

Print Media Diffusion in Bengaluru District

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Abstract

The Indian Media and Entertainment Industry are worth Rs.1,026 billion with a growth rate of 11.7% as on 2014. In the newspaper industry, reader is the king and nobody can afford to ignore the reach. Circulation is the lifeblood of newspapers and magazines. The economy of print media fundamentally depends on circulation. The growth is attributed to sustained progress by the language press, increase in the rate of literacy in general and female literacy in particular. This paper analyses the diffusion of Kannada and English Language press in Bengaluru district to investigate the reach and access of press in Karnataka state. The analysis of circulation of Kannada press makes interesting revelations. New entrants in the industry have gained high circulation relegating traditional giants in the background. In Kannada press, Vijayavani started in 2013 has established a big lead over conventional papers like Prajavani and Vijaya Karnataka with a whopping circulation of 7,91,837 (Jan-June 2016- ABC) claims 128 percent growth in three years establishing itself as the largest circulated newspaper since 2013.

Keywords; Media diffusion, Circulation, Readership, Regional newspapers

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INTRODUCTION

Today the world press is in jeopardy where the newspapers are heavily losing circulation in US and Europe markets. Newspapers which have a greater burden of competing with television news and social media have evolved unique strategies to stay in the industry. Increased research has contributed to the change in the designing and presentation of newspapers. Newspapers including local tabloid dailies have got rid of their traditional look and have taken to modern, glossy, and colourful appearance with front page attired in multiple jackets of advertisements. There has been increase in advertising revenue with the introduction of new editions and Jacket advertisements nick named as ‘Battle of Jackets’ which are in the form of full front page advertisements and ushering new retail advertising.

The print media market touched a turnover of Rs.263 billion in 2014 heralding the arrival of neo print advertisements competing with ads from other media devices. Television, Film,

Music and New Media have contributed to the growth of Indian media industry by leaps and bounds and has shown opportunities for further expansion. The government of India has increased FDI– Foreign Direct Investment in media to 26% in news and current affairs and 100% in non-news media like trade publications and general entertainment channel opening the flood gates to foreign owned media into Indian market. Indian media is poised to achieve tremendous growth by 2018 overtaking US market. Print media in India is investing more on research expertise to reach out to the customers. For instance, newspapers are targeting rural markets and second tier cities besides developing strategies to attract retail marketing.

In 2013-14, print media in India was supported by technology sector led by mobile and TV products rather than FMCG, causing fundamental shift in advertng. In the newspaper industry, reader is the king and nobody can afford to ignore the reach. Circulation is the lifeblood of newspapers and magazines. The economy of print media fundamentally depends on circulation. The number of copies circulated measures the success of the newspaper. Dip in circulation is alarming and wakes up the editor and the management to take measures to check fall in readership. Circulation is linked to advertising, as both are two sides of the same coin. Subscription revenue alone cannot fully support cost of newspaper production compelling newspapers to depend on advertng revenue.

Worldwide, advertisers heavily depend on ABC figures to keep abreast of circulation of newspapers and magazines for media planning. Field workers of ABC personally visit newspaper offices, inspect the newspaper plant, and conduct the audit by literally counting the copies printed and sold by checking files, bills and related account documents. The ABC certificates are therefore held in high esteem because of their foolproof auditing mechanism all over the world. Over 80% of circulation of world Press is certified by ABC and therefore it emerges as a market leader in measuring the circulation of newspapers and periodicals. On one hand, it guides the newspapers and periodicals to fix the advertising rates and on the other, it helps advertising agencies in media selection.

