

A Study of Perceived Credibility of News Broadcasters and Impact of Social Media Platforms on Opinion Formation

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Abstract

The quest for knowledge is one of the factors that differentiate humans from other species. This quest that expresses itself as curiosity about the surroundings and need for familiarity has expressed itself as a hunger for news and information. Newspapers were the traditional answers to this need and held sway for several decades till Television emerged as the medium of choice for households. This continued till internet and social media platforms took the world by storm and these today get greater time than traditional media of mass communication used for disbursing news and its analysis. This study focused on assessing the perception of people in terms of credibility of traditional media like newspapers and TV along with media like internet and social media platforms in vogue in the recent times. Data was collected using a structured questionnaire circulated as a google form and purposive sampling employed for seeking responses. It is seen that while social media platforms are highly engaging but when it comes to trust, newspapers still command great respect though newspaper industry is not as profitable as it used to be. The need for a credible and engaging medium of disbursing news and its analyses in a profitable manner then emerges as the primary challenge of our generation for modern entrepreneurs and present-day society.

Key Words: Newspapers, Television, Social media platforms, Mass communication

Introduction

The quest for knowledge is one of the factors that differentiates humans from other species. This quest took the form of news papers in the eighteenth century and the role of news papers expanded enormously with emergence of the printing press. Circulation of printed newspapers reduced costs to an extent where newspapers became household consumption items all over the world and prices of newspapers plummeted thanks the advertising revenue available to newspapers. The role and stature of newspapers in society also increased and newspapers played an important role in several movements aimed at addressing social issues or international evils like imperialism. The first newspapers

in India made their appearance in early part of nineteenth century and were the dominant medium of news dissemination till late in the twentieth century till television entered homes in a big way. In these close to a century and half, newspaper sales rose continuously in India. Newspapers presented certain inherent advantages over the other popular means of mass communication in the twentieth century, namely, radio. Newspapers could be carried and read at leisure as per the convenience of the purchaser unlike radio where programmes followed a pre-announced schedule that could not take into account individual schedules and availability. Over the last few decades, TV channels have emerged as the preferred medium for news, at least, among households that could afford TVs though newspapers continued to do well till the turn of the century. However, the twenty first century began to see a relative fall in the preference for newspapers with TV channels and social media taking over in a big way. The

publishers of newspapers opted to move for digital newspapers with the result that digital newspapers are helping them recapture revenues lost due diminishing interest in printed newspapers but the extent of catching up is not sufficient to raise total revenue adequately leading to the downward movement of total revenues continuing unabated and expected to continue for some years to come. As regards reader-volumes, the total readership appears to have plateaued to a level well below the pre-Covid-19 days suggesting the possibility that newspapers and magazines (printed as well as digital put together) may see difficult days in the years to come. The average revenue per reader has been relatively stable and expected to remain so for printed as well as digital newspapers and magazines. This means that if revenues have to increase, it will necessarily require higher volumes, something that is proving to be rather difficult [27]. This is shown in the table below:

Table 1: Newspapers & Magazines Projections: Revenues & Readership Data Worldwide [27]

Year	Global Revenues (Billion USD)			Global Readers (in Million users)		
	Printed Newspapers and Magazines	Digital Newspapers and Magazines	Total Revenue	Printed Newspapers and Magazines	Digital Newspapers and Magazines	Total
2017	180.20	29.63	209.83	2285.60	1191.00	3476.60
2018	173.70	31.04	204.74	2220.60	1256.90	3476.90
2019	167.50	32.82	200.32	2146.00	1338.40	3484.40
2020	143.30	32.39	175.69	1783.00	1375.20	3158.20
2021	140.80	35.92	176.72	1774.30	1375.20	3149.50
2022	130.50	36.53	167.03	1659.10	1542.00	3201.10
2023	127.20	38.60	165.80	1612.20	1628.30	3240.50
2024	123.50	40.23	163.73	1565.60	1707.90	3273.50
2025	119.30	41.28	160.58	1508.00	1772.80	3280.80
2026	115.00	42.25	157.25	1444.50	1829.90	3274.40
2027	110.60	42.99	153.59	1384.30	1881.90	3266.20

Most Recent Update: Feb. 2023 (Data from webpage on 4th March 2023)

Source: Statista.com webpage (URL: <https://www.statista.com/outlook/amo/media/newspapers-magazines/worldwide#revenue>)

Given the plateauing in usage of newspapers (printed and digital) and clear downward trend in revenues, a natural question arises whether it is due to trust among customers or there are other factors driving this trend. It is important to understand the mutual interplay between TV channels,

social media and newspapers despite the fact that there are clear differences in their approach to news and its reporting. This study examines the questions of accuracy in reporting, trust in newspapers and other media of news reporting like TV channels and social media platforms.

