

Media Survival Analysis: A Data-Driven Diagnosis & Strategic Roadmap for Bharat Herald

Project for: Codebasics Resume Project Challenge

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1. Executive Summary: The Diagnosis

1.1. The Crisis Bharat Herald, a venerable newspaper with a seven-decade legacy, is on the brink of collapse. From a peak of over 1.2 million daily copies, print circulation has plummeted to under 560,000 between 2019 and 2024. This report presents a comprehensive, data-driven diagnosis of the root causes behind this crisis, based on an analysis of the company's operational and financial data over this five-year period.

1.2. The Core Finding: A Story of a Lost Moat The central conclusion of this analysis is that Bharat Herald's crisis is not the result of a single tactical error, such as a flawed advertising strategy or a lack of client diversification. Instead, it is a story of fundamental strategic failure. The company's traditional **economic moat**—its powerful and expensive physical printing and distribution network—which once protected it from competition, was rendered obsolete by the internet. The company failed to adapt and build a new, digital moat.

1.3. The Two-Front War: Proving the Hypotheses Our analysis has proven three core hypotheses that, together, explain the company's downfall:

- **Losing the "Traditional Land":** The company's loyal print audience, its traditional territory, was naturally eroding due to demographic shifts. The data shows a catastrophic collapse of the entire print platform, proving this loss.
- **Failing the "Digital Land Grab":** While the print world was shrinking, a valuable new "digital land" of online readers was emerging. The data shows that the company failed to act decisively to capture this new market, ceding it to faster, more agile competitors.
- **A Failure of Execution:** The company's few attempts to enter the digital space were flawed from the start. The data provides a "smoking gun": the 2021 digital pilot was not an engaging product, proving a failure of execution, not just timing.

1.4. The Path Forward The data tells a clear story: Bharat Herald lost a war on two fronts. It failed to compete for the future while the foundations of its past were crumbling. The path to recovery, detailed in this report, requires a decisive pivot to a digital-first strategy, focused on building a high-quality product and targeting the high-potential markets identified in our analysis.

2. Analytical Methodology

To arrive at these conclusions, a multi-stage analytical process was employed.

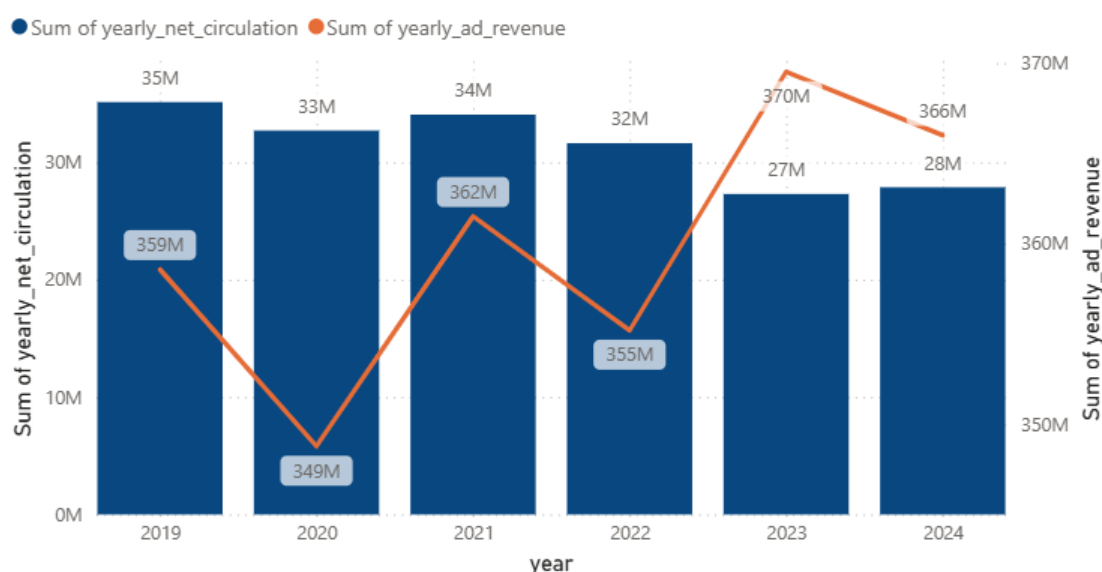
- **Data Extraction & Cleaning (SQL):** The raw data, stored across 7 different tables, was loaded into a MySQL database. Advanced SQL queries were used to clean, transform, and join this data. This included handling complex data quality issues like inconsistent date formats and mixed currencies to create reliable, analysis-ready datasets.
- **Data Visualization & Storytelling (Power BI):** The cleaned, aggregated data was imported into Power BI. A series of carefully selected visuals—including dual-axis charts, scatter plots, and bar charts—were created not just to report numbers, but to tell a clear, persuasive, and data-driven story.
- **Hypothesis Testing:** The analysis was guided by the core hypotheses outlined above, with each visual and query designed to either prove or disprove them with hard data.

