

## ***Print Newspapers will Die – Examining the Rhetoric in the Context of Bangladesh***

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**[Abstract :** This study has tried to explore the perception of the news managers working in media houses of Bangladesh on the future of print media in the country. The study has taken Displacement Theory and Constancy Hypothesis as its frameworks, and the author has conducted in-depth interviews of 10 news managers from newspapers, television channels and online portals of Bangladesh. This discussion has developed five broad themes regarding the perception of news managers of the country on the future of print media: diverse understanding towards an uncertain future; only corporate interest matter; (arguably, print is) still a relevant medium; innovations and ideas matter more than investment; and towards a solution: converge and evolve to survive. The key findings of this study are: i) News managers perceive varied forecast regarding the existence or extinction of print media in Bangladesh; ii) Most of them see the printed newspapers as a necessary and relevant medium so far; and iii) According to the news managers of the country, print media houses should be convergent and must offer special and exclusive features to their audiences in order to survive in the present age of online and digital media.]

**Key-words:** newspaper in Bangladesh, print media, future of print, print vs. online media, crisis of print media

### **Introduction**

Journalism is experiencing significant changes over the world due to the emergence of digital environment (technological innovations and digitization) and the internet, which have created challenges for the press or print media (Casero-Ripollés & Izquierdo-Castillo, 2013). Group of scholars have anticipated the end of print media because of a digital revolution in newspaper industry as well (Fortunati et al., 2015). Accordingly, in an Op-Ed published in May 2021, Molavi (2021) described print media, specially print newspaper as a slowly dying sector. This perception of Molavi on the future of print media is not only a perception, but he has tried to establish his argument with supporting statistics, which states that print circulation is now in lowest in 80 years, circulations are dropping across the world, and quoting from a writing of Ernest Hemingway, Molavi (2021) speculates that this sector is declining gradually but would die suddenly. From the latest data, Molavi (2021) also states that currently there is no newspaper in the United States of America (USA) having circulation of one million copies.

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The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the circulation of print newspapers as well. People started to avoid print newspapers considering it as a potential carrier of the virus (Noab, 2020). In Bangladesh, just after the outbreak of the pandemic, Newspaper Owners' Association of Bangladesh (NOAB) had to take initiatives to normalize the panicked readers and hawkers to prevent the decline in the circulations of the print media.

Beside the pandemic issue, the most popular disposition about the decline of print media is the rise of online media. But studies have shown that decrease in print advertising does not confirm the rise in online advertisement. There are cases where revenue generated from all kinds of news platforms have decreased as the circulation decreased (Mitchell & Holcomb, 2016). And most importantly, in these cases and others, digital subscription of online media as way of generating revenue could not play a significant role (Mitchell & Holcomb, 2016).

It is clear that the online or digital business model of media has not become the only way to survive with credibility, objectivity and popularity as print media so far. Moreover, it is a debatable issue that whether print media will survive in coming future or the online media will be the new and most probably the only platform of journalism. It is important to consider that in many places print and online media have to develop a symbiotic relationship to overcome the financial crisis of news industry and as a result of this, online media is seen as complementary to print media.

Based on these mostly hypothetical situations as there is no obvious position seems to be present, this study has tried to understand the perceptions of the news managers of media outlets of Bangladesh about the future of print media in Bangladesh. This study has investigated the thoughts and plans of the news managers from print newspapers, television channels and online media outlets and has tried to sketch an overall scenario of the media sector of the country about the confusion, uncertainty and possible paradigm shift in present time and near future. In order to learn their positions, this paper looks for answers to the following questions:

- RQ 1 : Is there any kind of existential threat to print media of Bangladesh because of the rise of online media?*
- RQ 2 : How do the news managers of Bangladesh foresee the future of print media in Bangladesh?*
- RQ 3 : What are the ways being or should be used by the print media to compete with the rise of online media?*

### **Literature Review**

Before exploring the perceptions of the news managers of various media houses of Bangladesh, reviewing of literatures on two particular aspects can be helpful to understand the relevance of this study in the present context. These aspects are the confusing relationship between print and online media; and media displacement effect.

#### **• The Confusing Relationship Between Print and Online Media**

After the emergence of online news media, there was a forecast of coexistence of print media along with online news media (Nerone & Barnhurst, 2001), but controversies arise over time among the stakeholders and academicians regarding the displacement of print media due to the technological changes (Nossek et al., 2015).

