

How Digitalised are the Urdu Newspapers issued from Srinagar? A study of select Urdu Newspapers issued from Srinagar

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Abstract

Urdu language has got a special position in the mediascape of Jammu and Kashmir. Even though very few people claim to be the native speakers of the tongue, but it has been the official language of the now Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. The history of Urdu publication in the region is older than its official status. In fact, the history of development of journalism in Jammu and Kashmir has been a story of the development of Urdu journalism in the region for at least 70 odd years before English got introduced in the journalism of Jammu and Kashmir in 1935. With the advent of internet technology and its coupling with smartphone technology, a revolution in information consumption, transfer and dissemination has forced the legacy media to change the way they used to function. This is an era of digitalization, where shifting from analogue to digital means has become a necessity for all existing media and their online presence is ubiquitous. With the increase in the trend of digitalization, vernacular newspapers have found a challenge as well as an opportunity in the digital world. The main language governing the Indian subcontinent is English and in this world of instant news and information dissemination, it raises the challenge for vernacular newspapers, especially Urdu language Newspapers. Urdu is one of the languages widely spoken in the Indian subcontinent. It has been the official language of Jammu and Kashmir region and the news consumers of J&K who mainly liked to read their news in Urdu. This study looks into the efforts made by the five leading Urdu dailies published from Srinagar- the summer capital of J&K. The study enquires into the digital presence of the top five Urdu dailies issued from Srinagar by studying the websites of these newspapers as per the different selected parameters. These parameters are - Hypertextuality, Interactivity, Personalization, Customization, Multimediality and Participation. Using the systematic observation method over a period of six months, the study found that all the newspapers under focus have made an effort towards digitalization and concludes that there is a variation in the degree of digitalization of Urdu Newspapers that have been taken up for the study which might be creating a digital vacuum for quality Urdu journalism online that might be, being filled by digital only Urdu news platforms.

Keywords: Urdu, Newspapers, Digitalization, Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir, Digital Vacuum

Introduction

Urdu has been the state language of Jammu and Kashmir since 1889, when it was recognized by the then Dogra Rulers as the state's official language (Indian Express, 2019). The most interesting fact about it being that it is natively spoken by a menial 19,956 people in Jammu and Kashmir from the population of 1,22,67,013 (Census, 2011). Jammu and Kashmir has a diverse composition of races and people, and Urdu has been the common language for exchange among the people of Jammu and Kashmir that has connected people of the erstwhile state.

Publishing in Urdu language in the region began right at the moment when press got introduced in Jammu and Kashmir in 1867. The first periodical published in Jammu and Kashmir was Vidya Vilas which was a bilingual publication in Urdu and Hindi (Chandel, 2021). Over the period of 168 years of publishing, Urdu newspapers became a common

favorite for news readers. The journey of Urdu newspapers has had developments that made them the primary source of news for people living in the region.

The changes in media technology have affected media practices of news dissemination and consumption globally. The advent of internet and smartphone technologies has made the presence of newspapers online a “no escape from” condition. *“Technology shapes the environment in which humans live”*. This statement made by Marshal H. McLuhan in his book *“Understanding the Media”* signifies that the whole gamut of smartphone and internet technology has shrunk the world into the palm of an individual. This technology has redefined daily living and with each passing day is making humans rely more on it.

Smartphones have emerged as the single most important information device for an individual that give him/her the power and ability to access information anywhere on the planet. There is hardly any limit to the ability of the smartphone to access/disseminate information when combined with the power of the internet.

The Internet is a technological marvel which has been reprocessing legacy media and its content to the next level demanding a strong online presence to keep up with the changing tastes and trends of the information age.

The times have changed into a sphere where media convergence is predominantly shaping the news content online.

There are multiple characteristics attributed to online news that otherwise did not exist in the news presented by all other legacy news media. Be it television, radio, newspapers or magazines, all the legacy news media have their set formats and templates for presenting news to consumers. The new internet wave has pulled all these media within it and made them create newer templates that would otherwise not be used in their legacy forms.

Today the news outlets need to have their websites along with a significant presence in the social media sphere through apps and social media handles like Instagram, X, Facebook etc. A news organization is expected to produce news in all possible forms be it text, audio, images or audio-visual content. This evolution has given space to the creation of a new form of newspaper called the digital newspaper.

There can be various characteristics of a newspaper when it conforms to a digital space. Characteristics like interactivity, interoperability, hypertextuality, speed, space, multiplicity, polycentrality, customization, personalization, participation and multimedia define a digital newspaper. A completely digitalized newspaper is supposed to have all these characteristics. Times of India and The Hindu newspapers for instance can be taken as good examples of a digital newspaper given their dynamic website and digital presence online.

Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir has a legacy of producing many Urdu Newspapers which have been among the prime sources of information for people living in the city and neighbouring districts.

The challenge that Urdu newspapers are facing due to internet news dissemination are similar to those of other vernacular newspapers in an English dominated mediasphere in the Indian sub-continent. With respect to Jammu and Kashmir, Urdu newspapers are important because they are a major source of news as around 70% population of the Union Territory being able to read and write in the language and 90% people able to communicate vocally in the language. (Census, 2011)

Urdu, being the most spoken language in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, thus calls for special attention when it comes to the status of digitalization of its newspapers. It is because the readership and news consumer behavior are supposed to change with the permeation of smartphones and internet in the social fabric of Jammu and Kashmir.

Digitization versus Digitalization

The two terms digitization and digitalization are often used interchangeably in the common language. But there is a slight difference in the actualities of the two terms. Digitization is one of the processes that happen within the larger phenomenon of digitalization. Digitization is defined as the conversion of analogue media into digital formats. While as, Digitalization is defined as the complete transition of business operations from analogue operations to digital.

Digitalization can be understood as an extension of digitization as it involves the shift of operations from analogue to digital for companies doing various forms of activities like business, journalism, entertainment, book publishing, etc. Digitalization involves processes that are digitally executed, and it gives an organization the advantage of staying efficient by using digital technologies. Once the digitalization of processes takes place, one can look for the process of digital transformation that involves a complete shift towards a digital framework.

Digitalization is defined as the way many domains of social life are restructured around digital communication and media infrastructures. In other terms, digitalization may be defined as the use of digital technologies.

Definitions

Multimediality: It refers to the coexistence of different media in a single package that can be a website or a social media handle of a newspaper. (Tapas Ray, 2011) The different kinds of formats which include text, images, audio stories, graphic stories, animation stories, podcasts and Audio-Visual Stories are commonly found on the websites of digital newspapers.

Hypertextuality: It can be explained as the presence of hypertexts within a given text. Hypertexts are the embedded links to other texts which may either be texts, images, videos, audio or graphs on the text within a story. These are used to access different sets of information regarding the hypertextualised texts. Hypertext is different from the regular text as it has a different text color and is sometimes underlined as well. (Tapas Ray, 2011)

Hypertextuality adds to the information within a text and gives the viewer a wider view of things by linking supporting pieces of information through hyperlinks for clarity within the mind of the consumer. Hypertexts have the utility of footnotes that are used in books and journals for the readers to get additional information on a term or concept.

Interactivity: Interactivity is a characteristic of online journalism that sets online journalism apart from broadcast and print media. The feature that enables a user to interact with the content on a news website is the element of interactivity. It has many dimensions as it enables the user to opt for a particular section, share a particular story, and give feedback on the story and also skip past content that is irrelevant to him or her. (Tapas Ray, 2011)

Personalisation: "A form of user-to-system interactivity that uses a set of technological features to adapt the content, delivery, and arrangement of a communication to individual users' explicitly registered and/or implicitly determined preferences" (Neil Thurman and Steve Schifferes), (2012).

Personalisation as a characteristic of digitalization lets the organization present personalized content through various means and tools. The organization by collecting data regarding the preferences and interests of a user gives the user dedicated access and information products like newsletters, SMS updates, etc. tailored according to the user's taste and liking.

The personalisation of news can be realized online through various means and techniques. Neil Thurman and Schifferes in their study have charted the explicit personalisation tools that can be availed to the user. These are - 'Email Newsletters', 'One-to-one Collaborative Filtering', 'Homepage Customisation', 'Homepage Editions', 'Mobile Editions and Apps', 'My Page' 'My Stories', 'Non-linear Interactives', 'Other Explicit' 'RSS Feeds', 'SMS Alerts', 'Twitter Feeds', and 'Widgets'.

Customisation: "the action of making or changing something according to the buyer's or user's needs" (Cambridge Dictionary). Customisation and personalisation are often used interchangeably. One can take customization as an offshoot of personalization given its personalizing of the content for the user. The main difference is that customisation is primarily set and done by the user. It is an act from the side of the user to the website according to his/her preferences. It produces functions like theme change, light and dark mode, homepage story sections, etc.

This study aims to study the above-mentioned characteristics of digitalisation in the online versions of five Urdu Newspapers issued from Srinagar. The newspapers under the focus are Kashmir Uzma, Daily Aftab, Tameel Irshad, Daily Roshni and Srinagar Times.

This research is important for its inspection of the status of digitalisation of Urdu newspapers as the people are shifting online for their media consumption and Urdu as a language has been the primary language of mass communication for connecting the diverse linguistic groups residing in the region.

Its digitalisation is important for the setting the standard of news consumption across the region although English literacy and choice of English as the language for news consumption is also a trend when it comes to the print consumption of the newspapers.

