

The features of online news websites in Bangladesh

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1. Introduction

The technology has a specific angle to use in the field of journalism. What everyone in journalism needs to understand about the technology from collecting information, processing, editing and distributing is made possible by the Internet, web, and mobile technologies [1]. According to Fahmidul Haq, new technology has always influenced and sometimes brought changes to the mode of production and patterns of journalism [2]. Journalism has always been shaped by technology [3]. A determinist view may prioritize technology, such as platforms and devices, over the user experience or the need to produce high-quality content that follows journalism traditions. The reality is that we must consider how people consume, share and interact with media in their day-to-day lives [4].

Bangladesh, a country in South Asia which is one of the most densely populated countries in the world having more than 160 million people. The number of Internet users continues to grow here and people are becoming more interested in visualization and interactivity. In recent years, Bangladesh has seen a phenomenal increase in Internet use.

We have already known that the Internet emerged in Bangladesh relatively late, first developing 1996, and the past few years, it has become more widespread. According to the Government agency Telecommunications Regulatory Commission of Bangladesh (BTRC), the total number of Internet subscribers has reached 112.713 million at the end of January, 2021 [5]. Among young people, there is a tendency to use Internet resources as news sources and a decrease in interest in traditional media. A more literate part of the country's population shows a significant interest in the blogosphere. Leading politicians, artists, and show business representatives use various social media platforms.

According to the BTRC, the total number of Mobile Phone subscribers has reached 171.854 million at the end of January, 2021. About 97 % of the total number of Internet users in Bangladesh use mobile devices to access the network, as confirmed by a recent survey, conducted by the government. According to the BTRC, 103.191 million users have access to the mobile Internet [6].

Features of the development of Bangladeshi Internet news media result from the development of Internet communications. The popularity of Internet media has been driven by the faster distribution of news and multimedia content as opposed to the slower pace of traditional media.

THE FEATURES OF ONLINE NEWS WEBSITES IN BANGLADESH

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Abstract: The Internet has opened borderless opportunities in the field of journalism and mass communication, especially significant on how journalistic stories will be created and distributed across the multiple platforms. Since 2006 Bangladeshi mainstream news organizations have been transforming and reshaping their strategy towards being a digital-only news outlet. News organizations are now using different features of mobile devices and social media to tell stories and engage with their target audiences. We consider digital-only platforms as a new media, social media and convergence media platforms. Almost each traditional media outlet observed has the analogue or another version on the web. Social media platforms, like Facebook, Twitter, weblogs, Tik Tok have provided the opportunity for the traditional journalists to share news quickly, get feedback from the audience and have two-way communication with the reader. Over the years they have created thousands of new jobs for aspiring journalists.

In this article, we analyze the basic features of online news media that exists in contemporary Bangladesh and provide an account of the development trends. We outline the new genres, techniques and use as a sample two most famous online news platforms: The Daily Star and bdnews24. This study is based on both primary and secondary sources of qualitative data to understand the new genres of online news media, challenges and opportunities to work in the ever-changing media landscape.

Keywords: new media, digital media, AI, ML, QR, messengers, Bangladesh, online newspapers, social media, online media.

In the rapidly developing information space, traditional media were forced to use new technologies to maintain their image in modern society [7]. Many editorial boards switched to the use of computer technology in the late 80s and early 90s. In the late 90s & beginning of 2000, all the leading newspapers created their web versions for Internet users. Most of the national daily newspapers are already available electronically.

Online media in Bangladesh has a relatively short history. In our opinion, progress in the field of online journalism is more dependent on the development of Internet technologies in general. Internet media have already managed to overcome difficult times on their way, now they are developing successfully. Today we see that even hyper local online news portals offer multimedia content for all kinds of digital platforms. To get a complete picture of the development of Internet media in our country, we will highlight a number of periods.

The aim of the study was to analyze and reveal the basic features of contemporary online news websites in Bangladesh. To understand the current trends we have undergone observing features of the country's two leading popular online news platforms: The Daily Star and bdnews24.

2. Methods

This study is based on both primary and secondary sources of qualitative data to understand the new genres of online news media, challenges and opportunities to work in the ever-changing media landscape. Based on the purposive sampling, Daily Star and Bdnews24.com newspapers were selected for the study to see the features in their websites. Several types of research related materials were reviewed to understand the development trends of genres and features of online journalism in the global and Bangladesh context and analyzed, where the question of immersive digital journalism was raised.

3. Result

3.1. Features of the news websites *thedailystar.net* and *bdnews24.com*

The Daily Star was established as an English newspaper in the media landscape of Bangladesh on January 14, 1991. The daily Star became the first ever newspaper in Bangladesh, launched its news website in 1997.

While the bdnews24.com initially began their journey as a news agency and then went on to become the country's first internet newspaper in 2006.

The Daily Star: The online version of the “Daily Star” print newspaper is the most visited English news website by Bangladeshi and foreign citizens at home and abroad and is often cited in national and international magazines, seminars, and research papers as the most reliable and trusted news source. It is a major taxpayer among the country’s media.

