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THE ROLE OF OWNERSHIP IN SHAPING ONLINE NEWS CONTENT: A POLITICAL ECONOMY ANALYSIS

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Abstract

There is a correlation between the ownership of media outlets and the selection of news content in Bangladesh because of the growth of online media. This study examines the ownership and media content of www.prothomalo.com, the most prominent online news portal in Bangladesh. The analysis was conducted using a qualitative approach and in-depth interviews. Four important elements are discussed: the ownership pattern and their reasons for investing in this sector; the corporate relationship between the business firms and www.prothomalo.com; news content categories and their presentation on www.prothomalo.com; and cited sources on www.prothomalo.com. The findings suggest that the ownership of online media outlets by corporate conglomerates raises concerns regarding the independence, objectivity and restricts the diversity of online news in Bangladesh.

Key words: Political Economy, Ownership, Online Media, Prothom Alo, Bangladesh.

Introduction

Now is the time of “digital” media, which is also called “new media.” Cross-media platforms, made possible by new media technologies, let journalists work together to make stories and materials for different media. Now we can find the same information in a lot of different places, like newspapers and magazines, websites, smartphone apps, and social media. As stated by Quarmal (2020), “like other parts of the globe, increased and easier internet access has made a significant change in the Bangladeshi media landscape; all media outlets are moving towards digitalization”. All of the major newspapers have websites with news stories and social media pages. TV stations do the same thing and stream live on YouTube and/or their own websites. There are websites for news sources even in a lot of small towns. With the rise of “new media,” the online news portals in Bangladesh have become an integral part of the ruling parties’ politics. It is impossible to maintain a profitable news service without the support of the ruling party. In Bangladeshi society, it is a well-kept secret (Khan, 2013).

The purpose of this study is to investigate the exceptional growth of the online news sector in Bangladesh, as well as how the country’s increasing tendency toward market liberalization has affected the structure, content, and method of news production. The aim is to conduct a political economy analysis in the case of Bangladesh. This study builds on the work of McChesney (2000), Mosco (2009), and Peers and Smythe (1982).

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They stressed in their analysis how media and communication systems, as well as their content, reinforce, challenge, or alter existing social and economic ties. They also looked at how ownership, support mechanisms (including advertising), and government regulations influence media behavior and content. Using the website www.prothomalo.com as a case study, this study discusses the political economy and ownership of online news in Bangladesh.

Organizational Structure of www.prothomalo.com.

The Transcom Group Limited owns www.prothomalo.com. They are a corporate conglomerate from Bangladesh. This group of companies includes beverages, pharmaceuticals, newspapers, radio stations, electronics, food, etc. Transcom is the regional distributor of many global brands (Transcom, n.d.). They are one of Bangladesh's earliest and largest companies. Their operation in Bangladesh began as a tea plantation firm in 1985 (Khan & Shnaider, 2021). www.prothomalo.com has a highly adaptable organizational structure in which diverse departments have sufficient autonomy and can collaborate (ProthomAlo, n.d.).

The Editor and the Board of Directors. As the agent of the Board of Directors, the editor of Prothom Alo is in charge of the general operations of the online daily (ProthomAlo, n.d.). He determines the publication of all news stories and advertisements. The chief executive officer (CEO) acts as a liaison between the newspaper's administration and the board of directors. In accordance with the Board's expectation that the team establish and implement various policies and strategies to achieve the organization's primary objective (ProthomAlo, n.d.).

Departments and Divisions. The office department and press department execute all the activities of www.prothomalo.com (ProthomAlo, n.d.). Additionally, the office department is divided into two sections: news and general. There are three divisions within the news section: the editorial division, the news division, and the feature division. These three divisions are directed by three deputy editors who report directly to the editor of the daily newspaper (ProthomAlo, n.d.). Notable is the fact that www.prothomalo.com first introduced the role of Deputy Editor in Bangladesh. The administrative manager oversees four divisions within the general section: administration, advertising, accounts, and circulation (ProthomAlo, n.d.). Lastly, the general manager oversees the press department with the assistance of a press manager and press supervisor. In addition to the main office, there is a branch office in Chittagong that is administered similarly to the main office (ProthomAlo, n.d.).

Work Force. www.prothomalo.com is offering its employees a very cordial working environment with a high opportunity to build up their career (ProthomAlo, n.d.).

