil Nadu has very high levels of awareness of news and current affairs. He has also said that the people of the state have very high news awareness. The reasons behind this are very informed public, a very nice education system, literacy and history of being informed about different types of issues. He also stated that Tamil Nadu should be the state which has recorded the best performance in the country with regards to news consumption. (Cris, 2018).

Thus, the practice of reading newspapers is viewed as one of the natural habits of a Tamilian. Despite the simplification and the practice of tabloidization which has become very common in print media platforms, they continue to have an edge over visual media platforms.

### **Research Methodology**

1. Research Design: Mixed-methods approach (quantitative and qualitative).

2. Objective: To study on the persistence and growth of print media in Tamil Nadu amidst the rise of digital and social media in the recent times.
3. Sampling Method: Random sampling has been adopted to collect data from the respondents.
4. Sample Size: 500 respondents (print media readers, advertisers, publishers).
5. Data Collection:
  - a. Survey questionnaire (print media consumption habits, preferences).
  - b. In-depth interviews and Focus Group Discussions with publishers, editors, and journalists.
  - c. Content analysis of select print media outlets.
6. Data Analysis:
  - a. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages).
  - b. Inferential statistics (correlation, regression)
  - c. Thematic analysis (interviews, content analysis).
7. Expected Outcomes:
  - a. Insights into print media's persistence and growth.
  - b. Strategies for print media outlets to thrive.
  - c. Recommendations for stakeholders.

## Analysis and Findings

**Table 1 Frequency of Print Media Consumption**

| Category | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------|-----------|------------|
| Daily    | 120       | 24%        |
| Weekly   | 150       | 30%        |
| Monthly  | 100       | 20%        |
| Rarely   | 80        | 16%        |
| Never    | 50        | 10%        |
| Total    | 500       | 100%       |

This table shows the frequency of print media consumption among the respondents. The majority (30%) consume print media weekly, followed by daily (24%) and monthly(20%) consumption.

**Table 2 Preferred Content in Print Media**

| Category      | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------|-----------|------------|
| News          | 250       | 50%        |
| Entertainment | 150       | 30%        |
| Education     | 50        | 10%        |
| Lifestyle     | 20        | 4%         |
| Other         | 30        | 6%         |
| Total         | 500       | 100%       |

This table shows the preferred content in print media among the respondents. The majority (50%) prefer news, followed entertainment (30%) and education (10%)

**Table 3 Social Media for News Consumption**

| Category | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------|-----------|------------|
| Yes      | 350       | 70%        |
| No       | 150       | 30%        |
| Total    | 500       | 100%       |

This table shows the use of social media for news consumption among the respondents. The majority (70%) use social media for news consumption.

**Table 4 Impact of Social Media on Print Media Consumption**

| Category | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------|-----------|------------|
| Yes      | 200       | 40%        |
| No       | 300       | 60%        |
| Total    | 500       | 100%       |

This table shows the impact of social media on print media consumption among the respondents. The majority (60%) do not think social media has reduced their print media consumption.

**Table 5 Trust in Social Media vs. Print Media**

| Category | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------|-----------|------------|
| Yes      | 100       | 20%        |
| No       | 300       | 60%        |
| Neutral  | 100       | 20%        |
| Total    | 500       | 100%       |

This table shows the trust in social media vs print media among the respondents. The majority (60%) do not trust social media more than print media.

**Table 6 Demographics - Age**

| Category    | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------|-----------|------------|
| 18-24       | 150       | 30%        |
| 25-34       | 120       | 24%        |
| 35-44       | 100       | 20%        |
| 45-54       | 80        | 16%        |
| 55 or older | 50        | 10%        |
| Total       | 500       | 100        |

This table shows the age demographic of the respondents. The majority (30%) are between 18-24 years old.

**Table 7 Demographics - Highest Level of Education.**

| Category        | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------|-----------|------------|
| High school     | 100       | 20%        |
| Diploma         | 80        | 16%        |
| Bachelors       | 150       | 30%        |
| Master degree   | 100       | 20%        |
| Doctoral degree | 20        | 4%         |
| Others          | 50        | 10%        |
| Total           | 500       | 100%       |

This table shows the highest level of education of the respondents . The majority (30%) hold a Bachelors degree.