Online media has changed the dimension of media industries “globally, nationally and locally” and audience pattern of media has also gone through this transform (Skogerbø & Winsvold, 2011: 214). Online media has become an important factor in various aspects of many societies such as in its ‘social, economic, and cultural life’ (Mitchelstein &

Boczkowski, 2009: 562). Though young generation is moving towards online, studies have pointed to the presence of such audience groups which are being risky for the local newspapers to go online as these groups are not preferring online like youths (Skogerbø & Winsvold, 2011).

In some countries, print and online media has formulated a symbiotic relationship (Doudaki & Spyridou, 2013). Print media is still stronger there, and both print and online media are showing a tendency to refashion themselves (Doudaki & Spyridou, 2013). The symbiotic relationship between print and online media can be further seen in a study where the findings state that print and online media are closely interconnected and have various types of homogeneity (Boczkowski & Santos, 2007). Another content analysis of news of print and online media reveals no significant differences among them and states that readers of both medium are getting the same information (Ghersetti, 2014).

On the other hand, it seems that the position of readers regarding print and online media has been a subject of confusion, as study shows that print version of a newspaper has been preferred even by the internet users in some cases, at the time when print readership was stronger (Chyi & Lasorsa, 2002). Further study shows that readers of online newspapers consider print newspapers and television channels better suited for their need of information; indicating towards a complementary relationship between print and online media (Waal et al., 2005); and some has suggested this complementary relationship as modest (Wurff et al., 2008). Another study states that print version of a media has higher opening rate than its online version and readers of the print version have higher rate of memory recalling and browsing engagement (Magee, 2013). Magee (2013) also suggests not ceasing the publication of their media's print version because of the basis of only funding crisis. Moreover, Study suggests that there is not only one variable influencing the reading habit of the readers, but it is actually a combination of many variables, among which socializing variables seemed to be the strongest (Raeymaeckers, 2002).

Journalists of print and online media have shown differences about their professional roles; print journalists implied significant importance on their investigative and interpretive roles than online journalists; on the other hand, online journalists have given emphasis on informing the public as soon as possible significantly more than the print journalists (Cassidy, 2005).

Another popular position regarding the relationship of print and online media is that print media has lost its revenue collected from advertisement due to the rise of online media. Because online media has changed the behavior of both advertisers and audiences of the media, and as a result print media had started to lost its revenue, though print media was ongoing through other crisis at the same time as well (Casero-Ripollés & Izquierdo-Castillo, 2013). It is true that newspaper industry, particularly print media has experienced significant revenue decrease, but data shows that during 2005-2011, if online revenue had increased one US dollar, the print revenues had decreased 22 US dollar in cases (Sridhar & Sriram, 2015), meaning that online media had not got the amount of advertisement which was lost by print media. However the same study concludes that the overall growth in online advertisement would fasten the overall decrease in print advertisement (Sridhar & Sriram, 2015). On the other hand, Price Waterhouse Coopers (2009) stated that online advertisement globally grew 32.4% from 2003 to 2008 and its largest increase was in the communication sector (cited in Casero-Ripollés & Izquierdo-Castillo, 2013). But Sonnac (2009) and Chyi (2005) also stated that the increase in online advertisement will not be enough for the funding needed in a newspaper business (cited in Casero-Ripollés & Izquierdo-Castillo, 2013). Eventually because of the low

advertising revenue in online media, many newspapers have to impose access charge for their readers in online platforms (Casero-Ripollés & Izquierdo-Castillo, 2013). And as a result, Casero-Ripollés (2010) states, online media industry has started different business models like free content, all paying content, metered model (free access to a certain number of articles), freemium (combination of free content and paid content) and donations (cited in Casero-Ripollés & Izquierdo-Castillo, 2013).

The impact of print and online media is another issue of debate. Generally it is believed that print media can widen the contents which its audience is aware to, and online media do the same thing in lesser extent (Schoenbach et al., 2005). But study has shown that this is not the actual reality as both platforms actually contribute to uphold the agenda of their audiences; the difference is online media show this to the most educated group of the society and print media do it for the most average group of the society (Schoenbach et al., 2005). Further study state that if readers have interest and belief in newspapers, print newspapers are more effective than online newspapers (Waal & Schoenbach, 2008). Another study has challenged the assumption that online media has greater mobilizing content than print media stating online media do not carry mobilizing information which is significantly higher than print media (Hoffman, 2006). Readers of print and online media have different experiences when they took these media as objects and they have emphasized on the bridging of print and digital media to overcome the crisis of news media, the print news media in particular (Fortunati et al., 2015).