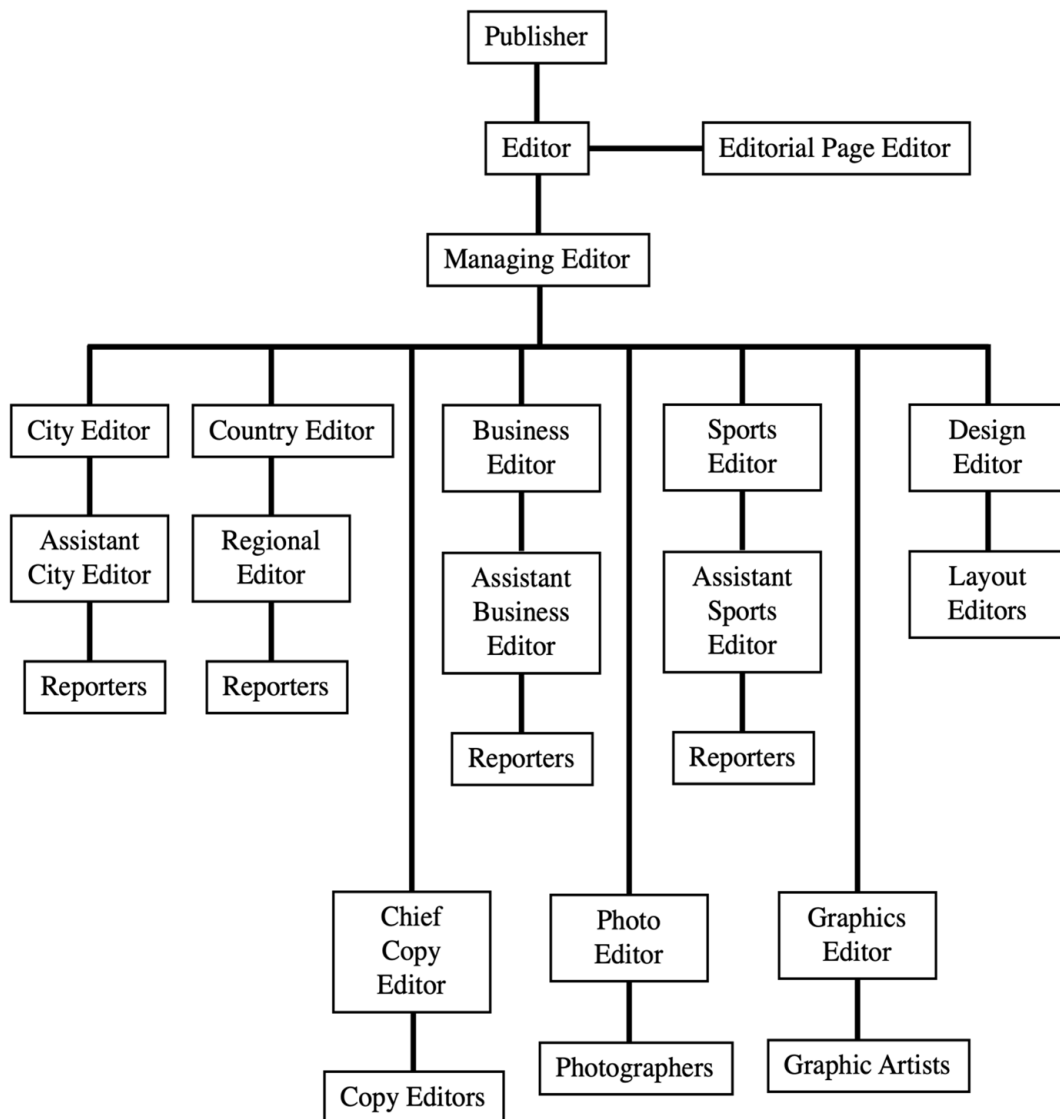


Figure-1: Organogram of www.prothomalo.com
Source: Prothom Alo

Objectives of the Study

The rapid growth of online media in Bangladesh has raised a lot of questions. The growth and expansion of the online media industry is very recent, and it is intimately correlated with the politics of the nation's ruling party (Khan, 2013). Media and communication studies must conduct a critical analysis of the full ownership-building process in such a setting (Khan, 2013). In order to shed some light on the mechanics and dynamics of online media ownership, this study examines the features of online media ownership. This study intends to investigate how the country's trend toward market liberalization shapes the structure, content, and process of news production among online news portals. For this research project, the researcher has addressed the following research questions:

RQ1: What motivated the owner of www.prothomalo.com to invest in this sector?

