



Exploring the Potential of Northeast Now in Guwahati: A Comprehensive Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the growth opportunities and prospects for *Northeast Now* in Guwahati, exploring its potential within the digital media landscape which is rapidly evolving. With the increasing infiltration of digital platforms and the shift in preferences of the consumer towards consumption of online news, regional media outlets like *Northeast Now* play a crucial role in shaping public discourse and providing regional content. The SWOT analysis reveals that *Northeast Now* possesses substantial strengths, such as its unique regional focus, bilingual content and a vigorous online presence most significantly through its YouTube channel. This study examines key elements influencing the growth, market trends, audience engagement and the competitive dynamics of the digital media sector in Guwahati. Moreover, it identifies challenges such as revenue generation, digital literacy and content sustainability, while also analyses the strategic opportunities for expansion and innovation of the sector. The findings enlighten the key insights for regional digital media sector to enhance

their adaptability and relevance in a competitive landscape, contributing to the future of journalism in emerging urban markets.

Introduction:

Hyper-regional news portals are intended to deliver hyper-localized news that is not to be found otherwise reported by bigger national news agencies. The development of these portals can be viewed as part of the more general development of the digital media ecology when these portals started enhancing the local content with more targeted news as soon as their relevant target audiences found them useful. By the end of the 1990s, it was national news primarily that seemed to find its place over the internet, alongside details about what was happening around the world. More or less the same time there was also marked by local and hyper-regional news websites with most of these being either community passion projects or small media ventures. The first generation of these pioneering hyper-regional sites focused specifically on local stories, events and issues that fell under the purview of large media houses filling an important information void for regional audiences.

Regional news websites began to pop up, many of them as spin-offs from print or broadcast media. The next era of 2000s saw a boom in broadband internet adoption and social media usage bringing the incredibly hyper-regional news portals into an era of visibly and reach. Hence websites quickly evolve into interesting multimedia features including video and interactive graphics which enhanced user experience. Demand of local news grew and a local set of professional hyper-regional news portals came into being, investing in expertise journalists, editors and marketing professionals to improve the quality of content and increase readership - a marked departure towards commercial viability and editorial excellence. Without evolution in the digital world, the hyper-local news portals have both opportunities and threats and are adopting news technologies including AI, machine learning and data analytics to improve the quality of reporting and interaction with the audience for relevance and impact in the long run.

Northeast Now is pioneering bilingual hyper-regional news portal based in Guwahati emerging as the first media of its kind to cover northeast at depth along with its neighbouring countries. Launched under the management of Ezen software and technology limited 2017, this digital platform marks leading effort in region's media landscape. Its dedication to political neutrality gives credibility to the platform in successfully negotiating the complex politics of Northeast India. Northeast Now also takes a step in

fostering regional integration between south Asia and the southeast Asian markets. Overall, it is a reliable news source focused on northeast India at their core, with a user-friendly design and commitment to providing informative content. As with any media platform, a constant focus on content accuracy, user engagement and technological improvements are key to maintaining and growing audience base. The Northeast Now YouTube channel and English website being ranked no.2 in northeast after India today, NE is a strong testament to its strong digital presence and the effectiveness of its multimedia strategy. With over 100 million views, the channel is a testament to its ability to consistently deliver high quality content. Since its launch, Northeast Now has maintained an impressive consistency in uploads, AS a relatively new channel, Northeast Now continues to push the boundaries of digital content creation and expand its position as the leading YouTube channel in the region.

One of the biggest barriers in the relatively low level of awareness outside of northeast region, especially in other parts of India which limits the audience base and therefore advertising revenue potential. This limited reach affects the platform's ability to expand its reach and enter large markets. Another issue is the digital divide, which poses a significant challenge as inconsistent internet and reach. Notably Northeast Now has successfully developed and maintained mobile apps for both android and iOS users - a feat rarely achieved by other digital media companies.

With its strong website presence and mobile accessibility, Northeast Now is well positioned to make a significant impact on the digital media landscape. This adaptive approach not only strengthens the platform's credibility but also ensures its continued growth and relevance in the rapidly evolving digital media landscape.

Objectives:

- To conduct a comprehensive SWOT analysis of NorthEast Now in the Guwahati city market.
- To analyse the current market trends and potential of NorthEast Now in Guwahati.

