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NEW MEDIA: THE INDUSTRY

New media has emerged from the print media. But its target audience is different from that of print media. Today, we have young readers getting attracted towards new media. But, why should a young reader be tempted to look at a website, read it and perhaps write about it or start a blog? That's where the ability to attract readers becomes a critical issue. Also, to run websites, one needs finances. How is that taken care of ?

Let us discuss these and other related questions.



OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to do the following:

- trace the transition from earlier forms of mass communication to new media in India;
- discuss the impact of new media in India;
- state the meaning of convergence;
- discuss examples of new media.

22.1 TRANSITION TO NEW MEDIA IN INDIA

The first news websites were launched by media houses around 1986. But, as you have already studied, these web editions were simply replicas of the respective print editions. The function of these websites was nothing more than generating awareness about the existence of these media houses.

The actual transition in India happened after 1996 when several independent media houses tried to bring out a news website. But after 2000, most of the independent media organisations along with their websites closed down. That was the time when the phenomenon of convergence became popular. Convergence means the coming together of different forms of mass media. You will learn more about this later.

22.2 IMPACT OF NEW MEDIA IN INDIA

The important question is that how did these independent media houses survive in the first place? Where did they get the money from ?

These independent media houses came up because they got funds from big businessmen who also lend money to others to start their own business. For this to happen, these well established business people must see growth potential in a new business. If they realise that they are going to get back several times the money that they are investing, they go ahead. These big businessmen are called *venture capitalists*.

In the case of new media, this is exactly what happened. The venture capitalists thought that new media could be a possible business option in India. It served them in two ways. One, through a media house, the venture capitalist had some access to the political groups in the country. Secondly, new media was showing signs of earning profits through business transactions via the internet .

But what they didn't realize at that stage was that Indian customers prefer to buy things only after seeing the product with their own eyes. In other words, in the Indian buying culture, the concept of 'look and feel' matters a lot. Although a few independent companies managed to stay afloat, most of them were forced to close down.

This was also a learning phase for Indian media practitioners and managers. They realized that if they ventured into new media, they had to think of innovative revenue models. They also accepted that they had to sell content to make money. Otherwise, merely getting into business transactions wasn't helping them at all.



Fig. 22.1: A customer is looking at a web page and trying to identify an item for buying. He has a very puzzled look. There is another customer who is buying things from a shop. She has a satisfied look on her face.



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**INTEXT QUESTIONS 22.1**

1. Who are venture capitalists?
2. Why were venture capitalists interested in supporting new media ventures in India?
3. What was the function of early web editions ?

22.3 NEW MEDIA AND CONVERGENCE

If you recall what you have studied about the history of the Indian media, you have learnt that the print media played a significant role in the Indian freedom struggle. At that time, there wasn't either television or new media. It was print media that had made such a huge impact on the minds of the people.

Later, when India became independent, print media continued to rule for more than two decades. When the nation stepped into the seventies, television appeared on the scene. But for years, the Indian people had to watch the limited programmes shown. Hence, print media still continued to rule.

It was when the concept of cable television hit the Indian market, that people started watching more and more television. It was because of television that the print media also started changing. To survive in the competitive scenario along with television, Indian newspapers changed their designs and forms of writing..

When new media arrived, it was another shift in the industry. At that time, a theory came up that print media may not survive. More importantly, with new media, technology was seen in a different light. Whereas, earlier, creativity was recognized as the primary skill, now technology became an important criterion for judging the suitability of an employee.

Let us consider these issues one by one.

The first issue is on technology. The debate is whether in the next five years, the entire media industry is going to turn digital or in a country like India where infrastructure is so poor, it's only a temporary wave. So will new media soon vanish and would we be back to print ?

The answer here is simple. Television also took time to settle down. Now radio is picking up. Similarly, new media will also take its time to stabilize. But just like television will not throw print media out of existence, similarly, new media will not throw out either print media or television. All these media forms will survive, but their styles may change.

The other issue is the debate on creativity versus technical skills. Media managers are asking the question, "Should we hire journalists who are good at writing and

reporting or who are good with technology?’ Even journalists are asking this question, “Is it our job to write, edit and report or to handle technology?”

There is a simple answer to this. All technological innovations in the media industry are happening because they are seen as complimentary to creativity. In other words, if technology does not support creativity, it’s useless. Hence, all creative professionals must make the best use of technology. In case, they feel that a certain form of technology is a hindrance to creativity, they must dump it and go for a better version of the same technology or change it altogether.