#### • Media Displacement Effect

Whatever may be the relation between print and online media is, older media such as newspaper, radio and television have been displaced by the increasing use of newer technologies like internet and the rise of online newspapers or online media. Although studies show conflicting results whether digital media will displace or complement older media such as newspaper, books, radio and television (Twenge et al., 2019).

Study shows that use of internet or online has affected the time spent on reading newspaper, viewing television, using telephone and family conversations (Kayany & Yelsma, 2000). Online media has replaced television as the primary source of information in some cases (Kayany & Yelsma, 2000). Rapid growth in the use of digital media has been observed in studies and this adoption is displacing the use of older or legacy media, this displacing trend has been found quite similarly among different gender, racial or ethnic and socioeconomic status of people (Twenge et al., 2019).

Displacement is very much dependent on the habits of media users, comparative advantages of different media and sociocultural contexts (Nimrod, 2019). Whereas the study of Twenge et al. (2019) has focused on the media displacement by the young or adolescent users, study of Nimrod (2019) has focused on the media displacement by the older people of six different countries. Nimrod (2019) has found high media displacement among the people aged 60 or more of these countries, and this displacement is high regarding newspapers and magazines. Waal & Schoenbach (2010) have states that they had found displacement effect visible among the adult users of media as well. They argues that print newspaper is gradually being substituted by online newspapers; and another thought provoking argument of their study is that online based newspaper sites are being displaced by the non-paper news sites as well (Waal & Schoenbach, 2010), which is indicating further displacement taking place within digital platforms.

It has been already said that media displacement by the rise of the online media is a debated issue as there is a trend present seeing the online media as complementary to the traditional newspapers, and the study of Vyas et al. (2007) is one of these kind. It argues

that rise of internet has not affected the newspaper business very much, but it has also stated that online media is more popular regarding business, sports and international news than traditional print media (Vyas et al., 2007). Advertising in online media has been explained as complementary to other media as advertising sources as well, and it is argued that it has not displaced most of the media as source of advertising information (Tsao & Sibley, 2004).

Whatever may be the consequence - displacement or complementary relationship - traditional media outlets have taken some steps to compete against the rise of online media or to ensure the co-existence in both platforms. It is happening because of the emergence of internet and later digital media, which have affected the availability of news and information greatly and these have forced traditional media to reorganize themselves (Vyas et al., 2007). Study of Mierzejewska et al. (2017) has focused on two strategies of traditional media; first, launching of online versions by the traditional media outlets and second, efforts of print newspapers to cover greater areas with special sections.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study has taken media displacement effect into consideration as quite an absolute consequence of the rise of internet use and emergence of digital media over print and other legacy media. From the technological aspect, this study has taken the Displacement Theory as one of its theoretical frameworks, which was developed by Maxwell McCombs (Anis & Fahad, 2020). The basic idea of this theory is that people have limited time to spend on a particular thing (Omachonu & Akanya, 2019).

McCombs argued that if people give more time to one medium, then they will have to spend less time on other media (Anis & Fahad, 2020). There are debates about the impacts of displacement effect on existing medium and at least three schools of thoughts have been developed around it; they have emphasized on three different relationships between older and newer media as the impact of displacement effect; they are asymmetrical relationship (increase-decrease relationship), complementary relationship (increase-increase relationship) and functional displacement (Anis & Fahad, 2020). Lee & Leung (2008) argues about two new approaches of displacement effect; they are medium centric approach where people spend more time on one media and less on others; and user centric approach which emphasizes on the needs and gratification of the users (cited in Anis & Fahad, 2020).

Displacement Theory mostly depends on the aspects of newer and older media, which is basically about the technological advancement and gratification of the users. But as this study has tried to find out the future of the print media in Bangladesh, it has also focused on the economic issues of mass media as well. And for this reason, this study has also taken the Constancy Hypothesis as one of its conceptual frameworks as well. The Constancy Hypothesis was proposed by Charles E. Scripps, where he argued that despite various technological and other changes, economic support in the field of mass media is relatively constant and very much related to the general economy (McCombs, 1972). According to this hypothesis, a constant amount of wealth is devoted to mass media according to the notion of general economy; when economy is rising, there will be more flow of capital in mass media and vice versa (McCombs, 1972). And because of this constant situation, when one particular medium arises, other media has to decline, and it reflects a major economic constraint which is stopping the growth of media industry (McCombs, 1972). A very important position of this hypothesis is that it has emphasized on the ups and downs of general economy to describe the rise and decline of newer and

older media and has given less importance on the competition within media and technological changes (McCombs, 1972).

