

# COMMUNICATOR

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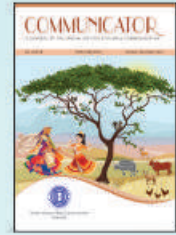
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## ABOUT THE JOURNAL

Launched in 1965, Communicator is a peer reviewed journal of the Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC) that publishes original research on communications. The flagship journal of the IIMC endeavours to publish the best literature available in the field of communications and its related branches for the greater benefit of scholars, practitioners and policy-makers. The main aim of Communicator Journal is to focus on communication theory, research, policy and practice. This UGC-CARE listed Journal is published on quarterly basis. Communicator is now being indexed in the Indian Citation Index.

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Editorial correspondence, including manuscripts for submission should be addressed to:  
The Editor, Communicator - Indian Institute of Mass Communication, Aruna Asaf Ali Marg, New Delhi - 110 067, India  
(Tel: 91-11-26741357, 26742239).

Email: [communicatoriiimc@gmail.com](mailto:communicatoriiimc@gmail.com), [vkbharti.iimc@gmail.com](mailto:vkbharti.iimc@gmail.com), [pawankoundal@gmail.com](mailto:pawankoundal@gmail.com)

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# From the Chief Editor's Desk



**Anupama Bhatnagar**  
Director General  
Indian Institute of Mass  
Communication

Media plays an important role in shaping the growth of the nation, and future journalists are groomed through structured media education. Earlier, there was a myth that journalistic skills were inborn qualities and, therefore, no specific media education was required. This myth has been completely disproved in the current era, as we find hundreds and thousands of media institutes and departments across various parts of the globe. Journalists of today remain relevant due to the dynamic nature of the socio-political-economic scenario and the increasing demand for professionalism in the field.

This issue of the Communicator journal includes a mixed bag of papers on myriad topics such as the historical evolution of media education in India and South Africa, coverage of Indian independence in national and international newspapers, communication strategies to reduce the infant mortality rate, the importance of communication tools in gaining agricultural information, effective communication between frontline health workers and women, and the importance of folktales in storytelling, to name a few.

The contribution of the press has been significant, as mentioned in the texts related to the Indian freedom struggle, but how the newspapers from India as well as the wider world covered the news of this achievement needs to be analyzed. Thus, a research paper analyses the coverage of ten Indian and Western newspapers based on the headlines, pictures, statements, and choice of language used in the newspapers of that era, using textual analysis tools.

The infant mortality rate (IMR) is closely related to the development of a country. A country with a better IMR is more likely to have stability and prosperity among its citizens. As a country develops, the potential of its population improves, offering them more choices and a better place in the economy. A paper outlines the role of NGOs in increasing awareness about health, nutrition, and sanitation, along with adherence to guidelines issued by the government under the National Health Mission (NHM).

Folktales, although a very old and traditional method of communication, are still a very effective way of storytelling. Folktales represent the shared knowledge of any community to entertain, educate, and enable the transmission of culture. They are a form of oral tradition within a community. In the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, it has been mentioned that folktales play a crucial role in the transmission of cultural traditions by bringing people closer together and ensuring exchange and understanding among them. This idea is reflected in one of the research papers on the Tharu community.

One of the papers focuses particularly on the impact of human emotions on marketing communication. Emotions have a powerful effect as they transform events or the knowledge gained from different sources. Today, as the marketplace is filled with various products, advertisers are compelled to come up with creative advertisements to position themselves in the minds of people. Emotion is hence proven to enhance the long-term memory of persuasive cultural commercials with increased recall.

An insightful study is undertaken in a paper which outlines how communication is important even in the dissemination of agrarian information among farmers. The government is taking various steps to assist farmers through various communication media, like radio and television. The role of the farming channel is to provide largely accurate, specific, and

unbiased specialized and operational information and advice in direct response to the needs of the farmers.

Effective communication between frontline health workers and women in the reproductive age group is crucial for ensuring optimal maternal and child health outcomes. A paper delves into exploring the existing modes of communication used for maternal and child healthcare in the Harhua block of Varanasi District and identifying potential areas for improvement. It also studies and investigates maternal and child healthcare communication practices that enable a better understanding of warning signs during pregnancy and childbirth, while also providing essential social, emotional, and psychological support during this pivotal period in the lives of women.

Other significant themes covered include the challenges faced during COVID-19 and how media helped in finding solutions through awareness and communication.

I would like to thank our distinguished editorial team for their continuous efforts in bringing an assortment of contemporary topics and subjects of relevance to our esteemed readers. I am also grateful to our editorial board and all the reviewers for their continuous support. We honour the critical comments, suggestions, and topics for a special issue from our esteemed readers.