3. The Five Key Findings: A Visual Story of the Collapse

This section details the five key data-driven findings that, in sequence, tell the complete story of Bharat Herald's decline.

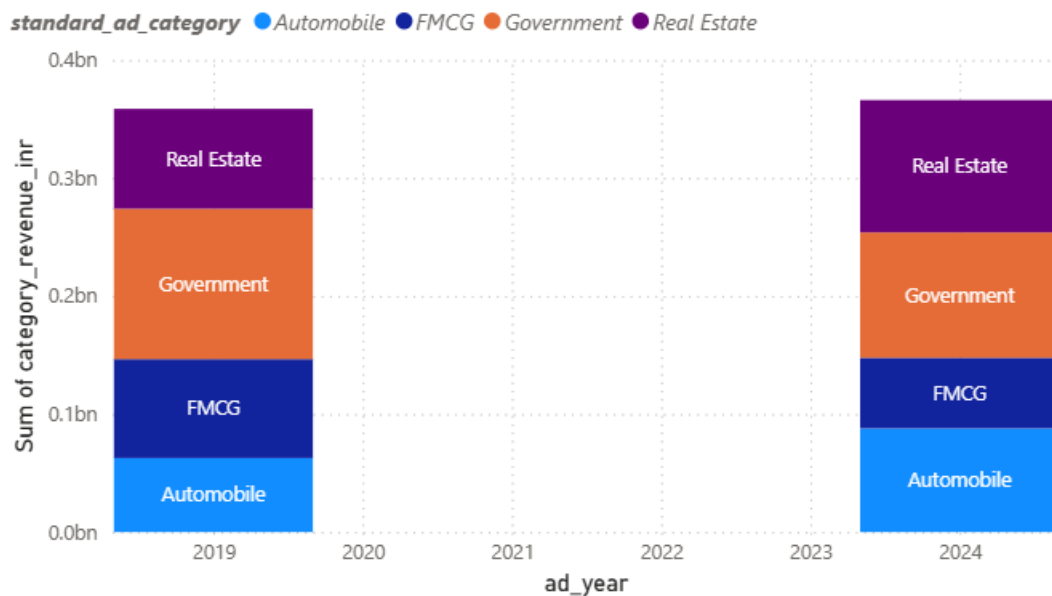
Finding 1: The Twin Pillars of Collapse (The Core Problem) The most critical finding is the dangerous decoupling of the company's two pillars of strength: readership and revenue. Our analysis shows that while net circulation (our core product) has been in a steady, alarming decline, ad revenue has remained volatile and has not fallen at the same rate. This is not a sign of health; it is the classic sign of a **dying platform**. The company is being forced to charge its remaining advertisers more and more money to reach fewer and fewer people. This is an unsustainable business model and the primary symptom of the crisis.

