Media landscape questions: India

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1. **What characterizes the difference between national, regional, and local in relation to media in your country?**

   India, a Union of States, is a Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic with a Parliamentary System of government. The Republic is governed in terms of the constitution, which was adopted by Constituent Assembly on 26 November 1949 and came into force on 26 January 1950. India comprises of 28 states and seven union territories. Its population is 1.21 billion (2011). The formation of governments at the Centre and States is through elections usually held once in five years.

   There are 600,000 villages and many cities and urban agglomerations in India. About 72 % of the population lives in rural areas and around 28 % in urban areas.

   A liberal media environment ensures that media plays a role in nurturing what is often described as the World's largest democracy.

   Media in India, for academic purposes, can still be classified into the print and electronic media, radio and television, cinema and through convergence-Internet. Industry analysts and media watch groups still analyse them sector wise.

   Print and electronic that have a dominant media presence have a multi-tier presence and can be classified into the national, regional and the local. National in a way is a myth as normally it is associated with Delhi, the capital of the country. Thus Delhi centrism often masks even trivial issues as national. Nevertheless, since Delhi is also the location of the Indian Parliament and all central government departments and ministers, consulates etc. there is sufficient scope for content that emanates from here to have national implications. Major television channels have their editorial and production infrastructure in and around Delhi, the National Capital Region (NCR) as it is often referred to. It also has a major presence of media professionals representing national and international media organisations. While Delhi can be regarded as the political and policy making capital of the country, the tag of commercial capital with respect to entertainment media-film and television is given to Mumbai. Many reputed newspapers with editorial control in other cities also claim national media status. For example, the multi edition English newspaper, the Hindu, emanates from Chennai but regarded as a national newspaper. Times of India that claims to be the world's largest newspaper emanates from Mumbai. National orientation of content can thus be taken as a variable to describe what constitutes national.

   The term regional in India is contentious. Historically it implied the colonial vernacular and later better described as the Indian language press or media. Robin Jeffery through his work on print capitalism substantially reworked the focus and debate to shift to regional media as in other Indian languages and Hindi. Therefore, regional media in India can be national as well. Notwithstanding these aspects of debate it is possible to construct taxonomy of regional media.

   Regional channels (other than Hindi) are predicting that they will outgrow even Hindi television channels by 2015. The new catch phrase in media circles in India is "regional is the new national."

   Local media and their tribe is diminishing, particularly in the print media. There used to be a presence of local media, particularly at the District level usually falling under the small and medium newspapers category. Now, with the rise of multi edition Indian language newspapers, district editions have been started and in many cases they have pull outs or local page inserts. The condition of media persons in small towns and rural areas is not very professional as very often they often are called as stringers. In many cases they double up both

as reporters and also advertising agents for their newspapers. The conflict of interest in this dual role is obvious.

Related to this is their vulnerability to pressures for suppressing news or highlighting events and personalities more than what is needed. It is not to suggest that well paid professionals in metros are not vulnerable. In metros the response team (that is normally responsible for advertising) offers better corporate and institutional packages to mask advertising as editorial-the phenomena of advertorials.

Local in broadcasting is perhaps more manifesting. For example, the "public" broadcaster, All India Radio (AIR) has organizationally a three tier structure-national-regional-local. It is because Radio characterizes voice and local in many cases brings proximity. In television, the General Entertainment Content is metro centric or worked through production houses. In news and current affairs, despite limitations, there is scope and evidence of local content.

With the freeing up of airwaves and advocacy movement, a Community Radio policy is in place. Very low power transmitters that limit to small coverage areas and ownership structures vested in community based organisations, these stations are expected to provide a forum for local expression.

2. **What is the role of newspapers in your society?**

Print media, the oldest of the technology enabled media, traces its origins through the colonial, nationalist and independence era (classification for analytical purposes only). The resilience of the print media as compared to many other countries is high, although keen observers feel that it may not sustain for a long time. By convention and perception there is what is described as the national press, the regional and the local press. Over a period of time this classification is not necessarily linked to circulation or reach. For example, the English language press enjoys considerable elite following but falls far behind the circulation pattern of the Hindi press or some of the other Indian language newspapers. Academic literature indicates that the impact and reach of the regional press is significant. The Indian Readership Surveys (IRS) yearly and quarterly reports also endorse this. Only one English newspaper figures in the top 10 publications.