**Anupama Bhatnagar**



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# Unfolding the Historical Evolution of Media Education in India and South Africa: A Comparative Study

SAMEERA BHOI<sup>1</sup> & RAJESH KUMAR<sup>2</sup>

## ABSTRACT

Though the first newspaper in India was published in 1780, the first journalism program was introduced quite late, i.e., in 1920 by Annie Besant. This way, the journey of media education has completed over 100 years of existence with a long discourse on its qualitative development. It has already thrived and emerged as a full-fledged academic discipline in the contemporary era. The study has traced the genesis and evolution of media education in India into two phases: pre- and post-globalisation. On the contrary, although the origin of the press in South Africa can be traced back to 1824, the first Journalism program came into being in the Communication Department at Potchefstroom University in 1960. Many universities in the later phase requested the Education Ministry to set up a Communication Department in their respective institutes. Initially, most of the Journalism and Mass Communication Departments started as an allied discipline of English Language, Video and Film Production, Sociology, etc. The historical transition of media education can be broadly divided into two phases: the apartheid years and the post-apartheid years. This paper attempts to trace the evolution of media education in India and South Africa and highlights major historical events that have influenced the discipline over the years. The study is based on an exploratory research design with a qualitative approach by conducting an in-depth study of existing literature.

**Keywords:** Apartheid years, Department, Discipline, Globalisation, Media education

## Introduction

Media education as a full-fledged training course and academic discipline is one of the latest developments that third-world countries like India and South Africa are witnessing. Most people of the early days were of the opinion that journalistic skills are inborn qualities and that there is nothing to teach about. But this logic has proved completely wrong in the current era when we find hundreds and thousands of media institutes and departments across various parts of the globe.

There was a time period in which ‘Journalism’ was considered solely an act of serving mankind and society by M.K Gandhi, which gradually became a source of livelihood and, later on, a commercial institution too (Bhuiyan, 2016). With this constantly changing nature of the institution, there is change in the requirements of knowledge and skills, which can be imparted through specially equipped media colleges and institutes. Henceforth, the scope and role of ‘media education’ has improved significantly.

Although the history of journalism in India can be traced back to 1780, when the first newspaper was published (Kumar, 2020), media education is about a century old (Saritha, 2020). Media of the early days were primarily not working with commercial motives but were to mobilize people for political independence and social transformation. People from different fields like law, politics, and literature were part of the journalistic fraternity, and no domain expertise was required to be a part of the press and media organisation. Later, in 1920 the impairment of required knowledge and skills, i.e., media education was initiated in India.

Despite its beginning during 1920, the evolution and progress of media education took a snail pace (Chatterjee, 2020). Most media studies in the early days were part of other disciplines related to literature, arts and humanities. Media studies itself was not an exclusive discipline. Media in post-independent India was witnessing a transition, i.e., from mission to profession (Natarajan, 1997). Due to

<sup>1</sup>PhD Scholar, Department of Mass Communication, Central University of Jharkhand, Ranchi, (*E-mail*: sameerbhoi111@gmail.com);

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor & Coordinator, Department of Mass Communication, Central University of Jharkhand, Ranchi (*E-mail*: rajesh.kumar@cuj.ac.in) (Corresponding Author)

liberalisation, privatisation, and globalisation (LPG) in 1991, yet again, multiple changes were seen in our socio-political-economic fabrics. Simultaneously, it affected the nature of media business and the types of content disseminated through these platforms. Naturally this transformation affected the pattern of media education, too.

Press in South Africa was introduced by Thomas Pringle in 1824. It is evident from the fact that the first serious academic publication work began in the press in 1946 by H. Lindsay Smith and the first Journalism Department started in 1960 only. After which many universities gradually started introducing courses on media studies and training. Media studies and practice in South Africa can be studied broadly in two phases.

First phase, when the country was reeling under a serious racial discrimination phase called Apartheid period (Tomaselli & Teer-Tomaselli, 2007). And second phase, when the country witnessed a sea change in political and economic transformation post 1990s. Media education in early days was part of other academic disciplines like Drama, Education, English, and Sociology (Van Zyl, 1984) which in later phases was becoming a more specialized course. Further media studies in South Africa changed and evolved drastically in various aspects, which we shall be discussing vividly in later parts.

### Research Objectives

- i) To trace the evolution and development of media education in India in pre- and post-globalisation era and;
- ii) To trace the genesis of media education in South Africa in Apartheid and post-Apartheid periods.