Review of Literature

The evolution of media has seen a profound change with the advent of digital technology. Urdu newspapers, especially those published from Srinagar, offer a unique perspective on this transition. This literature review on the subject hints towards the adoption of internet information dissemination practices by newspapers issued from Srinagar. The review also looks into the economic viability of digitalisation and how the newspapers are utilizing this opportunity in reaping the economic rewards associated with digitalisation.

Historical context and evolution

1. Historical Overview of Urdu Newspapers in Srinagar

Early research on Srinagar's Urdu newspapers, such as the work of Nayeem Showkat (2020), provides a basic understanding of the print media landscape in the region. Showkat's study details the "mediasphere" in Jammu and Kashmir. It takes account of the news outlets functional in Kashmir relying on the Registrar General of India's data.

2. The Digital Transition

The digital transition of newspapers is well documented in a wide range of studies. In a comprehensive study, C. Elizabeth Everett (2011) signaled a shift in news consumption among news consumers and the adoption of various technologies by newspapers to adapt to the changing realities due to the increased usage of the Internet. The researcher conducted an online survey to understand the media habits of users. She also studied the adoption of new technologies by newspapers to survive in the changing market that was increasingly shifting to the digital space with new online businesses starting each passing day. Although the research is not specific to Srinagar, her findings provide valuable context for understanding broader digitization trends affecting newspapers.

A significant study done by Hussain and Hassan in 2021 focuses on the challenges, new trends and the transition in the practice of Urdu Journalism in Kashmir. It focuses on different factors that pose a challenge to the existence of Urdu journalism, the hardships Urdu Press is going through and what can be done to revive the zeal of Urdu newspapers if at all any problems persist. The study points out most of the shortcomings faced by Urdu newspapers issued from Srinagar and gives (Jaleel, 2019) reasons for such shortcomings. It singles out New Media Technologies as the most potent challenge for the Urdu Newspapers highlighting the poor quality of Urdu software and fonts used by the newspapers that have an online presence. It also found that the Urdu newspapers have not been able to adapt to the new media technologies. The study found that properly developed websites, usage of social media tools, new smartphone Apps, convergence strategies and other aspects were also missing in most of the Urdu Newspapers.

Current Digital Practices in Urdu Newspapers from Srinagar and outside

1. Extent of Digital Adoption

A study done by Gul and Islam (2012) examines the adoption of social media by the newspapers issued from Srinagar. The study found that the adoption of social media in 2012 stood at a meager 36.2 % out of the newspapers under observation. The study recommended the adoption of social media interoperability among the vernacular newspapers for them to survive in the ever-evolving digitalized world.

An insightful study on the level of digitalization done by Simge Süllü Durul (2019) investigates the top 10 most visited digital news sites and analyses their levels of digitalization by identifying various characteristics of digital news present in them. The study is the most important in connection with this study as this study looks to analyze the newspapers on the same parameters used in the study done by Simge Süllü Durul.

2. Challenges and Barriers

The challenges faced by Urdu newspapers in adopting digital methods are documented in a study by Dr Sajjad Ali, Mr. Khayam Hassan, Mr. Muhammad Irfan, Dr. Faiza Latif, Dr. Abdul Shakoor in 2023 wherein they study the status of Urdu newspapers issued in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. In their study they discuss the historical evolution, current challenges, and prospects of Urdu journalism in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (formerly NWFP), Pakistan. They go for in-depth interviews of ten participants which include five journalists and five academicians from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, using the qualitative approach.

In their study they found that Urdu journalism had played a key role in the development of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region. In terms of challenges faced by Urdu newspapers, they found that the emergence of new media technologies was leading to a shift towards commercialisation, compromising journalistic integrity. They also found that limited funding and revenue streams were hindering the sustainability of Urdu journalism. They discovered that regulatory policies were challenging the freedom and operation of Urdu media outlets in the region. They also found the Urdu newspapers to be slow adopters to technological advances made in the field of journalism and saw a scarcity of advertising opportunities affecting the financial health of Urdu media outlets.

Conclusion

The existing literature on the subject focuses on the history of development of Urdu Newspapers, along with the adoption of social media by various Urdu Newspapers. Studies on digital newspapers of Srinagar also have highlighted the challenges and barriers they face when it comes to news dissemination in Jammu and Kashmir. The studies also talk about the lack of penetration online by digital newspapers due to various issues faced by them along with lack of engagement on the online versions of digital newspapers running from Srinagar.

The literature reveals a significant picture of digital transformation among Urdu newspapers published from Srinagar. Although noteworthy progress has been made in digital adoption, significant challenges remain. The extent of digital integration varies widely, influenced by factors such as resource availability, technological infrastructure, and audience preferences. Future research could further explore the impact of recent technological progress and regional development on this transition. In relation to this study, the literature provides the characteristics to be studied under digitalisation and a historical context is provided regarding the importance of Urdu journalism in Jammu and Kashmir. The research gaps found in the literature are the discussions on the level of digitalisation among any newspapers irrespective of language in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. Therefore, there is no scope of comparing the digitalisation of Urdu Newspapers with any other set of newspapers issued in other languages in the Union Territory.

Methodology:

This study uses The Systematic Observation Method for investigating the digitalisation status of newspapers under the focus. In the Observation Method, a phenomenon or a sample is examined by an observer who records the various characteristics that need to be identified for the study. The observation method is one of the most authentic methods of doing research. In this method, a researcher uses his/her sensory organs to collect information and record the variables that are of interest to him/her.

Observe means “to watch attentively in a scientific manner”. In an observational study, the status of a phenomenon is determined not by asking but by observing (Ronald R Powell, 1997).

Observation is defined as a planned methodical watching that involves constraints to improve accuracy (Ram Ahuja, 2001).

The study was done from 21st October 2024 to 12th April 2025. The websites of the newspapers were visited for this study during the period. The newspapers were selected based on the circulation of their hard copies. The data consulted for the purpose was from the report of the Registrar General of India compiled for the year 2022, available on their website.

This study aims to understand the level of *digitalisation* attained by five of the top six circulating newspapers published in the *Urdu Language* issued from *Srinagar*, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir. It aims to analyze whether the digital versions of these newspapers fulfill the conditions of being called digital newspapers. There are certain features associated with digital news like *interactivity, multimedia, hypertext, participation, personalisation, customisation*, etc. that give a unique experience to the consumer of digital content. This study puts the websites of the selected newspapers to the test of these features and tries to find out whether the selected newspapers have these elements or not. There are certain elements like *speed, multiplicity* and *polycentrality* that have not been included in this paper.

The presence of these features is supposed to vary from one website to another, and it would be an interesting way of understanding the level of digitalization attained by the Newspapers so far.

The newspapers selected for the study are – *Kashmir Uzma, Daily Aftab, Daily Roshni, Tameel Irshad and Srinagar Times*.

In this study, we have gone for systematic observation of the characteristics of digitalization found on the websites of five of the top six websites of the most circulated Urdu newspapers in Srinagar.

Findings

Newspaper	Multimedia	Hypertext	Personalisation	Customisation	Participation	Interaction
Kashmir Uzma	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Daily Roshni	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
Daily Aftab	✓	✓	X	X	✓	✓
Taameel Irshad	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Srinagar Times	X	✓	X	X	✓	X

Table 1.0: this table shows the digitalization characteristics found and missing on the websites of Urdu Newspapers issued from Srinagar

During the study, it was found that all five newspapers had some sort of digital presence and were on their way towards complete digitalization. The distribution of digital features varied between the newspapers. None of the newspapers can be said to be fully upgraded to the digital world in terms of the content that is produced for the digital world.

The newspapers have an online presence wherein Kashmir Uzma and Taameel Irshad tick all the boxes while Daily Roshni misses the personalization feature. Daily Aftab lacks customization and personalization features. Srinagar Times is the least digitalized newspaper among the five, It misses out on multimediality along with customisation and personalisation features.

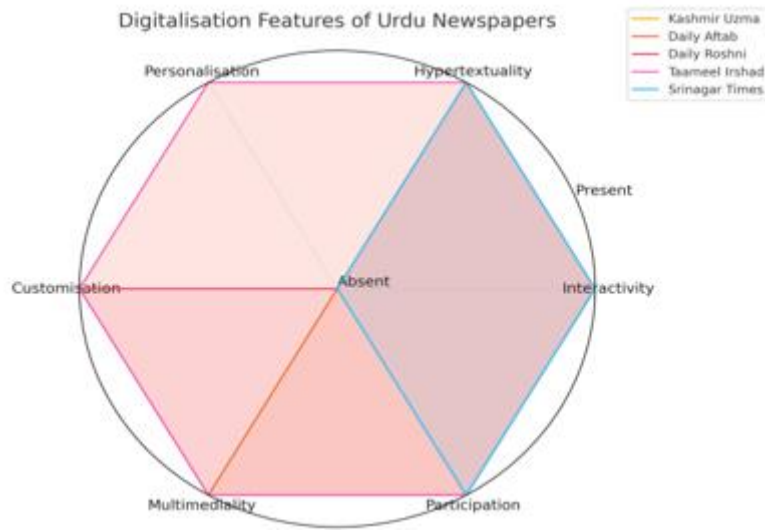


Figure 1: Radar chart showing the presence (1) or absence (0) of key digitalisation features

The details of digitalisation within each newspaper website are discussed in detail in the following section.