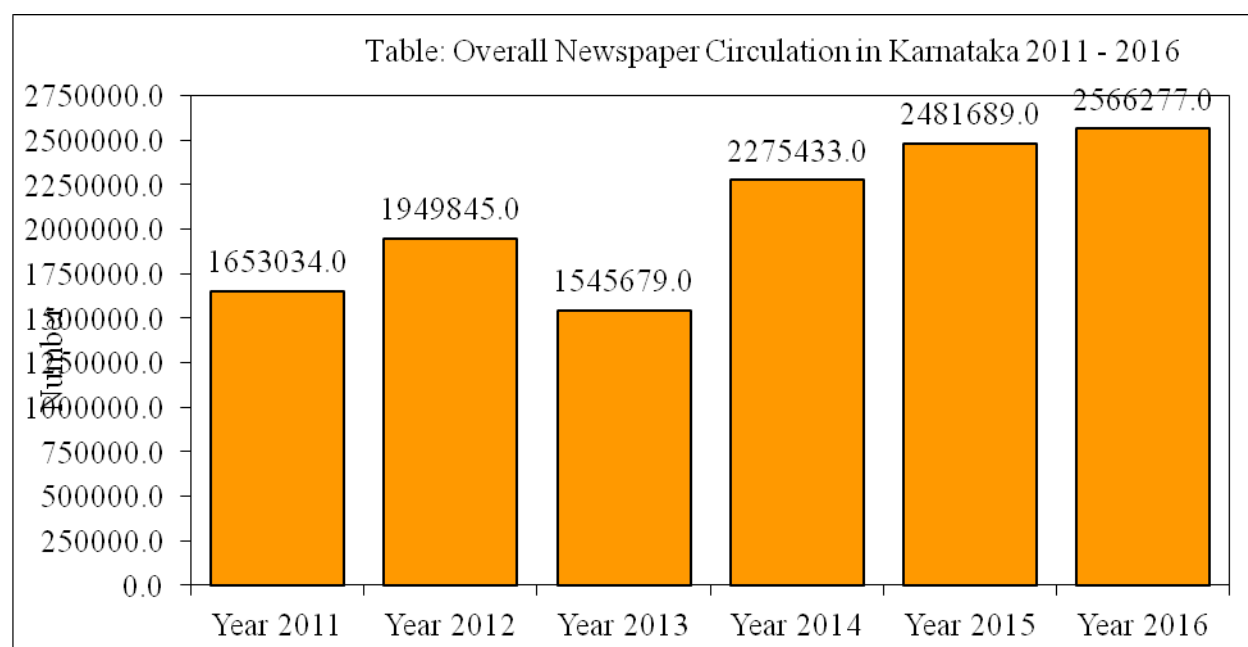
Today, the rapid expansion of newspapers has created demand for monitoring readership 24x7 instead of conventional annual surveys. The Indian Media and Entertainment Industry are worth Rs.1,026 billion with a growth rate of 11.7% as on 2014. It has a tremendous potential to reach a growth rate of 13% and a turnover of Rs.1964 billion by 2018 (KPMG Analysis). The growth is attributed to sustained progress by the language press, increase in the rate of literacy in

general and female literacy in particular, the establishment of *Panchayati Raj* Institutions that ushered in people's governance at grassroots level, and increase in competition. Post liberalization has seen transformation in Indian print media. It has become innovative with potential to overcome the competition posed by new media devices like social media, mobile and digital television.

This paper analyses the diffusion of Kannada and English Language press in Bengaluru district to investigate the reach and access of press in Karnataka state.

Kannada Press in Karnataka

Fig 1 Kannada Newspaper Circulation in Karnataka 2011-2016



Source: Estimate based on ABC

Table 1 Kannada Major Dailies Circulation 2016

| Newspaper | Circulation |
|---------------------------|-------------|
| <i>Vijayavani</i> | 7,91,837 |
| Vijaya Karnataka | 6,85,001 |
| <i>Prajavani</i> | 5,27,309 |
| <i>Udayavani</i> | 3,01,316 |
| <i>Kannada Prabha</i> | 1,28,020 |
| <i>Samyukta Karnataka</i> | 89,693 |
| <i>Vishwavani</i> | 74,924 |

Source: ABC

The analysis of circulation of Kannada press makes interesting revelations. New entrants in the industry have gained high circulation relegating traditional giants in the background. In Kannada press, *Vijayavani* started in 2013 has established a big lead over conventional papers like *Prajavani* and *Vijaya Karnataka* with a whopping circulation of 7,91,837 (Jan-June 2016-ABC) claims 128 percent growth in three years establishes itself as the largest circulated newspaper since 2013.