### **Methodology**

This study has taken in-depth interview as its methodology. Research interview is considered as one of the most used data collecting strategies (Bryman, 2012). Wimmer & Dominick (2011) has stated in-depth interview or intensive interview as a hybrid of one-to-one interview technique. In this methodology the sample size generally remains smaller, the interviews are generally long, and the success of this technique as a data collection method largely depends on the rapport building of the interviewer with the interviewees (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011).

For this study, semi-structured interview technique has been used. In this kind of interview the interviewer may have a set of questions to be asked to the interviewees, but the chronology of the questions is not followed strictly and interviewer can ask further or follow-up questions if necessary to be more clear about the related topic (Bryman, 2012).

This study has purposefully taken news managers from different media houses as its sample, who have a career in journalism for at least 10 years. So, purposive sampling has been taken initially as its sampling technique, which is also known as qualified volunteer sampling where the sampling is done using a sampling frame indicating who can participate as a sample and who cannot (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). In most of the cases, respondents of this type of sampling participate in the process voluntarily (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011).

From the news managers of the media outlets of the country, 10 news managers have been taken as the respondents of this study using available sampling technique. Available or convenience sample is a sampling technique where respondents are taken on the basis of their availability (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). After the purposive sampling of the news managers with experience in journalism for certain number of years, in-depth interviews of these experienced journalists have been taken based on their availability, where mean age of the respondents were 45.8 years with standard deviation of 7.11 years. Nine of the respondents were male and one of them was female. News managers from four national print dailies (two Bengali and two English), three television channels and three online portals have been interviewed in the study. The national dailies are Daily Prothom Alo, Daily Samakal, The Daily Star and The Business Standard; television channels are DBC News, Independent Television and Channel I; and the online portals are BDNews24.com, Newsbangla24.com and Banglatribune.com.

### **Data Analysis and Findings**

The findings of the study have been presented under five thematic areas, which are - diverse understanding towards an uncertain future (RQ 1); only corporate interest matter (RQ 1); (arguably, print is) still a relevant medium (RQ 2); innovations and ideas matter than investment (RQ 2); and towards a solution: converge and evolve to survive (RQ 3). In order to develop these themes, the basic categorization technique has been used where “the researcher looks for how various themes are similar, how they are different, and what kinds of relationships may exist between them” (Gibson and Brown, 2009: 128-129, cited in Saldana, 2016: 202).

#### **• Diverse understanding towards an uncertain future**

As the rise of online and digital media, traditional print media houses of Bangladesh have experienced a new situation over the media ecology and environment. But the

respondents of this study have expressed diverse understanding regarding the future of print media in Bangladesh due to this new phenomenon. Three major paths of thinking have been identified from the respondents.

First, a group of respondents think that there is no threat for print media in Bangladesh due to the rise of online media. These respondents have focused on the credibility issue of print media and mentioned the presence of a huge untouched market and readers of print media over the country. According to them if this untouched market and readers can be utilized, there are good prospect for the print media of Bangladesh in near future. One of the respondents also referred the rise of online media as not a threat, but a new window for the media sector of the country.

Second, another group of news managers believe that there is something happening in the print media sector due to the rise of online media. But they have named it in various ways like threat, challenge, displacement etc. News managers of this group repeatedly mentioned that challenge is not a new thing for print media. Challenges occurred previously because of the expansion of radio and television as well. A deputy executive editor of a national daily have said,

‘Newsprint will die’ — this rhetoric has been going around for 25-30 years. But people who read hardcopy (*printed newspapers*) are still reading it.

News managers of similar thinking believe that print media will survive for 10 to 25 years more in Bangladesh without any question. They have also mentioned that circulation of the newspapers was dropping slowly, or at least cumulative circulation was not increasing, but after the hit of COVID-19 pandemic, circulation of print newspapers has dropped drastically. And there are different perceptions among these news managers whether or not the lost circulation will be regained. A news manager of a online news portal thinks that readers will back to print media because of health concerns of using devices continuously. The same respondent also states that, advertisers still prefer print media over online while giving advertisement, which has been a huge advantage for the print media so far.

Third, a respondent of the study who is a consultant in an online news portal strongly believe that there will be no print newspaper in Bangladesh in 2035. He has also mentioned that, the cumulative reader of news is increasing in the country, but print is losing its readers for the online media. He believes that print newspaper’s production and distribution method is an outdated culture and because of the expansion of Wi-Fi technology, more readers are preferring online media. While expressing his perception, he said,

If there are five reasons for print losing their readers, the number one would be online readership. If we draw a percentage here, 80% of the responsibility has to be the online news media.