The official source for print media statistics in India is the Registrar of Newspapers in India (RNI). All newspapers and publications are expected to register in accordance with certain procedures that include titles etc. The RNI publishes an annual report, "Press in India" based on compilation of data that is provided by the newspapers. It is one of the important sources. The print media, at least the dominant players are represented by the Indian Newspaper Society (INS). With a membership of 1040 it largely represents the interests of dailies (665). Circulation as an indicator has now given way to readership and further to Average Issue Readership as indicators of reach of the print media. Compared to the rest of the world, particularly the US and Europe, print media in India is growing compounded increased literacy. Its economics and operational dynamics changed when one major group decided that newspaper was a commodity and began a price war to boost circulation. This war was played out to ludicrous extent when the waste value of the newspaper was higher than the cover price. The industry to some extent lost its sheen as being a critic and watchdog in a democracy to that of an advertising medium first and later news media. In due course when the wars settled down to practical considerations, newspapers are inching towards their prewar images.

Historically and by default newspapers have assumed the role of challenging the establishment. Therefore, some scholars have attributed their role in the nationalist struggle for independence.

In the absence of any other mass medium of communication this role is attributed. Post-independence and in the tradition of Anglo Saxon ideals of freedom of the press and the notions of role of the press in democracy they were more inclined towards the US model of press and democracy. However, freedom of the press in India under relevant provisions in our Constitution is subject to reasonable restrictions. There was continuous friction between the press and the establishment and at times the intention of the establishment to curb the press was challenged in the Courts with the later upholding the freedom of the press in many cases. The acid test for both the establishment and the Press came during the Internal emergency period (1975-77) when the government decided to suspend civil liberties and also imposed censorship. Now there are records to demonstrate how a few fought or masked their opinion and resisted. But the cumulative record as reflected in a caustic comment is that the Press was asked to only to bend but they knelt. Post emergency and with restoration of civil liberties, the press witnessed a boom period and registered unprecedented growth and developments with regard to increase in circulation, adoption of new techniques and technology and visible presence of magazine journalism.

Liberalization and the dynamics of globalisation enhanced the advertising base. Press could still claim its adversarial role as broadcasting, both radio and television, were under government control. By default the oppositional or non-government perspectives were available in the Press.

The advent of private television channels and more so arrival of 24 x 7 news channels has to some extend challenged the assumed role of the Press. Components of magazine journalism were adopted in the daily press with a slow erosion of the subscription base for magazines and periodicals. Commoditization of newspapers, the Samir Jain (times of india) formula brought further changes and invented a new niche of upper middle class clientele focusing on trends and celebrities.

Currently, the role and perception of the press is mixed as many aberrations consequent to their drive for maximizing revenue have resulted in the culture of the much abhorred paid news culture. This has not affected the entire industry as a few still maintain their editorial balance. No doubt press is still around but how long and in what shape we will know as industry shapes its strategies in the so called digital world.

3. **What characterizes the magazine sector in your country?**
   As a general trend, although print media is still robust in India, it is skewed in favor of newspapers, particularly in Indian languages. The general trend among newspapers by having pullouts and colorful supplements through the week has considerably altered the perception of magazine as a separate genre. The universal practice of newspapers having magazine sections is also followed by many mainstream newspapers. Nevertheless, as a post 1975 (internal emergency) development, magazines in attractive formats made their presence in India and over a period of time and based on developments in the growth of electronic media and also the rise of regional newspapers, their circulation has decreased. Readership surveys point out that among the top 10 magazines in India only two are in English and major Indian languages have their top few magazines.

   According to Registrar of newspapers in India, the government agency that is mandated to register and maintain a list of titles etc., magazines are listed under the category of periodicals and are further classified into weeklies and monthlies and other periodicals. There are 14,882 periodicals whose online registration data with the agency reveals that for the latest year

(2014-15) of the report that is published they have a circulation of 21,32,45,547 copies out of which weeklies claim 12,74,83,338 copies.

General interest magazines according to business analysts are on the wane and more niche publications are being published.