Literature Review

Brief History of Newspapers

Newspapers as a means of sharing information about events have been around for a long time now. The first known newspaper in India is believed to have been published on the 29th of January 1780 by James Augustus Hicky under the name, “the Bengal Gazette”. It was also referred to as “Calcutta General Advertiser” or the “Hicky's Gazette”. This was a time when India was under the British rule and print media had to operate under strict surveillance by the British Government [13]. The years that followed showed several newspapers emerge including 'Sambad Kaumudi (weekly in Bengali)' in 1821 by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, 'Mirat-ul Akbar (First journal in Persian)' in 1822 by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, 'Rast Goftar (A Gujarati fortnightly)' in 1851 by Dadabhai Naoroji, 'Amrita Bazar Patrika (Bengali in the beginning and later on English Daily)' in 1868 by Sisirkumar Ghosh and Motilal Ghosh, 'The Statesman' in 1875 by Robert Knight, 'The Hindu' in 1878 by GS Aiyar, Viraraghavchari and Subba Rao Pandit, 'Kesari (Marathi daily) and Maharatta (English Weekly)' in 1881 by Tilak, Chiplunkar, Agarkar, 'Paridasak (Weekly)' by Bipin Chandra Pal, 'Bombay Chronical (a daily)' in 1913 by Pherozshahs Mehta and BG Horniman, 'The Hindustan Times' in 1920 by KM Pannikkar as a part of Akali Dal Movement, 'Leader (in English)' by Madam Mohan Malviya, 'Bahishkrit Bharat' in 1927 by BR Ambedkar, 'National Herald' in 1938 by Jawaharlal Nehru, 'Comrade (Weekly English Newspaper)' in 1911 by Maulana Mohammad Ali, 'Al- Balagh and Al-Hilal (Both urdu weekly newspaper)' in 1912 by Abul Kalam Azad, 'Independent (Newspaper)' in 1919 by Motilal Nehru, 'Young India (Weekly Journal)' in 1919 by Mahatma Gandhi, 'Moon Nayak (Marathi Weekly)' in 1920 by BR Ambedkar, 'Nav Jeevan (Weekly Newspaper)' in 1929 by Mahatma Gandhi, 'Harijan (Weekly Journal)' in 1931 by Mahatma Gandhi and 'Hindustan Dainik' in 1936 by Madam Mohan Malviya [4]. Needless to add, many of those starting the newspapers listed here were mass leaders and believed newspapers would enable them to accurately communicate their message to a larger audience than other channels available to them.

Traditionally news was circulated through word of mouth. With the developments in written communication, sharing through writing became a possibility though disseminating news that was hand written carried inherent limitations in terms of number of copies that could be made available. Therefore, though news media existed earlier, newspapers as prevailing and understood today were largely the outcome of thirst for information on events and the printing press that made mass printing possible. And yet, smaller attempts were made in different parts of the world long before the emergence of the printing press. Mention can be made of The Tipao in China that existed as early as 202 BC and performed the function of imperial bulletins or palace reports. Information meant to be made available to the people at large was circulated via what could be treated as forerunners of present-day posters. Also, Rome saw the publication of 'Acta Diurna' even before to 59 BC (could actually be as early as 131 BC) and carried information from the government provided daily on military campaigns, trials, executions and political developments [24]. With the emergence of Johannes Gutenberg's printing press in 1440, it became possible to reproduce high quality printed material at a speed of about 4000 pages/day, a speed that was several hundred times what could be achieved earlier by hand. Even the cost of a printed sheet was much less making mass circulation a viable option. It took over a hundred and fifty years for the printing press to start churning out newspapers with 'Relations: Aller Furnemmen' printed by Johann Carolus and 'Aviso Relations over Zeitung' printed by Lucas Schulte being among the first (weekly) newspapers that could not even reveal the city they were printed for fear of government persecution. These initial attempts were so successful that newspapers became popular enough to see almost every European country having printed newspapers. With increasing popularity, it was only to be expected that newspapers should start discussing politics and other matters relating to governance on account of their impact on the customers of newspapers and people at large. One of the early cases where newspapers and press opposed the government of the day is the 1733 cases of John Peter Zenger of The New York Weekly Journal where the verdict

of 'Not Guilty' provided confidence to the press to oppose flaws in governance based on facts [15]. The first newspaper in India was referred to as the Hicky's Bengal Gazette and was started by the British in 1780. Till the electronic media became popular, newspapers were unchallenged as the media for sharing information and news with the viewership of newspapers growing from 407 Million in 2017 to 425 Million in the first quarter of 2019. The real challenge to newspapers comes from the internet and with increasing numbers moving online, there is a very real possibility that advertising revenue, the main source of sustenance will dry up leading to bigger challenges in producing newspapers. [22]. Newspaper industry grew

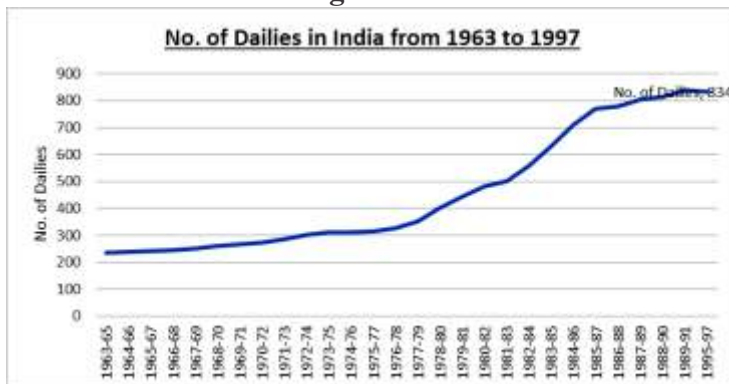
under the British rule despite curbs in their freedom and continued to grow rapidly after Indian independence. In 2003, India had over a hundred newspapers in regional languages and dialects other than Hindi and English. The period from 1901-02 to 1929-30 saw the number of newspapers increase from 708 to 1708 with Indian businessmen increasing their ownership in the press as time progressed though the press and editors remained largely independent of any kind of interference from businesses. The number of dailies, as measured by three year moving average, has constantly increased over the last 60 years [18]. This is shown in the table and figures below:

Table 2: Number of Dailies and their Circulation in India from 1963 to 1997

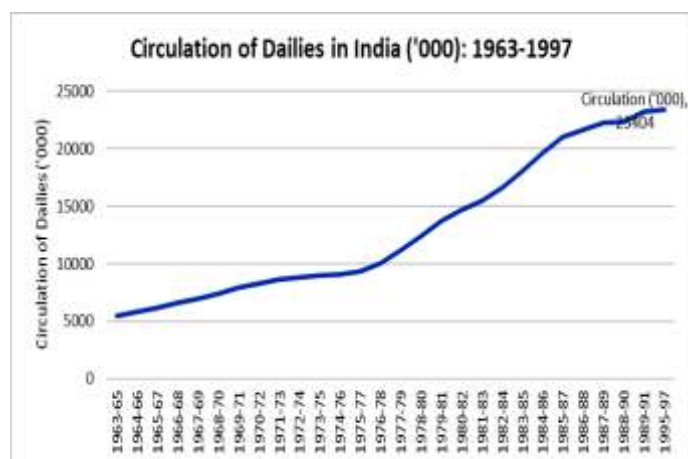
Year	No. of Dailies	Circulation ('000)	Year	No. of Dailies	Circulation ('000)
1963-65	236	5505	1977-79	351	11172
1964-66	237	5847	1978-80	403	12453
1965-67	242	6161	1979-81	445	13761
1966-68	243	6583	1980-82	482	14711
1967-69	252	6961	1981-83	500	15478
1968-70	260	7397	1982-84	558	16659
1969-71	266	7965	1983-85	631	18012
1970-72	273	8299	1984-86	711	19632
1971-73	286	8610	1985-87	769	21038
1972-74	302	8844	1986-88	779	21657
1973-75	310	8963	1987-89	803	22238
1974-76	312	9085	1988-90	813	22301
1975-77	314	9368	1989-91	839	23241
1976-78	326	10036	1995-97	834	23404

Source: Nair, T.S. (2003). "Growth and Structural Transformation of Newspaper Industry in India: An Empirical Investigation", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 38, No. 39 (Sep. 27 - Oct. 3, 2003), pp. 4182-4189.

Figure 1: Trend of Number of Dailies in India 1963 to 1997



Source: Nair, T.S. (2003). "Growth and Structural Transformation of Newspaper Industry in India: An Empirical Investigation", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 38, No. 39 (Sep. 27 - Oct. 3, 2003), pp. 4182-4189.

Figure 2: Circulation of Dailies in India 1963 to 1997

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Quite clearly the number of dailies as well as their circulation showed a steady increase over the years from 1963 to 1997. Even in terms of readership as measured by circulation per daily, there was an increase from about 23000/daily in 1963-65 to about 28000 in 1995-97 with the highest circulation during 1963-97 being observed in 1981-83 at 30977/daily. The trend of increasing newspapers appears to remain unabated with the number of registered newspapers and publications rising from over 51000 in the financial year 2001 to over 145000 in the financial year 2021 [28]. This is indicated in Table 2 below.

Financial Year	Registered Newspapers and Periodicals
2001	51960
2003	55780
2004	58469
2005	60413
2006	62483
2007	64998
2008	69323
2009	73146
2010	77384
2011	82222
2012	86754
2013	94067

Financial Year	Registered Newspapers and Periodicals
2014	99660
2015	105443
2016	110851
2017	114820
2018	118239
2019	119995
2020	143423
2021	144520

Source: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/885241/india-number-of-registered-newspapers-and-publications/>

The trend is clearly upward sloping on account of continuous increase in the number of newspapers and periodicals in the twenty-year period from 2001 to 2021. It is also seen that prevalence of highly emotive issues cause a jump in the circulation even though newspapers do not report events very accurately.

The Contribution and Role of Newspapers

Newspapers have contributed in a big way to many big social and political changes in the recent history. During the British rule in India, newspapers served the dual purpose of letting leaders shape public opinion and also expose the misdeeds and wrong practices of the British rulers. Newspapers help communicate with people in their own language, provide entertainment through puzzles, quizzes, cartoon clips etc. and raise awareness on a wide range of issues that impact society. It is through these strengths that newspapers have become an integral part of all literate societies. Listed below are a few instances in recent years that highlight the role of media in shaping history and, also, how those in power have not necessarily been supporters of a powerful media:

1. The Vietnam War: The media in USA started taking interest in the Vietnam war only when a large number of troops were committed to the war by the government in 1965 Spring. It was a war that was brought into US homes by the media through radio and TV with more than 60 journalists losing their lives during the war. Despite the hype, a lot of TV stories were filmed soon after the battle and not in the midst of battles. The media's role in highlighting death of US servicemen and military abuses played a very important role in

