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## Sustaining Print Media in the Contemporary Era: a case study of Afghanistan

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**Abstract.** *Print media forms the foundation of all media. It is called an effective tool for the development and advancement of knowledge and information, and the press has the responsibility of teaching, guiding, and advising human thoughts (Pater, 2016). Therefore, it is necessary for the managers of print publications, journalists, and experts in this field to use this essential tool and confront the digital media and tools of the new technological era. Serious steps should be taken regarding the situation and ways to attract readers should be understood and implemented.*

*The results of this research will help print media officials and journalists to enrich, continue, and succeed their print publication in some way and follow up with the purpose of benefiting from this essential tool and increasing their capacity.*

*Research has found this growth, perfection and technological era have made the editing and publishing of newspapers and magazines an industry and utility. It is also useful for print media managers to provide high standards of service according to the demands and needs of the people of the society. The print media should be designed in such a way that it is appealing based on technological tools and in accordance with the principles of printing and page making, that it has innovation and the art of reading, and that it causes its audience to quench their thirst. It should be filled with the taste of its readers and audience, the tactics of attracting the audience, and be aware of their life, knowledge, needs, and desires.*

**Key words:** *print media, attract the audience, Afghanistan, print design.*

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**Introduction.** In the twenty-first century, the Internet has become an indispensable tool for communication, presenting print publications with significant challenges (Ettema & Whitney, 1994). The rapid delivery of news and the immense online audience have revolutionized how information is disseminated, prompting print media editors to implement essential and practical strategies to ensure their long-term survival.

Similarly, the management of print media in various European nations has not consistently met high-quality standards. Recognizing the need for specialized training in print media writing, initiatives like Deborah Potter's establishment of the Pointer Institute in Washington, DC in 1998 have emerged. This institute aimed to equip print media professionals with the skills necessary to compete with the Internet and social media for audience engagement. Potter's mission was to elevate the status and importance of print media over online counterparts by providing journalists with comprehensive training in print media communication (Webster & Phalen 1997).

Despite the prevalence of contemporary and digital media, print media remains a significant presence in Afghanistan. It serves as the foundational medium upon which other forms of media rely. Journalists and media professionals in Afghanistan must recognize its enduring importance, while students and media consumers should understand how to effectively utilize this valuable

tool of the modern world. Maintaining a robust print media industry is vital, as it provides audience with the mental nourishment they require. Therefore, selecting this topic to investigate is essential (Fanoos, 2003).

**Statement of the problem.** Despite the widespread availability of print media in Afghanistan, readers and enthusiasts often lack access to these publications. Print media plays a pivotal role in the sacred profession of journalism. It disseminates knowledge, conducts research, reports on entertainment, facilitates communication between the government and the populace, and influences or reforms a nation's political order (Saeed, 2010).

This research endeavors to achieve several critical objectives within the realm of print media. Firstly, it seeks to discover and present effective strategies for captivating audiences through print media while enhancing the contemporary appeal of its content. Secondly, it aims to investigate the underlying reasons for the waning interest in print media, including factors such as shifting consumer behaviors and digital competition. Lastly, the research intends to offer concrete solutions and recommendations for adapting print media to thrive in today's digital age.

**Literature review.** According to the information of the Ministry of Information and Culture of Afghanistan, 203 television stations, 366 radio stations, 72 newspapers, 354 weekly magazines, 344 magazines and 73 news agencies have been registered. So far, these media have played a great role in providing news, public awareness, monitoring the government's work, analyzing, and evaluating the country's situation, presenting various entertainment programs to the people, and other areas, which are important for democracy in Afghanistan.

Print media has long been recognized for its multifaceted role in society. It serves as a source of information, supervision, and entertainment. Researchers have observed that it plays a vital role in disseminating research materials and addressing the entertainment needs of a society, all while maintaining the crucial relationship between the government and the people. Additionally, print media plays a role in strengthening a country's political system (Azizi, 2019).

