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Mariam Mammen Mathew,
CEO, Manorama Online

MANORAMA ONLINE

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DIGITAL MONETISATION

Why zero-party data is publishers' secret weapon in a post-cookie world

By Michael Silberman,
SVP Strategy, Piano

The clock is ticking on third-party data.

The death of third-party cookies — courtesy of Google, Apple, GDPR and CCPA — also means the accelerated fade of third-party data. And from ad tech companies to marketers and media companies, the shift has left many wondering how they'll proceed. Many fear the effect the changes could have on their business.

At Piano, though, we see opportunity where others see threat. And for the media companies we work with, we think the shift away from third-party data is an opportunity to thrive. It not only puts new emphasis on first-party data, but enables those companies to draw on something even more powerful: zero-party data.

Every day, users provide media companies with the type of explicit, accurate, data other businesses covet. Consumers willingly volunteer this data as they register or subscribe in order to unlock more content or build a deeper relationship with their site of choice. And it's exactly this type of information that, if used right, can push those companies ahead in this new data landscape.

The problem with third-party data

To understand their audience and find new users, companies in and outside of media have long been relying on third-party data. This type of data, sold by data aggregators, is available in huge (if shrinking) volumes and can potentially shed light on many different consumer types. However, there are three primary problems with it:

1. *The rising consumer concern around online privacy.* Consumers are becoming increasingly aware of tracking and privacy. And that's driven government privacy and consent regulations like GDPR, as well as the changes in browser cookie policies. This has reduced the reliability of third-party data.
2. *It can be out of date and unreliable.* This is why consumers are often targeted for a product they've already purchased or decided against, only to have ads "follow" them around the internet for weeks. If you're building a strategy around data that's two months (or even two weeks) old, it's likely already outdated. And the trend towards limiting third-party cookies only means third-party data will become even less reliable in the future.
3. *Sourcing is often hazy.* How third-party data is collected, aggregated and then sold is generally a black box. User consent isn't always known or verifiable. As the industry moves to tighten rules around data transparency, the value and utility of third-party data will continue to decline.

Unlike third-party cookies, third-party data probably won't necessarily vanish completely — though it will certainly diminish in value. Even so, there are better alternatives available, especially to media companies.

If third-party data is finished, what now?

While some important questions still remain unanswered in this post third-party cookie world, what's not unclear is that the more reliable the data, the higher the value for publishers' marketing partners and the more they're willing to pay for targeted ads. And for that, third-party data falls short next to the other options:

Zero-party data is intentionally shared with a business by its customers. This could range from customer relationship management (CRM) data, such as the email address or gender filled out in a registration form, to preferences selected during website customization. As data explicitly shared as part of a value exchange or to improve the customer experience, it's the most valuable data a company can collect. Critically, it belongs to the customer, not the business. It can't be used without consent and must be carefully protected. However, it is highly accurate, reliable, and transparent in sourcing.

First-party data is often thought to encompass zero-party data. However, it also includes behavioral data collected by observing customers as they browse your website or app, or visit your store. This type of data is implicit, rather than explicit, but is still considered premium for many reasons. It's collected by you so is more likely to be accurate. And any insights drawn from your own audience are likely to truly reflect their preferences and behaviors — meaning campaigns and strategies are more likely to succeed. Crucially, there are fewer concerns over data misuse and GDPR non-compliance as you control the conditions in which data is collected and stored.

Second-party data is when first-party data passes through a second set of hands. In other words, second-party data is someone else's first-party data. It occurs in like-minded publisher alliances, when suppliers exchange data with their retailers for mutual benefit, or when agencies strike exclusive deals with major publishers to empower programmatic buying. Gaining explicit consent to use and share second-party data isn't always an easy feat, but can be handled reliably with the right technology setup.

Media companies are in a unique position to take advantage of these data sources — especially first-party data and the gold standard of all user data: zero-party data.

Maximizing your zero-party data

In the media landscape, companies can use zero-party data to both benefit their advertising partners and personalize the experience they offer users themselves. All while finally aligning the interests of their subscription and advertising teams — something many media companies have been striving to do for years.

Zero-party data is already available through registration and subscription sign-ups. But the savviest companies will maximize their store using many of the same techniques subscription companies have already implemented to optimize their business. That starts with quality content that puts users at the center of the audience experience, and continues in the form of exclusive content, personalized recommendations and customized offers that engage the user and personalize the experience. Only when a true value exchange is in place will users be incentivized to provide their data to improve their experience even further.

A data management platform, or DMP, can then help companies use that data to understand and segment their users. Lookalikes will also allow them to extrapolate the data to cover their entire audience. In doing so, they'll be able to target ads to relevant users and engage more effectively with their chosen demographic.

Take Piano customer Mediahuis, for example. One of the largest publishers in Europe, they built a substantial base of 4.4 million registered users, then used the zero- and first-party data collected to create a significant, audience-based advertising business across Belgium and the Netherlands. Audience campaigns grew to 27% of total ad revenue, with clickthrough rates 26% higher than non-targeted campaigns.

That's the power of zero- and first-party data. Combining your advertising and subscription businesses through a focus on known users leads to a stronger and profitable monetization model, drawing from multiple revenue streams.

And that, as far as we're concerned, is hardly something to be afraid of.