RQ2: What corporate relationships exist between the owners and advertising firms?

RQ3: What are the categories of news content and, how are they presented on www.prothomalo.com?

RQ4: What are the cited sources of news on www.prothomalo.com?

Literature Review

Like other social phenomena, there is a dearth of academic literature on online journalism, especially the ownership of online news portals in developing countries like Bangladesh. In the context of the developed world, there are numerous studies and debates on online journalism and its impact on society, especially from the perspective of administrative research. In their research, Khan and Shnaider (2021) conducted an analysis of the fundamental characteristics of contemporary online news media in Bangladesh and described the trends in their development. As an illustration, they described the new genres, techniques, and applications of the two most popular online news platforms: The Daily Star online and bdnews24.com. Khan (2013) looked into the ownership of private television in Bangladesh. The investigation uncovers a vicious circle of executive-legislative-media power nexus that exploits private televisions for misdeeds, power abuse, corruption, and malpractices by their owners.

Rahman (2009) critically examined how the unprecedented expansion of the television industry in Bangladesh became possible over the past decade and how the increasingly market-liberalization trend of this country constitutes the structure, content, and process of news production among the TV channels. He argued that a power-exercise web between the government, corporations, media owners, and newsmakers is radically dividing the most popular mass media in Bangladesh and transforming it into a market-oriented class media. Bhayroo (2008) studied the ownership of online media content from the perspective of the public sphere's variety of news sources. His research explores the diversity of news online by examining the ownership of news sources. The project analyzes the homepages of News Corporation's www.FOXNews.com and Yahoo! Inc.'s www.news.yahoo.com using a qualitative case study technique and basic quantitative approaches. The results demonstrate that News Corporation and Yahoo! Inc.'s overarching corporate commercial imperatives direct the production, aggregation, and dissemination of news information on the homepages of www.FOXNews.com and www.news.yahoo.com. Karlidag and Bulut (2016) explored how the direct or indirect control policies of the Turkish political government towards the media, besides the ownership relations of the media, affect the news-making process.

Theoretical Framework

The critical political economy of communication and media is widely recognized as a highly influential branch of critical theory. The critical political economy of communication and media is a prominent school of critical thought. It promotes media democratization in a capitalistic system in which only a few people control and dominate the media canvas in a society (Nabi, 2021). The scientific study of the political economy of communication, according to McChesney, has two key components. To begin, it investigates the nature of the link between media and communication technologies on the one hand and the greater social structure of society on the other. In other words, it looks into how media and communication systems, as well as the content they include, reinforce, challenge, or alter existing social and economic ties. It does it with a particular interest in how economic factors affect politics and interpersonal relationships. The political economy of communication, on the other hand, looks at how ownership, funding sources (such as advertising), and governmental regulations influence media behavior and content. This field of study focuses on structural components and the labor process in the production, distribution, and consumption of communication (McChesney, 2000).

At the confluence of ideology, hegemony, and culture, there is a contested space where a dominant class struggles to hold onto its position of authority, or, as Peers & Smythe (1982) put it, "where a dominant class must continuously manufacture public opinion in order to maintain its control of the political-economic system." Dahlgren (1995) underlined the importance of comprehending online as a whole as an enterprise,

regardless of whether it is private or public. The ownership, control, and regulation of online media all have to do with its political economy, which in turn is integrated into the larger political economy of society, according to his argument regarding the political economy of the study of the online media sector. This in turn also reflects the modern world's increasingly globalized nature of commercial ties (Dahlgren, 1995). Ferdous & Khatun (2020) assert that research should be done on Bangladeshi online media ownership. Strong political figures and businessmen seek the media for a variety of reasons. They have complete control over all facets of Bangladeshi society because they are the owners of an online media outlet. The owners are strengthened and given more authority as a result of this trend as they pursue their corporate, political, and individual objectives. This is partly due to the owners having a combination of indirect and direct backing from the ruling party.

Mosco (2009) suggests three processes for a political economy of communication: commoditization, spatialization, and structuration. The process of transforming products valued for their utility into commercial products valued for the value they may bring in trade is known as commodification. Spatialization is the process of overcoming geographical space limitations through the use of mass media and communication technologies, among other things. Finally, structuration is the process of forming social ties, particularly those based on socioeconomic class, gender, and race. This study uses structuration as the theoretical framework to examine how online media in Bangladesh has affected the country's media landscape. What are the power dynamics between the ruling political parties and the owners of online media? How it has influenced Bangladeshi society in terms of political, socio-cultural, and power dynamics.