Table 2

| <i>Vijayavani</i> – Largest Circulated Kannada Daily | | |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|
| Place | Circulation | |
| Year | 2016 | 2014 |
| Bangalore | 2,50,242 | 2,17,964 |
| Hubli | 1,03,557 | 82,990 |
| Mysuru | 82,507 | 84,348 |
| Gangavati | 62,870 | 49,840 |
| Kalaburagia | 57,506 | 48,359 |
| Vijayapura | 52,904 | 42,101 |
| Belagavi | 51,401 | 39,350 |
| Chitradurga | 49,221 | 44,438 |
| Mangalore | 42,907 | 40,021 |
| Shivamogga | 38,722 | 32,929 |
| Total | 7,91,837 | 6,82,340 |

Source: ABC

The total combined circulation of major 7 Kannada dailies is 29.04 lakh whereas the total circulation of a single Malayalam newspaper, *Malayala Manorama*, of Kerala has 23.72 lakhs. Telugu daily, *Eenadu* has over 18.41 lakhs and Tamil daily, *Daily Thanthi* has over 17.14 lakh circulation. Comparatively, Kannada press cannot be compared with vibrant language press in Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. (ABC), Marathi daily *Sakal* has 12.81 lakh and Bengali newspaper, *Ananda Bazar Patrika* has 11.15 lakh circulation whereas Hindi daily, *Dainik Bhaskar* with a circulation of 38.12 lakh is the largest circulated language newspaper in India. No Kannada daily has at point of time in history has attained over 10 lakh circulation speaks volumes about low diffusion in the entire state. Share of circulation of Kannada press IN 2016 is only 5 percent in national circulation whereas it is 39 percent (Hindi), 17 percent (English), 10 percent (Malayalam), 7 percent (Tamil), 6 percent (Telugu, Marathi, Bengali) and 4 percent (others). In comparative analysis of circulation share of Kannada dailies between 2004-2014 indicate that there is moderate increase from 2.07 percent in 2004 to 4 percent in 2014

establishing the improvement in readership. There is 1 percent increase in 2016 but comparatively lower than other languages.

In 2016 three dailies *Vijayavani*, *Vijaya Karnataka* and *Prajavani* have more than 5 lakh circulation and two other major dailies like *Udayavani* and *Kannada Prabha* have more than 3 lakh and 1 lakh circulation. Traditional media institutions like Samyukta Karnataka owned by reputed Loka Shikshana Trust founded by freedom fighters of India as part of national movement established in 1933 in pre independent period has earned the tag of North Karnataka paper and has not succeeded in making inroads in Southern part of Karnataka and in old Mysuru region. The circulation of this paper has declined and has failed to withstand the competition posed by Hubli based post liberalization paper, *Vijaya Karnataka*. Perhaps the emergence of *Vijaya Karnataka* proved death knell for prominent dailies of Karnataka and overtook *Prajavani* which reigned the top slot in readership for over five decades. A non journalist Vijaya Sankeshwar, a Hubli based politician and transport entrepreneur was responsible for changing the fortunes of Kannada Press by starting *Vijaya Karnataka* that became household name in Karnataka and the first newspaper to cross 6 lakh circulation and increasing readership profile in the state. Vijaya Sankeshwar sold this paper to Bennett Coleman & Co. Ltd but started one more newspaper *Vijayavani* in 2013 and is the first ever paper to cross 7 lakh circulation in the history of Kannada press and in 2016 is the largest circulated paper in the state.

Both *Vijaya Karnataka* and *Vijayavani* are instrumental in increasing readership of Kannada press not only in metro cities but also in towns. *Prajavani* despite being dislodged from numero uno position has consistently maintained high circulation and quality of journalism and shuttles between 2nd and 3rd position in highest circulation.