Research Methodology:

The methodology includes the collection of data from various sources to find answers to the research problems. Well-established qualitative research has been adopted to evaluate the outcomes and forecast the probable trends. This study relies on a thorough analysis of secondary data to conduct a comprehensive case study of Northeast Now, examining the organization's growth and potential through

a detailed examination of existing literature and publicly available data. By leveraging secondary data, this research provides an informed understanding of Northeast Now's digital presence and market position. The use of secondary data enables a nuanced analysis, offering valuable insights into Northeast Now's strengths, challenges and opportunities for future growth. A case study has been conducted to gain a comprehensive understanding of the organization's operations, challenges and advantages in the region. The case study method must be helpful to explore various aspects of Northeast Now's market presence and community impact, gaining valuable insights that might not be captured through other research methods

LITERATURE REVIEW

These papers collectively provide a comprehensive understanding of the evolving digital landscape by highlighting the transformative impact of digital technologies on journalism, advertising, education, and public discourse while addressing the challenges of privacy, misinformation, and sustainability.

Zamri et al. (2024) examines the role of social media in supporting digital learning innovations as social media platforms can be used to facilitate collaborative learning, share educational resources and provide real-time feedback by highlighting the benefits of incorporating social media into learning environments.

Kozak, M., & Palacios, T. A. R. (2024) investigate the influence of digital news aggregators on media plurality and access to information. They argue that while aggregators provide diverse content from multiple sources, they can also undermine traditional news outlets by diverting advertising revenue.

Chinnasamy, S., & Volkmer, I. (2023) explores how public actors in Malaysia utilize digital platforms for transnational public discourse. Chinnasamy and Volkmer examine how social media and other digital tools enable dialogue across national borders, fostering global engagement on local issues with respect to the challenges like regulatory constraints and digital divides. **Lee, H., & Cho, C.-H. (2020)** explore the transformation of digital advertising and its implications for advertisers and consumers. The study covers the evolution from traditional media to digital platforms, emphasizing the rise of programmatic advertising and data-driven marketing strategies along with the emerging trends like the use of artificial intelligence and machine learning in optimizing ad targeting.

Agbawe, M. (2019) provides a regional perspective on social media usage among digital natives in Nigeria. The study identifies social media as a double-edged sword, offering opportunities for connectivity, education, and social change while presenting challenges like misinformation, privacy concerns, and digital addiction.

Rosenbaum et al. (2018) discuss how digital media have reshaped branding strategies, with a focus on innovation and consumer engagement by exploring the impact of social media, influencer marketing and digital storytelling on brand building.

Turow, J. (2017) investigates the practices of digital marketing and consumer tracking, examining how companies use data to target individuals with personalized advertising. He raises concerns about consumer privacy, surveillance, and the ethical implications of data-driven marketing techniques.

Conner-Zachocki, J. (2015) explores the integration of digital media and emerging technologies in educational settings and highlights the potential of digital tools to enhance learning experiences, foster collaboration, and support personalized education.

Franklin, B. (2014) examines the significant shifts in journalism due to the digital revolution, addressing changes in news production, distribution, and consumption. The research discusses the impact of declining print circulation and the increasing dominance of online news platforms. It also highlights the challenges posed by digital advertising models and the role of social media in news dissemination.

Fenton, N. (2010) critiques the impact of digital technology on journalism, focusing on how economic pressures and technological advances have influenced news content, journalistic practices, and democratic engagement.

Preston et al. (2009) examines the role of innovation and knowledge in driving the growth of the digital media industry as how new technologies have transformed media production, distribution, and consumption, leading to the emergence of new business models.

Livingstone, S. (2008) delves into how young people navigate the complexities of the digital environment, focusing on their skills, opportunities, and challenges. He has highlighted the importance of digital literacy for effective participation in an increasingly online world and the role of education in fostering critical engagement with digital media.

Gunter et al. (2002) compare online and offline research methodologies in evaluating digital media. They discuss how digital platforms offer new ways to measure audience engagement and content effectiveness but also present unique challenges, such as dealing with data quality and the representativeness of online samples.

SWOT Analysis of Northeast Now

STRENGTHS

- ***First of its kind new media initiative in the Northeast:*** Being the first media house to provide combination of local and international news along with providing mobile apps to android and apple users to reach to greater audience and seamlessly making it an easy way for its audience to stay connected, Northeast Now aims to establish a strong foundation with its audience.
- ***Politically Neutral:*** Northeast Now is unwavering in its political neutrality, refusing to favour and fear any sides. By avoiding bias, they ensure that their reporting is perceived as fair and maintain trust, integrity with their audience.
- ***Diverse Content Portfolio:*** Offering content on multiple platforms and on a variety of topics surpassing regional, national and international news attracting a wide variety of demographics from around the world resulting in a diverse content portfolio.
- ***Continuous Increasing Viewership:*** Growing traffic in both social media platforms and website highlights its popularity and ever-expanding reach.
- ***Bilingual Publishing:*** By uploading content in both English and Assamese language, Northeast Now has successfully opened gates for larger audience base for the future for making it accessible for a wider range of people.
- ***Ethical Journalism:*** Emphasizes in reporting make sure that the sources are accurate ensuring that every piece of information is thoroughly verified to maintain credibility of the platform.
- ***Regular Updates:*** With frequent updates and keeping a follow up on its previous reporting, keeps the audience well informed and up-to-date.