Methodology and Sampling

The qualitative approach is used in this research. This research is based on the political economy of communication theory. This study is exclusively focused on utilizing qualitative data from primary sources in order to comprehend the ownership pattern of online news media, as well as the problems and opportunities associated with operating within the dynamic media ecosystem. A collection of semi-structured, in-depth interviews were undertaken with various experts working in the fields of journalism and mass media. For the in-depth interviews, the interviewees were first communicated by email, and if they agreed to the interview, their interview was taken face-to-face at the daily Prothom Alo office. The timeframe for interviews was between January 2023 and April 2023.

Respondent	Position	Age	Gender
1	Reporter	27	Man
2	Sub-Editor	35	Woman
3	Manager	47	Man
4	Editor	54	Man
5	Editor	49	Man
6	Manager	44	Man
7	Reporter	34	Woman
8	Sub-Editor	27	Woman
9	Manager	48	Man
10	Reporter	31	Woman

11	Manager	46	Man
12	Sub-Editor	29	Woman
13	Reporter	33	Man
14	Editor	48	Man
15	Editor	46	Woman
16	Sub-Editor	34	Woman

Table 1: Descriptions of the Interview Participants
Source: own work.

The eligibility criteria for the interview were publishers and the professionals who work for the news production of www.prothomalo.com (e.g., editors, sub-editors, managers, reporters, etc.) for at least five years. The total number of interviewees was sixteen (16), with four each from the publishers, editors, managers, and reporters. There were no requirements on the characteristics of the interviewees (e.g., age, gender, educational level, etc.). The ages of the interviewed journalists ranged from 27 to 54. Of the sixteen journalists interviewed, nine were men and seven were women. In order to protect confidentiality and anonymity, the exact titles of editors and managers are not mentioned. The collected data have been analyzed using a thematic approach. For the interviews, there was a list of questions. The researcher transcribed the interviews exactly as they were spoken, without making any alterations, prior to conducting any required revisions and assessing the transcriptions. The researcher refrained from utilizing any particular software tool for the purpose of data analysis. The process of transcription facilitated the identification and categorization of a diverse range of themes and subthemes. For the research, Idaho State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained, and each participant gave their consent by signing the form before they sat for the interview. To guarantee anonymity and privacy, no identifying information such as names, phone numbers, residential addresses, or emails was collected.

Data Analysis

This section analyzes the data gained from the in-depth interviews. The researcher followed the procedural guidelines of thematic analysis, as recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006), to identify relevant topics for the current research inquiries. To gain an initial thorough understanding of the data, the researcher conducted multiple readings of the interview transcriptions and recorded overarching themes. Following that, the procedure of open coding was initiated in order to identify initial clusters within the dataset. Open coding, according to Speno and Halliwell (2021), is an iterative process in which thematic categories are consistently refined, merged, and expanded. In the process of categorizing the succeeding data segments, either new categories were created or existing ones were assigned. Following this, the researcher undertook a procedure of reexamining the textual fragments contained within each thematic category in order to determine their consistency and create a unified and cohesive collection of data. In the end, a comprehensive evaluation was conducted on the transcripts to determine which passages best exemplified each theme and subtheme.

Main Theme	Sub Theme	Sample of code text
Ownership		Corporate owned media
Interference in News		Direct interference in news selection

Pressure Groups	Politicians	Political parties, especially the ruling party, have impacts and influences on the media
	Business Organizations	Elite businesspeople and industrialists have an effect on the media house
News Sources	Primary Sources	Well-trained journalists and editors
	News Agencies	World renowned media organizations act as news sources
Advertisement	Corporate	Main source of income. That is why it has a huge impact on www.prothomalo.com
News Production	Increase in Viewers	Fulfillment of reader demand and covering all the possible aspects of news, easier navigation system
	News Sharing	Due to the credibility of news, Prothom Alo as a brand
Market Orientation		Use of modern technologies; update website

Table 2: Coding Results Based on Interview
Source: own work.

Ownership. www.prothomalo.com is the online section of the popular daily newspaper Prothom Alo. All 16 interviewees (100%) covered under this study said that it is a corporate-owned media, and the owners are Transcom Group Limited.