One of the major aspects of the loss of readership of print media in Bangladesh has been identified as the shift of preferences of the readers and younger generations from print to devices, which has been mentioned as a displacement in effect as well. And most of the respondents have shared a common perception that, during the COVID-19 pandemic, this displacement became so fast than normal situation, which has seriously affected the readership of print newspapers of the country.

#### • Only corporate interest matter

Most of the respondents of the study have identified a changed situation in the print media sector of Bangladesh. And the most ambitious of them are not seeing the

possibilities of presence of print newspapers 30 years from now. But new print newspapers have been starting their operations in Bangladesh frequently. Respondents were asked the cause behind it and almost all of them have responded the same, though they have seen quite uncomfortable addressing the issue. As the essence of that, one of them said,

This is a very complex matter to discuss. You have to see who are the owners of these new newspapers. If we consider print media as a business, who owns these businesses? You will find the industrial giants of Bangladesh among them.

Respondents have said unanimously that the private media sector of the country is totally under control of corporate groups and these groups are coming forward with new ventures of (print) media outlets for their absolute corporate interest. Behind this ventures of the corporate groups, journalistic principles are not any kind of concern at all and the respondents also think that these outlets are in operation to protect and backing up the owner, actually being used as a shield for their other business interest.

Respondents have also mentioned that these new print newspapers may not be financially profitable projects, but these can be profitable politically or otherwise for owners' side. Another prime reason for coming up with new print media outlets, according to the respondents, is to tackle the business opponents and influence others.

When asked why these corporate groups are coming up not with online media, respondents have expressed different perceptions. While one of them mentioned it as a possible Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activity, most of them have focused on the authenticity of print media in the mind of the readers, the status symbol of the ownership of a print media in the society, and convenience of getting lease and loan for the print media. Some of the respondents have also mentioned the lack of market and audience research before the starting of operations of these media outlets as a cause of coming up with print rather than online or digital.

• **(Arguably, print is) still a relevant medium**

Almost all print media houses of Bangladesh have already started their online operations as they are quite convinced that it is extremely hard to reach all the potential readers using the medium of print only. But respondents of the study have shed light on two aspects as well. First, according to their perception, print media may not survive after 25 to 30 years maximum in the country; Second, young generation is preferring digital devices more than reading any texts in print. On this note, while respondents have been asked whether or not the print media is a relevant medium now, almost all of them have answered affirmative. They have said print media will always be necessary and relevant for various causes.

These respondents think that the description in detail style of print and the impact of print media over the readers make it still relevant. Further, reading newspapers is a regular habit for many readers. According to them, news readers believe the content of the newspaper more than any other news media, which according to them, is another cause of the relevance of print media. A respondent believes that the print media will be relevant in the country until the education and other sectors as well as the advertisers and investors will not be fully digitized.

A fraction of the respondent from similar thoughts have stated that, print newspaper can be considered as proof of something and can be used as document, which makes it still relevant. They have also argued that the absence of any kind of guaranty of online



media because of its fragile electronic storage system and its security concern, print is still very much a relevant medium. A senior news editor of a television channel has ambitiously stated,

When television was becoming popular, radio was treated as a backdated medium, but radio came back with FM technology. Previously, it was at the houses, and now it is in the cars and phones. So, print may come back as a new style as well.

On the contrary, a respondent has stated that there is no relevance of print media right now as print media is unable to cope up with the developing news because of online based media. This respondent has also stated that providing news is the matter for media, not the medium it is using. This respondent, who is a consultant at an online news portal, has also reminded that online media has extinct many intermediary media services in recent past, which also indicates the irrelevance of the print media according to him. Stating that print media is not relevant from the point of view of the readers, he said,

In the last 10 years, the biggest incident in the country was the Holey Artisan incident. The incident ended by the early morning, but newspapers had to go to press by 2 AM. So, the people who read newspapers the next day did not have the story of how it ended. So, what role do newspapers play in delivering the news to the people? Audiences did have the updated news through television and online.

#### • **Innovations and ideas matter more than investment**

As most of the news managers of various media outlets of Bangladesh are feeling a threat or challenge for print media because of the rise of online media, and at the same time considering the print media as relevant, respondents of current study have been asked if the financial base of the print media outlets become stronger, will it be helpful for lasting the print media longer than their perception or not. From the responses of them, again differentiated paths can be identified.