Media is the tool that strengthens the relationship between the people and the government and also conveys the message to the audience. The term "media" is derived from the Latin word "medium"; its plural form is "media" in English. Media is a means of transmitting information, thoughts and ideas, which it conveys to the members of society (Fanoos, 2011).

David Klein's (2021) research indicates that, despite living in the digital age, a substantial majority of Americans prefer print for reading newspapers, magazines, and books. This preference highlights the importance of understanding one's audience when conducting print advertising campaigns. Knowing who you're trying to reach and how to engage them is crucial for success in this medium. More than two-thirds of U.S. adults (68%) prefer print when it comes to reading books, with nearly the same number (65%) saying print is best when reading magazines. Additionally, more than half (53%) prefer to read a physical newspaper. To make your print advertising campaign a success, it's essential to understand your audience: Who are you trying to reach, how can you communicate effectively with them, and what are their preferences? Failing to understand your audience can undermine even the most well-crafted newspaper or magazine advertisement because you may struggle to target the right people.

Researchers have found that many people continue to enjoy reading newspapers, magazines, and books, finding them to be an antidote to the busy digital world. This makes print an excellent way to reach new audiences who may be interested in your products or services. Print also reaches a diverse range of people, and it's worth noting that a significant number of those who enjoy reading print are millennials and those aged under 35. If your potential customers fall into this age group, advertising in printed publications is a wise choice. Moreover, people tend to place greater trust in what they see in print compared to other forms of content. This trust extends to advertisements, making it easier for businesses that advertise in newspapers and magazines to reach new audiences (Ahmadi, 2014).

Several studies have shown that while we are living in an increasingly digital world, print media remains an incredibly important part of the marketing mix in countries where majority of

population lives in rural area. Investing in print media can help businesses extend their reach to potential customers, gain exposure, and engage their target audiences with campaigns.

Researchers have investigated the fact that print media has maintained its position as the number one advertising method for centuries. Despite the rise of new media, print media continues to enjoy popularity among consumers and is favored by discerning advertisers and marketers. One of the main reasons for this is that print media is one of the most trusted means of communication and one of the most cost-effective ways to reach a broad audience quickly. While digital media marketing is gaining prominence, marketers and advertisers should not underestimate the power of print media, even in this digital age (Ahmed, 2018).

The editing and publication of newspapers and magazines have become both a business and a necessity due to the ongoing development, improvement, and advancements in technology. Print media managers play a vital role in providing high standards of service that align with the demands and needs of the society. The audience expects print media to distinguish itself from other forms of media by collecting and publishing content that cannot be found elsewhere. Exploring the essence of print media, the methods of engaging and attracting the audience, and the reasons behind studying these aspects are fundamental components of this inquiry (Quayle, 2012).

In view of the literature reviewed and some of the discussed information gaps, this study will pose the following research questions:

**RQ1:** What is the value and significance of attracting an audience in print media?

**QR2:** What factors contribute to the declining popularity and lack of interest in print media among the general public?

**QR3:** What are the consequences if the audience's requests and needs in print media are not taken into account?

To answer the posed research questions, study used qualitative research approach. Reviewed various scholarly articles, social media, and in-depth interviews.

**Research findings and analysis.** The media serves as a powerful conduit for disseminating information, thoughts, ideas, beliefs, and news globally. It is often regarded as the paramount tool for influencing, constructing, or even altering human societies, owing to its efficacy, significance, impact, and cost-effectiveness. In democratic societies, it is commonly acknowledged as the "fourth estate." Media, as a means of communication, holds the potential to illuminate the path toward human well-being, happiness, development, and the pursuit of national goals and ideals in every society.

In the twenty-first century, characterized by technological advancements reaching unprecedented heights, the influence and efficiency of media surpass that of any other influence. Given this efficiency, it becomes imperative to harness the potential of media effectively. In Afghanistan, the readership of print media is limited, posing the question of how to enhance the popularity of print publications, reinforce the tradition of print media study, and attract a broader audience. In the face of technology's dominance, which has relegated printed publications and communication to the realm of mass communication tools, it is essential to not only compete but also integrate them as a vital component of journalism.