Interference on News. Most of our interviewees said that the owners, Transcom Group Limited, have direct interference in news selection. Only 4 (20%) interviewees told the researcher that Transcom Group Limited has no direct interference in news selection, production, or any other direct impact regarding news. However, 12 (80%) interviewees noted that there are representatives of the owners who are involved in the production of news.

Pressure Groups. There is political and corporate interference in the media. According to our 7 (44%) interviewees, the first is direct interference in the operations of media outlets, either by politicians and business elites requesting editors or others involved in the production of news to alter or halt a story or by replacing journalists critical of a particular political party or policy with ones more favorable to those in power. However, 9 (56%) interviewees noted that there are influencers like high authorities (editors, board of directors) within the media who work as pressure groups and interfere with the production of news. Interviewee-12 added that he has more than 10–15 news deleted from the web portal due to instructions from high authorities.

News Sources. Prothom Alo uses both primary and secondary news sources. It also uses both national and international news organizations as its sources. Sources must be credible to become news sources, according to all of our interviewees. Interviewee-5 added that credibility is the most important thing for www.prothomalo.com. Prothom Alo comprises well-trained journalists and editors. World-renowned media organizations act as news sources for www.prothomalo.com.

Advertisement. Each and every interviewee informed the researcher that advertisement is the main source of income. That is why it has a huge impact on www.prothomalo.com. Interviewee-3 mentioned that elite businesspeople and industrialists have an effect on the media, as advertisement is the main source of income. Interviewee-7 noted that since Prothom Alo is the second most circulated newspaper in Bangladesh, that is

why it has huge demand in the advertising sector. Interviewee-9 said that a great part of newspaper and magazine advertising is that readers are actively looking to search for deals and coupons. Placing an advertisement in a newspaper provides the advantage of knowing that the audience is much more likely to notice it because they will read that paper or magazine.

News Production. According to the interviewees at www.prothomalo.com, the fulfillment of readers' demands and covering all the possible aspects of news faster than any other media with full credibility and neutrality, along with easier navigation systems, are the reasons for the increase in the number of viewers and share of news on social media platforms. According to interviewee-6, 10, and 11, Prothom Alo is a brand in the Bangladeshi media system. That is why they always want to keep their benchmark and raise the bar as high as possible.

Market Orientation. According to all the interviewees, market-oriented news production is currently the way to go. Interviewee-14 elaborated that www.prothomalo.com always anticipates the needs of their readers and tries to make their plans around them. They know that most of the readers do not like slow and complicated navigation systems. Hence, they always use modern technologies and update their website.

Findings

This section will discuss the findings of qualitative analysis that explored the political, socio-cultural, corporate, and technological factors of www.prothomalo.com.

Political Factors. For political news, www.prothomalo.com mostly tries to take a neutral standpoint, according to some interviews for this study. They are not biased toward any political party; rather, they try to practice objective journalism. They also have an opinion section where people can express their thoughts. They also try to take the comments of a specialist while covering news in order to understand the balance of the news. They are also careful regarding some controversial acts in Bangladesh, like the digital security act, defamation act, special powers act, blasphemy law, internet regulation law, and media regulation law, to name a few. However, there is political interference in the media, according to most other interviews for this study. According to the results of the interview, politicians use their power either by requesting editors or others involved in the production of news to alter or halt a story or by replacing journalists critical of a particular political party or policy with ones more favorable to those in power.

Strategic Factors. The mission of www.prothomalo.com is to prolong market leadership and protect the business interests of the newspaper. Prothom Alo's product strategy is to offer independent, unbiased, nonpartisan, protecting social values, non-communal, and modern outlook to the consumers (readers) for the betterment of the whole society. The critical success factors of Prothom Alo are honest journalism, teamwork, freedom in decision-making, social interaction and involvement, and strong financial support (investment). The main differentiators of www.prothomalo.com from its competitors are the quality of the news presentation, professionalism, and journalistic approach. It believes that the volume of revenue depends on the competitive market position of the newspaper. So, it focuses on increasing the volume of circulation as part of its strategy to generate revenue.

Socio-Cultural Factors. Over the years, Prothom Alo has been working on shaping the lifestyles of Bangladeshi people, especially for the young generation and kids. Naksha, Swapno Niye, and Adhuna are weekly supplements that publish articles about lifestyle. This includes wealth, buying habits, education level, family size and structure, and population density.