- shaping subsequent withdrawal of US troops and end of the war [14, 26].
2. Watergate Scandal: The now famous Watergate Scandal in United States of America started with a botched burglary attempt and arrest on 17 June 1972 and led to the resignation of Richard Nixon as President of USA in August 1974. This period of more than two years involved extensive research on the part of the press along with support from judiciary where the role of the press in highlighting wrong practices became legendary [21].
 3. Dissolution of USSR: The dissolution of USSR in December 1991 represents an example of how severe controls on media and communication can, in the long run, cause irreversible damage. Totalitarian control in different forms existed almost from the time of its creation coupled with a one-party system with the worst coming during Stalin's times. Though the reasons of collapse were varied, the philosophy of tight controls over communication prevented those in power from adequately understanding the flaws in their governance and functioning [8, 31].
 4. The Iraq War of 2003: The basis for war on Iraq led by USA and UK along with support from some other countries was built, at least partly, on a false premise that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction. The press also contributed to building a war hysteria and led to a very expensive war (about 2 Trillion USD) with 275000 to 306000 civilian lives lost on account of the war and its aftermath with immense damage to Iraqi healthcare system. The media failed in toning down the war rhetoric or unearthing those really responsible for this colossal loss of human lives and destruction of a nation [30, 34].
 5. Brexit: On 23rd June 2016, UK held a referendum to leave European Union where 52 percent voted in favour of leaving. The majority of British press had supported Brexit with the press focused on emotive issues like immigration, trust in politicians of the day, economic insecurities and budgetary tightening leading to cuts in public services [11].
 6. Covid-19: Covid-19 infected almost 678 Million people all over the world killing about 6.7 Million. The Table below presents data from the ten countries that reported the highest number of infected people. During the days when the pandemic was wrecking havoc all across the world and countries were under lockdown to prevent spread of the highly infectious Covid-19 virus, the media played a very positive role in spreading awareness on how to protect oneself and deal with the illness, if infected. During the period when countries were battling Covid-19, the use of internet and social media was at the top followed by TV news while use of newspapers and magazines fell enormously. The downside of reporting on Covid-19 was increase in anxiety, fear or even panic especially in the relatively older people [6, 37] Yet another feature of Covid-19 reporting is the almost total failure of media to unearth the real causes of Covid-19.

Table 4: Countries with the highest incidence of Covid-19 infections

	Infected	Deaths	Deaths as percent infected	Death/Million Population
USA	104803151	1140401	1.09%	3406
India	44684376	530756	1.19%	377
France	39570475	164622	0.42%	2510
Germany	37949446	166999	0.44%	1991
Brazil	36953492	697762	1.89%	3240
Japan	33048388	71349	0.22%	566
S.Korea	30399658	33806	0.11%	658
Italy	25519067	187551	0.73%	3112
UK	24315983	205540	0.85%	3001
Russia	22120421	395688	1.79%	2714

Source: <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/> (as updated on 15th Feb. 2023)

These few instances only bring out the following important features of media's functioning:

1. The media possesses enormous power on account of its reach;
2. The media has played an big role in the past in unearthing misdeeds by governments;
3. A strong and truthful media represents great societal strength
4. Some notable media failures include the 2003 Iraq war or unearthing causes of Covid-19

Given these features, it is worth understanding what features strengthen the media and what factors don't. Towards doing so, this study examines the ownership pattern of newspapers and other modes of mass communication. Indian media comprises Cinema, Internet-sites, Magazines, Newspapers, Portals, Radio and Television and includes close to 880 satellite TV channels out of which about 380 are news channels that relay news and current affairs analysis 24X7. The total value of Entertainment and Media industry in India was (in Billion INR) 1822 in 2019, 1386 in 2020, 1614 in 2021, 1889 in

2022 and is estimated to be 2320 in 2024 showing a continuously rising trend after a dip in 2020, the days of Covid-19 pandemic [29]. This is consistent with the trend in the Global Entertainment and Media industry that saw a dip in 2020 but rose after that and is expected to attain a total revenue of USD 2.93 Trillion in 2026. The Entertainment and Media industry worldwide is largely dependent upon access to technology and that varies greatly across regions in the world with fixed broadband access being available to about 73 percent households worldwide and mobile internet access to about 61 percent of the global population. This difference in availability of technology has a direct impact on the Entertainment and Media access across regions with the per capita spend in North America in 2021 being about 2229 USD as compared to USD 224 in Asia-Pacific and about 82 USD in Middle East and Africa. The relatively low per capita spend means a higher potential for growth and India stands at the third position after Turkey and Argentina with an estimated consumer growth of 9.1 percent during 2021-26 [25]. The ownership of news media in India was as given in the Table below

Table 5: Private Ownership of News Media Groups and News Media Outlets (Sep. 2021) [35]

S. No.	Family	Some Prominent Individuals	News Media Groups and News Media Outlets
1.	Ambani	Mukesh Ambani	Network 18 group Firstpost, CNN-News18, News 18 India
2.	Agarwal	Ramesh Chandra Agarwal	Dainik Bhaskar Group, Dainik Bhaskar
3.	Bahl	Raghav Bahl, Ritu Kapur	Quintillion Media Pvt. Ltd., The Quint
4.	Chopra	Vijay Kumar Chopra	The Hind Samachar Limited, Punjab Kesari
5.	Darda	Rajendra Darda, Vijay J Darda	Lokmat Media Group, Lokmat
6.	Goenka	Ramnath Goenka, Viveck Goenka	Express Group The Indian Express, The Indian Express Online The Financial Express, Jansatta, Loksatta, Lokprabha
7.	Gupta	Puran Chandra Gupta	Jagran Prakashan Limited, Dainik Jagran
8.	Sahu Jain	---	The Times Group The Times of India, The Times of India Online, Times Now, Mumbai Mirror, Bangalore Mirror, Ahmedabad Mirror, The Economic Times, Cricbuzz
9.	Kasturi	S. Kasturi Ranga Iyengar	Kasturi and Sons Limited: The Hindu, The Hindu Group
10.	Mapillai	Kandathil Varghese Mapillai	The Malayala Manorama Company, Malayala Manorma

