

# Media Convergence and its impact on Media Environment

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*Abstract-The new technologies are changing the way we perceive people, cultures, countries and companies and our expectations of them and also our expectations of ourselves. The roots of network convergence can be traced to the advent of digital communications, which reduced information into discrete, identifiable and thus, more easily transferable pieces of information. With blurring of geographical boundaries, thanks to the distance insensitive Internet, majority of business and individual are becoming part of a high-speed networking fabric which will enable secure digital communication of voice, data, and video to or from anyone, anywhere and anytime. Convergence is the key today. We can think about convergence in several different ways. Technology convergence signifies the move towards common networking technologies that satisfy both LAN and WAN requirements. Convergence of media platforms and services is now a feature of all established media, as well as being a core feature of new media. The globalisation of media platforms, content and services is also a critical feature of the convergent media environment. The convergence in India has arrived faster than expected. The rise of social media and the shift in the nature of audiences towards a more participatory media culture is associated with greater user control over their individual media environment. The increasingly competitive environment in the multimedia industry promises tremendous user benefits through increased savings in time, greater choice, and an explosion of innovative media services and products. This paper discusses in detail about Media Convergence and it reflects the impact of convergence on media environment.*

The Gutenberg era is over and a new digital communications technology has emerged. An electronic superhighway is beginning to girdle the globe as voice, video and data converge, bringing in their wake a new basket of digital, multimedia and interactive communication technologies. It is not only the technology it is the social change that accompanies the technologies that must be our prime concern. They are changing the way we live-the way we work, relax, manage our money, trade and communicate with each other. The new technologies are changing the way we perceive people, cultures, countries and companies and our expectations of them and also our expectations of ourselves.

Convergence has been defined as- the

interlinking of computing and ICTs, communication networks, and media content that has occurred with the development and popularisation of the Internet, and the convergent products, services and activities that have emerged in the digital media space. Many see this as simply the tip of the iceberg, since all aspects of institutional activity and social life-from art to business, government to journalism, health and education, and beyond-are increasingly conducted in this interactive digital media environment, across a plethora of networked ICT devices.

Graham Meikle and Sherman Young observe that convergence can be understood in four dimensions:

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- **Technological**-the combination of computing, communications and content around networked digital media platforms;
- **Industrial**-the engagement of established media institutions in the digital media space, and the rise of digitally-based companies such as Google, Apple, Microsoft and others as significant media content providers;
- **Social**-the rise of social network media such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, and the growth of user-created content; and
- **Textual**-the re-use and remixing of media into what has been termed a 'transmedia' model, where stories and media content (for example, sounds, images, written text) are dispersed across multiple media platforms.

The roots of network convergence can be traced to the advent of digital communications, which reduced information into discrete, identifiable and thus, more easily transferable pieces of information. Network convergence utilizes this attribute of digital communication to efficiently and effectively distribute different types of information- voice, video and data on the same communication network.

### **The New Paradigm**

With blurring of geographical boundaries, thanks to the distance insensitive Internet, majority of business and individual are becoming part of a high-speed networking fabric which will enable secure digital communication of voice, data, and video to or from anyone, anywhere and anytime. Customers now want to pick and chose from narrowcast and broadcast. They want a fusion of voice, data, and video in all possible mixes. In other words, this means the availability of multiple technology choices to fulfil the customer's desire for anytime access to people, information, and commerce. In fact, it leaves enough room for many technologies to co-exist and one will not replace the other outright. This is because no one technology can meet all the requirements of the market-place. Hence, each technology will find its niche and redefine new and old classes of service and user terminals.

Convergence is the key today. We can think about

convergence in several different ways. One is in terms of the actual industries converging, such as communication, entertainment, and computing. Another is converging voice, video, and data over a common infrastructure or within a common computing platform. The PC today is a collaborative communication and media tool. Another factor driving convergence is the cost of maintaining three separate networks for voice, video, and data.

Payload convergence is that aspect of converged networking wherein different data types are carried in the same communication format. Protocol convergence is the movement away from multi-protocol to single protocol (typically IP) networks. Physical convergence occurs when payloads travel over the same physical network equipment regardless of their service requirements. Device convergence means the trend in network device architecture to support different networking paradigms in single system. Application convergence represents the appearance of applications that integrate formerly separate functions. For example: Web browsers allow the incorporation of plug-in applications that allow web pages to carry multimedia content such as audio, video, high-resolution graphics, virtual reality graphics and interactive voices. Technology convergence signifies the move towards common networking technologies that satisfy both LAN and WAN requirements. For example, ATM can be used to provide both LAN and WAN services. At the technical level, digital transmission has the potential to deliver integrated interactive text, video, voice and data to a mass audience what we might call 'real multimedia'. However, historically each part of the spectrum and mode of transmission became associated with a different form of communication: point-to-point communication became the province of the telephone, and wireless transmission became associated with broadcast news and entertainment. Digital compression allows point-to point communication to be conducted increasingly by advanced forms of radio transmission.

Digitisation of media products and services

Associated with rapidly increasing internet usage by consumers and business is the digitisation of all media products and services. It is estimated that 48 hours of video are uploaded every minute onto YouTube, and three billion videos are viewed every day worldwide from that site alone. The Apple iTunes store now sells almost 10 million songs a day, making it by far the major music retailer worldwide. People were directly employed in occupations related to the internet, ranging from internet hardware and software industries to online information services, IT software and consulting, online advertising, government and e-commerce activities.

**Convergence of media platforms and services**  
 Convergence of media platforms and services is now a feature of all established media, as well as being a core feature of new media. All the media organisations, their digital content services are now very much at the heart of their news operations, and these patterns are intensifying.