Sum of yearly_net_circulation and Sum of yearly_ad_revenue by year



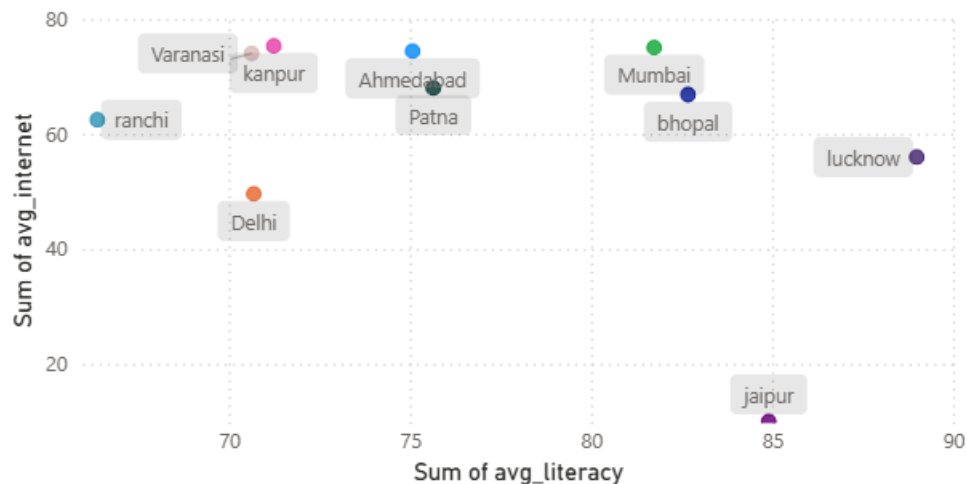
Finding 2: The Changing Battlefield (The Financial Story) A common assumption would be that the company lost a specific, large client sector. To test this, we compared the absolute ad revenue for each major category in a healthy year (2019) versus the most recent year (2024). The data is undeniable: revenue from **every single client sector** saw a significant decline. This proves the problem wasn't the clients; it was the underlying print platform that was failing to deliver value for everyone. The entire battlefield was sinking, taking all the armies down with it.

Sum of category_revenue_inr by ad_year and standard_ad_category



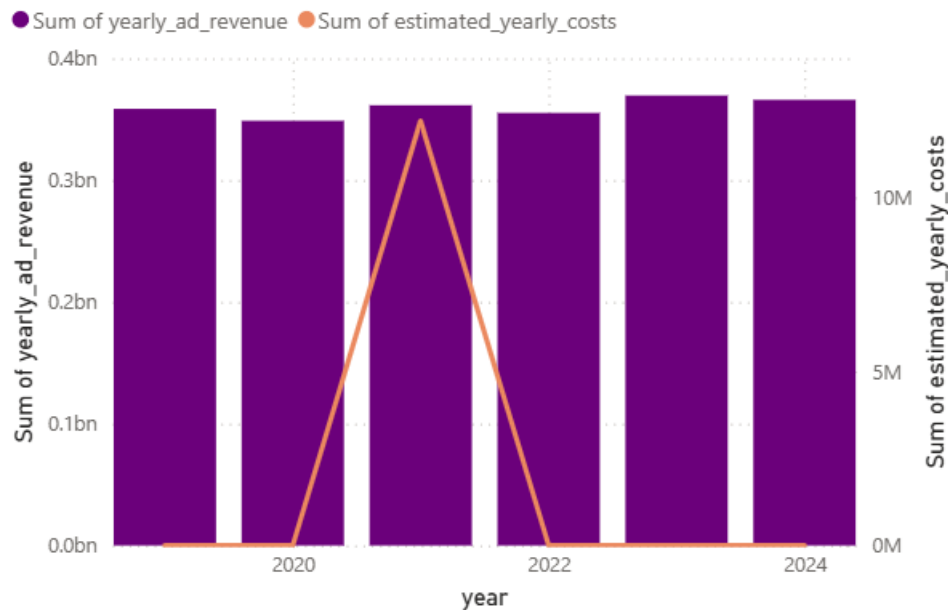
Finding 3: The Missed Opportunity (The "Digital Land Grab") While the print world was collapsing, a new one was being born. Our analysis of city-level data proves that key markets had high and growing rates of literacy and internet penetration. These "golden markets" represented a massive, ready-made digital audience. This visual is the "Opportunity Map" that proves our hypothesis about the "digital land grab." It shows the valuable "digital land" that was available to be captured, proving that a huge strategic opportunity was missed.