Today, journalists as well as media managers have realized fully well that a more effective form of communication does not destroy the earlier form. Rather, the earlier form of communication changes for the better and makes a place for itself in the changed scenario. Hence, media practitioners are talking of convergence.

Now, what is meant by the term ‘convergence’?

It means that several media forms such as print, radio, television etc. will exist simultaneously. They may have different mandates, but they will co-exist nevertheless.

Keeping this reality in mind, media organisations are also expanding and trying to bring in different elements of mass communication under a common roof. In a global media environment, we will now find more and more media organisations running print, television, radio and new media divisions together.



Fig. 22.2: Convergence



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**INTEXT QUESTIONS 22.2**

1. Fill in the blanks with appropriate word/s:
 - i) did not exist in India during the time of the British rule.
 - ii) Indian newspapers changed their and of writing to survive competition from television.
 - iii) Convergence means the coming together of , , —
 - iv) An form of communication does not the earlier form.

22.4 NEW MEDIA: EXAMPLES

Let us consider a situation when you have gone to spend your summer vacation with your grandparents in a village. This village does not have many facilities. Most importantly, you don't have a television in every house. But you are interested in cricket and you feel bad if you don't get to know the latest scores. Incidentally, there is a match going on between India and Australia and you are anxious to know the score.

Suddenly, you remember that you are carrying your mobile phone with you.. You immediately send a message and within five minutes the score flashes on your mobile screen. This is because of new media and its advantages.

You had actually got yourself registered on a news website and had sent an information by e-mail that you are interested in cricket scores. Now, wherever you travel, you only have to send a message through your mobile phone to get the latest update. This is also called *customization of news*. It means whatever kind of news interests you will be sent to you.

The most standard new media product is a website. Besides, news websites, there are innumerable kinds of websites that we see on the internet.

Today, you will find that every organisation has a website of its own. Through corporate websites, prospective customers and employees receive the initial information that's required. Each website has a 'contact us' section. If you want to speak to somebody on the phone, you can do so after noting down the number from the website. To send an e-mail, a person will only have to note down the e-mail address given on the website and send an e-mail immediately.

Some companies even encourage visitors on their websites to write blogs on their products or services. While for the organisation this is a good way to collect feedback, for the customers it could be a way to create a network of people who have bought products from the same organization. This way they can develop a common forum.



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Another product that has picked up is a *social networking site*. These are websites where anyone can open an account and become a member.

For those who want to be in touch with a lot of people, this is a very good way. You can become a member of some of these sites and interact with several people with whom you share ideas, thoughts and information. You can even trace an old friend or a classmate and begin talking to that person.

For those interested in research and academics, there are several libraries available on the internet called *online libraries* which they can refer to get material on their subjects. In the domain of education and training, learning through the internet has become very popular and is called *online learning* or *e-learning* (electronic learning). For others, the internet offers several sites from where they can buy and sell products. For children, besides information and stories, the internet has several online games that they can enjoy.

New media products are interesting because they have several elements in them. For instance, those interested in graphics, animations and cartoons may find several websites containing these elements. Those interested in reading will find several websites containing good content. All those who are interested in writing may start from blogs. Many amongst you will surely be interested in photography. You will find several websites on photography.



INTEXT QUESTIONS 22.3

1. What do you understand by 'customisation of news'?
2. What is meant by the term 'online learning'?



22.5 WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT?

→ Transition to new media in India

- news website
- convergence

Impact of new media

- creativity vs technology

Examples of new media

- news websites
- customisation of news



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- online learning
- online libraries
- online games



22.6 TERMINAL EXERCISES

1. Write an essay on how convergence is changing the face of the Indian media industry?
2. Make three columns and write the essential features of print, television and new media. After completing the exercise, write a note on how new media is different from print media and television.
3. Discuss the impact of new media in India.



22.7 ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

- 22.1**
1. Venture capitalists are big businessmen who lend money to people who want to start their own business.
 2. Venture capitalists were interested in supporting new media ventures in India because they thought they would get good returns.
 3. Refer to section 22.1.
- 22.2**
1. i) television, new media
ii) designs, forms
iii) television, radio, new media
iv) effective, destroy
- 22.3**
1. Customizing news is based on one's need. For instance, for someone who is interested in cricket, a new media set up can supply him with news only related to cricket. This is known as customization of news.
 2. If learning happens through the world wide web, it is called online learning. In other words, online learning is education with the help of the Internet. Several subjects, especially professional subjects, can be taught by this method.