S. No.	Family	Some Prominent Individuals	News Media Groups and News Media Outlets
11.	Panda	Baijayant Panda	Odisha Television Limited, Odisha TV
12.	Purie	Aroon Purie	India Today Group India Today, India Today (TV), Aaj Tak, Aaj Talk Tez, Delhi Aaj Tak, Mail Today, Business Today
13.	Roy	Prannoy Roy, Radhika Roy	NDTV NDTV 24X7, NDTV India, NDTV Prime, NDTV Profit, Good Times, Gadgets360, NDTV Imagine
14.	Sarkar	Ashok Kumar Sarkar	ABP Group Anandabazar Patrika, ABP News, ABP Ananda, ABP Majha, The Telegraph
15.	Sarma	Riniki Bhuyan Sarma	Pride East Entertainments Private News Live, North East Live
16.	Sharma	Rajat Sharma	Independent News Service, India TV
17.	---	Shobhana Bhartiya	Hindustan Times, Hindustan, Livemint
18.	---	TV Ramasubbaiyer	Dinamalar
19.	---	SP Adithanar	Dina Thanthi
20.	---	Subhash Chandra	Zee Media, Zee News, WION
21.	---	Chandan Mitra	The Pioneer
22.	---	Khitikrishna Dev, Jyotiarjun Dev	Khiti World IT & Media Research Analysis Wing P Ltd Black Cat News

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_news_media_ownership_in_India

Since September 2021, the ownership pattern has changed. For eg. NDTV was acquired by The Adani Group (Adani Enterprises Ltd now owns about 64.72 percent of NDTV through its subsidiaries RRPR Holding and Vishvapradhan Commercial). Many of the individuals/families listed above are prominent families with their footprints in the national level business and political circles. An almost natural question is whether such prominent individuals/families want to invest in news channels primarily for business gains or doing so provides other advantages as well through reporting and analysing news events. For instance, it was felt that NDTV, a news channel that made news recently on account of takeover by the Adani Group was, in the recent past, openly biased towards the Congress and notoriously anti-BJP with the ownership pattern also appearing close to Congress. NDTV was a company with majority held by a few individuals and corporate bodies, namely, Pranoy Roy, Radhika Roy, RRPR Private Holding Limited (RRPR being the acronym for Radhika Roy and Pranoy Roy) and Oswal Greentech Limited with the key personnel involved having close links

with political parties [19]. Despite the rapid growth of the Entertainment and Media industry, as a genre, news attracts about 20 percent of advertising and about 7 percent viewership in India but make up about half the licensed TV channels with most each of them losing money. The investment pattern suggests that the main investors in news based TV channels are: (i) politicians; (ii) chit fund, real estate and money market companies; and (iii) large corporations. There are innumerable examples where powerful politicians, especially when they are in power, use the might of TV news channels to either air their own version of news or prevent a differing, and possibly more accurate, version from being aired [20]. With this problem being as prevalent as it is given the large number of channels owned and being started despite not making money, it is not surprising why their credibility is not at the highest nor rising among the viewers. Global research based on data from ninety seven countries indicated that government ownership is more pervasive in news channels than printed media though it is also seen that government ownership undermines political and economic freedom [7].

The media ownership pattern shows high concentration among few players: (i) The Hindi language print media has four outlets, namely, Amar Ujala, Dainik Bhaskar, Dainik Jagran and Hindustan serving over 76 percent of the readers; (ii) Regional language newspapers also show high concentration in few hands including newspapers in Assamese, Bengali, Gujrati, Kannada, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Tamil, Telegu and Urdu. As far as Radio goes, the monopoly for radio news is with the Government of India through All India Radio. The Television based news channels are primarily self regulated through Indian Broadcasting Foundation (IBF) and News Broadcasters Association (NBA) for regulating the TV market but do not address market concentration. The ownership of most TV channels lies with major media houses that exercise ownership control through a complex system of cross-shareholdings that do not necessarily reveal ownership explicitly and also, sometimes, allow circumventing certain legal requirements [17]. The trend of big fraction of total media being owned by a few appears to be true in many countries. For example, it was reported that in 2021 about 90 percent of national newspapers in UK were owned by just three companies (DMG Media: 38.26 percent, News UK: 32.16 percent and Reach: 19.42 percent) and the total ownership of three leading local newspapers exceeded 60 percent (Newsquest: 23.2 percent, Reach PLC: 20.7 percent and JPI Media: 18 percent). With increasing digitalization of information, this concentration of media power in a few hands is not likely to go away any time soon unless legal remedies are adopted to address challenges posed by concentrated ownership of media [16]. In USA, about six corporations and fifteen billionaires own most of the media outlets [9]. While the circulation of daily weekday newspapers has been falling continuously since 1985, from nearly 63 Million in 1985 to 24 Million in 2020 indicating a cumulative fall of almost 2.7 percent an year over a three and half decade period, the concentration of news papers remains a fact of life for newspapers in USA with the six largest owners of daily newspapers owning over 60 percent of daily newspapers [32, 33]. Thus, the question of concentration of media control, is in no way unique to India and as far as electronic media goes, the

prevalence of a large number of players does increase the possibility of viewpoint of a wider section being made available to people at large.