About the author

Michael Silberman, SVP Strategy, leads Piano's Strategic Services team, helping clients develop reader revenue strategies and drive success and revenue on the Piano platform. He joined Piano in 2018 after 10 years building the digital media business at New York magazine, and earlier, as one of the top editors launching and growing MSNBC.com in the early days of the consumer Internet.

Visit piano.io to find out more about Piano Zero, or write to hello@piano.io

MONETISING VOICE, VIDEO TOP THE PRIORITY LIST FOR MANORAMA ONLINE

By Neha Gupta

India's Manorama Online, the digital arm of Malayala Manorama, delivers news from Kerala to more than 30 million Malayalis every month.

Based on current census figures, this accounts for more than 90 percent of the total Malayalam-speaking population worldwide.

An early adopter of paywalls, Manorama Online has used them for all of its e-magazines since 2008. While the brand has made its e-magazines subscription-based, the company's main source of revenue is still online banners, followed by native advertising and paid-for digital classified products, such as the matrimonial site m4marry.

Manorama Online also took home the award for "Best News Website or Mobile Service" at the South Asia Digital Media Awards 2020 in New Delhi in February.

In this interview, Mariam Mammen Mathew, the brand's Chief Executive Officer, discusses their goals for 2020, diverse monetisation options and how the company is capitalising on technology such as artificial reality and machine learning.

WAN-IFRA: What are some of the key priorities for Manorama Online this year?

MARIAM M MATHEW: Manorama Online's key priorities this year are voice, video and subscriptions. We are looking at enhancing our content with unique videos, and adding voice to mix with podcasts that set context to the storytelling process. In this process, we are looking to create a value product that we can put behind paywalls.

Malayala Manorama emerged as the seventh most read Indian daily and reported a growth of 6.1 lakh (610,000) readers in Q2 2019. On the digital side, how have your reader numbers developed during the past year or so?

We pride ourselves in creating quality content by our editorial team and the same stands for the digital side as well. Our efforts in the last couple of years have been to further enhance this, with a focus on good hyperlocal content.



Mariam Mammen Mathew,
CEO, Manorama Online

Making stories come alive to the reader showed a surge in our monthly unique visitors by over 100 percent in 2019.

Media companies everywhere face continuing declines in traditional ad revenue. What are some alternate revenue sources Manorama Online is exploring?

Yes, that might be the case with most of the traditional media companies, but for Manorama Online we are seeing a growth in our digital advertising business.

On the digital revenue side, like with tech and editorial, we have had to constantly innovate to give creative solutions to our advertisers. We explore all possible monetisation options available such as banners, videos, natives, sponsorships, activations, social media integration, affiliate revenues etc.

We have a few products behind a basic subscription paywall, an aspect we are planning to concentrate on in 2020.

Besides this, we also have digital classifieds products for matrimonial, real estate, education and yellow pages that

help us create alternative revenue options.

How many Manorama Online products are subscription-based? What are some of the things you are doing to keep subscribers and reduce churn?

The digital replicas of all paid offline products are subscription-based. This includes the e-newspaper and all our magazines. Subscribers are willing to pay for digital content, provided it is content worth paying for. Our business and data analytics teams regularly monitor the behavioural approach of subscribers across products.

How difficult is it to monetise hard news in India? What sort of paywall experiments are you trying at Manorama Online?

Hard news is in abundance everywhere, digitally. From a reader's perspective, there is no point paying for that. This is an area where traditional players can secure leverage.

Adding value to hard news is the key deliverable. How to add value differs from

player to player, market to market, depending on marketing conditions and user requirements.

The Manorama Online digital newsroom goes beyond traditional news reporting norms. Our team believes in developing premium content with the right end-user packaging framework, delivering unique and credible information that our readers will invest in.

The Google-Facebook duopoly accounted for around 60% of the digital ad spending in 2019 in India. What are some steps that Manorama Online is taking to maximise its share of digital advertising revenues?

Yes, there is no doubt about the growing dominance of the duopoly. We play to our strength which is 99% vernacular, focused on the regional language "Malayalam," making it difficult for larger platforms to encroach on.

Manorama 360 is a free application that lets a user experience the culture and terrain of Kerala in Virtual Reality. Do you have more such projects in the pipeline? How do you see these trends (AI/machine learning/AR/VR/voice) affecting your brand's strategy?

We are undoubtedly one of the early movers in that domain, globally. We are currently adopting a wait-and-watch policy. The technology and user interests should stabilise for such content to evolve. Once it does, we will have products to match that, not necessarily restricted to VR.

Your brand is also experimenting with video and audio. How are you monetising these areas?

The major focus age group of Manorama Online are the millennials and Gen Z who are more inclined to consume video and podcast content. Manorama Online has made investments in good technology and understanding the product gap in this area.

Our tech platform provides us with flexibility of enhanced monetisation for video content within our web pages. Manorama Online is aiding the perception drift in regional advertiser spends from a television-to-digital platform by offering them in-stream, out-stream, native and branded visibility business offerings.

Last year we also launched ManoramaMax, which is an OTT offering from our television brand.

Digital Media India 2020 and South Asian Digital Media Awards 2019

The ninth edition of WAN-IFRA's Digital Media India (DMI) conference was held in New Delhi on 18-19 February, with more than 110 news media executives from more than 10 countries attending.

The conference, with the theme 'Growing Big in Digital', covered a range of news publishing topics, such as digital and programmatic advertising, video and OTT space in India, subscription strategies and transformation.