Kashmir Uzma:

Multimedia	✓
Hypertext	✓
Personalisation	✓
Customisation	✓
Participation	✓
Interaction	✓

Table 2.0 Characteristics of Digitalisation present on the website of Kashmir Uzma

Kashmir Uzma is the leading Urdu newspaper of the Valley and a sister concern of the English daily Greater Kashmir. The newspaper's website is www.kashmiruzma.news. The website showed elements such as Multimedia, Hypertext, Participation, Customisation, Personalisation and Interaction.

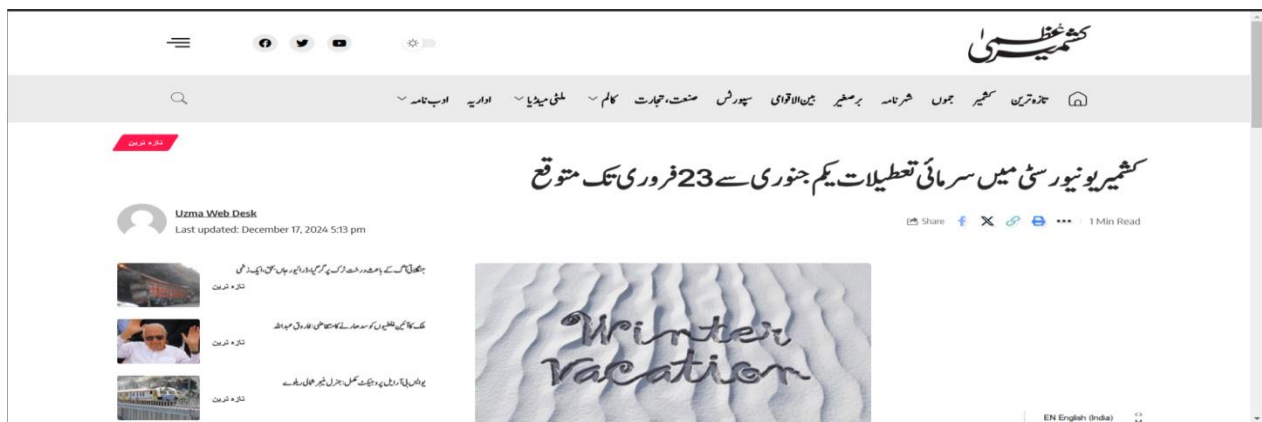


Figure 1.1: Screenshot of the newspaper website homepage of Kashmir Uzma

The website's multimedia include - photo stories, text, audiovisual, and podcast options. The podcast section, however, doesn't have any specific podcast on it. The stories follow a singular scheme, and one finds only a particular form of

story, either in text with a single picture, a video, or a photo story. None of the stories can be said to have multimedia of the contemporary style included in them.

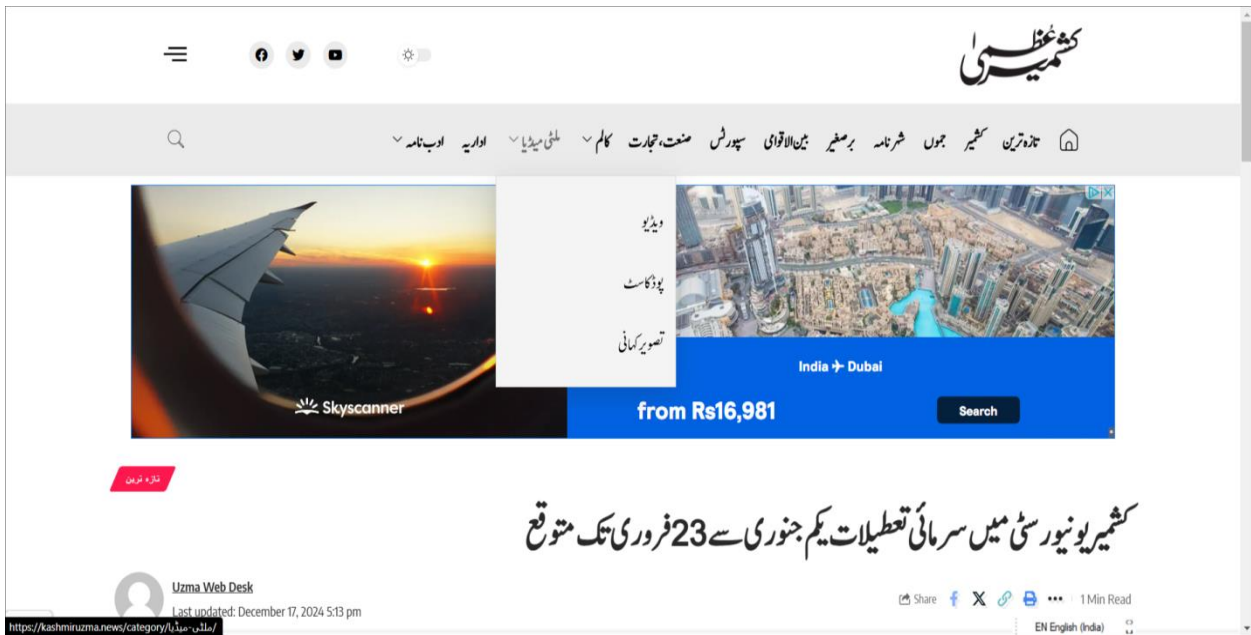


Figure 1.2: The screenshot showing the multimedia options available for the viewer to choose from on the website.

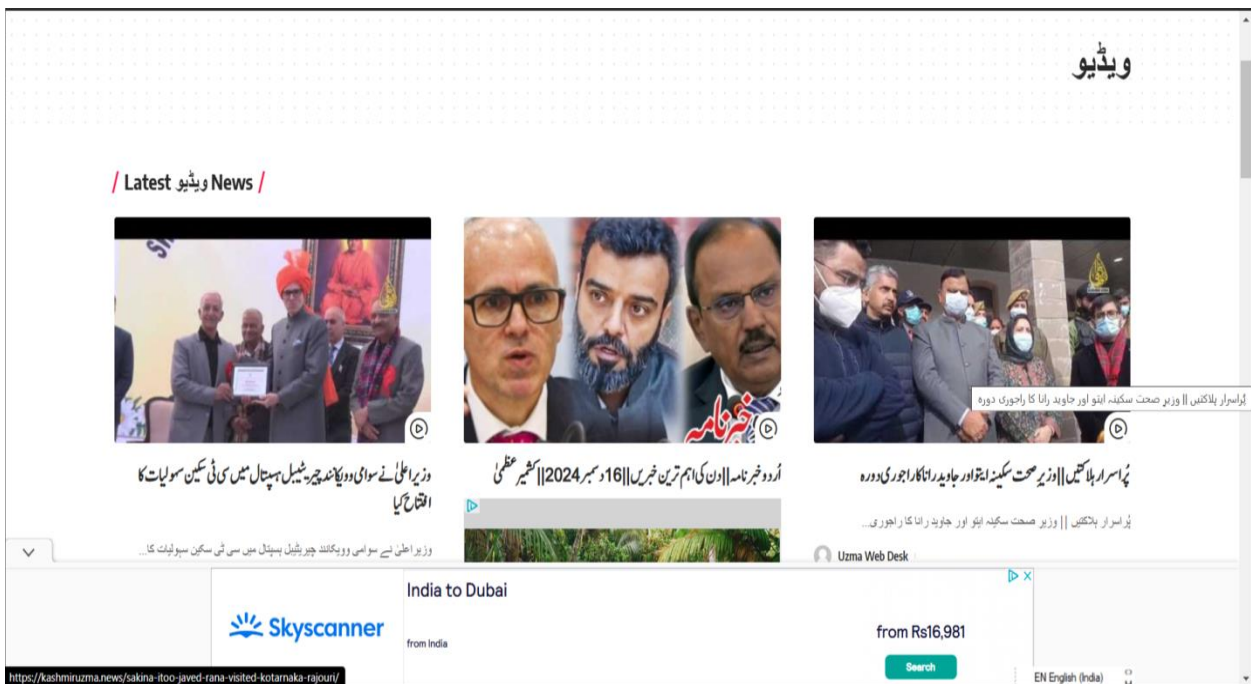


Figure 1.3: The figure shows the video stories section of the website of Kashmir Uzma

The hypertext on the website can be said to be used for navigating the website and does not bridge stories within the text and can only be used to access a particular story on the website. This option also has an element of interoperability on the website. One can access the various social media handles of the news organization on the website using hyperlinks.