Corporate Factors. For an online media, advertising is much more profitable because there is no limited space on the website. Being the most popular online news portal in

Bangladesh, www.prothomalo.com enjoys huge demand to show advertisements for a variety of businesses and industries. When www.prothomalo.com selects a news story, they tend to consider how many views and shares this news will generate. The number of advertisements will increase if the news generates more views. For example, according to one of the editors of www.prothomalo.com, news related to environmental issues doesn't generate many views or shares. On the other hand, entertainment and sports news do generate plenty of views. So, they consider these issues while uploading news. According to the interviews for this study, there is corporate interference in the media. Just like politicians, business organizations have direct interference in the operations of media outlets, either by requesting editors or others involved in the production of news to alter or halt a story or by replacing journalists critical of a business organization or policy with ones more favorable to those in power. According to one of the interviewees, he has had more than 10 to 15 news stories deleted from the web portal due to instructions from high authorities. So, most of the time, www.prothomalo.com doesn't publish the negative news about the advertisers. Here is the quote from the reporter: "When one of my news items was taken out of the newspaper by corporate and political pressure, I was quite disappointed. I've experienced that more than ten to fifteen times since then. This is blatantly dishonest journalism and a betrayal of the public's confidence. I pleaded with the newspaper's management to go back on this choice and respect the values of free speech for journalists. However, they told me that high authorities and business people are involved."

Technological Factors. Technological factors include production techniques, information and communication resources, production, logistics, marketing, and e-commerce technologies. These affect how www.prothomalo.com operates, sells its products, interacts with, and gathers intelligence on customers, suppliers, and competitors. www.prothomalo.com always uses the latest technology, an easier navigation system, eye-catching colors, and constantly updates their website as well as their navigation process. These factors keep them a step ahead compared to their competitors.

Discussion

Regarding the first research question, the reason for investing in online media is because it pays in different ways. It is a strong tool for party politics. It gives the owners new power and increases their status quo in society, as well as making profit in both direct (profitable business) and indirect (protecting and enhancing other businesses) ways. The categories that came up as the reasons for investment in the online media sector after data analysis are: politics, power, profit, prestige, and indirect gain.

Politics. Politics is one of the main reasons for investing in online media in the country. All the channels in Bangladesh are somehow inclined to the political ideology of the ruling parties (both past and present ones). It is very difficult to start a quality online media without the blessing of the ruling party. On the contrary, the ruling party wants to get media support from the media owners for its political propaganda. Since these online media were allowed primarily to support the ruling party's politics, So, from the very beginning, they tried to give media support to the ruling party. There is a tendency among the owners to use his or her online media channel for his or her political interest or for the party's interest where he or she belongs.

Media Power. 'Media Power' came as another category for investment in the online media sector. Online media channels are one of the most sophisticated tools for power practice in today's information age in Bangladesh. Its ownership gives it power and makes close contact with the ruling elites. The owners enjoy social and political power in comparison with other business communities in the country. All the interviewees covered in this study said that there is a common trend among people about online media owners. They are afraid to write or investigate anything about the owners. The reason is

very simple. If anybody tries to write against the owners or try to investigate anything, then the cameras will follow the journalist or investigator to dig out something negative about them, and it will be given on air to destroy their image in society.

Profit. Profit has come up as another category for investment in the online media sector in Bangladesh. Investing in online media is a profitable business in the long run. On one hand, online media brings more money. On the other hand, online media itself is a safe business and also protects owners' other businesses.

Prestige. Prestige is another category for investment in online media that came up from data analysis. Ownership of media outlets is a symbol of status in present-day Bangladeshi society. Online media confers more prestige on its owners. Today's Bangladesh media world is largely dominated by online media owners, and most of the prominent online media have a good connection with the government and its high officials. According to Prothom Alo's chief news editor: "The organization's success in the online media sector has earned it unparalleled prestige. The name of Prothom Alo itself became a symbol of prestige. To work at Prothom Alo or to be a part of Prothom Alo is a matter of great prestige in Bangladesh."

Socioeconomic Factor. The socioeconomic factor is a major category for investing in online media in Bangladesh, as it came into the data analysis. In today's Bangladesh, being the owner of an online media adds societal prestige and power to the owner's life. It has been noticed that the business communities of the country, from traders to industrialists, want to have a media outlet, especially an online media channel. Another reason for investing in the online media sector is that it protects the investor and acts as a shield for different purposes. Data analysis shows that many people, from businesspeople to former bureaucrats, are involved with online media channels. Most channels are directly backed by the business conglomerates of the country.