In the realms of art, news, and advertising, one of the paramount considerations is knowing one's audience. While information, advertisements, or any other message may be disseminated widely through optimal methods and channels, without a clear understanding of the intended recipients, the chances of success and achieving objectives remain significantly diminished.

A prudent approach involves consistently categorizing educational background of audience within society, closely monitoring their social lives, occupations, goals, demands, and needs, and tailoring publications to cater to these distinct categories. Such an approach not only retains the existing audience but also extends the reach to new readerships (Saeed, 2010).

For editors of print publications, gauging the value of their work can be challenging. Unlike financial metrics or quantifiable indicators of success found in sports games, the value of editorial work is less tangible. Editors require assurance to persevere in their roles, and this assurance primarily emanates from the readers and their engagement (Halim, 2013).

Identifying the target audience is considered an important principle of the media, which should be given a lot of attention. Publications should be printed according to their demands, needs, knowledge, tastes, interests, religious and cultural preferences, and political inclinations. This approach allows media to play a constructive role in attracting and engaging their audience (Jafari, 2008).

In the year 2000, Western scholars predicted that with the advent of technology, print media would be rendered obsolete, as audiences would shift their attention to digital media. Similarly, many opinion leaders in Afghanistan believe that print media has lost its relevance and audience in the present day.

Every challenge prompts individuals to adopt a defensive stance, and competition instills the spirit of innovation and progress. Print media can evolve effectively with television, radio, and social media news sites by offering qualitative changes, depth, and thorough analysis of content.

A successful editor of print publications places great importance on understanding the audience and maintaining their engagement while retaining their unique editorial identity. Some media outlets excel in understanding their audience on a deeper level, tailoring content to meet their readers' requests, needs, tastes, knowledge levels, and addressing religious, cultural, and societal issues.

In a society like Afghanistan, it is crucial to consider the preferences and areas of interest of the readership, conduct research to understand them better, and publish content that satisfies their thirst for knowledge. In conclusion, print media should prioritize robust content while addressing the desires and preferences of their audience.

Every danger forces a person to be on the defensive and every rivalry and competitive action instills the spirit of innovation and competition in others. If the print media competes with television, radio and social media news sites in terms of the qualitative change, strength, intensity and deep analysis of its content. Therefore, with digital purchase, there will be competition in these ways as well (Webster & Phalen, 1997).

If newspaper editors find out the interests and tastes of literate and illiterate people and publish their favorite content and issues, then here we will have found an audience for our media and we will have competed with other digital media. Because the addressee is someone who voluntarily turns to a certain media. A successful editor of print publications gives importance to reconciliation between himself and the audience and knows how to keep the audience with him as well as his individuality.

Some media are more sophisticated and effective than others since they are aware of their audience on a deeper level. The readers or audience, the content of the print media, and all the components that fill the space of the print media are what matter most to media; in order for our media to continue to exist, media must take into account our readers' requests, needs, tastes, knowledge, and religious, cultural, and cultural issues, as well as all the publications that fill the content of print media, the society's request, and whether they are necessary.

In every society, especially like the one in Afghanistan, it is important to consider the preferences and areas of interest of the readership, research them, and then publish something that will quench their desire for knowledge. On the basis of this, it can be said that print media should have strong content and consider the wants and preferences of their audience.

Many print media and news organizations should require reporters to specialize in a particular region. This specialization may involve covering a single subject exclusively or focusing on a unique geographical region within the same print newspaper (Pater, 2016). For example, a journalist might exclusively cover sports news, which is a distinct subset of their field. In some cases, a separate reporter is assigned to cover news in a limited number of cities, addressing unique geographical concerns. The terms "specialization" and "jurisdiction," once reserved primarily for the police, are now also applied to journalists. Within this context, journalists become acquainted with individuals related to their work area for the first time. In some instances, they must familiarize themselves with specific terminology to understand the

local dialect and expressions used by people in their region (Quayle, 2012). The goal is not to compel reporters to use complex language in their reports. Instead, they are expected to learn terminology specific to their field and a few local phrases, which they can then explain to the audience in plain language. This effectively turns journalists into interpreters and translators, enabling them to provide the public with valuable and easily digestible content, enriching print media with knowledge extracted from intricate language structures.