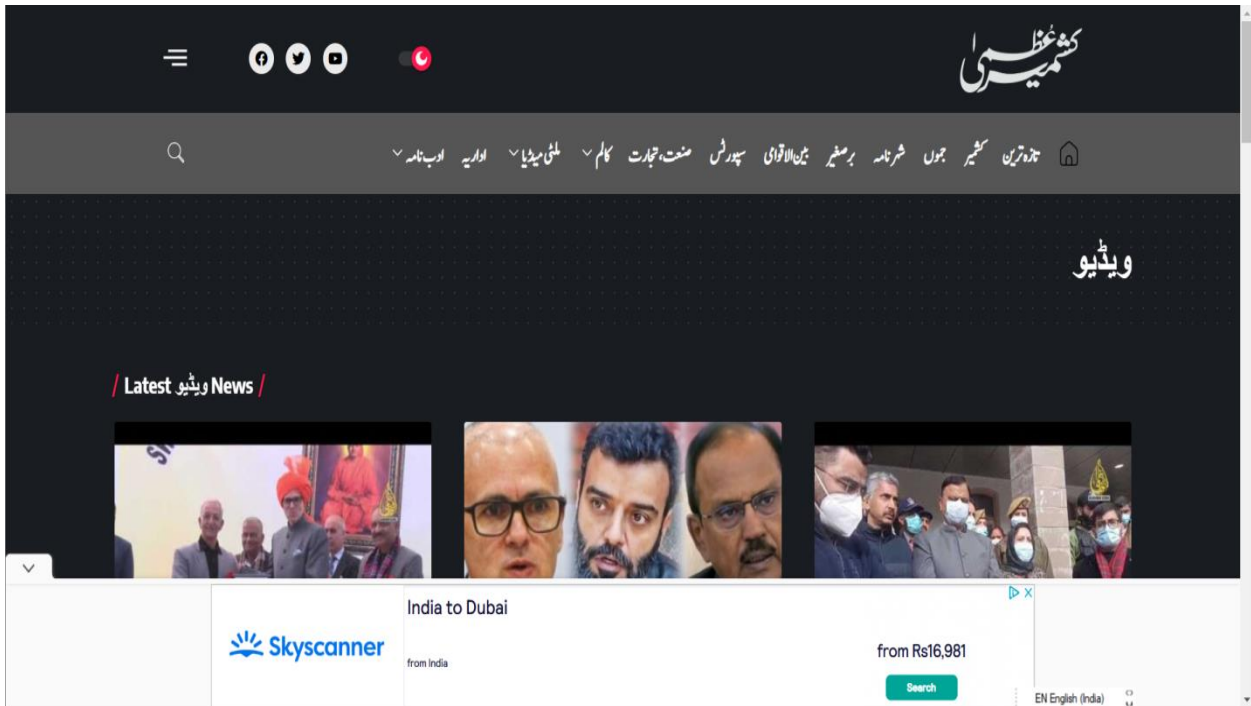


Figure 1.4: The figure shows the dark mode enabled on the website

The only customisation feature available on the website is that of switching from light mode to dark mode. Also when the dark mode is selected, clicking on options button does not present visible options to choose from. The website offers some sort of personalization. The website has the subscription option that allows delivery of its newsletter through email. The website also gives news specific to regions like Chenab, Pir Panjal and the city of Srinagar.

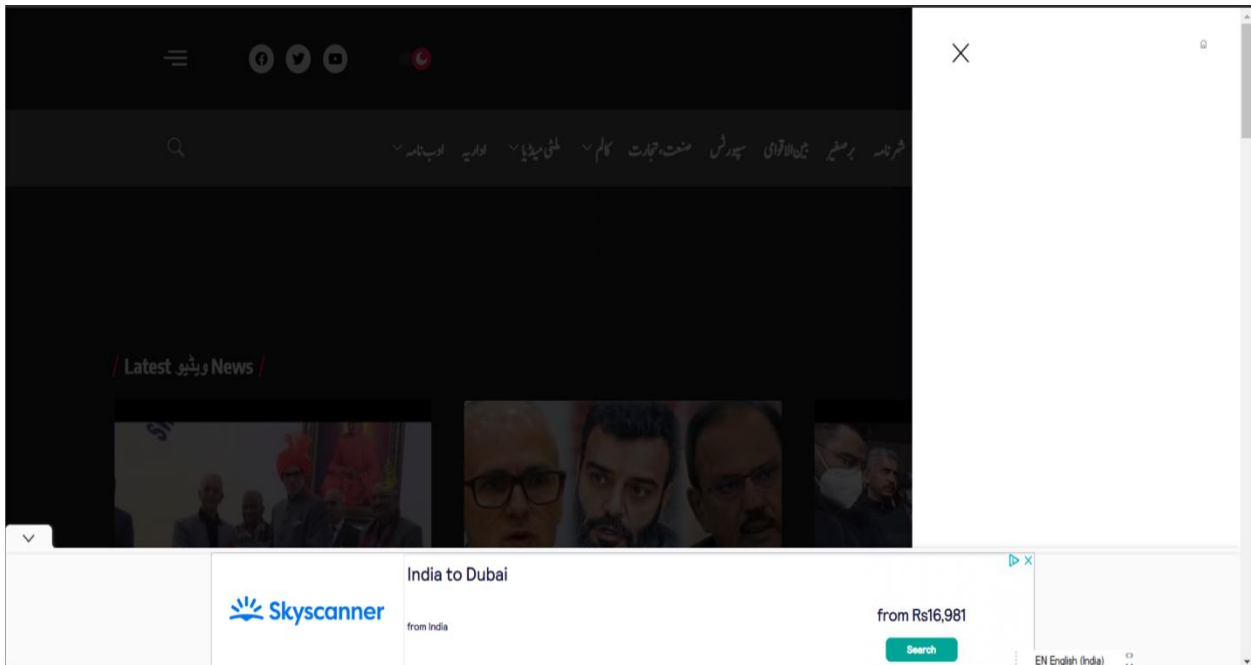


Figure 1.5: The figure shows the invisibility of options when clicking on the options menu when the dark mode is on

The news organisation does post articles and opinion pieces on the website and that opens up the domain of participation in the news or information production process. Also, the website allows the user to share a story on social media which makes the viewer a hawker as well.

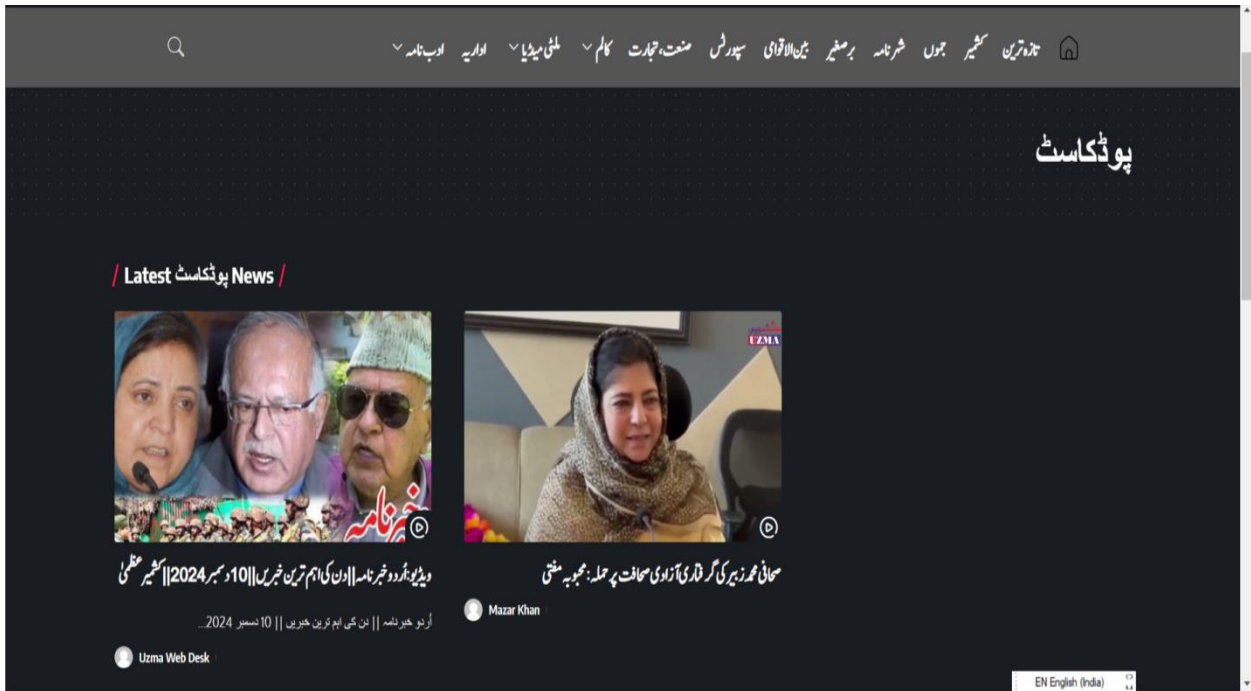


Figure 1.6: The figure shows video stories in the podcast section of the website

Besides this, it is hard to conclude that there is any more form of participation allowed on the news website for the viewer and mostly it is a traditional form of newspaper functioning visible on the website.



Figure 1.7: This image shows various columns which are taken from external contributors (participants)

The website gives the viewer a variety of options through which one can interact with the story. One can share a story on his/her social media by clicking on the share option. A viewer also gets recommendations for other stories while viewing a story.

