

Reading Lesson

B1+ Services: New Success In the Indian Newspaper Industry?

Reading

Read the text. Why is the successful situation of the Indian newspaper industry uncommon?



New Success In the Indian Newspaper Industry?

In today's competitive markets, where falling newspaper sales are normal, India's print media appears to be an unusual success story. India has a growing and constantly changing newspaper market, but according to a Media Research Users Council survey, the number of newspaper readers has grown from 407 million in 2017 to 425 million at the end of the first 4 months of 2019. This is in direct contrast to almost every other market in the world, where newspaper sales have fallen dramatically since the birth of online news websites.

In a country with an astonishing 82,000 newspapers in publication, most of this growth is caused by local newspapers written in a variety of regional languages. The availability of newspapers in different languages has meant that India's newspaper market appeals to millions of non-English speakers. *Dainik Jagran*, a Hindi newspaper, was the highest-selling paper in 2017 with over 17 million readers. Hindi daily papers had 186 million readers in total. *The Times of India* is the only English newspaper to appear in the top 10 list, although English newspaper readership went up from 28 million to 31 million between 2017 and 2019. An increase in literacy rates together with more local content explains the rise in regional newspaper sales. Physical newspaper sales have also grown partly because their online versions have failed to attract India's 450 million active internet users. People were put off by too many website links that didn't work and too many advertisements that claimed to be news stories.

However, the newspaper industry in India hasn't always enjoyed increasing sales. India's newspaper industry faced problems in the past because of government control, a lack of financial investment, and the challenge of so many different languages. But the arrival of the internet was accompanied by a newspaper revolution. Growth in technology and the ability of newspaper companies to afford to buy new printing equipment meant that it was possible for newspapers to be printed in a variety of regional languages, rather than just in either Hindi or English.

But perhaps the biggest reason why newspapers across India have continued to increase their sales is because more people than ever before, particularly in rural areas, are now able to read and write. Newspapers have given them the opportunity to be involved in political life in a way that wasn't possible in the past. The situation in the state of Kerala, on the southwest coast of the country, is one such example. During the 20th century, this was an area with some of the highest literacy rates in India. There was also a strong sense of political involvement among the people, and the number of people per 1000 who read a daily newspaper was well above the national average for India, even though the average income for people there was below the Indian national average. This shows that newspapers are not a sign of belonging to an "elite" group of people, but as a way for Indian people to take part in national, social, and cultural affairs.

It remains to be seen what will happen in the future. As the younger generation of Indians is increasingly likely to get news stories on their smartphones and tablets, it might not be possible for printed newspapers to continue to have such unusually high sales. The challenge for India's newspaper industry is to be able to keep their audiences through quality digital news websites, while still having enough advertising and subscription income to continue their paper editions.

Reading Lesson

astonishing (adj): amazing; surprising

elite (adj): having a high status because it contains the best of its kind

in (direct) contrast to (phr): be very different from something else

literacy rates (n): the number of people who can read and write

put off by (phr v): to make someone not want or like something

readership (n): the number of people who read a specific newspaper, book, or magazine

regional (adj): relating to a particular area or part of a country

revolution (n): a sudden or major change

Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box.

editions income investment publication subscription

- Danielle became well-known after the _____ of her first novel.
- There are two different _____ of this cook book—one in English and one in French.
- Do you know what the average annual _____ is for young people in your country?
- I bought my friend a monthly _____ to her favorite magazine for her birthday.
- Peter's father made an _____ of \$4000 into his new business.

Comprehension

Write the word, number, or short phrase that each sentence refers to.

- The name of the most popular English-language newspaper in India: _____
- The number of active internet users in India in 2019: _____
- The main reason sales of newspapers have increased in rural areas of India: _____
- The number of newspaper readers in India in April 2019: _____
- The number of print newspapers published in India: _____

Thinking

In your opinion, what has been the single most important news item of the past year? How did newspapers in your country or local area cover the story?