The Indian journalism industry has been in the online business since the 1990s. Now, publishers are engaging in rigorous brand diversification, experimenting with new technology and strategising to satiate the fast-growing hunger for news in one of the world's most competitive media markets.

The first day of the conference covered digital advertising and alternate revenue sources for the news media business, addressing how a publisher can drive their business to profitability; and closed with the ninth edition of the South Asian Digital Media Awards. The second day of the conference covered the road ahead for digital journalism and explored whether digital content is a bubble waiting to burst. The conference also covered the over-the-top (OTT) scenario in South Asia and the threats, challenges and opportunities that accompany online streaming in the region.



Brett McKeehan, Director – Asia at CNN Digital Worldwide, Hong Kong speaks about 'Driving change in Newsrooms' at the Digital Media India conference, 2020 in New Delhi.



Trushar Barot, Strategic Partner Development, Facebook, speaks on "The changing phase of video viewership and its impact on news dissemination." He shared insights on best video practices from Facebook for news publishers.



Rohan Tiwary, APAC Head – Media, News & Entertainment Partnerships, Google, shares insights on Building sustainable business for journalism through technology and innovation.



Ritu Kapur, Co-Founder & CEO, Quintillion Media, India and Navaneeth L, CEO, The Hindu, discuss the regional challenges and the future of media business in South Asia.



Siddharth Varadarajan, Founding Editor, The Wire, imparts insights on the secret ingredients to sustain digital journalism while answering tough questions like if the readers would ever be ready to pay for content and whether digital content is a bubble waiting to burst.



Digital Media India Conference 2020 at New Delhi, on 18 and 19 February, hosted the fifth edition of the South Asia Digital Media Awards ceremony, which saw more than 80 entries from over 20 media companies. SDMA Awards recognise publishers who have adopted digital media strategies as part of their product offering to meet major changes in how people consume news today.



(L-R) BBC's Gagan Narhe, Dhruve Nenwani and Shadab Nazmi receive a Gold award for Best Data Visualisation for a project titled, 'How many promises did the Narendra Modi government keep?' The project tracked the status of 346 promises the Modi-led BJP made in the 2014 General Election manifesto.



Bloomberg Quint bagged a Silver award for the Best Paid Content Strategy. Kuruvilla Choolackal, Eshani Mathur and Sumit Raina and receive the award, from WAN-IFRA's Magdoom Mohamed, on behalf of the company.



(L-R) Arre won the Gold award for Best in Lifestyle, Sports, Entertainment Website or Mobile Services. Karanjeet Kaur, Arre's Creative Editor receives the award from Rohan Tiwary, APAC Head - Media, News & Partnership of Google.



Bangladesh's Prothom Alo won a Gold award for 'Best Native Advertising/Branded Content Campaign'.

How CNN uses audience insights to drive newsroom change

“Newsrooms that don’t embrace change are going to be left behind,” Brett McKeehan, Director – Asia, CNN Digital Worldwide, Hong Kong, said at the recently concluded Digital Media India Conference 2020 in New Delhi.

McKeehan oversees digital content strategy, content development and publishing across India, China, Australia, Singapore, Japan, South Korea and Indonesia. He also works closely with the teams in London, Abu Dhabi, New York and Atlanta.

By effectively using audience data, the digital medium allows a publisher to accurately access the consumer’s wants, needs, consumption patterns, align them with brand objectives and strategise accordingly. Embracing analytics and insights to improve newsroom efficiency, however, does not translate to clickbait.

Proof vs instinct

“Journalism is not about what you sell, but how you sell it,” he said. “At CNN Digital, we are constantly optimising the content tone, angle, packaging, and distribution based on what works best.”

“The proof of success is not merely knowing what works, but why and when it works; one can’t rely on instinct alone to break free from the status quo and drive true organic transformational change from within,” McKeehan said.

CNN has access to more than 484 million households and hotels globally. The brand’s combined properties see more than 299 million monthly unique visitors around the world on average, as of the final quarter of 2019.

The company also has more than 166 million social media followers, and gets half a billion video hits each month.

How did they achieve these milestones?

Journalists at CNN treat every market differently, through intense analytical rigour. Knowing what content people consume, as well as when, how and where they consume it, influences every step in the editorial team’s content creation, editing, publishing and distribution process.

Region-specific audience strategy

Nearly two in five adults globally engage with CNN through either the digital medium or the television on a regular basis. Across the company’s key markets, this statistic translates to 640 million adults – a pool of potential relationships and data points that proves to be a learning source.

“Competition in the media space has never been greater. Audiences today have higher expectations and lower attention spans. They are our asset,” – Brett McKeehan, CNN Digital Worldwide

“We need to find a middle ground to meet their, and the brand’s, expectations of content consumption and creation, without compromising on the quality,” he added.

People are now more connected than ever, with plenty choices and a smorgasbord of information.

On an average, globally, the CNN audience consumes more than 10 hours of media daily, across platforms, of which three hours is on the smartphone.

There is an evident, drastic shift in people from non-English speaking countries spending increasing time online, forcing publishers to write headlines and programme homepages that keep small screens in mind.

Three in four English language news readers in India now consume content on their smartphones, the primary platform for news consumption in the country.

“Stats show that Indian audiences like consuming video content on phones,” McKeehan said. “Twenty-seven of the top 39 most popular pieces of CNN content in 2019 were videos.”