Indirect Gain. Investing in online media pays the owners in many ways. Apparently, it seems that some channels cannot make any direct profit, but it helps the owners to have other indirect gains. The online media help the owners protect and enhance their businesses and other interests. It gives the owners face value. Being the owners of online media channels, they can easily influence administration and have easy access to the ministers and bureaucrats.

Regarding the second research question, in reality, the idea of media relations has a significant impact and influences the media's coverage to some extent. Media outlets that rely on advertising sales are included in the economics of advertising. Numerous forms of advertising fund the production of content and lower the cost at which it is made available (or free). For instance, advertising covers around 75% of the cost of www.prothomalo.com. Online media, broadcast radio, and TV all rely solely on advertisements. News, music, and entertainment are provided for free to the public, while sponsors gain exposure. Without the money generated by advertising, popular forms of media would either be prohibitively expensive for readers or viewers or would go out of business. Advertising generates demand, which fuels economic growth. Table-2 discusses the percentage of total advertising revenue at www.prothomalo.com and their sources of advertising.

Sources of Advertising	% of total Advertising Revenue (June 2022)
Advertising Agency	58%
Office (Direct)	18.5%
Zonal Office (Chittagong)	2.5%
Private advertising (Direct)	16%
Government Advertising	3%

District Correspondents	0.5%
Advertising Booth (Classified)	1.5%
Total	100%

Table 3: Contribution of Different Sources of Advertising Revenue
Source: Prothom Alo

Another significant element that has recently been closely watched is corporate coverage. Many businesses now understand how crucial it is to keep track of news stories that not only mention their firm but also the industry as a whole. This helps to identify areas of audience interest that are followed up on by the media vehicles, resulting in a general awareness of the importance given to the industry and the percentage of coverage that the company is given. Media outlets typically choose a corporate story based on news that appeals to their audience. The choice is also reasonably influenced by entertainment factors. Trend-based stories are also given preference in the selection process. Most people prefer media releases with a clear, concise narrative, well-referenced background information, and relevant details and numbers.

Regarding the third research question about the categories of news content and their presentation on www.prothomalo.com. Media products can be attributed to a particular genre. Here, the term “genre” indicates a stable type of publication with substantive and formal features.

News Stream. The news stream is the most prevalent genre among online news providers and online adaptations of print newspapers. These deliver the latest news updates to readers. News is primarily used for informational purposes and includes current information about domestic and international events. Using the “inverted pyramid” structure, the news is presented in a concise statement that emphasizes the most important elements. The aim of journalists in this genre is to quickly transmit information to their audience. The lead is the first paragraph of the news and contains the most relevant information. Headings and initial paragraphs are placed on the main page of the www.prothomalo.com website to draw the reader’s attention. Most readers are confined to reading the lead; only if the reading has piqued the reader’s interest will he or she become acquainted with the news’s details.

Web Package. One of the most well-known forms of internet journalism that covers a multifaceted event that occurs right in the presence of a journalist is the web package. In addition to text-based narratives, the web packages of www.prothomalo.com furnish the reader with audios, videos, images, and visuals that complete the picture of the events.

Interview. Interviews hold significant value and are widely disseminated through print and online news outlets. Interviews are among the most widely discussed genres in contemporary news media. The websites of Bangladeshi newspapers frequently feature interview sections. This typically consists of interviews with notable figures in the media, politics, science, economics, or sports. Notably, analytical interviews appear most frequently on news portals that also have a traditional printed counterpart. One illustration of this can be seen in the “Interviews” section of the website www.prothomalo.com/opinion/interview, which is accessible to users. Presently, online media possess the capability to disseminate interviews in various formats, including video and audio in addition to text.

Opinion. Opinion is another type of online news in Bangladesh. Since quite some time, it has been frequently used in regional print media and has also become well-known in online news portals. An instance of this can be seen on the website www.prothomalo.com/opinion, which features a distinct section labeled “Opinion” to which users have access. Opinion writers are widely recognized authorities in a variety of fields. In addition to

expressing their viewpoint, opinion, or concept, they analyze current social, political, cultural, technological, and sports circumstances or issues that have an effect on society.