Social Media and Growing Divisiveness

With the emergence and increasing use of social media, its ability to connect diverse groups at a speed hitherto not seen before, social media has changed the way people communicate. Social media platforms have drawn people in a manner that can keep them engaged on social media platforms even when surrounded by friends and family members. Based on a study of 19 advanced economies, it is seen that while social media does provide certain positive outcomes for democracies, their down side includes use of social media to manipulate people through rumours or false information and a possibility of dividing people based on opinions. People from different countries have a very different perception of social media though there appears to be a general agreement that social media can achieve the following: (i) Raise awareness and influence opinions about social and political issues; (ii) Get those in public life to pay attention to issues requiring attention; and (iii) Influence policy decisions. Irrespective of its impact, there is no gainsaying that use of social media has increased greatly from 2012 to 2022 with Japan recording the highest increase of 45 percentage points (from 30 to 75 percent) [36]. The use of bots and other approaches that allow automation allows those who wish to manipulate public opinion make relatively less interesting topics look like trending topics of interest and draw more people into a discussion that has little relevance to their lives [12]. As far as individuals are concerned, social media allows people to keep in touch and engage in what comes quite close to face-to-face chatting despite being separated by long distances. It facilitates excellent exchange of information and serves as a platform for exchanging views from across the globe. On the downside, social media platforms expose the participants in different ways to strangers, not all of whom have the best of intentions towards others. Thus, the criticism of social media platforms comes from instances of child pornography, sexting, stalking and privacy loss. Youngsters are more at risk besides the fact that use of

social media, especially in excess can cause time depletion with social media taking away time that could be spent on more essential/productive tasks and reduced social/interpersonal skills as social media usage is often a solo activity [1]. Studies on the 6 January, 2021 rioting at US Capitol suggest that social media platforms are not the root cause of political polarization or divisiveness but these platforms to exacerbate it and intensify political sectarianism by playing the role of a key facilitator, largely because they lack required level of self-regulation [3]. Use of content ranking algorithm can lead to more one-sided content flowing to users leading to many users missing out on the contrary point of view. This causes enhanced polarization largely because some social media platforms failed to adopt a more moderated and balanced approach out of fear of losing out on user engagement. Legal remedies appear to be one possible answer to the challenge of down side of social media platforms unless self-regulation standards are raised by them. Social media has the potential to worsen polarization through an interplay of technological, social and cognitive processes making it a significant part of the problem though not the root problem. This happens, at least partly, because some social media platforms' algorithms appear to amplify content that appear to amplify content that affirms ones social biases and identity. When factually incorrect or controversial content is posted and begins to attract attention, a hard intervention of blocking appears to have an adverse impact with the post drawing more attention on other platforms. This raises questions on the kind of intervention that works best and it appears that soft intervention on any single platform is more effective than hard intervention unless all social media platforms can be brought in synch so that mischievous content can be removed from all though doing so may require more work to arrive at an appropriate understanding of content that needs to be so removed [10]. Instances of misuse of popular social media apps to collect private information or their usage in influencing decisions or even elections add a scarier dimension to the dangers of uncontrolled proliferation of social media use. It has been reported that in the run up of 2022 elections, the @NewsTokss account criticized certain US politicians

without explicitly (it was done by pointing users to, in this case, DOJ, DC with the vast majority not checking the profile details) disclosing to viewers that they were being pushed by a foreign government [2]. The usage of social media rose from 5 percent in 2005 to about 70 percent in 2019 with close to 97 percent in the age group of 13 to 17 using, at least, one social media platform and spending anything from 6-9 hours a day on social media platforms. This high usage makes social media platforms highly influential in shaping perceptions as well as their lives. With such high usage, its downside is beginning to show more prominently and includes creation of an unreal world (where 'friends' could actually be strangers) and can be highly absorbing to the point of being addictive [5]. The cons of social media also include cyberbullying, rapid spread of flawed information that could lead to disturbances in society and infringement of privacy. As far as youngsters, the biggest users of social media, is concerned, students using social networking sites while studying were found to score 20 percent less on tests. Also, students using social media were found to have an average GPA of 3.06 as compared to an average of 3.82 among non-users [23]. It can be seen that social media presents a mixed bag with clear advantages and areas for concern. The areas of concern are not entirely caused by social media (eg. cyber bullying, child pornography, circulation of fake news etc.) but social media, by virtue of its features, makes it easier to indulge in such acts.

Research Methodology and Data Collection

Data for the study was collected through convenience sampling. A google form was prepared and circulated among various likely respondents. The respondents were assured anonymity of their responses and that the responses would be used only for academic purposes. Data from the google form was compiled as a google sheet and analysed statistically for a level of significance (α) of 5 percent. Based on statistical analysis, the following hypotheses were considered for testing:

H01: Majority of viewers devote more time to news and analysis than social media channels

H02: Majority of viewers believe that news is reported accurately

H03: Over the last few years the trust in news channels has increased among viewers

H04: Majority of viewers do not trust newspapers for information

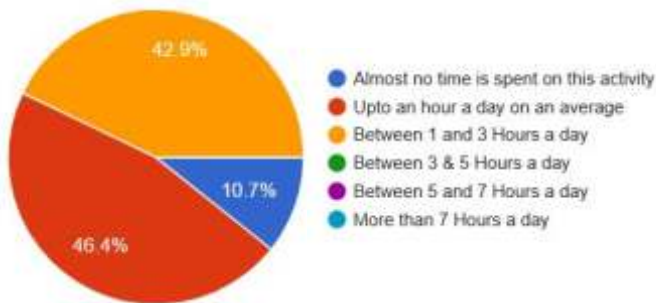
H05: Majority of viewers trust social media more than other channels for information

Given below is the summary of data collected, it's analysis and statistical conclusions.

Summary of Data Collected and It's Analysis

1. The time spent of watching TV and various entertainment channels on the internet:

Fig. 3: Time Spent Watching TV and Various Entertainment Channels on Internet



The data indicates that about 55 percent of respondents spend less than an hour watching TV and entertainment channels on the internet. When one looks at “The time spent on social media platforms” a comparable percentage (57 percent) spend over an hour a day on social media platforms suggesting that social media platforms are beginning to overtake TV and entertainment channels on the internet put together.