English Press in Karnataka State

Karnataka is the home of oldest regional English daily, Deccan Herald published from Printers (Mysuru) Pvt.Ltd in Bengaluru that has group of publications including prominent daily *Prajavani* and a host of popular Kannada magazines. The Deccan Herald was the largest circulated English daily in Karnataka prior to the invasion of circulation territory by the Times of India in early 1990s.

The trend analysis of Deccan Herald between 2011-2016 indicates an increase since 2014, the Indian election year. In 2016 the paper has reached highest circulation of the period

with 2.86 lakh. It is consistently reaching over 2.2 lakh readers since 2011. It is a multi edition paper with editions in Bangalore, Mysuru (14957), Davanagere (4717), Kalaburagia (7911), Hubli (28,992) and Mangalore (14,729). Bengaluru edition has the largest circulation in Karnataka with over 1.84 lakh (2016) copies.

The Times of India, the largest multi edition English daily with 27.31 lakh (2016) has invaded Karnataka with editions of Bangalore, Hubli, Mangalore and Mysuru. The total circulation in Karnataka is 4.94 lakh (2016) which is the largest of any English newspaper in the state. However, 90 percent of its circulation is confined to Bengaluru edition with 4.61 lakh copies followed by Mysuru (11,573), Mangalore (10,565) and Hubli (10,331) editions. Interestingly, the ToI circulation has seen increase at national level but has declined in Karnataka. Since 2011, ToI has circulation of over 5 lakhs but has declined to 4.94 lakhs in 2016. The highest circulation of ToI in Karnataka was in July- Dec 2014, the election year of 14th Lok Sabha.

The Hindu from Chennai has South Indian identity is pre independent (September 20,1878) English daily owned by Kasturi & Sons has a wide circulation base in Karnataka. A multi edition paper, it publishes Bangalore, Hubli and Mangalore editions. In 2016, its national circulation reached 14.58 lakhs and its reach in Karnataka is higher than Deccan Herald with 2,51,162 copies (2016). Its Bengaluru edition sells highest copies (2.22 lakh) followed by Mangalore (14,871) and Hubli (13,588) editions. The Hindu has grown in popularity in Karnataka state since 2011 when it had less than 1 lakh circulation established its readership base with a circulation of over 1.45 lakhs. Since 2014, Karnataka circulation of The Hindu has been on the rise and in 2016 has reached its highest (2.22 lakhs) and its Bengaluru edition has high reach than that of Deccan Herald and has contributed to the growth of English press in the state. The New Indian Express publishes from Karnataka with multi editions in Bangalore, Belagavi and Shivamogga. The paper has seen decline in its national circulation with 2.57 lakhs (2016) from 4.18 lakhs (2014). Its circulation in the state is very low nothing comparable with other three big English dailies. In 2016, papers Bengaluru(25,162), Belagavi (2021) and Shivamogga (1869) editions sold low percent of copies. Mangalore in Karnataka gets the Kozhikode (Kerala) edition of this paper, Belagavi edition also goes to Hubli whereas Coimbatore (Tamil Nadu) edition also gets distributed in Bangalore.

Overall, the circulation base of English press is driven by three major newspapers, The Times of India, Deccan Herald and The Hindu. All these papers have heavy diffusion in metro city of Bengaluru than towns and villages. English press in Karnataka is an urban phenomenon.

Kannada Press in Bengaluru Urban District

The IT bowl of India, Bangalore, the capital of Karnataka, is the nerve centre of politics, business, industry, and media.