**Table 8 Demographics - Monthly Income**

| Category              | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------------|-----------|------------|
| Less than Rs 10,000   | 100       | 20%        |
| Rs 10,000- Rs 20,000  | 150       | 30%        |
| Rs 20,000- Rs 30,000  | 100       | 20%        |
| Rs 30,000 - Rs 50,000 | 80        | 16%-       |
| Rs 50,000 - 70,000    | 70        | 14%        |
| Total                 | 500       | 100%       |

### Statistical Analysis

Chi-Square Test: .  $X^2=12.15$ , P -value<0.001 (significant association between social media use print media consumption)

ANOVA Test: .  $F(3,496)=10.23$ , P-value>0.001 (significant difference in content preferences)

Post-Hoc Analysis: . Tukey's HSD reveals test:

News and Entertainment : P-value =0.012 (significant difference)

News and Education : P-value < 0.001 (significant difference)

Entertainment and Education : P-value = 0.145 ( no significant difference)

The study reveals that

1. Most of the participants read print media publications weekly (30%), followed by reading them daily. (24%).
2. 60% of participants do not believe that social media has reduced their print media consumption
3. 60% of participants do not trust social media platforms as compared to print media platforms.

The findings suggest that print media remains relevant in Tamil Nadu, despite the rise of social media. Print media outlets can adapt by incorporating more visual content, increasing online presence, and focusing on niche topics.

## Conclusion

Media platforms and publications have the ability and also have acted as a check on the powers and functions of the governments. Both the developed and under developed nations utilized enhanced technology which makes the production and distribution of larger numbers of newspapers possible in the country. The state of Tamil Nadu has a very active media culture from the 19<sup>th</sup> century when *Sudesamitran*, the first Tamil language newspaper owned and run by Indians was started and it continues till now. In addition to established newspapers such as *Dina Thanthi*, *Dina Malar* and *Dinakaran*, some of the other newspapers and the magazines in the state are *Dina Mani*, Tamil edition of *The Hindu* and *Malai Malar*.

They are also various Tamil television channels in the state such as Kalaigamar TV, Jaya TV, Sun TV, Vijay TV and Zee Tamil TV in the state along with digital news websites such as Ippodu.com, which supports the fact of an active media culture in the state. *Dina Thanthi*, *Dinamalar* and *The Hindu Tamil* have daily circulation of 12 lakh copies, 10 lakh copies and 6 lakh copies respectively in 2026. (Parameswaran, 2024). In addition to this, the daily circulation of *Dina Thanthi* has increased from 1, 158, 832 (about 11.5 lakh copies) in 2023 to about 1.2 million (12 lakh copies) in 2026 and the daily circulation of *Dinamalar* had also increased from 667, 264 copies to about 1 million (10 lakh copies) in 2026. (MN4U Bureau, 2024; Parameswaran, 2024).

Thus, the circulation of the newspapers has been increasing in Tamil Nadu for a while and with *Dina Thanthi* and *Dinamalar* paper having a readership of 2.58 cr and *Dinamalar* 1.25 cr respectively, this has also shown that print media publications such as the newspapers will always be brought and read by the people even while facing competition from electronic media platforms. (Parameswaran, 2024). The fundamental reasons for this trend can be attributed to the constantly increasing education levels, higher purchasing power, aggressive publishing, and political excitement, unlike electronic media platforms. The results of the survey carried out as a part of this study also shows that most of the respondents consuming print media monthly (30%) followed by consuming them daily (24%); thus pointing out people read print media publications often. The results of the survey has also shown that half of the respondents liked to read news articles on these publications and also that 60% of the respondents do not think that social media platforms has reduced their print media consumption.

Additionally, 60% of the respondents do not trust social media as compared to print media platforms. Thus, the results point out that social media does not impact the consumption of print media among the participants and also that they are not trusted by people as compared to print media platforms. Thus, they also illustrate the importance of print media and also its relevance as most of them (54%) either read it monthly or daily. Thus, it can be concluded that each media has its own existence, role, and impact on the society. Print media publications are still thriving and being read by people often even in the age of social media platforms in Tamil Nadu.

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