### Methodological Framework

This paper attempts to explore the evolution and development of 'Media Education' in India and South Africa. It also tries to highlight major historical events that have a significant role in the evolution of media education in these two countries. The study has adopted a qualitative research approach through an extensive literature review to understand various phenomena and intricacies associated with media education in India and South Africa. For this purpose, the researchers have gone through various secondary sources such as research papers, articles, policy papers, and national and international reports for data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

### Media Education in Pre-globalised India

Although the first newspaper in India got published in 1780, the genesis of media education can be traced back to 1920 when Annie Besant

introduced journalism as a teaching and training course at National University at Adyar, Madras. This program was funded by the Theosophical Society (Dutta, 2020). Besant started a bachelor's degree in the Faculty of Arts in the Department of English. The curricula were very practical as the students used to get an opportunity to do intern in the 'New India' newspaper office. Though the course trained and created many prominent journalists, it did not continue for long. Journalism practices before the 1920s were considered to be natural and self-learned skills.

The second attempt at media teaching and training was made almost after two decades in 1938 when Aligarh Muslim University started a diploma course in journalism. This course too could not be sustained for a long time and was closed after two years (Chatterjee, 2020). Then the oldest political party of India, i.e., the Congress party established a school in Kochi, Kerala to train Indian journalists, who would later on become a part of the nationalist movement. But, there was no exclusive Department of Journalism and Mass Communication.

The first full-fledged Department of Journalism in India was established at Punjab University, Lahore (in undivided India) in 1941 by Prof. Prithvi Pal Singh, who had studied a diploma in journalism from London University and a Master's degree from the University of Missouri, Columbia, USA. Prof. Singh had rich experience in the media after working for The Pioneer, Navin Bharat (Hindi daily), International News Service, and UP's Director of Information Publicity, and also Chief Editor of the department's Hindi, English, and Urdu journals (Dutta, 2020). Prof. Singh headed the department till his retirement in July 1973.

In Southern India, it was Madras University that started the first Department of Journalism and Mass Communication in 1947 and subsequently the University of Calcutta in the following year. It was the Indian Journalists' Association (IJA) that proposed the establishment of a Journalism Department at University of Calcutta in 1934. However, the university announced a two years PG Diploma course in 1950 (Chatterjee, 2020).

The Journalism Department at Maharaja College, Mysore was started in 1951. This newly evolving subject allured many students and gained popularity in the university. Dr. Nadig Krishna Murthy, the head of the department, worked hard for more than two decades for the growth of the subject in general and the journalism department in particular (Chatterjee, 2020). Later on, media research activities were incorporated into the department curricula in the year 1972.



Nagpur University (Rashtra Sant Tukadoji Maharaj) started a well-structured journalism course after Independence. It was Hislop College, Nagpur which set up the full-fledged journalism department under the approval of Nagpur University in 1952. Prof K E Eapen was the first Indian scholar to become the head of the department (Dutta, 2020). Osmania University started a journalism course in 1954. In fact, the Department of Communication and Journalism of the university was the first in the country to introduce a bachelor's degree course in 1962.

In 1965, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting marked a significant milestone with the establishment of the Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC) in New Delhi. Today it has evolved as one of the best professional training hubs for aspiring journalist in India and Asia (India Today, 2019). To specify on North-eastern India, media education was started in Gauhati University in 1967. In the year 1968, a certificate course in journalism was initiated by Kolhapur University, Maharashtra. The university later on started a BA in journalism in 1988 and has played a crucial role in the spread of media education in Maharashtra (Chatterjee, 2020). Banaras Hindu University (BHU) started the Department of Journalism and Mass communication in 1973.

SITE and the Kheda Communication project were two landmark events so far in the history of media and communication research. In fact, after the successful implementation of these projects, there was a fair transformation in the mass communication course content. And gradually, media departments in various universities opened up in various Govt. colleges and universities. By 1981 there were 25 departments exclusively dedicated to the promoting of media education in India (Kumar, 2020).

### **Media education in Post-globalised India**

The country witnessed a major socio-economic-political-cultural transformation after 1990 when India adopted the LPG policy (Natarajan, 1997). Quite obviously this reformatory policy affected the education system in general and media education in particular. By early 2020, the country had about 900 colleges and institutes (private & public) that are offering journalism and mass communication programs (Chatterjee, 2020).

There are three universities exclusively meant for media education, namely Makhnallal Chaturvedi National University for Journalism and Communication in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, established in 1990, Kushabhau Thakre University of Journalism and Mass Communication, Raipur,

Chhattisgarh, established in 2005 and Haridev Joshi University of Journalism and Mass Communication, Jaipur, Rajasthan, established in 2012. Further, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting started five regional campuses of the Indian Institute of Mass Communication in Dhenkanal (1993), Kottayam (1995), Aizawl (2011), Amaravati (2011), Jammu (2012) which are doing phenomenal works by training young aspiring journalists in English as well as in various regional languages (Chatterjee, 2020).