- Media policy needs to be premised upon content abundance and increased media competition, rather than upon distribution scarcity and monopolistic or oligopolistic media markets;
- Technological changes generate new challenges for maintaining technology-neutral or network-neutral media regulations;

**Globalisation of media platforms, content and services**  
 The globalisation of media platforms, content and services is also a critical feature of the convergent media environment. At the same time, local audiences have frequently displayed a preference for culturally relevant local media content where it is available. What has changed has been the extent to which digital media content can be sourced, distributed and accessed from any point in the world to any other point in the world. This has led to the rise of media platforms and content distributors such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and Apple iTunes that sit across national jurisdictions.

The convergence in India has arrived faster than expected. The convergence would help in web

casting, video on demand and internet via cable. The optical fibre cable carries more bandwidth resulting in more signals being carried with superior clarity, the cable companies are expected to rule the roost due to investments made by them in the cable networks. The up gradation of cable network (optical fibre) and the cable operators deliver the cable and satellite channels to the consumers. With more and more channels going pay to air, would open up subscription revenue for the broadcasters. In future it will emerge a major source of revenue and much larger than the advertisement revenue stream. The channel will be carried on two platforms - Direct to Operator (DTO) and Direct to Home (DTH). Both the services have user addressability in ear of convergence.

**Direct To Home (DTH)** It offers an alternative to the DTO service addressing superior reception with advance level of multi channel subscription revenue for broadcaster. The digitized channels are broadcast using the Ku. The consumers have the option to receive more than one signal which are down linked by the consumer directly by using dish antenna at their home. DTH can broadcast more than 600 channels using IRD, which ensures conditional access on payment of subscription. The growth of Cable and Satellite has opened a new vista for the Indian media sector after drastic changes in media convergence.

**Content is Key** Content has emerged as king in the fierce battle of television channels. The success of channel is dependent on the quality of content, which attracts the attention of an audience. The content would drive the success of the channel. Content has high recyclable value, no storage cost and can be exported. A successful and good quality content has high recyclable value and can also be delivered through various delivery mechanisms such as Compact Disc, and Web Casting. The availability of intellect and low manpower cost has made the Indian content popular world over and an export of content has opened a new revenue stream for the content provider. The merger between telecommunications, computer and broadcasting is going to change the way people will work, play

and live. The 'convergence' of these technologies has given birth to the prospect of multimedia services which will offer interactive computer based applications that will combine text, graphics, audio and animation features into a media experience for users.

**Rise of user-created content** An important shift in the media ecology associated with convergence is the rise of user-created content, and a shift in the nature of media users from audiences to participants. User-created content is already an important economic phenomenon despite it originally being largely non-commercial. The spread of [user-created content] and the amount of attention devoted to it by users appears to be a significant disruptive force for how content is created and consumed and for traditional content suppliers. This disruption creates both opportunities and challenges for established market participants and their strategies. The more immediate economic impacts in terms of growth, entry of new firms and employment are currently with ICT goods and services providers and newly forming [user-created content] platforms. New digital content innovations seem to be more based on decentralised creativity, organisational innovation and new value-added models, which favour new entrants, and less on traditional scale advantages and large start-up investments. The Internet as a new creative outlet has altered the economics of information production, increased the democratisation of media production and led to changes in the nature of communication and social relationships. Changes in the way users produce, distribute, access and re-use information; knowledge and entertainment potentially give rise to increased user autonomy, increased participation and increased diversity.

**Greater media user empowerment** The rise of social media and the shift in the nature of audiences towards a more participatory media culture is associated with greater user control over their individual media environment. This is partly related to a greater diversity of choices of media content and platforms, but also in the ability to achieve greater personalisation of the media content that one chooses to access.

Convergence requires media companies to rethink old assumptions about what it means to consume media, assumptions that shape both programming and marketing decisions. If old consumers were assumed to be passive, the new consumers are active. If old consumers were predictable and stayed where you told them to stay, then new consumers are migratory, showing a declining loyalty to networks or media. If old consumers were isolated individuals, the new consumers are more socially connected.

## Conclusion

The increasingly competitive environment in the multimedia industry promises tremendous user benefits through increased savings in time, greater choice, and an explosion of innovative media services and products. This is the promise, to date, truly interactive services allowing the viewer to descend through a series of levels of information. The development of multimedia services will not replace judgment value that is provided by the traditional media. The traditional media will also have a large role to play in the new multimedia world. Multimedia has the potential to vastly increase the range of services available, and offer its users a larger choice of applications but new technology alone will not ensure success; it is the people who use it who will decide the future of multimedia. The users' wants and needs; how they will manage the flood of options; and, above all, whether or not they will pay for the freedom of choice are what counts.

Because of the Media Convergence the media environment has drastically changed and the Social media has been at the forefront on numerous occasions during 2011. What was considered primarily as a platform to market, promote or connect was in the news for serving a totally different purpose. Social media activism and online activism came into the fore in 2011 and 2012 and generated a lot of debate. It made indelible changes in the worlds geopolitical and socio political structure, which even a year back seemed impossible and change which no political commentator could have predicted.

The largest and most vibrant democracy in the world, India, had its own tryst with social media activism and this is because of media convergence. The anti corruption movement and the call for a strong Lokpal built up steam on traditional media, but made a real impact when thousands of Indians took to social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter to voice their opinions and generate support for a civic society movement against the parliament. Terms like 'Anna Hazare', 'Lokpal', 'Ramlila Maidan' and Delhi Gang Rape Case were trending on Social Net working sites for a number of days. Every citizen can use Twitter to broadcast". It can democratize journalism and news and become the preferred medium to seek news updates. Media convergence played a significant role on media environment.

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