Sum of avg_literacy and Sum of avg_internet by city and city



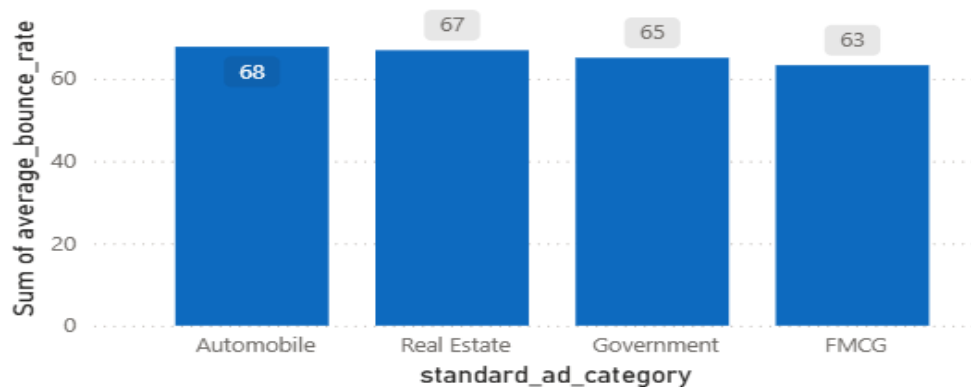
Finding 4: The Second Villain (A Half-Hearted Experiment) The data reveals a second, more insidious villain: a story of a self-inflicted wound. Our analysis of the company's estimated costs reveals that the only significant investment in a digital future occurred in a single, isolated year: 2021. This was not a sustained, multi-year strategic effort to win the 'digital land grab'. It was a short-lived, half-hearted, and ultimately abandoned experiment. This financial data is the final proof that the company's crisis was not just a failure to adapt to external forces, but a failure of its own strategic commitment to survival.

Sum of yearly_ad_revenue and Sum of estimated_yearly_costs by year



Finding 5: The Smoking Gun (The "Fatal Flaw" of Execution) The final and most damning piece of evidence comes from the 2021 digital pilot data. This visual is the "smoking gun" that proves *why* the company's half-hearted experiment failed. The analysis of the platform's average **bounce rates** shows catastrophically high numbers (over 60% for all categories). A high bounce rate means the vast majority of users who visited the platform left immediately without engaging. This is the definitive proof that the company's digital product was a failure. The root cause of the crisis was not just a failure of timing, but a fundamental failure of execution.

Sum of average_bounce_rate by standard_ad_category



4. Recommendations: A Phased Digital Roadmap

Based on these data-driven findings, a three-phase roadmap is recommended to stabilize the business and build a sustainable digital future.

Phase 1: Build a High-Quality, Mobile-First Product (Fix the "Fatal Flaw")

- **Action:** Immediately halt all non-essential print operations and re-allocate capital to developing a best-in-class, mobile-first news application. The #1 priority must be user experience and engagement.
- **Rationale:** The data from Finding 5 (the "Smoking Gun") proves that our previous digital product failed because it was not engaging. We cannot make the same mistake twice. A high-quality product is the foundation of any successful digital transformation.
- **Metric to Track:** Target an average bounce rate below 50% and a 30-day user retention rate of over 20%.

Phase 2: Target the "Golden Markets" (Win the "Digital Land Grab")

- **Action:** Once the new product is ready, use the "Opportunity Map" data from Finding 3 to focus all marketing and user acquisition efforts on the cities in the top-right quadrant (high literacy, high internet penetration).
- **Rationale:** The data shows these markets have the highest concentration of our target digital audience. Instead of a scattered national launch, a focused, city-by-city approach in these high-potential markets will yield the highest return on investment.
- **Metric to Track:** User growth and market share in these specific target cities.

Phase 3: Develop a Sustainable Digital Business Model

- **Action:** Implement a modern, hybrid business model that combines a "freemium" subscription model (a few free articles per month, then a paywall) with high-value, programmatic digital advertising.
- **Rationale:** The data from Finding 1 shows the old advertising model is broken. A sustainable digital future requires multiple revenue streams that are not solely dependent on advertising.
- **Metric to Track:** Average Revenue Per User (ARPU) and the growth of our digital subscriber base.

5. Conclusion

The story of Bharat Herald's decline, as told by its own data, is a powerful cautionary tale. It is not a story of a single bad decision, but of a slow, strategic failure to recognize and adapt to a fundamental shift in the world.

The analysis is clear: the company's crisis was not caused by a failure of its sales team or a lack of advertiser interest. It was caused by the **collapse of its entire platform**. The company's business model was built on a "print" foundation that was eroding, while a new "digital" foundation was being built next to it—a foundation on which the company failed to build.

The evidence is undeniable: from the decoupling of revenue and readership, to the missed opportunity in high-potential digital markets, to the half-hearted one-year investment in a digital future, to the poor execution of its digital pilot, the data consistently points to a single conclusion. Bharat Herald is a company that lost its future because it was too focused on protecting its past. The path forward, outlined in the recommendations, requires a decisive and immediate pivot to a digital-first mindset, not as an experiment, but as the only viable path to survival.