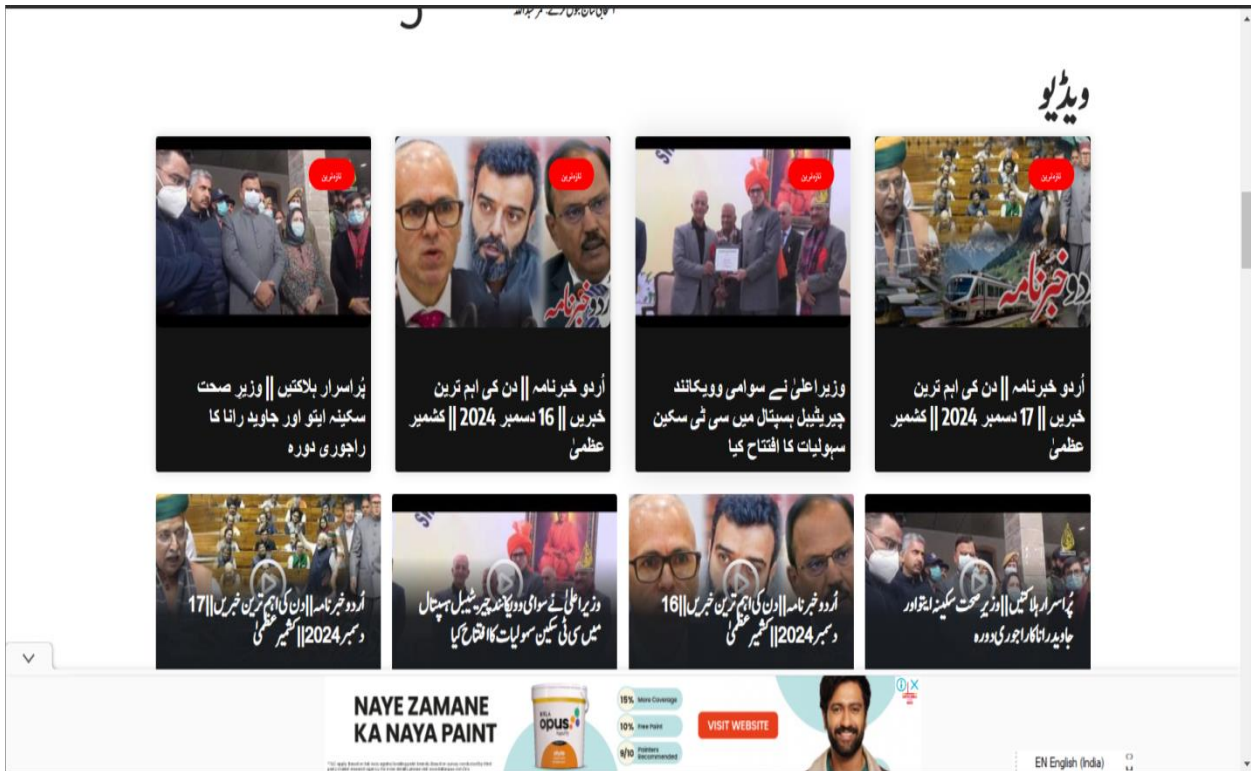


Figure 1.8: Image showing the video section on the website

The newspaper also had a significant social media presence with social media handles on Facebook, X and YouTube.

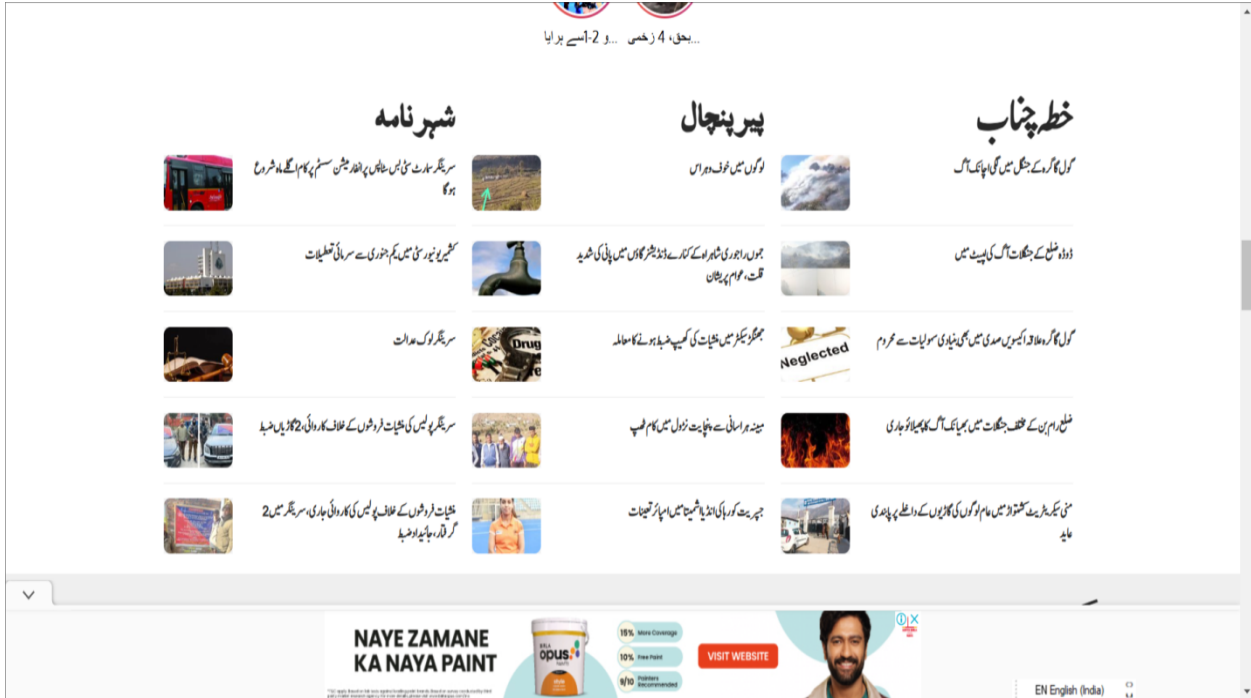


Figure 1.9: image shows the section of region specific news

It can be concluded that Kashmir Uzma has a solid digital presence with the website fulfilling the conditions of being called a digital newspaper. The two major shortcomings would be the lack of an optimized customisation of the website along with absence of some news personalisation options.

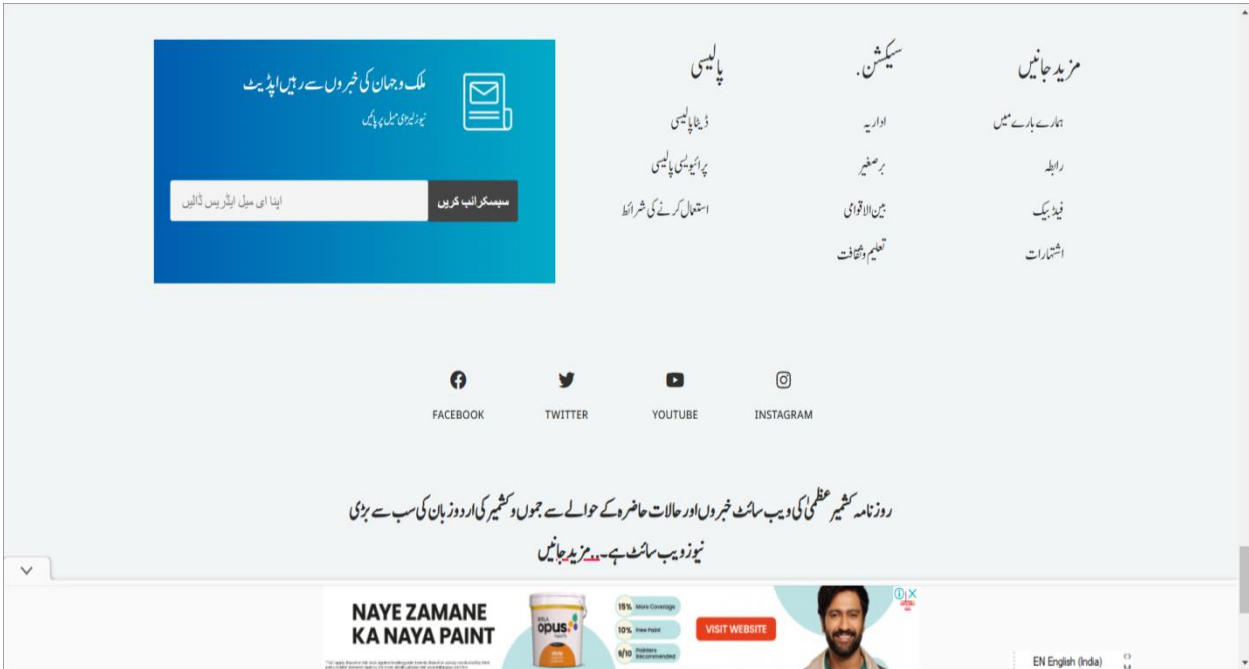


Figure 1.10: Image showing the subscription to the newsletter option of the organisation

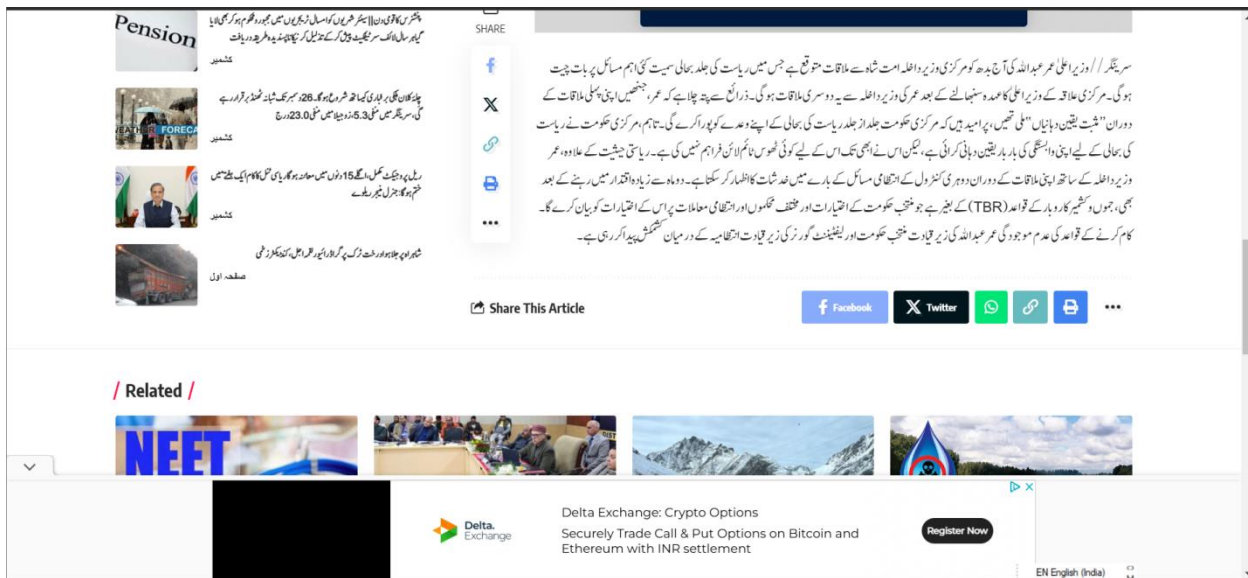


Figure 1.11: Image showing sharing options along with recommendations and related news

Daily Roshni

Multimedia	✓
Hypertext	✓
Personalisation	X
Customisation	✓
Participation	✓

Interaction	✓
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Table 3: Table showing the digitalisation characteristics of Daily Roshni

Daily Roshni had the following digital features on their website- Multimedia, Hypertext, Participation, Customisation and Interaction. The website lacked the feature of personalisation. In the case of Daily Roshni, two websites were discovered. These are www.dailyroshni.in and www.dailyroshni.net.