4. **What characterizes the radio sector in your country? If your country has community radio as phenomena, please include them. If not, please reflect on how minority groups (ex.: migrant/immigrant diasporas, national groups, language-based groups, etc.) use ICTs for articulation, mobilization, cultural resistance, etc.**

Broadcasting (radio and television) had staggered origins in the last phase of the colonial rule in India in the late 1920s. Post-independence, due to lack of resources, the phase of development was not very significant. Television was introduced as an experimental service in 1959 for limited educational broadcasts as it was feared that the medium and its pattern of development elsewhere was not congenial for the development needs of the country. A very strong development paradigm albeit rooted in the US extension model guided the thinking with regard to television at least. The Indo China war and the reverses we suffered affirmed a faith in radio broadcasting and its potential to carry the message to people and invoke their participation. It was only in the late 1960s that the medium came into reckoning as a policy input.

The subsequent growth of the medium under government supervision was aimed at improving the reach and coverage and to this end the reach of the public broadcaster is impressive. The monopoly of government control was challenged in the Supreme court and its ruling that airwaves are public property altered the policy framework initially to allow private radio stations in the FM mode and later as a result of continuous advocacy and persuasion it has now opened up the broadcasting sector to the communities as well.

The model of a three tier approach in broadcasting is visible. This is also facilitated by technological options for narrowcasting.

5. **What characterizes the television sector in your country?**

Part of the development of television sector in India is subsumed in the history of broadcasting in India. India's adherence to a strong developmental role for television evidenced by the processes leading to the text book case of the Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE) in 1975-76. The tradition continues in the sense that the public broadcaster, Doordarshan, maintains its pro development stance and programming. The expansion of television through the public broadcaster is again regarded as phenomenal as it expanded by adding a transmitter a day.

While the public broadcaster, its expansion and reach is one part of the dominant television sector analysis in India, it is the private sector television rise that is more manifest. The development of cable distribution in an ad hoc manner subsequently regulated leading to the arrival of what is called as Cable and Satellite Television has over a period of time lead to rapid expansion and currently 800 plus channels are registered with more than 300 of them in the news and current affairs genre. The macro division is between news and current affairs and general entertainment channels.

Critiques of television in India center around the public broadcaster that is continuously flogged and the private channels that are in a self-praising mode as well as in the eye of criticism for trivializing content, chasing news and masking ordinary developments as

breaking news and aggressive panel based shows that perforce aims to "balance" opposing views and perspectives.

Ethics and invasion of privacy are constant themes. GEC channels are analysed for their content and heavy orientation and skewed content from cinema. Serials and soap operas and reality shows are another genre frequently analysed. Some of the theoretical discourses in our analysis include agenda setting, commercialization, stereotyping and reaffirmation of traditional and patriarchal value systems. Representations of modern ideas are also critiqued for affecting the cultural fabric. Published works on television have also looked at resurgence of fundamentalist value systems through epic serials.

Current debates in India with respect to media and perhaps more so with television are oriented towards ownership and curbs on permissible advertising time. Perhaps this is a significant aspect for our comparative analysis and the group can debate.

6. **Describe the telephony sector in your country. What are the roles and penetration rates of the landlines? What is the role of the mobile telephony sector? How do people commonly use mobile phones (including smartphones and tablets)?** [1]

As on March 2016 there were 1058.86 million Wireless and Wireline connections in India. The wireless telephony diffusion is 1033.63 million. The overall Tele density is 83.36 %. There are 149.75 million broadband subscribers in India. The private access service providers held 91.30% market share of the wireless subscribers whereas BSNL and MTNL, the two Public Service Undertaking access service providers, had a market share of only 8.70%. Although mobile phone dispersion is significant, the share of smart phone users among the mobile phone users is less. With the telecom operators claiming that their revenue base with voice telephony is reducing they are focusing on data and by extension entertainment that seems to drive the promotion and availability of cheaper smart phones that can allow users to access data. There is also a trend among the political parties to move towards policies to provide for phones and sim cards as an extension of their e-governance initiatives. Social media is visible and has been actively used for activism and advocacy including elections and many analysts point out that the social media provided a useful platform for the present ruling political combination to swing votes in its favour. The reported activity among the phone users is 21% for messages, 17 % for watching movies and other content, 13 % for games, around 15 % for banking and 17 % for directions and map services.