“CNN has a lot of video content, and India has a lot of people,” he continued, “We, thus, optimise digital video and newsroom resources to maximise Indian eyeballs on the smartphone during prime India hours – by displaying stories we know will play well with the Indian readers ranked higher on a mobile homepage than the desktop.”

The strategy is to serve every market differently. CNN numbers show that Australians frequenting the website crave news on US politics over local news.

“It all boils down to striking a balance between statistical proof and instinct. Our play in Australia is lightly programmatic, in that we make sure there are plenty of American news items on the homepage and social media accounts during key Australian hours,” McKeehan said.

Singapore, another key market for CNN, is extremely well served by local media. The company identified the audience’s key interest lay in news about wider Asia, particularly north Korea and Malaysia, and health, military and travel.

In Japan, people engage with the website on their desktops mostly between 10am and 2pm. The traffic peaks at about noon. Hours between 7am-8am and 9pm-10pm (office and commute



Brett McKeehan, Director – Asia, CNN Digital Worldwide, Hong Kong, at the Digital Media India Conference 2020 in New Delhi on 19 February.
Photo by WAN-IFRA

hours) are key mobile traffic drivers.

Three in five international readers, i.e. an overwhelming 62 percent, (barring the US) engage with CNN using Android devices, compared to 31 percent in the USA.

Eighty percent of readers are interested in understanding the USA’s position in the global economy. Sixty-seven percent of readers consider themselves foodies, and 59 percent of readers will engage with brands if offered high quality content.

“All these regions employ different strategies. While we cover consumer food news very aggressively, we acknowledge the fact that we cannot do restaurant reviews, not being a local website,” said McKeehan.

Eighty percent of CNN’s content opportunities are likely to get significant play in both the US and international markets.

How to reach people who aren’t reading CNN?

Research released late last year found 4 in 5 people (77 percent) in 11 key markets including Singapore, Japan and Hong Kong, checked the CNN news website or application at least once daily.

“Our audience knows us for unbiased, objective and impartial reporting. This translates to an unwavering commitment to accuracy, fact-checking, reviewing data and performance,” McKeehan said.

The company, in its regular news coverage, found several niche subject areas, engagement points and threads that created audience acquisition opportunities.

The brand soon realised that coupled with its unprecedented domain authority, it could attract new audiences and offer more to existing readers through a more diverse content ecosystem.

Business, tech, style, sport, health and travel are verticals that the audience might not automatically associate with the company.

“Our stats, however, showed a strong appetite for these subject interests, and so we actively pursued these areas,” McKeehan said.

These verticals proved to be not only extremely safe for potential advertisers who wanted to be associated with the

trust and value of the CNN brand, but also became important areas for offering a 360-degree content mix.

“We looked at the numbers, assessed audience appetites, identified the opportunities and built our brand. We have managed to create multiple entry points for audiences into the wider CNN digital ecosystem. This, in turn, has created several revenue opportunities and ideas around further streams we can focus on,” said McKeehan.

Brand presence

Print media is bound by the distribution model; Digital is global. Having steadily expanded over the years, the CNN universe now comprises the website, app and the direct streaming TV service as its top platforms. Apart from those, the brand uses eight video platforms, 14 social and messaging platforms, and 15 emerging platforms.

Audience habits and platforms are constantly evolving and need to fit into a publisher’s wider distribution strategy.

CNN has a central team at Hong Kong and bureaus across Asia, including in New Delhi. What sets the company apart from its contemporaries in making regional news global?

“Our unique enterprise journalism is what makes us stand out. It takes more resources and is harder but find a way to make local content globally appealing,” McKeehan said.

“A beautiful thing about the digital media is that imagination is as limitless as the audience. We understood that if we analysed data, combined it with the right sort of social media activity, our impact journalism could be extremely powerful and transformative.” – Brett McKeehan

The opportunity for audience engagement in India is unmatched with a 1.3 billion population. More than 500 million people access the internet, and another 800 million people will be connected in the next decade.

“Audience equals opportunity. With the right digital tools and by treating them as people with real interests, one can target readers effectively to the benefit of one’s business,” McKeehan said.

Seeing a gap in Southeast Asia, India's The Ken plots a regional expansion with local teams

They now have reporters across Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

When the team at India's The Ken, a one-story-a-day publication on technology, business and healthcare, felt that the company had found product-market fit in India, they began to think of their next steps. "We looked at various dimensions," remembered co-founder Rohin Dharmakumar. "Should we be looking at new sectors? Products? Geographies?"

When the team at India's The Ken, a one-story-a-day publication on technology, business and healthcare, felt that the company had found product-market fit in India, they began to think of their next steps. "We looked at various dimensions," remembered co-founder Rohin Dharmakumar. "Should we be looking at new sectors? Products? Geographies?"

They landed upon Southeast Asia. "It was the strongest of these cases," said Dharmakumar.

In a way, Dharmakumar explained, the region looked a lot like the India where The Ken started in 2016. "The growth rates, aspiration, and competitive drive in Southeast Asia were closer to what we see in India than what it would be in the U.S. and Europe," Dharmakumar explained. "Additionally, many of these markets had significant numbers of people who are comfortable with English."

For the first six months, Southeast Asia stories were hosted on The Ken's India site. This month, it announced that it would unbundle its Southeast Asia offering from its India offering.

Pricing for the Southeast Asia product hasn't been announced, but the Indian offering is priced at \$108 annually and \$50 quarterly.