Fig. 4: Time Spent on Social Media Platforms

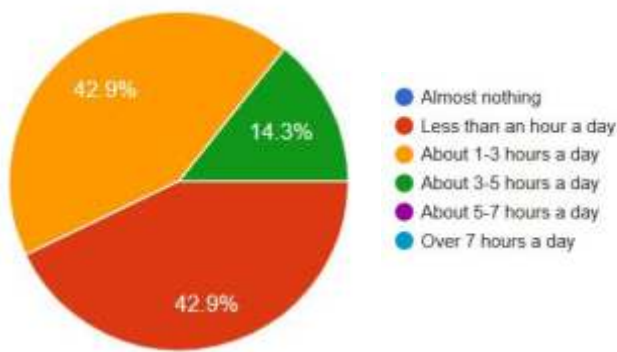
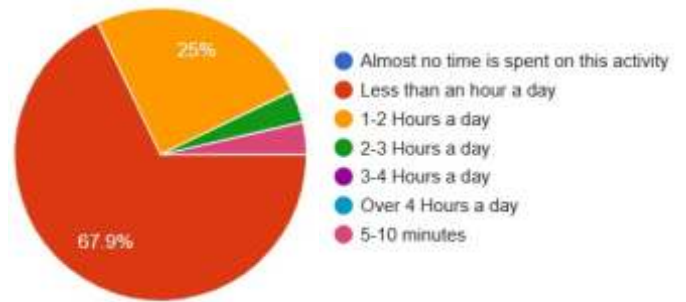


Fig. 5: Time Spent on News and its Analysis (TV and Internet)



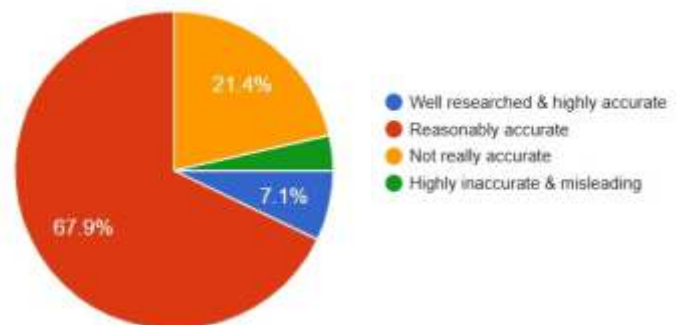
The figure above provides an estimate of time people set aside to understand news and watch news analyses. It can be seen that close to 70 percent people have little interest in news and its analyses as it appears on TV and the internet. To summarize, there appears to be a move away from the medium of obtaining news in so far as TV and the internet are concerned and that space, as far as time goes, is being taken over by social media platforms. It, therefore, becomes very important that social media provide accurate information and its analyses.

H01: Majority of viewers devote more time to news and analysis than social media channels

In mathematical terms, this requires, half or more respondents devoting more time to news and analysis than social media platforms. The t value of the test statistic is -6.72 and p value is close to 0. For a level of significance (α) of 5 percent, the hypotheses is rejected.

2. About a quarter respondents report that news reporting is either not really accurate or highly inaccurate and misleading with the rest stating that it is reasonably accurate or well researched and highly accurate.

Fig. 6: Accuracy of Reporting

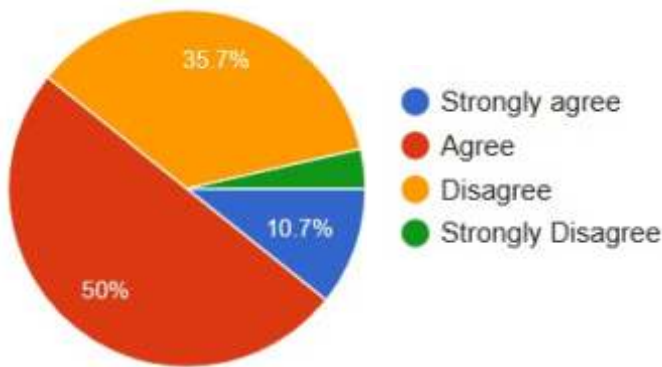


H02: Majority of viewers believe that news is reported accurately

In mathematical terms, this requires, half or more respondents stating that news is reported accurately. The p value is much higher than 0.05, the level of significance meaning that the null hypotheses can not be rejected.

- The study explored respondent view on the accuracy of reporting of news items and their analyses compared to what it was some years back.

Fig. 7: Present day news items and analyses more accurate than some years back



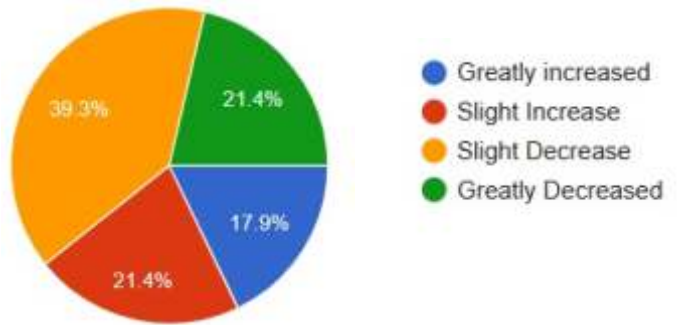
It is seen that less than 40 percent respondents reported disagreement with the thought that accuracy of reporting news items and their analyses has increased. If respondents do not perceive the reporting to be accurate then they are not likely to trust the news and its analyses and lose interest in news reporting as well as its analyses.