7. **Describe the historical development and current situation of Internet in your country. Also consider: technical infrastructure, digital divide, common uses, influence of Internet content in public debates, etc.**

Internet through its origins elsewhere began in India in a project mode ERNET as an educational research network in 1986. Since then through various initiatives including induction of computers for improving efficiency in various sectors it has grown substantially and got a significant boost in the framework of telecom reforms and overall progress in the application of information and communication technologies (ICTs).

"The official launch of the Internet for the Indian public (August 15, 1995) ended up being a big goof up as VSNL had no estimation about the hidden demand, this was coupled with

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[1] Please note that these are official figures released by the regulatory agency as on March 31, 2016. Any update that is likely to be available later and at the time of formal writing of the report will be provided.

hardware and network issues. However, post the botched launch, VSNL was able to add 10,000 Internet users in just six months.

Twenty years later, according to the latest data released by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), there are a total of 302.35 million Internet subscribers in India." suggests a media capture of history of Internet in India

The expansion of telecommunications in both public and private sector and more in the later, the internet hub has widened. India has recognized and participated in several forums and debates pertaining to the missing link and subsequently digital divide issues. A proactive policy framework has enabled the spread of internet among both computer based and mobile based users with the later having visible access. How the internet spread should be harnessed is a matter of intense debates and discussions among stake holders and the government of India for example wants to promote a network for knowledge sharing and dissemination. The debates surrounding net neutrality are evident in India as well. The companies see higher potential for revenues through data as in through the net. Issues pertaining to national security, privacy, abuse of social networking spaces and frauds are common as they are elsewhere. E commerce is a driving variable in expansion of net.

The government last year has launched digital India initiative on the policy premise that the country should be riding on digital highways and the attempt will be to extend the plug the last mile issues. Net in the context of governance is seen as both an empowerment tool and also direct beneficiary transfer of welfare schemes. The features of digital India are:

- High speed internet as a core utility
- Cradle to grave digital identity -unique, lifelong, online, authenticable
- Mobile phone & Bank account enabling participation in digital & financial space
- Easy access to a Common Service Centre
- Shareable private space on a public cloud
- Safe and secure Cyber-space

8. **About the registered domains: what are the most common kinds of websites registered and what are the most accessed kinds of website?**

Access to websites in India, notwithstanding occasional attempts and debates to control or block it. Courts have been judicious in ensuring that access in unrestricted and it means websites accessible to any other citizen in other countries, the so called free countries is also available to an India. Indians access websites through popular search engines that offer other services as well. However, keeping in view the policies of having a unique domain, a registry has been set up in India.

.IN is India's Country Code Top Level domain (ccTLD). The Govt. of India delegated the operations of IN Registry to NIXI in 2004. The IN Registry operates and manages India's .IN cc TLD. The National Internet Exchange of India or NIXI is a Not-for-Profit Company incorporated under section 25 of the Indian Companies Act, 1956, with an objective of facilitating improved internet services in the country.

The IN Registry ensure operational stability, security and reliability of the .in ccTLD. The IN Registry implements the policies of Department of electronics and Information Technology, Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, Government of India from time to time. The IN Registry facilitates the registration of domain names through its accredited registrars spread all over world.

The total number of .IN domains (accessed on July 4, 2016) is:

Total number of IN domains # 21,14,209

9. **About social media: what social media platforms are the most common (e.x. blogs, social networks, video-sharing websites, etc)? How influent in public debates are issues raised in social media? Does your country follow international patterns of social media usage (ex.: are global platforms like facebook the most popular or are there national/regional/local ones)?**

The worldwide known social platforms are popular in India with many users and followers. Facebook, twitter etc. you tube on which many other forms of video content is consumed and measures more than 60 million unique users. Politicians, as a trend have increasingly taken to twitter and offer their comments including critiques of their adversaries and bouquets to their friends. Both corporate and government sector is using the web and social media in varying degrees. Websites are considered as acceptable platforms for companies and institutions to announce their policies and provide access to information.

Many debates are floated on social networks and since entertainment celebrities are very popular they have followers and use them extensively. Trolls are increasing and in a recent case the comments of a national leader lead to trolls in a state where elections with considerable impact.