By Splice



The Ken's full team during an onsite meetup in Bangalore in early January.
Photo credit: The Ken/Splice



Jagran Prakashan posts advertisement revenue of Rs 336.29 crore for Q3

The publishers of Dainik Jagran has seen 16% growth in Consolidated Net Profit at Rs 81.61 crore.

Jagran Prakashan Limited has recorded advertisement revenue of Rs 336.29 crore for third quarter of financial year 2020, according to media reports.

The publishers of Dainik Jagran have seen 16% growth in Consolidated Net Profit at Rs 81.61 crore.

The company's operating profit is at Rs 147.13 crore, up 11%, and the circulation revenue stands at Rs 107.47 crore.

The Print digital revenue has been recorded at Rs 11.73 crore, up 12.6%.

By Exchange 4 media

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Nikkan Pro Sports boosts newspaper production with Tecnau NewsReady

Nikkan Pro Sports Newspaper Co., Ltd. launched the first sport newspaper in Japan in 1947. Since then, the company has been focused on publishing and selling track cycling newspapers.

The group, with the main headquarters in Tokyo, has grown over the years and counted 64 employees in 2014. Nikkan is a publisher of specific forecast newspapers for bicycle races that are hugely popular among fans.

"With races being held every day of the year, our company publishes prediction newspapers non-stop 24/7 and delivers them to the race-track. In recent years, we made use of corner stores and the internet to expand this circulation, but readers still prefer



Photo: WAN-IFRA

printed publications. With increased demand, we faced a real time-to-market challenge," said Mr Takeuchi, CEO at Nikkan Pro Sports.

The company publishes two types of newspapers - a daily (Akakei) and a weekly (Pro Sports).

To speed up and streamline the production process and minimise paper handling and operations, Nikkan installed a digital finishing Tecnau NewsReady™ solution inline to a Screen TruePress Jet520HD Series High-Definition Inkjet Web Press inside the factory in Tokyo.

Reduction in production time and labor

"This efficient solution produces finished applications in a single process from white paper rolls to printed multi-page folded booklets," said Thomas Olofsson, Area Manager for Asia Pacific and Nordic Europe at Tecnau. "Compared to the offset printer previously used, the customer is now able to print all the pages in full color and has been able to reduce production time and labor".

Tecnau NewsReady cuts and accumulates the printed web into sheets that are folded once or twice before being ready for delivery. Depending on the application requested, the solution can be configured in seconds to create single folded sheets (twice or z-folded) or multiple sheets folded once. The NewsReady solution at Nikkan Pro Sports also allows 1-up or 2-up stacks, with or without offset, to be sent to a 90° conveyor for other commercial print or book-block production purposes.

By WAN-IFRA

Swedish media in solidarity against Chinese attacks on press freedom

Swedish media association urges the Swedish government to act with the EU against Chinese attempts to undermine press freedom in the country and stop attacks on Swedish journalists and Swedish media houses.

The Chinese Government is continuing to attack independent journalists, Swedish media companies and publishers. Following the recent attempts to hamper a free media, Utgivarna, the Media Publishers Association in Sweden, now requests that the Swedish government acts, together with

the EU, to protest in the strongest terms possible against China's attempts to influence the freedom of the press.

Utgivarnas is an association of Swedish publishers with major media companies and organisations such as the Press Publishers Association, the Magazines Publishers Association, TV4, Sveriges Radio, Sveriges Television and UR.

Time and again, China's ambassador, Gui Congyou, has tried to undermine the freedom of the press and the freedom of expression under the Swedish Constitution, with false statements and threats. Publications have been criticized, media companies have been accused of being biased against China and individual journalists have been singled out.



China's embassy has described Swedish freedom of the press and expression as "media tyranny", and previously even threatened Sweden's Minister of Culture, Amanda Lind with "consequences for Sweden" in connection with the Swedish PEN's award of the Tucholsky Prize to Chinese-born Swedish publisher, Gui Minhai. It is unacceptable that the world's largest dictatorship is trying to prevent free and independent journalism in a democracy like Sweden.

Utgivarna believes that Sweden should now raise the issue of China's actions at the EU level and, together with the other democratic EU countries, vigorously protest all forms of attacks against the freedom of the press.

By WAN-IFRA



How Way2News transformed the hyper-local news ecosystem in India

Founder & CEO of Way2online Raju Vanapala shares how Way2News became India's number 1 hyper-local news app.

The 2.5 million daily active users of Way2News, a leading hyperlocal news company, clearly showcase that digital is the way forward for news organizations to penetrate deep into uncharted territories of the country.

Way2Online-owned Way2SMS used to be among the top-ranked websites from 2007 to 2012. But realising that SMS messaging could soon fall out of fashion, the company came up with another entity named Way2News.

Currently, Way2News provides personalised news in a short-summarized format in Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Marathi, Gujarati, Kannada and Bengali.

"Starting with a few stringers, Way2News has expanded its hyperlocal network to 40,000 active reporters," Raju Vanapala, founder of Way2News told e4m. They successfully publish over a million hyperlocal stories and have 62,761 verified videos, covering 1,10,000 villages.

"Smaller towns are consuming the internet today; they have a hunger for news, but they only get what is happening in their state and the country. With digital, we can go deep into villages," Vanapala said.

By Exchange 4 media

Ad spends may grow nearly 11% this year

Growth in digital advertising will offset marginal decline in television ads and flat growth in print ads.

Advertising expenditure in India is expected to grow 10.7% year-on-year to Rs 91,641 crore in 2020 as growth in digital advertising will offset marginal decline in television advertising and flat growth in print advertising.