Print media should continuously adapt its content to meet the evolving needs, preferences, and interests of its audience and make effective adjustments in its publications (Karkran, 2005). The goal is to offer the most relevant and appealing content, ensuring that readers can engage with it voluntarily. In a world where discerning audiences tend to reject subpar offerings, print media managers must strive to deliver content of the highest quality that aligns with the demands and requirements of the community.

The audience's expectation from print media is for it to distinguish itself from other forms of media by curating and publishing content that is unique and not readily available through other sources (Fanoos, 2003).

**Conclusion.** Some have argued that the audience for print media and broadcasting in Afghanistan has diminished in the twenty-first century due to the widespread adoption of new technologies, social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, as well as radio, television, and the proliferation of thousands of websites. However, the reality is that there will always be audiences and readers if print media maintains professionalism, adheres to high standards, follows established principles and printing rules, and caters to people's needs and preferences while making effective use of new technological tools. Addressing the audience as a collective is key to sustaining readership (Jafari, 2008).

Despite the various stages of evolution in Afghan journalism, the field has consistently grappled with challenges such as inexperience and imitation. Looking at the history of journalism in the country, few publications have truly inspired innovation. At present, there are numerous print media outlets, including newspapers, weeklies, journals, magazines, and periodicals; however, they often tend to be quite similar. For instance, if you pick up two or three magazines from the shelf, you will likely find identical sections covering movies, sports, economics, politics, literature, interviews, and other subjects. To capture the interest of the target audience, it is crucial for the responsible editors to employ a consistent thematic distribution style, prioritize news based on importance, and arrange it within its designated section on the page in an organized and categorized manner. This approach can help print media maintain its relevance and readership in an ever-evolving media landscape.

Filling print media content with relevant news and addressing the audience's needs, engaging the audience effectively, and employing an appropriate design are all critical elements in the success and continuous operation of print media. Neglecting the audience's needs and desires can be detrimental.

Print media promotion and audience engagement involve these key considerations. Often, other forms of media underestimate the value of print media, leading to a lack of understanding of their audience.

Print media should prioritize and segment content based on its significance, adhering to established principles and norms of publication. Additionally, content should be organized in a manner that aligns with the audience's interests and preferences, ensuring that problems are effectively addressed. By doing so, print media can better cater to their readers and maintain their relevance.

In the realm of print media, where topics and reports on contemporary social, political, economic, and cultural issues take center stage, the meticulous organization and arrangement of content, including titles, text, fonts, images, and other visual elements, is of paramount importance. The crux of this matter lies in the effective design of print media and advertisements, as it plays a pivotal role in capturing the audience's attention. When newspapers, magazines, and other publications are designed in accordance with well-established principles, featuring

attractive and vibrant colors, eye-catching headlines, suitable and engaging imagery, relevant graphics, and aesthetically pleasing layouts, they become something that the audience can truly appreciate.

In light of these considerations, it becomes evident that the publication and printing of content that fails to captivate readers is essentially futile. There may be numerous newspapers and magazines filled with a wealth of news and issues, but without proper design and page layout, readers may flip through their pages one after another without finding anything of interest. The key to success lies in presenting content in an appealing and suitable design, taking into account the preferences and interests of the target audience. Whether newspapers serve an informative, commercial, partisan, or industry-related purpose, their pages should be meticulously designed and formatted in accordance with the principles mentioned above to effectively attract and retain readers.

In order to achieve the above goals, it is necessary for print media to consider the following points:

- Audience understanding.
- Adaptation. Regularly update publishing materials to align with the changing demands, tastes, and interests of the audience. Flexibility is key.
- Content relevance.
- Innovative Design. Media should use colorful images, attractive headlines, and engaging layouts to directly captivate the audience.
- Adherence to Standards. Uphold journalistic standards in the print media.
- Editors and staff in print media should be skilled writers proficient in the native language. They should also possess deep knowledge of the region's culture, history, science, geography, and be well-informed about global politics and events.
- Audience Engagement. Understand the lives, knowledge, needs, and desires of the audience. Media should employ tactics to keep them engaged and interested.