A major transformation in media education is witnessed in post-LPG when several private institutes set up by prominent media houses (The Times of India, Pioneer, The Statesman, India Today, Indian Express, and Tehelka are few examples) giving training to aspiring journalists (Dutta, 2020). Now Journalism and Mass Communication training and teaching has become more diversified and specialized in the country. There are separate courses for print, electronic, digital media, advertising and public relations, development communication, etc. So, media education over the time has changed significantly.

The Ministry of Education (formerly Ministry of Human Resource Development) in general and UGC in particular have taken a few steps from time to time by designing model curriculum to streamline media education. Further, the National Education Policy 2020 has emphasised more on specialisation, a multidisciplinary approach, use of mother tongue during instruction, multiple entry-exit systems, research and innovation, etc., including media education (Kumar & Nandini, 2021).

### **Media education during Apartheid in South Africa**

Apartheid was an institutionalized system of racial discrimination that started in 1948 to the early 1990s. This was the period in which the government led by white people executed a series of laws and policies favouring white masses and discriminating against the black majority (Welsh, 2010). The blacks were deprived of basic amenities like good education, healthcare services, employment opportunities, etc. A series of protests led by the then-opposition leader Nelson Mandela and international pressures resulted in the culmination of this system in the 1990s.

Although the historical origin of the press in South Africa is a bit old, media education in the country is a quite new academic and training discipline. Press history in South Africa can be traced to two centuries back when Thomas Pringle introduced a Libertarian Press into the Cape in 1824 (Tomasevski, 2002). Media education for the first time in South Africa took an institutionalized shape when the first Department

of Communication was setup at Potchefstroom University in 1960. Although few academic and research works on media were found prior to 1960, there was still no formalisation of media education.

Many universities post 1960 requested the Education Ministry of the country to open up media courses. Gradually, media courses began to be a part of many universities' curriculum. Media courses started at Rhodes University in 1969, at the University of South Africa (UNISA) in 1969, at Rand Afrikaans University (RAU) in 1970, and at the University of Orange Free State in 1971 (Wigston, 1988). Additionally, during the early 1980s, the Homeland Institution of Fort Hare, UNIBO, and Zululand introduced courses on media studies. By imitating the media education model of Columbia University, a Department for Media Graduate was opened up at Stellenbosch in 1978.

To discuss about research in mass communication, the first journal called 'Communication in Africa' was started by Tony Giffard of Rhodes University. The journal could not last long and was shut down in 1974 just after the publication of five issues. A journal called 'Communicatio' was started in 1974 by the UNISA Press. Another journal named 'Communicare' focused on marketing communication, which is still in continuation, was started in 1980 by SACOMM. The same publisher had another journal started in the same period in 1980 called *Ecquid Novi: Journal for Journalism in South Africa*.

Anti-Apartheid journal called 'Critical Arts: A Journal for Media Studies' had started in the same period. A series of media textbooks were published during the 1980s by the University of South Africa (UNISA). De Beer's books on mass communication became popular at this time. Arnold De Beer was an anti-apartheid scholar within the media discipline who had prepared the constitution of The South African Communication Association (SACOMM), which is considered as the oldest association for media education in South Africa (De Beer, 1981). De Beers, along with his associate *Ecquid Novi*, took many steps in the reformation of media profession and training in South Africa.

After 1990, South Africa became a member of the African Council for Communication Education (ACCE), Nairobi, Kenya, which is considered the biggest association for media academicians and professionals in Africa. Prominent media professionals like Arnold De Beer demanded the closure of the South African Communication Association (SACOMM) since ACCE could replace it. However, ACCE became a weak body in 1996 due to financial problems. ACCE had a tri-annual publication called *African Media Review* that

covered various aspects of African communication studies (Tomaselli, 2002).

#### **Media education during Post-Apartheid in South-Africa (after 1994):**

In 1994, South Africa saw a major political transformation when the first post-Apartheid national election took place. Everyone in the country, irrespective of race, was given electorate rights. Nelson Mandela, who always championed the cause of the black masses, led the country as the new President. With this political transformation on one side, a number of changes were seen in the socio-economic-cultural scenario. Likewise, many changes were seen in the media landscape ranging from ownership pattern, staffing and management, etc. on racial grounds.

Black people had started representing all sectors, including in media (Tomaselli, 2002). However, concentration and globalisation of media had resulted in more commercialisation of content. Tabloid journalism was becoming quite popular. The first tabloid in South Africa came in 2002 with the introduction of the *Daily Sun* and subsequently, the *Kaapse Son* and the *Daily Voice*. Non-racially promoted associations like the 'South-African National Editors' forum were emerging, which tried to give a clear roadmap for journalism training.