The share of digital media is forecast to grow to 30% this year from 27% last year, WPP-owned media agency GroupM said in its report This Year, Next Year (TYNY). The total share of TV advertising is expected to touch 42%, registering a 1% decline over 2019. Growth in print advertising will remain flat at 20%.

If the forecast for this year is achieved, it would be marginally higher than the 9% increase in 2019.

The report said India will remain the eight-fastest growing markets by ad spends despite weak consumption demand in a slowing economy. The country is the third-highest contributor to the incremental ad spends, only behind the UK and US even as China fell to the fourth spot.

By Livemint

Taiwan's female-focused media startup Womany preps Asia expansion

The 9-year-old company believes changes in Taiwan's society could be a useful guide for other countries.

Womany, the 9-year-old media group, has helped galvanize the social conversation on women and gender issues in Taiwan, and now hopes to take its brand across Asia this year.

The company has been looking into readership data to determine what people want, and then creates content to match those interests. The past year, Womany has been quietly



Womany's co-founder Tanya Chen believes there are opportunities to drive gender education across Asia. Photo: Antonia Timmerman

building and translating content for Hong Kong and Japan, while evaluating opportunities in South Korea and Singapore.

Womany first came to life as a Facebook Page where it posted women-related content. Its mission is to drive gender education and shed light on gender issues.

Taiwanese society has changed a lot over the past decade. By early 2020, Taiwan put an unmarried, childless female president in office twice, and became the first Asian government to legalise same-sex marriage.

With 30 full-time staff, Womany today makes money from events, ads and merchandise sold on Womany Shop.

Womany sees huge potential across Asia. Japan is a unique market with plenty of room for gender education. "We are quite excited to get into Japan because we know there's so much more, we can do there," Chen said.

As the brand caught public attention in 2015, it secured an undisclosed amount of seed funding from several strategic investors.

Since then, with the business able to sustain itself, the group has not felt the urgency to raise another round of funding despite their regional expansion plans.

By Splice

Chinese newspaper Sing Tao Daily to close after 38 years

Australia's largest circulating and longest-running Chinese language paper, Sing Tao Daily, will close after going into liquidation last week.

Offices in Sydney and Melbourne have been closed and Mumbrella understands 20 staff have been let go.

The publication was one of 16 overseas editions of Hong Kong's second-largest Chinese-language newspapers and had a circulation of more than 15,000 on weekdays and 25,000 on weekends.

An ASIC notice from last week noted the liquidation of Sing Tao Newspapers Pty Ltd as a



result of a general meeting held by members of the business. Richard Stone and David Kerr have been appointed as joint liquidators for the business.

The Australian is reporting that of the staff let go, many were left with unpaid benefits.

In September 2019, Australian New

Express Daily also pulled its print title, with the market currently sitting around 30 Chinese-language publications, down from 90 in previous years.

By Mumbrella

Journalist Faye D'Souza to launch her own news vehicle

'Beetroot' will deliver honest and independent journalism.



Journalist Faye D'Souza, who currently presents 30 second current affairs news segment 'Facts First with Faye' on Firework (a short video platform), will soon launch her own news vehicle 'Beetroot'. Sources aware of the development told afaqs! that the new venture will deliver 'honest and independent journalism' with 'fresh tech innovations'. It will majorly target the young and urban population of the country and is currently on the look-out for investors.

She stepped down as the executive editor of Times Network's second English News Channel - Mirror Now in September 2019. Before becoming the executive editor of Mirror Now, she was editor, personal finance at ET Now. Faye D'Souza joined the Times Group in October 2008 and before that, she was with CNBC-TV18 for four years. As of now, she is no longer associated with the Times Group in any capacity.

By Afaqs

Budget 2020: Print media players breathe sigh of relief with reduction of customs duty

Industry heads say the cut on customs duty on import of newsprint and light-weight coated paper will finally bring down the production costs.

Thanks to Budget 2020 newspaper businesses are looking forward to sizable reduction in costs. The industry is set to partially recover from the 10 per cent customs duty slapped on newsprint in the July Budget last year, with the 5% reduction in customs duty in this budget.

While there was no custom duty for the category before July 2019, industry stakeholders still welcome the move as it saves them Rs 1,500 to Rs 1,700 per tonne of newsprint.

In August 2017, the price of newsprint was around Rs 36,000 per tonne, a year later the price reached around Rs 55,000 per tonne. The latest price of newsprints ranges from Rs 48,000 to Rs 50,000.

The industry that has an annual demand of 2.5 million tons of newsprint. Newspaper owners are forced to use imported newsprint as the local production in India is only about 1 million tonnes annually.

By Exchange 4 media

Indian publishers team up to fight fake news with films

Kaun Banayega – literally meaning 'who will make' – is the name of a new initiative to encourage readership and counter fake news.

Times of India Group Bennett Coleman & Co and Dainik Bhaskar have teamed up under the project which would bring out a series of films to educate readers. In an Exchange4media.com report, BCCL revenue president Sivaku-

mar Sundaram described fake news as "a modern-day malaise brought on by social media".

"It ranges from the silly to grave 'forwards' having repercussions that affect the social, economic and cultural fabric of nations.

"As gatekeepers of the truth and as a leading newspaper company, The Times of India takes on the responsibility of ed-

ucating people on the need to follow real news and not forwards."

