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## Press release

### How three leading Indian newspapers are managing the digital transition

How are established Indian media changing their newsrooms and structure to increase their digital presence and adapt to a changing news environment?

*India Newspapers' Digital Transition*, a new report from the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, produced in collaboration with the Centre for Internet and Society, looks at three leading Indian newspapers, the *Dainik Jagran* in Hindi, the English-language *Hindustan Times*, and *Malayala Manorama* in Malayalam, to understand their priorities and approaches.

Since 2010, internet use in India has grown at an explosive pace, with mobile web access growing considerably, and media organisations have been forced to adapt their practices sharply. Audiences too have changed, as web access is increasingly available beyond the urban, affluent, highly-educated and English-language audiences who have historically represented a large part of India's web users.

The report looks at the challenges and opportunities opened up by these seismic changes in web use, and analyze how three leading titles are adopting different strategies with the shared ambition of securing their long-term futures.

*"Investing in digital tools and resources and hiring skilled staff is the easy part. What's challenging is to change organisational and journalistic cultures to fit the new rhythms of the newsroom. It's been interesting to see the different ways the three organisations go about this"* says Zeenab Aneez, lead author on the report.

The report was written by Zeenab Aneez, Sumandro Chattapadhyay, Vibodh Parthasarathi, and Rasmus Kleis Nielsen. Key findings include:

- Investing in digital technology and expertise is common to all three newspapers. Editorial priorities are adjusting in line with digital commitments, and daily workflows, distribution strategies and business models are all being impacted and shaped by a shift towards digital.
- The print newspaper industry is still growing in India – which means digital innovation can be explored from a position of relative strength in comparison to other global media markets where print is in decline.
- Assets, reputation and brand strength is key – all three newspapers are aware that print growth is short term, and that digital will shape their priorities longer term, and are utilising their existing brand legacy, audience reach and editorial resources to gain an edge over newer digital start-ups and international competitors.
- Investment is not enough. Although all three newspapers have invested in new staff and skills, its clear innovation in technology needs to be accompanied by profound shift in

organisation and culture in order to effectively leverage existing editorial assets within a digital environment.

Reuters Institute Director of Research Rasmus Kleis Nielsen says: *“The most significant barriers to change is the perception that print journalism is somehow inherently superior to digital journalism, and a lack of effective synergy between editorial leaders and managers, often combined with a lack of technical know-how. Money can buy new tools and bring in new expertise, but it cannot on its own change culture, ensure synergy, or align the organisation with new priorities. This requires leadership and broad-based change. Long-term, senior editors, management, and rank-and-file reporters will have to work and change together to secure Indian newspapers’ role in an increasingly digital media environment.”*

The challenges Indian media face are similar to other media markets – but the key difference from many is the position of strength that they are navigating major change from, and their ability to learn from both mistakes and successes elsewhere.

[Download the report here.](#)

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## Editors’ notes

### About The Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism

The Thomson Reuters Foundation is the core funder of the RISJ, based in the Department of Politics and International Relations at the University of Oxford. The RISJ was launched in November 2006 and developed from the Reuters Fellowship Programme, established at Oxford 33 years ago. An international research centre in the comparative study of journalism, the RISJ aims to be global in its perspective and provides a leading forum for scholars from a wide range of disciplines to engage with journalists from around the world. See <http://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/>

### About the authors

**Zeenab Aneez** is an independent journalist and researcher in the field of digital media and culture. Her interests include digital publishing practices, new media journalism, media ecologies and digital labour. She was previously a reporter at *The Hindu*, Hyderabad, and has recently completed an MA in Digital Media and Culture at the Centre for Interdisciplinary Methodologies, University of Warwick. She is associated with the Researchers at Work (RAW) programme at the Centre for Internet and Society, leading a multi-year study on digital transition in Indian news media.

**Sumandro Chattapadhyay** is Research Director at the Centre for Internet and Society (CIS), India. His research interests span over new media, information technology, and political economy. At CIS, Sumandro leads and contributes to the Researchers at Work programme, and policy engagements in the fields of open data and free software, e-governance and digital ID, and network economy and digital labour.

**Vibodh Parthasarathi** maintains a multidisciplinary interest in media policy, creative industries, and policy literacy. An Associate Professor at the Centre for Culture, Media and Governance at Jamia Millia Islamia University, his ongoing research focuses on digital migration across media sectors, and devising a Media Diversity Index for India. Parthasarathi’s work has attracted support from the Ford

Foundation, Social Science Research Council, India New Zealand Education Council, HIVOS, Indian Council for Social Science Research, Canada's IDRC, India Foundation for the Arts and Open Society Foundation. A founding Board Member of the Centre for Internet and Society, he serves on the Boards of The Media Foundation, The India Open Data Association and the All India Communication & Media Association. He is currently finalising a large, two volume edited work on the media economy of India.

**Rasmus Kleis Nielsen** is Director of Research at the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism and serves as Editor in Chief of the *International Journal of Press/Politics*. His work focuses on changes in the news media, on political communication, and the role of digital technologies in both. He has done extensive research on journalism, American politics, and various forms of activism, and a significant amount of comparative work in Western Europe and beyond. Recent books include *The Changing Business of Journalism and its Implications for Democracy* (2010, edited with David A. L. Levy), *Ground Wars: Personalized Communication in Political Campaigns* (2012), and *Political Journalism in Transition: Western Europe in a Comparative Perspective* (2014, edited with Raymond Kuhn) and a report on *Digital Journalism Start-Ups in India* (2016, with Arijit Sen).

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