South Africa had 35 Universities and Polytechnics in 1994. The curricula of those educational institutions were designed to address inequalities and inefficiencies inherited from Apartheid (Reddy, 2004). In the post-Apartheid period, journalists were expected to have a social outlook by raising their voice for the poor, the weak, and marginalised and against all social odds (Wasserman, 2005). Some critics allege that journalism training and teaching in South Africa is deeply influenced by western models, hence failing to incorporate the value of cultural diversity, environmental and social development of the country.

The 1990s was the time period when various economies, including South Africa were opening up. The media sector gradually became a full-fledged industry. So, the media training institutions paid special heed to the 'required skills and training' as per the industry standards (Steenveld, 2006). Although the skill-full professionals were in high demand, many journalism training institutes failed to provide the required skills as per Sanaf's skill audit report 2002. Students were more exposed to theoretical orientations than practical exposure due to adequate infrastructure and quality human resources.

First M. Phil. Programme in journalism at a distance mode was started in the year 1997 and a full-

time graduation called B.Phil. was started in 2000. A new kind of debate was emerging in South Africa on Media Theory vs Practice (De Beer & Tomaselli 2000; Fourie 2005; Wasserman 2005). Many media journals extensively focused the discourse on a pertinent question that what is the best way to prepare a journalism student? Should they join a training institute to learn journalistic craft or can directly join industry to get practical understanding over the fields? Another trend that still present in South African media education system that there is large incorporation of media studies with language department (especially English Language Department).

### Findings & Analysis

Media education is a century old in India and has been through many ups and downs. Initially, the sole motive of the press was to liberate India into a politically independent state and bring socio-political transformation in the country. So was the motive of media education: how to create man powers who could work in a mission mode with social motives. Media education post-independence was becoming more formalised and organised when journalists started taking it as a source of bread and butter. Media education in post-globalisation has become more diversified and specialized as media has become just like other industries. Still, our media education framework and curricula have to be more pragmatic and suitable following the contemporary requirements that could not only create efficient journalists but also ethical professionals.

Formal media education in South Africa is quite new since it began in 1960 only. Gradually many universities started opening up media studies departments. Initially the media courses were part of different academic disciplines like Literature, Psychology and Film Studies. Many publications in South Africa were centred on racial issues. Media education in post-Apartheid era (1994) witnessed a sea change when there were major changes in socio-political-economic scenarios. Media education over the years has changed significantly and has become industry oriented. Yet the debate of formal journalistic training vs direct hands-on experience based journalistic practice still persists in South Africa.

### Conclusion

The evolution of media education in India and South Africa reflects a dynamic journey influenced by historical, socio-political, and economic changes. The journey of media education began during the early 1900s with a mission driven approach before independence to a more structured and formal system

after independence to a industry oriented model during post-globalisation. On the contrary, although the formalisation of media education in South Africa began in the 1960s, there was no significant progress in the quality of teaching and training till the post-Apartheid era, which brought tectonic changes in the socioeconomic and political fabric.

In India and South Africa, a perception had prevailed in the initial phase that journalistic skills are part of inborn talents, but later, they acknowledged the value of formal media education. Today, the media education system is trying hard to cope with changing landscapes, emphasizing specialisation, multidisciplinary approaches, and industry relevance. Challenges still exist today and will remain in days to come to adapt education to the changing dynamics of society in general and the media industry in particular. Even though there has been significant progress in this regard, media education in India and South Africa still has a long way to go.

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# A Study of Perspectives on Indian Independence in National and International Print Media

VIJAYTA TANEJA<sup>1</sup>

## ABSTRACT

‘Tryst with Destiny’ is the classic, which every citizen of India associates with the eve of Independence. The struggles and sacrifices of freedom fighters, courage of common man and strength of unity were the main factors which contributed towards the achievement of this milestone. The Indian perspective on this day relates to the feeling of being an independent republic, but the world seemed to observe this special day with various viewpoints. The contribution of press has been significant as mentioned in the texts related to the Indian freedom struggle, but how the newspapers from India as well as outer world covered the news of this achievement needs to be analysed. The present study attempts to analyse the coverage of ten Indian and western newspapers based on the headlines, pictures, statements and the choice of language used in the newspapers of that era using textual analysis tools like VADER Sentiment Analysis. The present research study relates to the colonial narratives and media during Independence through the print media, which was the prominent source of information amongst the elite section of the society.