A deputy news editor of an online news portal has said investment will be a huge influence and investment is needed for the better development and digitization of the whole process of print media. In contrast, another news manager from an online news portal has stated that only ideas matter for print media rather than financial investments. And a chief news editor of a television channel has stated that the owners of the media outlets actually do not care about the future or quality of print media, so, according to him this is an irrelevant aspect. According to him,

The investors worry about keeping their ventures secure, about having the political and media backup in favor of them. So, they do not care about whether the journalism industry is developing or not. Initially, it seems that there will be many investments, but eventually those changes.

But most of the respondents have focused on quality content along with financial investments. They have emphasized on knowing the choices and expectations of the readers, reducing the number of pages of newspapers, prior market and audience research for investing in profitable areas, promoting interactive and citizen journalism etc. Though they have considered both the quality improvement and financial investment necessary for the survival of print media in Bangladesh, most of their concern has been seen in quality development of contents rather than financial issues. They have suggested to look for diverse content and to think on new ideas and innovations as audiences have

become competitor of media now a days. For improved ideas and innovations, a news manager has considered leadership and skilled manpower as primary concerns. According to him,

If you think about the BBC or the News York Times, we do not even dare to dream that some newspaper from Bangladesh will dominate the Asian or the South-Asian region, let alone global. Our crisis is not money; our primary crisis is leadership.

The same news manager, who is a deputy executive editor of a national daily, has called for a renovation of journalism academia as well. He stated,

I also studied in the department of Journalism. All we had was bookish knowledge, with bare minimum practical...the productions from the departments of Journalism are not satisfactory.

But, one of the respondents has repeatedly said that according to him, there is actually no need for print media at this time. Better ideas can help it to survive for few years more, but in that case, eventually there will be no readers for the print. He argues,

Do we look for any word in the dictionary now? So, when there is no need, why will the newspaper get printed?

#### • Towards a solution: Converge and evolve to survive

Respondents have been asked to express their thinking on possible solutions of this ongoing unstable situation in the print media sector of Bangladesh. The solution they have emphasized most is that authority of the print media houses will have to embrace the changed situation and they will have to evolve with time and technologies. One of the respondents has suggested that print media houses must incorporate updated servers and applications related to print. A deputy executive editor of a national daily has suggested that media houses of the country will have to consider themselves as content producers, a news manager of an online portal has said almost the same using the term as news publishers instead of content producers. On the same notion, an assistant editor of a national daily argues that, in this situation text of the news will remain same, but the medium may change.

Respondents of the study have focused on various aspects for having a solution of this crisis period of the print media houses of Bangladesh. Some of them have suggested that print media should focus on collecting advertisement and more digitization, and increase the price of the newspaper and start paywall in their online versions.

But most of the respondents have emphasized on the quality of the content as prime concern. According to them, quality of the content must be ensured with credibility and insightfulness. They have also asked print for presentable, authentic and in-depth special contents along with human interest stories and long articles.

On the question of the contents of print media, a senior news editor of a television channel has said,

It cannot go both ways. They either have to increase pages, publish post editorials of prominent figures, expert writers on their pool and engage the intellectual audience. On the contrary, to get a popular audience, they will have to reduce pages and add popular content.

While addressing the same issue, a consultant of an online portal has given importance on the content preferences of audiences with seeking a change in the newspaper delivery method and describing the improvement of circulation as a prime concern. He stated,

News managers...have to make news related to people and their lives if they want to increase circulation or readership. But if that is not the primary target...they do not have to consider what the audiences want.

A respondent, who is working as a chief news editor of a television channel, has suggested that print media should control their thirst for hits, reactions and comments in their online operations and must not compromise with the ethics of journalistic practices.

Moreover, a senior news editor of another television channel has come with the suggestion of introducing new ventures along with print media business. According to him, it has been difficult to survive with only one business. This news manager has mentioned the business model of Daily Prothom Alo, a national daily of the country who are running a publication house along with the daily newspaper and recently launched an Over the Top (OTT) platform.

A news manager has suggested to focus on regional newspapers and regional contents to catch the attention of new readers. On this note, a good number of respondents have referred the model of Ajker Patrika, a national daily started its operation in June, 2021, whose motto is 'Country's Local Newspaper' as it is publishing the highest number of regional editions.

When asked the same question in a comparatively micro level, means what measures have been taken by the media houses of each of the news managers, more concrete answers have been received. These answers can be divided into three major areas.