H03: Over the last few years the trust in news channels has increased among viewers

In mathematical terms, this requires, half or more respondents stating that present day news items and analyses are more accurate than some years back. The p value is much higher than 0.05, the level of significance meaning that the null hypotheses can not be rejected.

- It is now very important to assess the rather low level of interest in news and its analyses on the TV and internet. The figure below provides clues to the likely reason.

Fig. 8: Trust in news Channels and their analyses



The figure above indicates that over the trust of 60 percent respondents has decreased over the last few years while less than 18 percent reported that their trust had greatly increased. This is a telling commentary on what is perceived about news channels and their analyses. When clubbed with fact that accuracy of news reporting and its analyses is perceived to have increased by over 60 percent respondents, falling trust could indicate distaste to the manner the news and its analyses are presented or a gradual moving away from news channels due to emergence of alternative media of acquiring the same information.

- In an environment where trust on TV and news channels appears to be on the wane, the study also explored media that is trusted by respondents and the data collected is summarized below as a table:

Sl.No.	Source of Information	Percentage respondents that trust
1.	Newspapers	75
2.	TV/Internet based news items and analyses	32
3.	Social Media platforms and discussions therein	29
4.	Internet based articles	29
5.	Informal discussions	18
6.	Any other source/no source can be trusted	07

* Total is over 100% as a person may trust more than one source

News papers have emerged as the most trusted medium of news reporting and its analysis with no other source of information coming close to it. In fact, about 43 percent report that newspapers are the most trusted source of news

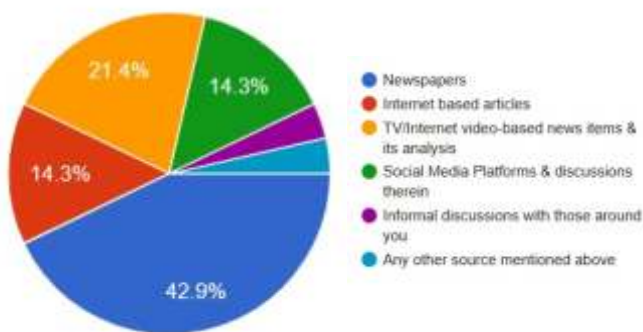
among all source available and this includes TV/internet based news items, internet based articles and social media besides others.

H04: Majority of viewers do not trust newspapers for information

In mathematical terms, this requires, half or more respondents stating that they do not trust newspapers for information. The actual fraction is 0.75 with the resulting p value that is much higher than the level of significance of 0.05 meaning that the null hypotheses can not be rejected.

To further establish if respondents trust news papers, a question on the most trusted source of information indicates that close to 43 percent respondents believe that newspapers are the most trusted source of information as compared to other available sources like TV/internet or social media platforms.

Fig. 9: Single Most Trusted Source of News



Considering that newspapers are also showing declining interest across the world, the emerging scenario presents an unprecedented challenge on creating a profitable media outlet that reports events accurately and is trusted by people at large. That can broadly be summed up as the information challenge of our generation. This importance of this challenge is further emphasized by the lack of trust in social media platforms despite the very high popularity of social media platforms.

H05: Majority of viewers trust social media more than other channels for information

The t value here is 2.44 and it corresponds to a p value of less than 0.01 (much lower than the level of significance of 0.05). This leads to rejection of the null hypotheses that social media is trusted more than other channels of information.

The table below summarizes the outcome of different hypotheses tested:

Sl. No.	Hypotheses	Outcome
1.	H ₀₁ : Majority of viewers devote more time to news and analysis than social media channels	Rejected
2.	H ₀₂ : Majority of viewers believe that news is reported accurately	Can't be rejected
3.	H ₀₃ : Over the last few years the trust in news channels has increased among viewers	Can't be rejected
4.	H ₀₄ : Majority of viewers do not trust newspapers for information	Can't be rejected
5.	H ₀₅ : Majority of viewers trust social media more than other channels for information	Rejected

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

The electronic media in India has made great strides in terms of its reach but needs to do more to build credibility and trust among the viewers. While usage and customer base of print media is going down, especially after Covid-19 pandemic, the electronic media continues to grow. The relatively flexible regulatory framework in India provides extensive freedom in reporting but also creates the possibility of misuse of media channels for purposes that go beyond accurate reporting and analysis. Present day users have moved away from traditional channels of news reporting like news papers or TV/internet based channels and are spending more time on social media platforms. This points to a need for extending added focus on self-regulation and moving towards a regulatory framework that ensures greater accountability in the news media. Such steps will, in the long run, add to the credibility of news channels. Absence of such a framework could lead to media, especially social media, exacerbating divisiveness in the society. The same is true for the social media where a

weak legal framework is very likely to exacerbate the downside of social media platforms and deprive these platforms of their credibility. Frequent instances of these limitations of social media usage could reduce these platforms to media for light banter but not ideally suited for a serious discussion.

Among the different channels available for news acquisition, newspapers continue to be held in high regard and are trusted by people at large though news papers are not as profitable as they were at one time. This creates a unique challenge confronting our times, that of creating a media outlet that is credible, engaging and also profitable. That sums up the communication challenge of our generation.

Limitations of the Study:

One of the limitations of this study is the use of blogs and news articles. While this does not automatically detract from the accuracy of information, it is possible that some of the information was not the most accurate reflection of facts. Another limitation comes from the use convenience sampling where the primary criteria was willingness to take the questionnaire. That however does bring in bias as the author is from the academic community and the people requested were also from the teaching/academic community.

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