Table 3 Kannada Language Newspaper Circulation in Bengaluru District 2011 – 2016

| Newspaper & Year | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
|---------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| <i>Prajavani</i> | 162967 | 167832 | 170819 | 95410 | 171448 | 189984 |
| Vijaya Karnataka | 198948 | 208092 | 0* | 218515 | 229729 | 233836 |
| <i>Kannada Prabha</i> | 48366 | 47239 | 46257 | 51607 | 60143 | 33654 |
| <i>Udayavani</i> | 32216 | 41635 | 41457 | 42899 | 44112 | 45246 |
| <i>Vijayavani</i> | 0 | 44160 | 79084 | 142866 | 158804 | 171791 |
| <i>Samyukta Karnataka</i> | 6791 | 7290 | 6701 | 5506 | 6912 | 4757 |
| Vishva Vani | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 19861 |
| Total | 449288 | 516248 | 344318 | 556803 | 671148 | 699129 |

Source: ABC

* Vijaya Karnataka has not provided accounts for 2013 at ABC

The district tops the table in the reach of Kannada press and has seen increase in circulation in 2016 (6,99,129) as compared to 2011 (4,49,288). Bengaluru urban district geographically consists of BengaluruCity, BengaluruSouth, BengaluruNorth, BengaluruEast and Anekal. There is consistent growth of Kannada press since 2011 driven by *Vijaya Karnataka* (2,33,836), *Prajavani* (1,89,984), and *Vijayavani* (1,71,791) in 2016. *Prajavani* has consistent growth and has lost circulation only in 2014, strangely the election year. *Vijaya Karnataka* has never lost circulation showing greater degree of sustainability among newspapers. *Vijayavani*, a new paper in the market has shown over 200 percent growth in 2016 as compared 2012. *Udayavani* from the coastal belt has maintained low circulation not correlating to the presence of coastal population in Bengalurudistrict in good numbers. *Kannada Prabha* of Indian Express group has lost over 50 percent of circulation in 2016. *Samyukta Karnataka* from the northern Karnataka has failed to reach readers with lowest circulation in the district. A new chip in the block, *Vishwavani* started in 2016 has better circulation of 19861 in the district with its edition reaching 44,327 outside Bengaluru in 2016 than *Samyukta Karnataka* (4757). However, *Samyukta Karnataka's* Bengaluru edition sells more (22,047) outside the district than in Bangalore.

Table 4

| Bengaluru Edition of Kannada Dailies Jan-June 2016 | |
|--|-------------|
| Newspaper | Circulation |
| Vijaya Karnataka | 2,90,916 |
| <i>Prajavani</i> | 2,74,827 |
| <i>Vijayavani</i> | 2,50,242 |
| <i>Udayavani</i> | 82,509 |
| <i>Kannada Prabha</i> | 67,235 |
| <i>Vishwavani</i> | 44,327 |
| <i>Samyukta Karnataka</i> | 22,047 |

Source: ABC

Most of these big Kannada dailies are published from Bengaluru and its editions reach other districts in the state. The Bengaluru edition is distributed in places outside the district too. Only three big dailies *Prajavani*, *Kannada Prabha* and *Vishwavani* are published from Bangalore. Rest of the other papers, *Vijaya Karnataka* (Hubli), *Vijayavani* (Hubli), *Samyukta Karnataka* (Hubli) and *Udayavani* (Mangalore) publish Bengaluru editions. *Vijaya Karnataka* (2,90,916), *Prajavani* (2,74,827) and *Vijayavani* (2,50,242) lead the circulation (2016) of Bengaluru edition. *Udayavani* readership in Bengaluru is half of its combined circulation of Bengaluru edition (82,509) indicating its distribution outside Bengaluru urban district.

The growth of Kannada press in Bengaluru district indicates 38 percent increase in 2014 that is highest in trend analysis of 2011-2016, but growth declined to 17 percent in 2015 and 4 percent in 2016. The period of 2013 and 2014 were crucial years of political upheavals with change of guard from right wing to secular parties impacting the prospects of Kannada press. *Udayavani* gained over 23 percent in 2012 but suffered a marginal decline of 3 percent of circulation in 2016. *Kannada Prabha* is the only newspaper that suffered 79 percent decrease in growth rate in 2016 heavily losing circulation. *Vijayavani*, started in 2012 gained 44 percent in 2013, 45 percent in 2014 but its growth declined by 10 percent in 2015 but picked up 8 percent in 2016. *Prajavani* suffered a decrease of 10 percent in circulation in 2016 in Mysuru district. *Vijaya Karnataka* has maintained consistency in circulation with marginal increase of up to 2

percent but has not suffered decline in readership in Mysuru district. The overall circulation of Kannada dailies in Bengalurudistrict shows a 4 percent decrease in 2016.