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### **Қазіргі дәуірдегі мерзімді баспасөзді қолдау: Ауғанстан мысалында**

**Аңдатпа.** Мерзімді баспасөз барлық бұқаралық ақпарат құралдарының бастауында тұрған өзегі. Бұл білім мен ақпаратты дамытудың және насихаттаудың тиімді құралы деп саналады, сондай-ақ баспасөз оқырмандарға бағыт-бағдар беріп, нұсқаушы (Патер, 2016). Сондықтан баспа басылымдарының басшылары, журналистер мен осы саладағы сарапшылар баспасөзді және цифрлық бұқаралық ақпарат құралдары мен жаңа технологиялық дәуірдің құралдарын пайдалана отырып нәтижеге жетуді үйренуі керек. Бұл мәселеге қатысты елеулі қадамдар жасау, сондай-ақ оқырмандарды тарту тәсілдерін түсіну және енгізу қажет.

Бұл зерттеудің нәтижелері мерзімді баспасөздің басшылары мен журналистерге өздерінің баспа басылымдарының оқылымын арттыруға, жалғастыруға және табысқа жетуге, сондай-ақ осы маңызды құралды пайдалану және олардың әлеуетін арттыру мақсатында кейінгі шараларды қабылдауға көмектеседі.

Зерттеулер көрсеткендей, қазіргі технологияның қарыштап дамыған кезеңінде газет-журналдарды шығаруды пайдалы салаға айналдырды. Мерзімді баспасөз басшыларына оқырман сұраныстары мен қажеттіліктеріне сәйкес қызмет көрсетудің жоғары стандарттарын қамтамасыз етуі қажет. Газет-журналдар тартымды, технологиялық құралдарға негізделген және беттерді басып шығару және безендіру принциптеріне сәйкес, оларда инновациялар мен оқу өнері болатындай етіп жасалуы және олар оқырмандар сұранысын қанағаттандыруы керек. Ол өз оқырмандары мен аудиториясының талғамына, аудиторияны тарту тактикасына толы болып, олардың өмірі, білімі, қажеттіліктері мен тілектері туралы хабардар етуі керек.

**Түйін сөздер:** мерзімді баспасөз, аудиторияны жинау, Ауғанстан, басылым дизайны.

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### **Поддержка печатных СМИ в современную эпоху: на примере Афганистана**

**Аннотация.** Печатные СМИ формируют основу всех средств массовой информации. Это называется эффективным инструментом для развития и продвижения знаний и информации, и пресса направляет читателей (Pater, 2016). Поэтому руководителям печатных изданий, журналистам и экспертам в этой области необходимо использовать этот незаменимый инструмент и противостояние цифровым средствам массовой информации и инструментам новой технологической эры. Необходимо предпринять серьезные шаги в отношении ситуации, а также понять и внедрить способы привлечения читателей.

Результаты этого исследования помогут должностным лицам печатных СМИ и журналистам обогатить, продолжить и добиться успеха в своих печатных публикациях, а также принять последующие меры с целью воспользоваться этим важным инструментом и увеличить свой потенциал.

Исследования показывают, что текущий рост, технологическая эволюция и совершенствование в мире СМИ, несомненно, сделали редакцию и публикацию газет и журналов более полезной и динамичной отраслью. Печатные издания должны быть разработаны с учетом современных технологических инструментов и соблюдения принципов дизайна и верстки страниц, чтобы внедрить инновации и создать искусство чтения.

Следует сделать акцент на том, чтобы контент был привлекательным для читателей, основанным на современных технологиях и соответствовал принципам хорошей печати и дизайна. Он также должен отвечать вкусам аудитории, использовать тактики привлечения внимания и быть информированным о жизни, знаниях, потребностях и желаниях своей аудитории.

**Ключевые слова:** печатные СМИ, привлечение аудитории, Афганистан, дизайн печатных СМИ.

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