WEAKNESSES

- ***Regional Focus:*** Primarily focuses on regional news, with only limited coverage of international news which at times might not appeal to its international audience.

- **Political Challenges:** Political parties or extremist groups often pressure channels to provide favourable coverage. Because of its political neutrality, it can also result in threats or intimidation from extremist groups or individuals who oppose unbiased coverage.
- **Rise in competition:** As many new emerging portals are offering similar content, the challenge to stand out as unique and better in a crowded market is tough.
- **Challenges in Revenue optimization:** Due to its heavy reliance on traffic-dependent streams like YouTube and website, low traffic and less audience engagement significantly affects their revenue growth.

OPPORTUNITIES

- **Digital Expansion:** Focusing solely on digital platforms and offering mobile apps for both android and apple users, fostering a growing user base and increasing engagement.
- **Content Diversification:** By adding more follow up on upcoming events related to either sports or entertainment, it opens a gate to attract a variety of audience around the globe to get the updates and essentially resulting in higher audience engagement.
- **Content Syndication:** Forming partnership with corporate giants or leading coaching institute allows for a better quality of content and also additional income stream.
- **Data journalism and Fact-checking:** To leverage the credibility by investing in data journalism, offering in-depth, insightful content and enhance brand reputation.
- **Interactive Platform:** Developing interactive platforms and engaging with them by keeping them updated about current and upcoming events and providing follow-ups makes up for a better user experience.

THREATS

- **Government regulations:** Political restrictions, government regulations pose a significant threat as censorship on certain reporting can limit the ability to provide unbiased news and can drift away audience who seek transparency.

- **Intensified competition:** With the rise of digital news media with multi-platform presence, it makes established player hard to stand out and retain its audience.
- **Intellectual property threats:** Producing original news and multimedia content, makes it vulnerable on the internet. Many contents theft, trademark infringement can dilute brand value and result reputation and financial loss.
- **Legal challenges:** Navigating copyright laws, pursuing legal action can be costly and time-consuming resulting in diverting resources and loss of focus.

Northeast Now strength lies in its regional focus and growing digital presence, offering significant opportunities for content diversification and audience engagement. However, it faces issues in revenue generation and standing out strong in a competitive market. Opportunities such as digital expansion and partnerships can drive growth, but threats from government regulations and intellectual property threats pose significant challenges to overcome.

A Case Study of Topcem and NENow in Northeast India:

This case study analyses the partnership between Topcem Cement and Northeast Now and has three parts: the advertising strategies used to achieve success; how it has impacted on business growth and what future initiatives will be undertaken in this area.

Topcem cement, established in 2006 is a product of Meghalaya cements ltd, is among the leading cement manufacturers in entire northeast India. It also heavily invests R&D as it strongly believes in evolving with time. As a result of that, it has successfully launched Topcem solid Dhalai cement - a superior strength, anti-corrosive and innovative product in the year 2020. Committed to philanthropic endeavours like organizing free eye check-up camps and providing health aid have greatly benefitted the local communities of Assam and Meghalaya. Moreover, Topcem aspires to be sustainable and follows environmental regulations to ensure adherence to environmental norms laid down by central and state governments.

Northeast Now launched in 2017 is a digital news portal that provides comprehensive coverage of Northeast India and its neighbouring regions. It aims to bridge the gap for the people outside Northeast by delivering accurate and diverse news.

It examines how Northeast Now's digital news platform, launched in 2017, has facilitated increased visibility for Topcem Cement and the subsequent adjustments made to enhance this partnership.

Post covid-19, as there was a great pushback in the global economy, companies suffered greatly which led to new challenges, new adjustments being made. Following that, Northeast Now managed to successfully make yearlong advertisement deal with Topcem cement in 2021 and since then, Topcem has renewed its agreement with Northeast Now consecutively since the beginning of the deal following some negotiations in price rates.

The main goals of this partnership were to expand the visibility of the Topcem brand in the region of Northeast India. By putting in-article ads in the English website of Northeast Now, it saw a significant boost in its userbase from 30,000 views per day to 60,000 views per day. This in the bigger picture resulted in greater traffic for Northeast Now and enhancing the brand recognition of Topcem.