Figure 2.1: This image shows the interface of the website www.dailyroshni.net

On the website – www.dailyroshni.net, the newspaper has an interface that features the e-newspaper only. The interface has no other features of a digital newspaper website and has extensions that take the user to the social media handles of the newspaper.

The website www.daiyroshni.in does have a mobile version. Therefore, it can be understood to have some sort of personalisation, but the lack of regular updates of news on the website, makes the mobile version dormant.



Figure 2.2: The image showing the homepage of the website www.daiyroshni.in

The other website – www.dailyroshni.in has features like interactivity, hypertextuality, multimedia, customisation and participation but the updating of news on the website is not frequent. The website opens with a template that gives the viewer an option of directly going to e-paper section.

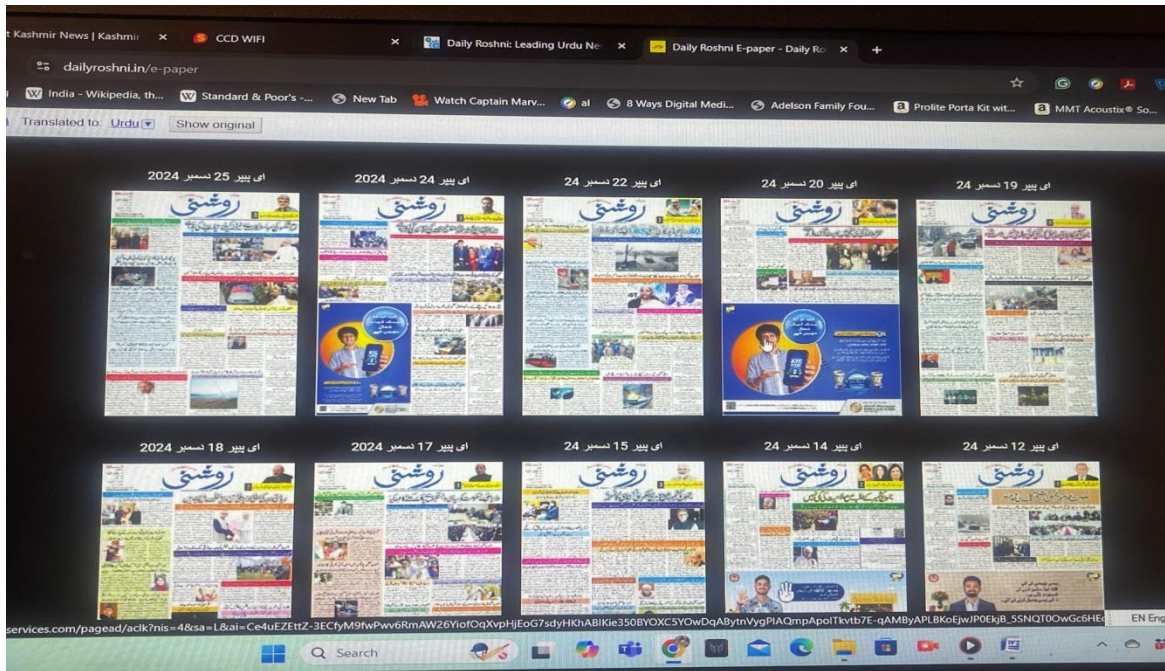


Figure 2.3: Image showing the interface of www.dailyroshni.in on opening the website showing e-paper gallery



Figure 2.4: This image shows the dark mode of the website highlighting customization

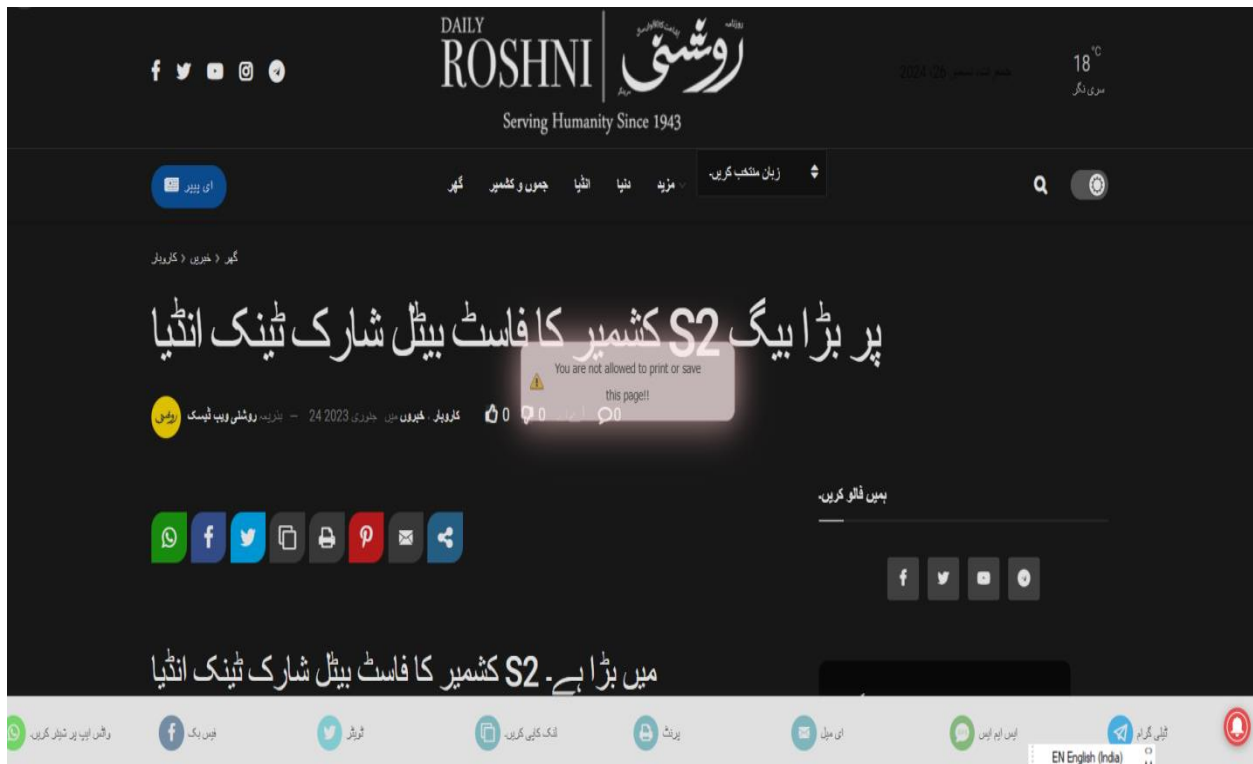


Figure 2.5: The image shows a video story on the website which reflects multimedia presence along with options of sharing the story giving evidence of interactivity

On reaching out to the newspaper through mail, the researcher could not get any response. It would be safe to conclude that Daily Roshni does not have an active/functional digital news website experience for the user, which could satisfy the requirements for being called a digital newspaper primarily based on the criterion on frequency of updates on the digital website www.dailyroshni.in.

Daily Aftab

<i>Multimedia</i>	✓
<i>Hypertext</i>	✓
<i>Personalisation</i>	X
<i>Customisation</i>	✓
<i>Participation</i>	✓
<i>Interaction</i>	✓

Table 4: Table showing the digitalisation characteristics of Daily Aftab

Daily Aftab is one of the oldest running dailies in Kashmir and has had a significant readership throughout its publication. The newspaper has been running for 67 years and is one of the few surviving Urdu dailies from Srinagar.