First, the news managers working at newspaper or print media have mentioned that they are operating integrated newsrooms with strong online sections, emphasizing on fast news and fast analysis, more digitization and more investment on digitization. Two of them have mentioned that they have turned their houses as a news portal or platform rather than only a print media house. They are doing it by publishing multimedia content and operating YouTube channels; infographics, data journalism and specialized contents for print versions; and most importantly they are constantly trying to provide something new for the print version of their media outlets for the next day.

Second, news manager who are working at television channels seem to have more vulnerable situation than print. A chief news editor has said that his house has not taken any steps regarding the rise of online media. He thinks that the higher authority of his house has not felt any kind of threat yet. Another news manager of a television channel has stated that his house is sacking experienced journalists to reduce their cost as experienced employees are highly paid. As a result, this house is lacking expertise which is deepening the crisis further. Only one of the news managers of a television channel has expressed an initiative of his channel to cope up with the rise of online media. This particular television channel is uploading long video contents in their YouTube channel and broadcasting a shortened version of those contents in their television channel to engage its audiences both in television broadcasting and online operations.

Third, most of the news managers from online portals have mentioned that their houses are using every kind of technologies which are useful for gathering and disseminating news. As a part of this, they are being totally digitized by having interconnected servers and being familiar with newer technologies and apps. They are also making their in-house journalists trained up in mobile and online journalism. And for now, they are also using social networking sites as a circulating tool of their contents. But on the contrary, a news manager of an online portal has also stated that, he thinks his house is failing to cope up with the new situation than the newcomers on the media sector

of the country. At this point, it should be mentioned that, his portal is one of the oldest online portals of Bangladesh which came into operations in the first decade of current century.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

This study has investigated the ongoing unsettled situation of print media of Bangladesh because of the emergence of online, digital and internet-based media, and its possible consequences according to the news managers of various media houses of the country including national dailies (print newspapers), television channels and online portals. Acquired data of the study can be summarized under three major aspects.

First, news managers of different media houses of the country are perceiving varied forecast regarding the existence or extinction of print media in Bangladesh. Where some of them are not seeing the rise of online media as any kind of threat for print media, some news managers have identified the situation as a huge challenge or threat for the print media. Later group has indicated towards a kind of displacement which is happening within the news consumers of the country due to the rise of internet-based news media, which resembles the findings of Twenge et al. (2019).

Most of the respondents have agreed that there was a steadiness present in the growth of cumulative circulation of the print newspaper in Bangladesh for a time being. But after the hit of COVID-19 pandemic in the country, circulation of print media had fallen drastically. During the primary time of the pandemic, people along with young generation had taken internet-based media as their prime source of entertainment and information as well. As a result, a huge number of people are now considering device-based news consumption rather than reading traditional printed newspapers. This perception of the news managers of the country is supported by the rapid growth of the internet users in Bangladesh during the first month of COVID-19 outbreak in the country, where the cumulative internet users in the country were increased 7.38% from February 2020 to March 2020 (Islam, 2020).

Second, whatever are the perceptions of the news managers regarding the future of the print media in Bangladesh, most of them still see the print as a necessary and relevant medium so far. Though, according to their response, there is very little to be ambitious about the new print media outlets of the country, they are still finding it convenient to consider the print as a much authentic medium than any other media, with the print having extra points for its documentation value and secure storage system than digital or electronic storage of online media contents. But this position of the news managers seems to be partially right because it is true that any kinds of disruption or hacking can permanently damage the digital storage of online media contents; but on the other hand, it is also true that the physical storage of the print media contents can be preserved with more security online as it will be free from any kind of earthy risks like damages due to fire, water or any kind of physical entropy in those cases.

Though the news managers of the country are believing in the relevance of print media so far, their concern regarding the new corporate owned print media is a sector to put emphasis on, as not only new print media houses but most of the media houses are operating in various corporate controlled condition. Riaz and Rahman (2021) has stated that many media outlets of Bangladesh are controlled by the members of same family, media houses are affiliated with political identity and they are mostly owned by big business or corporate groups with various business interest. And the owners of media outlets are using their ownership to safeguard their business interest and to criticize their rival groups (Riaz & Rahman, 2021). On this note, new operations

of print media outlets in the country may not be seemed as development of print media sector.

