



# The road to 2010 & beyond: three things that will impact Newspapers

With the ever-evolving media-scape being inundated with multiple media options and with new media alternatives mushrooming continually, that are highly interactive and measurable, media professionals – be it analysts, buyers, planners, clients or even media owners – normally tend to relegate newspapers to the realm of conventional media and thereby fail to leverage the innumerable innovative opportunities that would enhance the newspapers’ relevance to the new age reader.

Operating in a post television, post internet, post modern era (the youngest conscious consumer/reader to exert influence being the 1998 born), any media brand – being mind products – must re-define their competitive landscape beyond silos (like print, TV, radio) and activities (like news, celebrity info, business), to embrace the hyper-competitive leisure and entertainment space, define / carve out relevance in that environment and compete for the 16 waking hours of the audience. Hence, ‘everything is competition’ and ‘everything is media’.

The only route to long-term sustainability, in such a dynamic media-scape, is to enhance the relevance of your brand through multiple connect nodes with the audience in a holistic, format neutral manner. Relevance is a function of audience preference and preference is a moving target (it evolves continuously) – what is preferred today need not be preferred tomorrow. Thus, the challenge is to create a relevance quotient by leveraging the following three emerging imperatives resulting from the twin change agents of ‘globalisation’ and ‘technology’:

**1. TRUST:** With a plethora of information easily accessible through multiple media options, commoditization of content resulting in an acute trust famine across every media sources is an expected natural fallout. Thus, it is imperative that any newspaper (or media) brand not only ensures dilution in trust but works towards further consolidating and finally owning credibility to an extent that the reader out-sources his anxiety onto the brand.

Newspapers, being closely associated with ‘the written word’, inherently have a higher credibility quotient but it is important that we leverage this to the maximum – especially in this over-communicated society. While there can never be any recipe for gaining trust, below mentioned are a few initiatives that are essentially bed-rocked on facilitating the success of our readers as a route to fostering a relationship:

•**Make Content Usable:** Breaking news is no longer the dominant domain of newspapers. Hence, it is critical to acknowledge this shift and re-purpose the content from ‘What’, ‘Where’ and ‘How’ to ‘WHAT NOW’. The intent is not to inform them of the event but to upgrade them to leverage the implications arising from it. This empowers the

user to face the impact of events better.

•**Localization:** Dominate and leverage local news. It is important to manage the global and local paradox. Most newspapers, in their endeavour to become globally relevant, lose out on their local connectivity. The youth of today are as locally concerned as they are globally networked and are keen on improving their immediate environment as it directly impacts them. Hence, initiatives that help build and lend voice to various community causes can play a pivotal role in enhancing the salience of the newspaper.

•**Address Personal Concern Areas:** In an over-communicated society, consumers are seeking to outsource their decision-making anxiety – be it in critical areas like education, careers or when undertaking high value transactions like property purchase, etc. Newspapers can usurp the role of the “Friendly Neighbourhood Spiderman” by addressing these areas in a holistic manner through cross media initiatives as well as experiential activities to demystify the ambiguity involved in the transaction process as well as to facilitate direct interaction.

Initiatives such as these not only enable the reader in his quest for success but they can also be developed as monetizable properties. Moreover, it also helps in extending the newspaper’s salience beyond the limited 30 minutes every morning by breaking free of format constraints to surround the reader through multiple connect nodes and at the same time further consolidates its position as a credible solution provider.

**2. INTEGRATION:** New age readers are not only tech-savvy but also highly platform agnostic. Hence, to cater to these digital natives, newspapers need not merely use technology to be present 24x7 but instead, it must enhance value (maximize convenience and comfort) through a fully integrated and seamless experience. The success of any integrated model lies in the re-orientation of the mindset from a silo perspective towards a convergent perspective across all functions, stakeholders, activities as follows:

•**Harness Reader Intent:** Integrate print and web not only for sharing content but also for analyzing click-throughs on stories on the online version to identify topics of reader interest. This can be done on a dynamic basis to help decide on content flows for the following edition. As and when the interest levels on the net drops on a particular story, it is faded-out of the publication. So also, if the feedback from net users reveals an alternate perspective, the editor can get a pulse of the general sentiment on the topic and reflect an appropriate stance on the print version.

•**Lose Control To Gain Control:** The balance of



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