Northeast Now made changes in the placements of native ads and google ads following strategic advices as it turned out that native ads often generated lower revenue offering a predictable amount whereas google ads generate significant revenue through cost-per-click (CPC) payments. However, it's not always the case, infact native ads can also generate higher return depending on the popularity of the brand. Changes made post-deal included plans to ensure steady traffic during major events by publishing news quickly and covering exclusive topics like corruption. The platform aims to increase live updates, especially for sports events, and use real-time data for better visualization. For instance, it intends to cover topics like water crisis management using historical data comparison. Future initiatives involve approaching Topcem Cement for banner ads and targeting other cement companies to diversify their advertising portfolio. Technical improvements are planned to increase website visitors, ensuring a more robust and user-friendly platform.

Growth and Potential of Northeast Now in the current market scenario:

Northeast Now's strategic positioning within the Northeast's thriving digital media landscape has fueled significant growth and has huge potential in the current market scenario. Northeast Now is the first of its kind in the region, filling a critical gap in regional news coverage, providing a comprehensive digital platform that caters to the information needs of the Northeast's population. The platform is bilingual, offering content in both English and Assamese, broadening its appeal and making it accessible to a diverse demographic. The rapid adoption of smartphones and widespread

internet access in the region has created a large and untapped audience hungry for quality content that caters to local interests and needs.

Northeast Now is uniquely positioned to capitalize on this trend with its strong online presence, mobile apps and extensive library of video content, providing an unparalleled platform for news, entertainment and information. Current market trends indicate a growing interest in regional news due to rising internet penetration and smartphone usage in India. Northeast Now has capitalized on this trend by establishing a strong online presence through dedicated Android and iOS apps to improve user access. Its active participation on social media platforms such as Facebook and YouTube have further expanded its reach and impact. Expanding its content portfolio to include multimedia formats such as video documentaries and podcasts can attract a young, tech-savvy audience. Additionally, using data analytics to understand audience preferences and tailor content accordingly can improve user engagement and retention. Its growth potential lies in its ability to innovatively adapt to the dynamic digital environment.

As the region's leading digital media channel, Northeast Now is poised to leverage its high profile, extensive network, and local expertise to develop new revenue streams, explore innovative content formats, and solidify its market dominance. With an impressive track record of 100 million views on YouTube and a large subscriber base, NE Now is poised to ride the wave of digital transformation in the Northeast, unlock new opportunities for growth, engagement, and monetization, and maintain its position as a pioneer in strengthening the region's digital media ecosystem. Additionally, the growing demand for regional language content and the increasing importance of hyperlocal news and events create fertile ground for Northeast Now's expansion. As Northeast Now continues to grow, focusing on these areas will be critical to maintaining its growth trajectory and solidifying its position as a leading regional news platform.

Revenue streams can be improved above the micro level by introducing monetization mechanisms like premium compete variants or sponsored content plus targeted advertising. Also, engaging with educational institutions and local enterprises to create content partnership and sponsorship could also help them in achieving financial sustainability.

As Northeast Now keeps on thriving in providing its users with quality journalism and well-written stories, its expansion strategy is already clear as carrying a strong focus on the many facets of digital marketing which are likely to promote the brand even further. As the audience grows, the word of

mouth and increased audience trust with the focus on their needs, helped by the Northeast Today brand, provides even greater synergies for organic growth and expansion. If the company continues on its fertilizing course of innovativeness and earned audience trust complemented with addressing the audience pain points, Northeast Now is well on course to harness the opportunities in the prevailing market scenario and emerge as a formidable player in the digital media space in the region.

Northeast Now continues to engage in community initiatives, including a free quiz competition and collaborations for tree plantation with universities. Last year, Northeast Now donated 1,000 blankets to homeless individuals and offered support to those in need, demonstrating a commitment to community service. Committed to journalistic excellence and unwavering neutrality, Northeast Now is a trusted source for hyper-regional news in the Northeast. Based in Guwahati, their multilingual platform brings in-depth coverage and diverse perspectives to empower the audience.

CONCLUSION:

Northeast Now has established itself as a significant entity in the digital news sector of the northeastern region of India, offering an essential platform for news and information dissemination. Its innovative strategies and dedication to political impartiality distinguish it as a reliable news outlet. Nevertheless, to sustain its growth and navigate current challenges, Northeast Now must persist in its innovation efforts, broaden its audience, and diversify its revenue sources. By focusing on these aspects, Northeast Now can ensure its continued success and maintain its role as a crucial media platform for the region. The platform's dual role in delivering news and promoting regional unity between South Asia and Southeast Asia contributes to enhanced socio-economic integration and connectivity. The rising trends in digital media consumption in Guwahati and the wider northeastern area present clear opportunities for growth. To take advantage of these prospects, Northeast Now should continue to innovate and adapt to the ever-changing digital media environment, prioritizing audience engagement and the exploration of new revenue avenues. The analysis concludes that while Northeast Now has effectively established a unique position, its future viability and growth will hinge on addressing current challenges, capitalizing on its strengths, and remaining responsive to the shifting landscape of digital journalism.

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