He said this was being done in an "engaging and humorous manner" through the films titled Kaun Banayega, Dainik Bhaskar Group promoter-director Girish Agarwal said the companies, which are two of the largest media houses in the country, share a common responsibility.

By gxpess



Prominent media groups join hands in the battle against misinformation
Photo: AFP

How Inshorts used AI to become one of India's top news apps

By Neha Gupta

In 2013, three IIT students, Deepit Purkayastha, Azhar Iqbal and Anunay Pandey, launched an application called Inshorts, a pioneer in short form content. Today, it is one of India's biggest digital success stories.

The trio began its entrepreneurial journey with TLabs incubator in 2013, followed by a seed round from Times Internet and a group of angel investors including Flipkart founders Sachin and Binny Bansal.

In 2015, Inshorts, which delivers snappy news summaries in 60 words, raised Rs 25 crore (approximately \$3.4 million) in a Series A round from Tiger Global and Rebright Partners. Four months later, it raised Rs 127 crore (about \$17.5 million) in Series B led by Tiger Global.

The company became operationally profitable in November 2017, hitting a net revenue run rate of Rs 25 crore (\$3.4 million), compared to Rs 3 crore (\$0.4 million) in 2016. Its revenue for 2019-20 was \$14 million.

Today, Inshorts is India's highest-rated news application with more than 15 million downloads both on Android and iOS.

Tech disruptions and form factors

Through the years, the digital space has been witness to an onslaught of tech-driven disruptions such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) driven feeds, wireless technology such as WiFi, 4G and 5G, radio waves and optic fibers, easily overwhelming the traditional news space.

Contrary to popular perception, technology has only enabled these disruptions in the media sector, and not caused them.

The biggest disruptions are form-factors such as email-newsletters, social media posts, news hour debates and the daily newspaper deck. The format and user interface that works for print media differs drastically from what works for digital, broadcast, social media or the radio.

In addition to being a co-founder of Inshorts, Deepit Purkayastha is also Inshorts Chief Strategy Officer and oversees the business and strategic roadmap of the enterprise.

"Media houses must remember to use platform-specific form factors, which is what InShorts capitalised on," he said.

Inshorts works on a combination of technology and form factor innovation. ML and AI are technology innovations that will not reap benefits until linked to a platform-appropriate form factor, enabled by said technology.

"Once technology and form factor begin working harmoniously, only then can a publisher leverage that disruptive force. When Inshorts was launched 6 years ago, most media companies took print content and dumped it on a website, resulting in an overwhelming consumer experience," Purkayastha said.

India is the second largest global smartphone market, behind China and ahead of the United States.

In 2019, adults spent an average of 1 hour 29 minutes per day on digital platforms, according to a research by eMarketer. In the past two years, the average digital consumption in India has seen 2X growth, as per a BCG-CII report.

In 2013, when the company was launched, India had not yet witnessed the smartphone boom. Data was expensive, existing aggregators had not innovated on form factor, and smartphones were running on 2G connections.

"This resulted in costly video consumption, and a cluttered run-off-the-mill list of collated articles. This was our first hook," Purkayastha said. "Most of our peers were passive news readers because of unsuccessful form factors. Their main source of content consumption was Facebook because the other sources were overwhelming to consume on the smartphone."

Today, the first point of news access for 500 million Indians, with data costs as low as Rs 18.5 (\$0.26) per GB, is the smartphone with inexpensive 4G internet.

Artificial intelligence and editorial collaboration

InShorts' form factor are single screen cards comprising a headline, an image and a crisp summary. These cards can be navigated by swiping and are editorially curated with AI-driven personalisation.

The company was clear in its motive to not burden a consumer with information. While Inshorts registers users across age groups, its most active users are in the 20-30 age bracket.

"People, especially young adults, don't have time, and have a sea of content to choose from. This is where artificial intelligence fits into our product experience," – Deepit Purkayastha, co-founder, Inshorts

Parsing of data and content summarisation has proven to be one of the



Deepit Purkayastha, co-founder and Chief Strategy Officer at Inshorts, at WAN-IFRA's Digital Media India Conference in New Delhi.

biggest challenges of AI and machine learning.

Another hurdle that faces a completely AI-driven news product is the possibility of consumers getting segregated into buckets, reading news that they are comfortable with, and not stepping out of their echo chambers.

What works best for Inshorts is striking a balance between AI and editorial inputs.

An AI-backed algorithm called Rapid60 automatically condenses a news article into a 60-word brief. The algorithm is born out of analysing a database of more than half a million articles summarised by Inshorts editors during a five-year period and can summarise more than 100K articles per month.

Inshorts produces multiple story cards each day. The 20 percent most read content on the app, which brings in the lion's share of clicks, is still entirely editorially curated and trumps the click-through rate of the 80 percent AI-driven content.

How a story will be pushed out to the audience is based on a rating system ranging from 0 to 1000. It predicts reader interests based on time spent by them on each news card, and then marries the two with AI.

"If an editor rates a story 1000, it will be pushed out to the audience, irrespective of their chosen interests," Purkayastha said.

"A swiping card system will always translate to more clicks, compared to a list of links, which naturally tends to lean towards clickbait, decreasing the time spent per article." – Deepit Purkayastha, co-founder, Inshorts

Although the brand's single screen summaries don't grab as many eyeballs as a clickbait headline would, the comparative average time spent on an Inshorts story is 4-5 times.