Third, according to the news managers of the country, print media houses will have to be convergent and must offer special and exclusive features to their audiences in order to survive in the present age of online and digital media. Along with this statement, it seems from the responses of the interviewees that television channels are in more vulnerable situation than print media in Bangladesh because of the rise of online media and OTT platforms. Most of them are not having proper plan of action and activities to combat the situation like print media are doing, and they are choosing the way of cost reduction by sacking experienced journalists of their houses. So, the suggestions of the news managers for the print media to be convergent and offer special and exclusive features to its readers should be applicable for the television channel or for the broadcast media sector of the country as well.

To conclude, it is a convincing fact that the overall media sector of Bangladesh is passing through a confusing situation as audiences are shifting their preferences due to displacement effect, and traditional print media houses of the country as well as television channels are being bound to launch their online operations. On this note, it is recommended that the media houses of the country should and must realize this reality and should put more emphasis on their online operation planning. And if they want their print version to last long, they must have different plan of action, quality content and professionalism along with convergent journalism for the print which will catch the attraction of the readers in this era of very fast online journalism.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Because of the lack of adequate fund and time, present author could not take a bigger sample for interviewing in-depth and explore the issue more thoroughly, which could have made its findings and conclusion more generalizable. Another limitation of the study is that, it has interviewed three news managers from different television channels as representatives from broadcast media sector of the country, but has not interviewed any news manager working at radio stations. Moreover, this study has not investigated the position of the owners and top editorial bodies of the media outlets, which can be arguably stated as another limitation of the study, though it was not the primary focus of this study. However, if it was done, it could have been reflected the situation more vigorously.

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**[সার-সংক্ষেপ :** এই গবেষণাটি বাংলাদেশে প্রিন্ট সংবাদমাধ্যমের ভবিষ্যত সম্পর্কে দেশের বিভিন্ন সংবাদমাধ্যম প্রতিষ্ঠানে কর্মরত সংবাদ ব্যবস্থাপকদের অনুধাবন অন্বেষণের চেষ্টা করেছে। ডিসপ্লেসমেন্ট তত্ত্ব ও কস্টেপ্সি হাইপোথিসিসিকে কাঠামো ধরে এই গবেষণায় সংবাদপত্র, টেলিভিশন চ্যানেল ও অনলাইন পোর্টালে কর্মরত ১০ জন সংবাদ ব্যবস্থাপকের বিষয় সাক্ষাৎকার গ্রহণ করা হয়েছে। প্রিন্ট সংবাদমাধ্যমের ভবিষ্যত সম্পর্কে তাদের অনুধাবন বিষয়ে সাক্ষাৎকারের আলোচনাসমূহকে পাঁচটি পৃথক এলাকায় ভাগ করা যায়: একটি অনিশ্চিত ভবিষ্যত সম্পর্কে বহুমুখী বোঝাপড়া; কর্পোরেট স্বার্থের একক কর্তৃত্ব; (তর্কসাপেক্ষে, প্রিন্ট গণমাধ্যমের) বিদ্যমানতার প্রাসঙ্গিকতা; বিনিয়োগের তুলনায় উদ্ভাবন ও ভাবনার গুরুত্ব; এবং সমাধানের দিকে: সম্মিলন ও বিবর্ধনের মাধ্যমে টিকে থাকা। গবেষণার ফলাফল থেকে দেখা যায়: ক) বাংলাদেশে প্রিন্ট সংবাদমাধ্যমের বিদ্যমানতা অথবা বিলুপ্তির প্রশ্নে দেশের সংবাদ ব্যবস্থাপকগণ বিভিন্ন ধরনের অনুধাবন লালন করছেন; খ) এখন পর্যন্ত তাদের অধিকাংশ প্রিন্ট সংবাদমাধ্যমকে একটি প্রয়োজনীয় ও প্রাসঙ্গিক মাধ্যম হিসেবে দেখছেন; এবং গ) দেশের সংবাদ ব্যবস্থাপকদের মতে, অনলাইন ও ডিজিটাল সংবাদমাধ্যমের এই যুগে টিকে থাকতে হলে প্রিন্ট সংবাদমাধ্যম প্রতিষ্ঠানগুলোকে কনভারজেন্ট হতে হবে এবং তাদের পাঠক তথা অডিয়েন্সের জন্য অবশ্যই বিশেষ ও অনন্য বৈশিষ্ট্যের আধেয় তৈরি করতে হবে।

**মুখ্য শব্দগুচ্ছ :** বাংলাদেশে সংবাদপত্র, প্রিন্ট সংবাদমাধ্যম, প্রিন্ট মাধ্যমের ভবিষ্যত, প্রিন্ট বনাম অনলাইন সংবাদমাধ্যম, প্রিন্ট সংবাদমাধ্যমের সফট]