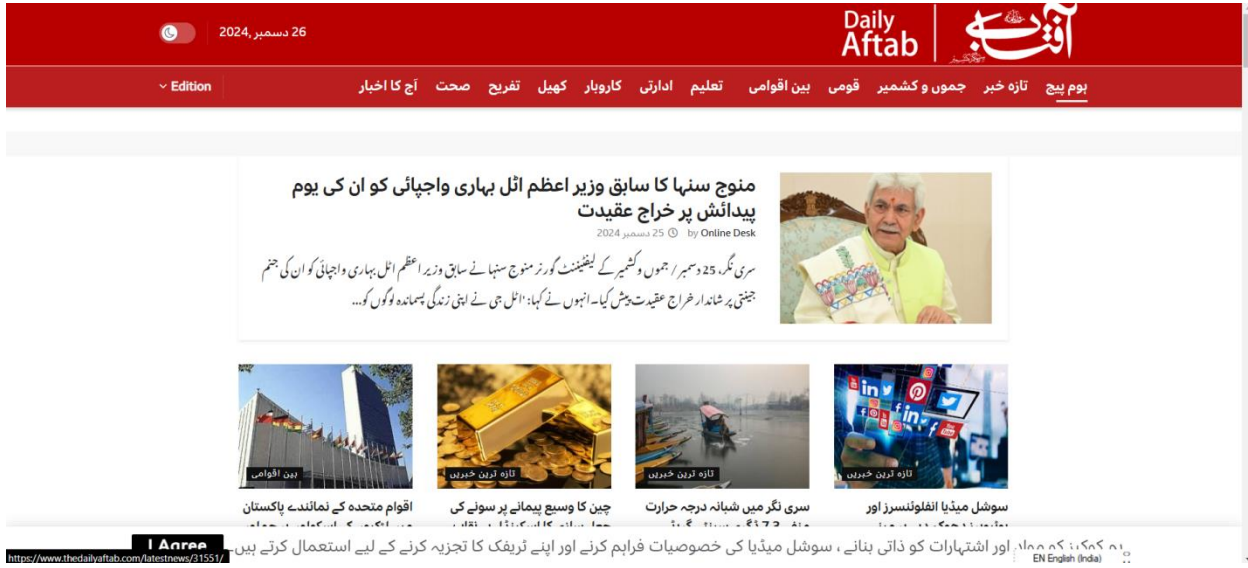


Figure3.1: This image shows the homepage of www.dailyaftab.com

The website of the newspaper is – www.dailyaftab.com. The website has elements of Multimedia, Hypertext, Customisation, Participation and Interaction. The multimedia in the app includes text, images, and audio-visual. Other elements of multimedia which include audio only in the form of news podcasts are absent and are not produced by the organization.

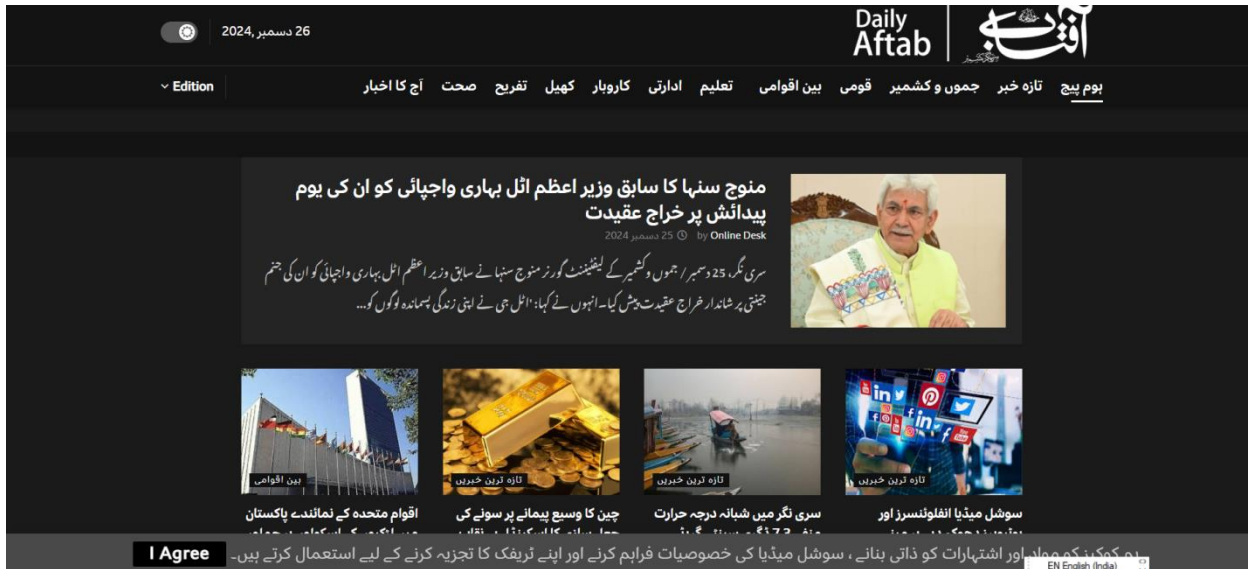


Figure 3.2: This image shows the dark mode customization option of the website www.dailyaftab.com

The website does have hypertextuality as a feature as the viewer gets to choose from options of news and can select from various news categories by clicking on the hypertexts belonging to them, in the form of highlights. The hypertextual elements within stories are missing that would connect a story to more relevant stories.

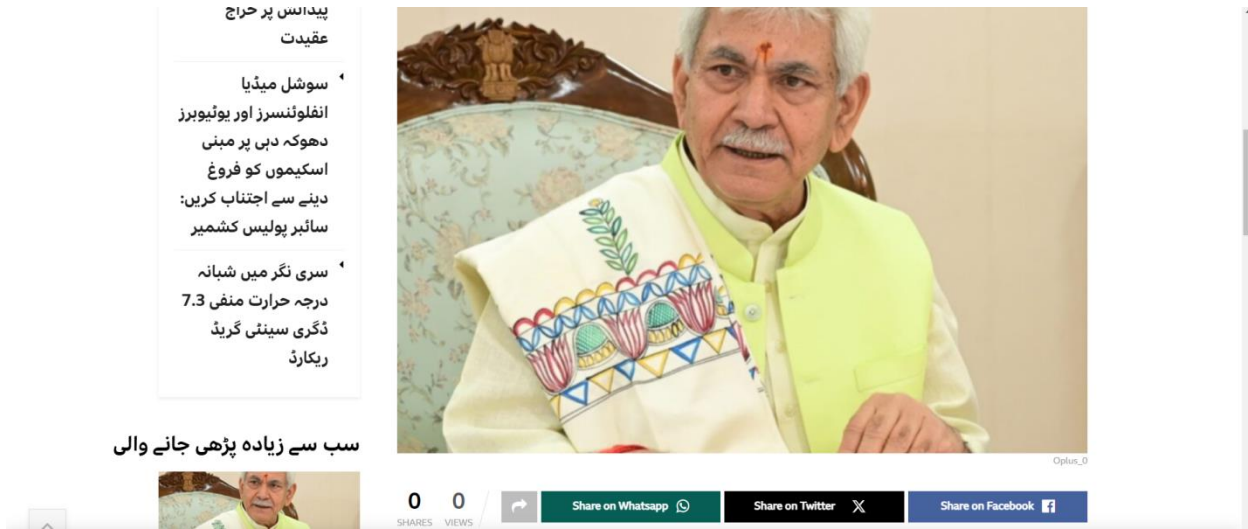


Figure 3.3: This image shows the interactivity options of the website and the platforms on which a story can be shared

The website is one of the few websites that has elements of customisation that are provided for the viewer. The website can be customized to dark or light mode according to the choice of the viewer.

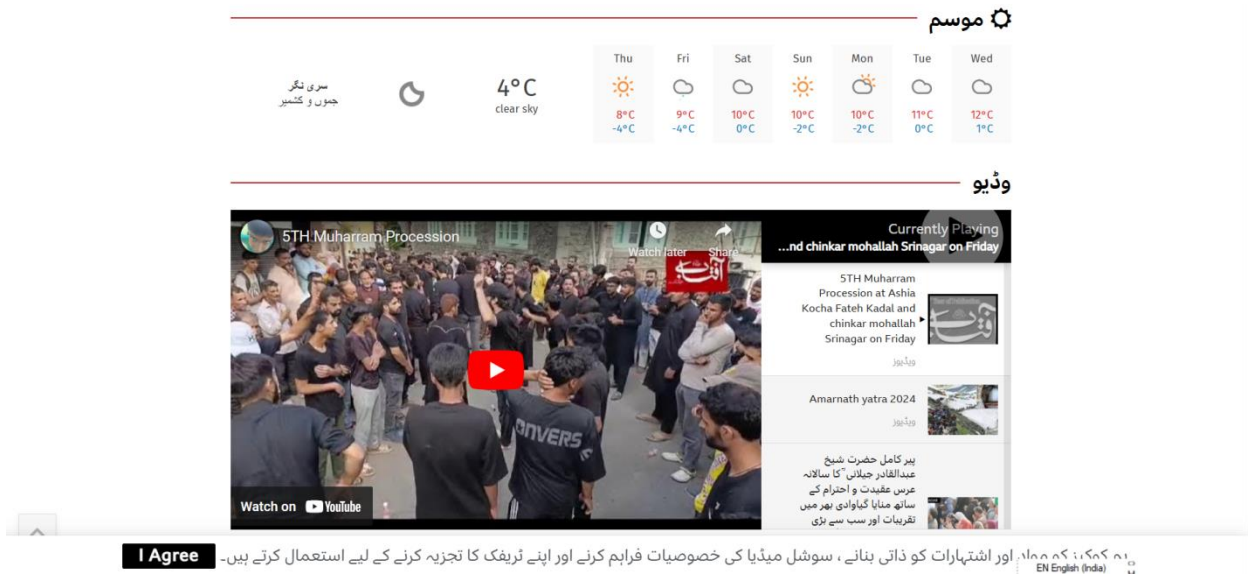


Figure 3.4: This image shows the video section of the website showing multimedia on it.