**Keywords:** Coverage, Indian freedom, Indian independence, Perspectives, Print media

## Introduction

The World Information Network has always reported the major news around the world be it the coverage of World War I and II or the independence of the British colonies, which had been the most significant event of mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The centuries of British Raj, slavery and the oppression were ended with the birth of two nations, Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan, as reported in the coverage of international news dailies. It was the time when Indian print media had been involved in the task of reporting the most important milestone of the Indian history. The prominent English dailies of that time, i.e., The Indian Express, The Times of India and Hindustan Times had gained an opportunity to report the historical moments. On the contrary, the world-famous newspapers like The Washington Post, The New York Times represented the American point of view whereas The Telegraph and The Guardian had reported the British sentiments to symbolize their perspective on the biggest colonial loss suffered by the British authorities. On the other hand, The Irish Times, being another colony to get independence reported the matter in its own words and perspectives (Roychowdhury, 2018).

The coverage of the moment of independence of a nation is significant as it relates to the history, which serves to make the upcoming generations aware about the golden moment along with the memories that led to the independence. The public’s view, the dissemination of information, and the comprehension of the event by the world community are all significantly influenced by the media coverage of a nation’s declaration of independence.

## Review of literature

An editorial published in *The Guardian* (“India: The British Raj is Dead - Archive, August 1947,” 2017) mentions, “The British people have no yearly celebration of a national birthday, for it would be hard to say when the life of contemporary Britain began, but in this respect, they are unusual. To many countries, a national day is as necessary as a national flag. July 4 and July 14 are likely to be hallowed dates for centuries, and October 10 is to be revered by many hundred million Chinese in the future. Today, August 15, on which Indian independence [celebration] is inaugurated, may in time become a date no less revered than these other anniversaries, and by even larger number of people.

<sup>1</sup>Associate Professor, Department of Journalism & Mass Communication, Delhi Institute of Higher Education, Greater Noida West.  
(E-mail: vijaytakapoor@gmail.com)

Moreover, the Indian national day may also have a prouder distinction. For while the national days of other countries so often commemorate glorious but bloody events, Indians today are able to rejoice at achieving their independence without the prelude of countrywide civil war to which some months ago many had resigned themselves.”

The political scenario after World War II pointed towards the changes in international order, with colonial nations gaining independence and facing the burden and the expenses imposed with the exit of powers even at the leaving stage. The largest and the most important colony of Britain getting independence from the British Empire was an international news indeed that was reported in the world with zeal and fervour. The important aspect of reportage was the bloodshed of Bengal and Punjab, which has been a great challenge to the Indian freedom.

In an article published on the website of Times Now (The story of the century: How Indian newspapers reported Independence Day on 15 August 1947; 2020), the focus is on various other points along with the end of colonialism. According to this article, the press was mindful of the situation of the homeless people in the nation. At the same time, it also had to cover the jubilant celebrations associated with eve of independence. It was the coverage of Indian Independence that made the other colonial nations of Asia and Africa hopeful about their independence from European oppression.

Talbot (2022) mentions that the celebration of independence of India and creation of Pakistan in 1947 were shadowed with the stories of violence, killings, crime and displacement. He writes, “Some British newspapers were to contrast the ‘curious apathy’ in the city with the celebrations in New Delhi the next day.” The celebratory media coverage of independence in India and newly formed Pakistan could not sustain for a longer period of time. The article further mentions the newspaper headlines from various newspapers such as ‘Birth of India’s Freedom’ (The Times of India, 15th August, 1947). ‘India Independent: Britain rule ends’ (Hindustan Times, 15th August, 1947) and ‘Birth of Pakistan: An Event in History’ (Dawn, 14th August, 1947) were quickly overshadowed in the following days by reports concerning accelerating violence, migration on mass level and the problems caused by partition.

In an article published on its website, by ABP News (“Independence Day: How Foreign and Indian Newspapers Covered India’s Freedom From British in 1947,” 2022) mentions that the freedom in India was an important news story not only for India and Pakistan but for the entire world, as India had

been the largest colonial nation under the British Empire. The independence was also highlighted as it led to the partition of the colony in two nations i.e. India and Pakistan. The foreign press covered the milestone event reflecting the angle of division of the nation on the basis of religion. The partition was also accompanied with the tragedy of displacement of the people, which resulted in the loss of lives for thousands of people.