The English-language newspaper “Daily Star” is well known as a respected media outlet in the country, as well as among young journalists and university graduates. Its print version is the highest circulated English newspaper in Bangladesh. The newspaper pays standard wages to employees, who have acquired a reputation for fair and responsible journalism, popularity, and public support. They update the website 24/7 with breaking, political, business, entertainment, sports, and crime news.

According to Alexa ranking, thedailystar.net ranks first among the English-language issues in Bangladesh. The news is updated on a daily basis, which makes it possible to quickly learn about current events in Bangladesh and in the world. Thedailystar.net is ranked 6,637 in the global ranking [8]. The web page reached 27th position among the users in Bangladesh. A user spends around 4 minutes and 17 seconds on the website each day. About 70 % traffic came from Bangladesh, followed by the USA & India. On the top of the home page there are 13 menu tabs and some of them have separate categories. The lead story appears with another 3 more stories at the landing page. The website also publishes Bengali news, which has turned the web as a bilingual website.

The Dailystar.net has a number of features that are mainly displayed on the home page. In 2014–2015, the home page included multimedia presentations, available on podcasts, English bulletin of ATN Bangla TV, and the latest news from ABC Radio. Gradually they removed all these features from the website. Today we can only find photo galleries and video content (Star Live) as multimedia elements in the home page. Some of the basic widgets of the newspaper are sending news to email, RSS feed and social media icons. Users can send a comment on a news story using their Facebook account. Each article can be posted on Facebook and Twitter by clicking the share button on the social media logo and can also be sent to email or Messenger.

Bdnews24.com: It is one of the fastest and most reliable news sources in Bangladesh and the first online newspaper in the country. It is considered a news agency and sells material for national newspapers and TV channels. The bdnews24.com website was launched on 23 March 2006. Bdnews24.com is a modified online version of BD News, originally launched as a news agency to serve readers and the media. The portal is known as Bangladesh’s largest news publisher by reach & volume, where the readers can get news content both in Bangla and English. Over the years they have identified themselves as an Internet-only and global first news portal.

Bdnews24.com has a global Alexa ranking of 2,142 and ranked 9th position among all websites, visited from Bangladesh. About 37 % of traffic comes from different search engines. The website has monthly 3.79 million unique visitors and daily 2, 74.00 unique visitors hit the website. A visitor spends 5 minutes and 13 seconds on the website per day. About 77 % of users are from Bangladesh, followed by India, USA, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Canada, Japan, and several other countries [9].

The website publishes news content both in Bengali and English Languages. Recently, a new web page has been devel-

oped specifically for use in social media. Users can join in the opinion poll section and find the most read recent stories and most viewed stories at the right side of the middle of the web page. The site offers users various paid services for receiving news via SMS-messages to a short number, as well as “push-notifications” for delivering urgent news using mobile applications. The website is also available on Android and iOS platforms. This is how major world news agencies work today.

4. Discussion

We are witnessing the period, when new types and genres of journalism are born in Bangladeshi online news portals. And technologies, provided by new media, will continue to change the relationships between audience and mass media. We can see how journalism has changed in Bangladesh since its appearance and in the near future we will see the influence of implementation of VR, Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning in journalism. The further research on this topic is required, finding out the readiness of the news media for using AI in the newsroom.

In the past few years we have seen some significant changes of journalism worldwide and in particular in Bangladesh. As an industry news media is constantly growing and considering the ever-expanding requirements from the job seekers. Online journalism has already received huge popularity. Online new websites are publishing multimedia stories, podcasts, live reports, text news on a 24/7 cycle. The innovation around the new ways of storytelling in digital platforms has also been accelerated through the opening up of new possibilities for non-professional journalists. The blogs are now integrating with the main news platforms, informing us that we must grow our habit and mindset to digest news content from a wide variety of media platforms. More and more news establishments are making their website accessible for internet users. At the end of July 2020, the Information Ministry of Bangladesh has released a list of 34 verified media outlets as part of its process of registering online news portals. The report has mentioned that the 3,000 news portals are applied for registration [10].

The implementation of information technologies in journalism had a huge impact on news gathering, processing, production and distribution of media content worldwide, and in particular in Bangladesh. Though we need to admit that there is an issue in implementing modern technologies, the most noticeable one is the lack of skills of modern journalists. That’s why there are some centers and private courses, where modern journalists are studying how to make a video, how to make a montage, how to make audio, how to upload the content to the digital platforms and how to communicate with the audience on different digital platforms.

5. Conclusion

Based on Bangladesh’s context for an online news media ecosystem, there is a solid business model that is being implemented by newsrooms and convergence media. In that sense, social media is the primary mode of news delivery and consumption for specific demographic cohorts and young netizens that are in significant part an audience of online news media. That’s why it’s so important for traditional newsrooms to stay updated with the new trends of gathering and distribution of the content. Modern newsrooms should pay attention to the skills of journalists and have the possibility to provide training for all the employees, so they can produce different genres and storytelling for online platforms.

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