Photo Story. A photo story, which is a group of pictures about a certain topic, is an interesting example of this type of web news today. A photo story is usually shown online as a slide show that follows the normal framework of a photo story and shows the order of events. With the slide show menu, users can see photos in a wider format or even in high quality when the screen is full. A photo story is one of the most popular types of online news right now. It's impossible for online media to be complete without this. There is a place on every news website where pictures are posted as "photos of the day" or in photo galleries.

Video. Today, video is regarded as the dominant media format on web platforms. Publishers of media were finding that GIFs and other graphics were crucial for improving the effectiveness of online media posts. It is now a requirement for journalists to compile and disseminate photographs and videos in their written pieces.

Infographics. These days, people like to read one piece of content that quickly gives them all the important facts. Because of this, one of the main trends on current news media websites is the use of infographics. Web tools incorporate a variety of statistics, data, and graphic information in addition to text and photo-video assets to aid readers in understanding complicated ideas rapidly. This includes charts, graphs, or maps with standalone figures, quotes, etc. These infographics convey messages faster than text alone, demonstrate the trend, and organize more information.

Regarding the final research question, the first column of Table-3 lists the cited news source. The second column contains the percentage of total sources, and the third column lists all the respective nations of those cited sources. From this table, it is clear that the 10 cited sources on www.prothomalo.com are very well-known news organizations. Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha is Bangladesh's national news agency. They are the main source of online news when it comes from a news agency. United News of Bangladesh is another national news agency that www.prothomalo.com uses as its source. The Associated Press, The Guardian, Reuters, The New York Times, The Daily Mail, The Times of India, and Bild are basically used as news sources when it comes to international news. Hindustan Times is their main source of news regarding India, and Dawn is their main source of news for Pakistan. Apart from these, www.prothomalo.com uses various other news sources like The Sydney Morning Herald, Daily Telegraph, Deccan Chronicle, etc. The reason for using these news sources, according to www.prothomalo.com, is because they are well-known, credible news agencies that match their interests.

Cited Source	Percentage	Country
Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha	42.1%	Bangladesh
Associated Press	9.8%	United States
The Guardian	7.3%	United Kingdom
Reuters	6.5%	United Kingdom
United News of Bangladesh	5.6%	Bangladesh
Hindustan Times	5.1%	India
The New York Times	4.8%	United States
Daily Mail	4.2%	United Kingdom
The Times of India	3.7%	India
Bild	3.6%	Germany
Others	7.3%	

Table 4: Cited News Sources on www.prothomalo.com
Source: Prothom Alo

Recommendations

The researcher proposes following recommendations concerning the ownership and political economy of online news in Bangladesh. This study investigates the political economy and ownership of www.prothomalo.com. Other researchers must investigate the political economy and ownership of Bangladesh's other online, radio, and television media.

Researchers must investigate the political and economic determinants of online news ownership and the effects of ownership on news content and distribution. The significance of online news ownership in Bangladesh's democracy and media freedom must also be investigated.

Raising awareness of the political economy of online news ownership could aid in the promotion of media-liberating reforms. This would benefit the citizens of Bangladesh by granting them access to a greater variety of news and perspectives.

To ensure media freedom and their function as watchdogs, another suggestion is to refrain from favoritism when issuing licenses to online media. In addition, the governing body must ensure that all media seeking licenses comply with and uphold all rules and regulations and practice neutral, objective journalism.

Conclusion

Diverse news and entertainment companies distribute news as one of many branded products in the online media. These conglomerates dominate the online convergence of the film, radio, television, advertising, and information technology industries. The cultural sectors that create and disseminate media, entertainment, news, and information products are so firmly centered around these giants (Khan & Shnaider, 2021). The results of this research reveal that media corporations that are already dominant in the production, distribution, and ownership of traditional news content are also dominant in the production, aggregation, and distribution of online news content. Content distribution reveals the movement of news content among and between online news websites. The data analysis indicates that the commercial imperatives of www.prothomalo.com are geared toward maximizing financial revenues for the company. The advertising model is the primary ways used to generate revenues for the company. Advertisers on www.

prothomalo.com are provided with opportunities to target users of these Web news portals. The analysis of the cited sources of news revealed at least ten news sources. In other words, www.prothomalo.com receives news content from these media companies.

Research on this topic must continue in the near future so that we can identify the specific credibility issues plaguing online media and gain insight into how readers view and choose to consume digital material from both traditional and online news outlets. Therefore, we should begin our analysis of online media by addressing the ways in which it challenges fundamental beliefs about traditional media, society, and journalism.

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