Daniyal (2015) makes a comparison of the tone of the headlines between a British newspaper *The Statesman*, a pro-Congress newspaper *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and a pro-Muslim League newspaper *The Star of India*. It mentions, “The *Patrika* reports the joining of ‘non-Muslim majority areas’ with the Indian Union as a ‘fateful decision’. *The Star of India* highlights that West Bengal had voted for partition and *The Statesman*—with no dog in this fight—runs a headline, which does not make a value judgment. The same process was followed for the Punjab.” The newspapers in Pakistan, a newly formed country, were not bothered about independence in India. The article mentions, “*The Civil and Military Gazette*, published from Lahore, the epicentre of the partition holocaust, did not even bother with reporting any news of independence or freedom on its front pages on August 15; although the previous day, Lord Mountbatten had formally transferred power to the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan. A news item, carried on August 14, announced that the Muslim League would not carry out any celebrations in West Punjab in view of the disturbances.”

In an article published on its website, Deccan Herald (Newspaper Headlines on August 15, 1947 Deccan Herald, 2022) mentions that the much-awaited, albeit violence-laden freedom of India on August 15, 1947 was covered in the international news dailies with different perspectives. The Daily Telegraph referred to the angle of partition, while The New York Times emphasized on the birth of two Indian nations with the mention of clashes between the people in another headline. Interestingly, The Washington Post published a two-column headline with focus on the terms like ‘sovereignty’ and ‘scenes of wild rejoicing’. The most important type of headline, i.e., banner headline was used by newspapers like The Morning News and The Statesman, with the former highlighting the birth of two independent nations while later mentioned the “Political Freedom for One-Fifth of Human Race”, underlining the major significance of the day not just in terms of India, but of the world as a whole. The headline published in The Times of India, ‘Birth of India’s Freedom’ was a banner headline. There

was also a story about Pakistan's independence, and a description of the frenzied celebrations in Bombay (now Mumbai) with the then Governor of Bombay, Sir John Colville's message, 'May Bombay prosper.' The headline published in the Manchester Guardian, i.e., "Farewell and Hail" and then the strapline "End of the Indian Empire: Birth of Two Dominions" depicted two contrasting statements which signify the end of British rule on one side and birth of two nations on the other.

Outlook Web Bureau (2017) in another article states that the country suffered a lot to achieve the freedom. The article, on the eve of 71<sup>st</sup> Independence Day, delves into the coverage of this special day by national as well as international media and chronicled the birth of two nations. The article focuses not only on the headline but also on the editorial published in The Hindu, which mentions the responsibilities and challenges ahead for the leaders keeping in mind the inauguration of Pakistan. About the coverage of Pakistan-based newspaper Dawn, it mentions, "Pakistan-based daily Dawn elaborated on the birth of Pakistan and Lord Mountbatten's address to Pakistan Constituent Assembly. Another half of the divided page said "Dawn of freedom in Indian Union". The bottom of the page was filled with greetings from all across."

Ahanchi (2009) in a research article explained the type of coverage and the news stories related to the Indian independence being published in the Iranian dailies. He divided the article into three kinds of articles. The first category comprises of writings that largely supported the establishment of Pakistan and were impartial between Muslims and Hindus. The articles in the second group are those that defended the founding of Pakistan, allied with Muslims, and sharply attacked the Indians. The third group, through their articles, was adamantly opposed to the disintegration of the country into India and Pakistan mentioning that it was a London-planned collapse of the subcontinent. The articles in this category briefly described the details of the conflict between Muslims and Hindus and did not focus on covering such kind of stories.

### Research objectives

- To understand the national and international perspectives on Indian freedom.
- To understand important people, issues and pictures that got space in national and international news dailies.
- To carry out the sentiment analysis of headlines and sub-headlines published in national and international news dailies.

### Hypothesis

The publication of news of independence of a colony has been published with several perspectives of partition, violence and atrocities.

- The political representatives of India at the time of independence and the British authorities were covered on the front pages of national and international dailies.
- The sentiment with respect to Indian independence has been mostly positive or neutral around the world.

### Research methodology

The research study has been focused upon the deep insights mentioned within the news coverage of the day following the eve of independence. To carry out this study, the researcher has conducted the content analysis of the front page news stories of four international news dailies—The Washington Post, The New York Times, Chicago Daily Tribune, The Irish Times—and six national news dailies, i.e., The Times of India, The Indian Express, The Statesman, Hindustan Times, Amrita Bazar Patrika and The Pioneer. Using VADER sentiment analysis technique, the sentiment analysis of a total of 56 headlines and sub-headlines selected from above-mentioned international and national news dailies has been conducted.