"Form factor influences algorithms more than we realise. One should take a call on the form factor, understand its biases and only then deploy AI as a subservient tool to achieve the company goal," Purkayastha said.

Advertising and revenue

Inshorts primary source of monetisation is advertising through B2B channels.

The company produces about 1,000 shorts per day and an Inshorts consumer

spends an average 12 minutes a day and manages to consume almost 86 shorts.

The company has the highest Daily Active Users (DAU) to Monthly Active Users (MAU) ratio of 42 percent across the board, a mother metric for consumer-oriented applications. Seventy percent of the app downloads are organic, and 90 percent of the feed comprises factual hard news.

The company regularly collaborates with brands such as Uber, Airtel and Netflix for advertising, which makes for the lion's share of the revenue pie. The nature of the advertisement is non-invasive, skippable and appears exactly how a story card would, and has a native advertising feel to it.

Advertisers can share their ads to Inshort's reader base in 60 words along with an embedded image or video. The ads do not involve mandatory engagement and are listed as "Powered by" along with the advertiser's name.

The engagement the company sees on these sponsored shorts is much higher compared to the traditional interstitial ad format (ads designed to be placed between content), resulting in advertisers being willing to pay higher rates.

Plans for 2020

Inshorts recently launched a product called "Public" – a location-based, video-first, hyper-local social platform for stringers, publishers and brands to report news.

"The power of form factor is so strong that it can act as a self-sufficient PR tool. Public was able to generate 50,000 downloads entirely organically without celebrity endorsements or campaigning."

The company wants to actively use AI/ML and image processing to moderate "Public," which is already seeing more than a million unique videos per month by users across India.

Inshorts is also planning to come up with new interactive forms of delivering news such as graphic cards, collections factoids. The company already collaborates with Ipsos (a global market research firm based in Paris) for polls.

"Our typical poll gets about 4 lakh [400,000] responders in a single day. We realise the huge ground of resources we're sitting on, and we intend to make full use of it this year," Purkayastha said.

2020: Newsletter driven startups seize the day

By Dave Callaway

What promises to be a monumental year for news worldwide, with Middle East turmoil, U.S. elections, and climate change roiling countries from Australia to Africa, is also shaping up to be one of the most threatening yet for news companies, and journalists. But there is hope for journalism, writes Dave Callaway.

Strong-arm politicians in Turkey, Hungary, the Philippines, and even the U.S. threaten media freedoms daily. While in countries such as Mexico the killing of reporters has become almost commonplace, with 10 reported killed in the line of duty last year. Cost-cutting and aggressive attacks from hedge funds on the three largest providers of local news in the U.S., Gannett, Tribune and McClatchy, portend thousands of more lost jobs. While in India the inevitable transition from print to digital is crushing what just a few years ago was a robust national newspaper rivalry.

But journalism is not dying. People read – and need – news more than ever. It is under attack, to be sure. But it's also enduring the wrenching change many other industries are undergoing as the world becomes more mobile and digital, albeit in more public fashion. In that change, however, lies opportunity.

New media companies find new ways to deliver news

Every generation of journalists in my career of almost 40 years has lamented the loss of the good old days. Yet every one has also spawned new media companies and technologies to replace the lost ones. Think CNN and Sky with 24-hour television news. Bloomberg News in business. ESPN in sports. Politico in politics. All simply found new ways to deliver news, and audiences responded.

In just the last few years, as hundreds of traditional newspapers have cut staff or closed around the world, we've seen the rise of Pro Publica in investigative journalism in the US, and Bureau Local in the UK. Kaiser Health News in Healthcare in the US and Bhekisisa in South Africa. The Information on technology in Silicon Valley. Brazil's JOTA in legal and government. Axios in several verticals, from government to sports.

Indeed, five years go, when I was editor of USA Today in Washington D.C., I would receive seven newspapers on my desk each morning. And scan a dozen websites before 8 am. Today, I read a handful of email newsletters, which together provide just about every

relevant new story or podcast on politics, business, sports and my local scene that I require to get through that first cup of coffee.

What these new operations are doing is seizing on how people consume information today – on their phones, through email newsletters, and using audio (also video). They provide their own unique journalism and referrals to stories they don't have. The reader comes first.

We've already cycled through the first two generations of digital news operations since the late 1990s and are well into the third, with some of the recent stars, such as BuzzFeed or Vox, cutting back after sharp growth. In just the last several months, even newer faces have emerged, led by well-known journalists.

Tortoise, the UK provider of long-form journalism, was started by James Harding, former editor of The Times in the UK. The Athletic in sports. Media analyst Ken Doctor is starting The Lookout for local news. And @dotLA in Los Angeles, run by former Wall Street correspondent Joe Bel Bruno.

One of the more promising, and important, news stories of the next 30 years – climate change – is only just starting to be covered aggressively by mainstream

media. But several young news organizations have been growing in this space for years. Home Climate News in the UK. Inside Climate News and GreenBiz in the US. Eco-business.com in Singapore.

Others will come. I know. I plan to start one myself.

The point is that everyone naturally looks back on the old days with pride and nostalgia, because we already got through them. The future is scary. Make no mistake, not all or even many of those lost newspaper jobs will come back. But journalism, our collective search for truth, and the ability to speak truth to power, is not going anywhere. In fact, it is gearing up for a new world of news consumption, and will be stronger and more important than ever.



Dave Callaway is the immediate past President of the World Editors Forum. Photo: Gordon Steiger



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