Another important customization on the website is the option of choosing the language. There are two language options on the website which are – Urdu and English. By choosing English the viewer goes to the English newspaper mode which is called Valley Spectrum. The English version also seems to not get updated with regular news as the last set of top stories on the home page is from the date of 5th January 2022. Another limitation of this feature is that one does not get an option of switching back to Urdu mode on the English page. One can conclude that the English section of the website is not a reliable source of information or an updated source of news.



Figure 3.5: This image shows the photo story section of the website

In terms of personalisation, the website doesn't give the viewer much of personalising options or packages. The choice of selecting the kind of news a user wants to read or consume regularly is not given and the website has a common homepage. There is a login option, but that option is only available on the English news option. There is also no way of setting up a profile on the website which makes the login option defunct.

Tameel Irshad

<i>Multimedia</i>	✓
<i>Hypertext</i>	✓
<i>Personalisation</i>	✓
<i>Customisation</i>	✓
<i>Participation</i>	✓
<i>Interaction</i>	✓

Table 5: Table showing the digitalisation characteristics of Tameel Irshad

Tameel Irshad is the largest circulating Urdu daily in Kashmir and has a website – www.tameelirshad.net. The website has Multimedia usage and gives the viewer an audio-visual experience along with text. The podcast option is not available. The newspaper also offers an Android app for the user. The website has hyperlinks that help the user navigate through the website's various sections, stories and social media handles. The interface also has a section that shows the newspaper's live updates on the social media website X.

In terms of Interactivity, the website allows the user to share a story on social media but one does not get to react to a story on the website. The website has a login option but the signing up option to the website is not easily discoverable. It makes the customisation of the website according to the needs of the user a torrid exercise given the ease to which the contemporary user is used. The website does have certain personalisation features. It has a live X feed.



Figure 4.1: The image showing the home page of www.tameelirshad.net

The X feed doesn't show any tweets though and is empty. The newspaper also offers an Android app for smartphones but Apple users do not get this option. It seems to be a half-hearted attempt that is supposed to evolve and grow in the future for the newspaper.



Figure 4.2: the image showing the multimedia section on the website of Tameel Irshad

The discoverability of the website on search engines is not simple. One has to enter the title of the whole website, and the name of the newspaper when typed on Google takes a user to the e-paper of the organization with no way of going to the website from there.

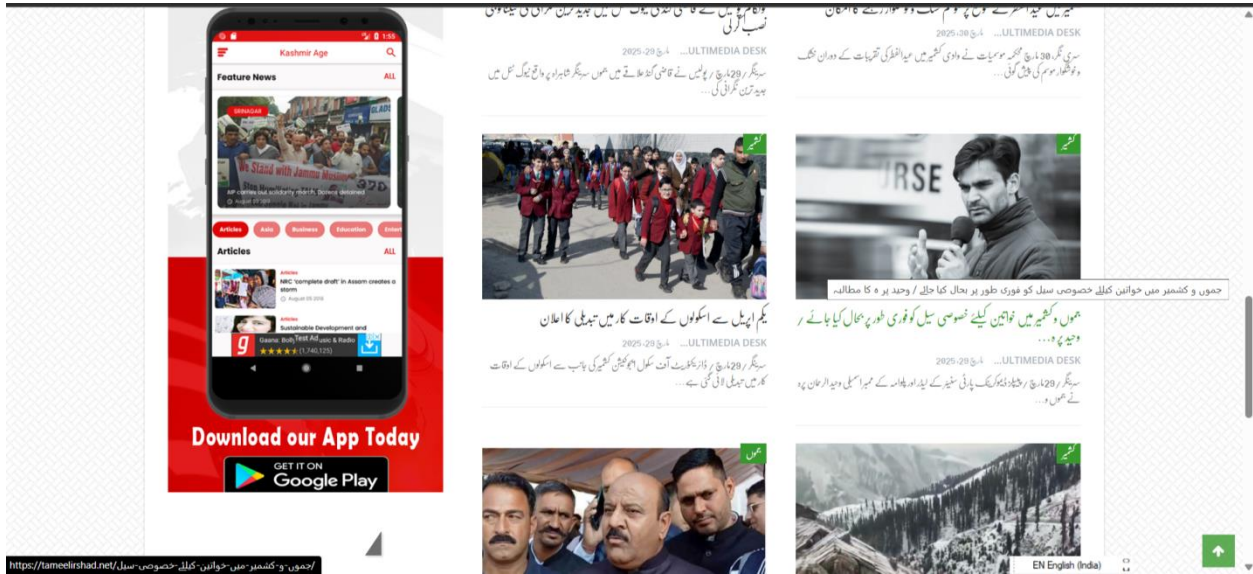


Figure 4.2: the image showing the personalisation option on the website of Tameel Irshad

Tameel Irshad ticks all the conditions of being called a complete digital newspaper. It has Interactivity, Hypertextuality, Multimodality, Customization, and Personalization as well as certain Participatory possibilities for the user. Participation is limited to the contribution of articles in the hard newspaper that get shoved onto the website.



Figure 4.3: the image showing the interactivity feature on the website of Tameel Irshad

When it comes to giving space to freelancers or citizens to contribute through news stories, it is hard to find such examples. The customization and personalization options can be worked upon by updating the website regularly and getting the live X feed active. The smartphone app also needs to be designed and provided for Apple users.

Srinagar Times

Multimedia	X
Hypertext	✓
Personalisation	X
Customisation	X
Participation	✓
Interaction	X

Table 4: Table showing the digitalisation characteristics on the website of Srinagar Times

Srinagar Times is in its 55th year and has been one of the most trusted sources of news for the people living in Srinagar. The newspaper on the internet has a very thin presence with a website www.srinagartimes.net being the virtual home for the newspaper. The website has only an e-paper to show online.



Figure 5.1: The homepage of the website www.srinagartimes.net

The interface of the website has a couple of social media icons that take the viewer to the social media handles of the newspaper. There is nothing else for the user to navigate and thus elements of multimedia, personalisation and customisation are not to be found on the website.

The hyperlink usage on the website is for switching pages and going to the social media handles of the newspaper. The newspaper allows contributions in its editorial and opinion sections which are present on the e-paper of the website. The pages of the e-paper are organized with a number assigned to each page.

The newspaper has not invested much in having a running news website. On going through the social media handles of the newspaper, it was found that the handles also do not feature regular news updates and mostly cartoons and e-paper snapshots are shared on social media by the newspaper.

The newspaper is functioning in the traditional style and it will be interesting to see, how long it can sustain itself without having a competitive digital presence.

Conclusion:

The digital presence of Urdu Newspapers does have indications of the Urdu newspapers recognising the value of digital space. Four out of five newspapers under the study have websites that tick the basic requirements of being called a news website.

The convergence of media in the digital space makes the job of newspapers a bit more complicated. From having to just focus on the text and photographic parts of news production, the requirements of the digital space to produce multimedia are a challenge for Urdu newspapers or any newspaper for that matter. Although many newspapers nationally and internationally have been able to produce convergent journalistic stories, the Urdu newspapers running from Srinagar seem to be still finding their feet in this space.

The audio-visual content produced by the newspapers is mostly the headlines of the day and the single stories of audio-visual nature lack the quality that is expected of an audio-visual news piece.

The newspapers have Urdu as an advantage to them as most of the people in Jammu and Kashmir understand the language and are closer to it when compared to the English language. This should be taken as an inspiration and the newspapers can hire convergent journalists, who have skills to produce news for digital space. That would add to the viewership of the newspapers online and increase the revenue generated from the digital space.

Although these newspapers do have a significant following on social media, the content presented online as audio-visual for the viewers has a lot required for the newspapers to compete in the online space in the future.

The mushrooming of online news outlets and websites in the valley has added a parallel player to the news business. The anchor cum reporter role played by the journalists for the online news outlets is a cue for Urdu newspapers to take. The videos made by the newspapers lack the basic elements of a convergent story. The text, voice of God, and quality of background music are elements that need to be added to the online content for it to be competent.

The storytelling in the videos does not fulfill the standards of digital storytelling. To have a future, the adoption of digital-specific content generation is a must for newspapers to survive in the almost digitally converted world. E-papers and plain textual storytelling with a sprinkling of pictures are not enough anymore.

The Urdu newspapers have the trust of the audiences which gives them another advantage, but this advantage won't last long as news is being produced and shared at the speed of light making any storyteller capable of winning the trust of audiences.

There is also a need to streamline the subscription and revenue models of the newspapers online. The Urdu newspapers seem to lack a strategy to monetize their content online. The newspapers rely mostly on advertisements online that appear along with the content online. But the subscription model is where the newspapers need to look and to attract subscriptions in the cheap and almost free information era is a challenge that needs to be taken by upgrading and standardizing the content produced for online viewers. This would depend on the quality of content as well as the quality of journalism done by newspapers for their online audiences. The online presence seems to be a half-hearted effort made out of compulsion rather than conviction.

Customization, participation and personalization are the digital features that do not have a comprehensive presence on the websites. Hyperlinks and interactivity are majorly under-utilized on newspaper websites. This also sheds light on the kind of journalists the educational institutes are churning out. The types of skills taught at journalism schools in Kashmir also need to be studied and necessary changes must be recommended to supply a digitally competent lot of journalists who know how to create digital media.

There is space for a lot of improvements that can be made by the Urdu Newspapers issued from Srinagar and this needs to be filled quickly as the appetite for subscribing to news handles and websites is supposed to decline over time due to the content-snacking habits of the user.

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