Besides mainstream papers, many local Kannada newspapers are published in the district. Some of the local Kannada newspapers, published from Bengaluru have readership in the district. Major local dailies of the district, *Endu Sanje*, *Sanje Vani*, *Ee Sanje*, *Ee Munjane*, *Matrushri*, and *Sanje Samachar* publish multi edition and are distributed outside the district. *Sanje Samaya*, *Sakshat Suddi*, *Vidhi Karnataka*, *Navu Kannadigaru*, *Suddi Mrudanga* and *Jai bhimagade* local Kannada dailies are single edition papers. These local newspapers have penetrated small towns and villages and enjoy mass readers outside Bengaluru district. Recognized by the state government for accreditation and release of advertisements these newspapers claim a minimum circulation of 1000 copies (Information & Public Relations, Govt. of Karnataka, 2017).

The diffusion of print media is no match to the population and the literacy rate in Bengaluru urban. The district ranked first in per capita income has 87.7 percent literacy with a total population of 96 lakh (9 million) and Bangalore city of all the five taluks alone has 8.4 million population. Four taluks of Bengaluru Urban are rural and only Bengaluru city is urban with a highest literacy of 88.7 percent and lowest literacy is 78.4 in Bengaluru South. The media diffusion is more concentrated in Bengaluru city than the rural areas of Bengaluru Urban district. Bengaluru Urban district ranks 1st in Per Capita Income (NDDP) in the state. It is ranked 1st in HDI with high level of living standard index (1st rank), education index (1st rank) and health index (2nd rank) has highest print media diffusion in the state.

English Press in Bengaluru Urban District

Bengaluru urban district has perhaps highest number of daily newspapers of other Indian languages. There are over 13 such newspapers that have been recognized by the state government for accreditation and release of advertisements these newspapers claim a excluding Kannada papers (Information & Public Relations, Govt. of Karnataka, 2017). Papers are published in English (excluding mainstream English dailies), Hindi, Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu languages whose combined circulation is 1,73,608 copies per day indicating pluralistic demography profile of the district. Among them, Rajastan Patrika (47982), Daily Paswan

(21000), Dakshin Bharat Rashtramath (22,000) and Rojnam Rashtriya Sahara (22006) command more readers in BengaluruUrban. Rest of the papers command circulation ranging between 1000-15,000 copies indicating print media catering to linguistic diversity in the IT capital of the State. Urdu paper, Daily Salar (8000) reaches minority population. Tamil newspaper, *Daily Tanti* command a reach of 21,785 reflects the media diversity in Bengaluruurban in Karnataka.

Media Diffusion in Bengaluru Rural District

Kannada Press

Table 5 Kannada Language Newspaper Circulation in BengaluruRural District 2011 - 2016

| Newspaper & Year | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
|---------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| <i>Prajavani</i> | 27631 | 18533 | 18773 | 20580 | 20195 | 15074 |
| <i>Vijay Karnataka</i> | 7493 | 8293 | 0 | 10064 | 10582 | 10404 |
| <i>Kannada Prabha</i> | 1657 | 8875 | 9134 | 0 | 0 | 4444 |
| <i>Udayavani</i> | 2413 | 3115 | 3478 | 3657 | 4246 | 4040 |
| <i>Vijayavani</i> | 0 | 3146 | 6558 | 9945 | 8022 | 7934 |
| <i>Samyukta Karnataka</i> | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| <i>Vishvavani</i> | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 39194 | 41962 | 37943 | 44246 | 43045 | 41896 |

Source: ABC

Bengaluru Rural district comprising four taluks, Doddaballpura, Hosakote, Nelamangala and Devanahalli is no different from other predominantly rural districts of the state in media diffusion despite its geographical proximity to BengaluruUrban District. Comparative analysis with Bengaluruurban indicates a contrast media profile of the rural district. Low print media presence is one of the major findings of the study. Bengalururural has a meager 16.68 percent of the total circulation of Bengaluruurban endorsing the premise that geographical proximity with high profile metro city will not impact media diffusion as these areas face the brunt of urban growth by losing land and live under constant pressure, threat of urban poverty relegating priority to mass media to the background. The intervention of urban press in development of rural poor living in the geographical fringes of big metropolitan cities is marginal.

Bengaluru rural district has 9.9 lakh population with an average literacy of 77.93 percent consisting of 84.82 percent male literacy and 70.63 percent of female literacy. The Rural district has urban and rural regions where rural women have comparatively low literacy level (66.80 percent) than rural region of BengaluruUrban district (70.92 percent). There is a negligible

difference in the average literacy of BengaluruUrban and BengaluruRural districts. The literacy variable in BengaluruRural has not influenced the growth of press in the district. The total average combined circulation of all seven major Kannada newspapers is 41896 copies (2016) but there is marginal increase in growth percent since 2011 (39194). *Prajavani* (15074) has highest reach in BengaluruRural followed by *Vijay Karnataka* (10404) and *Vijayavani* (7934). Both *Udayavani* and *Kannada Prabha* have around 4000 circulation. Surprisingly, *Samyukta Karnataka* and *Vishwavani* have no circulation in BengaluruRural indicating the lack of print media intervention in the district. *Prajavani*, the Bengaluru-based Kannada paper started in 1948 has seen a decline in circulation in 2016 (15074) as compared to 2011 (27631). However, *Vijay Karnataka* daily from Hubli has increased its Bengaluru edition reaching rural Bengaluru and has gained readership in 2016 (10404) as compared to 2011 (7493). *Kannada Prabha* has lost readership in 2016 that it gained in 2012 and 2013. Surprisingly, *Udayavani* from coastal and trade hub of Mangalore has gained readership consistently indicating migration of business community. Overall, the top Kannada press has negligible presence in BengaluruRural despite its geographical proximity to IT capital of India.

The growth of Kannada press in BengaluruRural district indicates 3 percent decrease in 2016. In trend analysis of 2011-2016 indicative of inconsistent growth of increase by 7 percent in 2012, decrease of 11 percent in 2013 and again gain of 14 percent in 2014 but began sliding down by 3 percent both in 2015 and 2016 indicating influence of elections of 2013 and 2014 on Kannada press. *Prajavani* suffered a decrease of whopping 49 percent in circulation in 2012 and consistently lost every succeeding year ending at decrease of 34 percent in 2016 in BengaluruRural district. *Udayavani* gained over 23 percent in 2012 but suffered a marginal decline of 5 percent in 2016. *Kannada Prabha* is the only newspaper that gained 81 percent in growth rate in 2012 but lost heavily in succeeding years. *Vijayavani*, started in 2012 gained 52 percent in 2013, 34 percent in 2014 but its growth declined by 24 percent in 2015 ending up at 1 percent decline in 2016. *Vijaya Karnataka* has maintained consistency in circulation with marginal increase of up to 18 percent but suffered decline by 2 percent in the district. The overall circulation of Kannada dailies in BengaluruRural district shows a 3 percent decrease in 2016.

The local Kannada small newspapers published in BengaluruUrban District finds low presence in BengaluruRural district. The spread of local Kannada dailies is not significant.

BengaluruRural district is ranked 7th in HDI with high level of living standard index (3rd rank) but low level of education index (25th rank) and moderate level of health (11th rank) indices indicating moderate performance. This is in contrast to BengaluruUrban district, ranked 1st in HDI with high level of living standard index (1st rank), education index (1st rank) and health index (2nd rank). It ranks 6th in Per Capita Income (NDDP) in the state. The media diffusion is low and doesn't correlate with the moderate progress made in human development

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