VADER (Valence Aware Dictionary and Sentiment Reasoner) is a lexicon and simple rule-based model for sentiment analysis. It can efficiently handle vocabularies, abbreviations, capitalizations, repeated punctuations, emoticons, etc. usually adopted on social media platforms to express one's sentiment, which makes it a great fit for social media sentiment text analysis. The result generated by VADER is a dictionary of four keys—neg (negative), neu (neutral), pos (positive) and compound polarity score (Pragnya, 2022). The result obtained by analysing the statement should be equal to 1 or close to it with float operation. The compound polarity score corresponds to the sum of the valence score of each word in the lexicon and determines the degree of the sentiment rather than the actual value as opposed to the previous ones. Its value is between -1 (most extreme negative sentiment) and +1 (most extreme positive sentiment).

#### 1. Data cleaning and enrichment

- Used text mining package to perform data cleaning
- Converted headlines to lower case
- Removed extra spaces and white spaces
- Removed punctuation marks
- Removed numbers as sentiment analysis work on

textual data

- Removed stopwords. Stopwords are irrelevant words.

2. Created corpus of words or bag of words to do tagging

3. Used lexicons of positive and negative words to perform scoring and tagging of each word

4. Modelling

- Gave score to each word mentioned in the headlines using lexicons
- Calculated compound polarity score by aggregating the score of each word mentioned in the headline
- Based on scoring, categorized sentiment categories

5. Using the compound polarity score can be enough to determine the underlying sentiment of a text, because for:

- a positive sentiment, compound polarity score  $\geq 0.05$
- a negative sentiment, compound polarity score  $\leq -0.05$
- a neutral sentiment, the compound polarity score is between  $[-0.05, 0.05]$

#### **Sentiment Analysis of Headlines and Sub-Headlines using Vader Sentiment Analysis**

Table 1 analyses various headlines and sub-headlines of national and international news stories using VADER sentiment analysis.

Table 1: Sentiment analysis of national and international news stories

S.No.	Newspaper	News Headline	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Compound polarity score	Result
1	The New York Times	India and Pakistan Become Nations, Clashes Continue	0	1	0	0	Neutral
2	The New York Times	Ceremonies at New Delhi and Karachi Mark Independence for 400,000,000 Persons	0	1	0	0	Neutral
3	The New York Times	Nehru Acclaims Gandhi	0	1	0	0	Neutral
4	The Washington Post	India Achieves Sovereignty Amid Scenes of Wild Rejoicing	0	0.648	0.352	0.5859	Positive
5	Chicago Daily Tribune	Mountbatten New Governor of Hindu India	0	1	0	0	Neutral
6	Chicago Daily Tribune	Punjab Riots Rage On, 250 Dead	0.817	0.183	0	-0.9371	Negative
7	The Irish Times	India Celebrates As British Hands Over Control	0	0.619	0.381	0.5719	Positive
8	The Daily Telegraph	India is Now Two Dominions	0	1	0	0	Neutral
9	The Daily Telegraph	Power Transferred at Midnight	0	1	0	0	Neutral
10	The Daily Telegraph	King's Message to Pakistan	0	1	0	0	Neutral
11	The Daily Telegraph	Earldom Conferred on Lord Mounbatten	0	1	0	0	Neutral



S.No.	Newspaper	News Headline	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Compound polarity score	Result
12	The Times of India	Birth of India's Freedom	0	0.417	0.583	0.6369	Positive
13	The Times of India	Nation Walks to New Life	0	1	0	0	Neutral
14	The Times of India	Mr Nehru Calls for Big Efforts from People	0	1	0	0	Neutral
15	The Times of India	Incessant Striving Task of Future	0	1	0	0	Neutral
16	The Times of India	Assembly Members Take Solemn Pledge	0.245	0.755	0	-0.772	Negative
17	The Times of India	Wild Scenes of Jubilation in Delhi	0	1	0	0	Neutral
18	The Times of India	Lord Mountbatten Greets Pakistan	0	0.652	0.348	0.1531	Positive
19	The Times of India	Mr Jinnah Re-Affirms Firm Friendship with Britain	0	0.623	0.377	0.5622	Positive
20	The Times of India	Frenzied Enthusiasm in Bombay	0	0.508	0.492	0.4402	Positive
21	The Times of India	Crowds in Festive Mood	0	0.5	0.5	0.4588	Positive
22	The Times of India	May Bombay Prosper, Governor's Message, Good Wishes to Free India	0	0.473	0.527	0.7783	Positive
23	Indian Express	India Celebrates Freedom	0	0.112	0.888	0.836	Positive
24	Indian Express	Consambly Takes Over Governance	0	1	0	0	Neutral
25	Indian Express	Mountbatten Asks to be Relieved in April	0	0.698	0.302	0.3818	Positive
26	Indian Express	Memorable Scenes in Madras	0	1	0	0	Neutral
27	Indian Express	National Flags Over Fort: Mammoth Meeting in Beach	0	1	0	0	Neutral
28	The Hindustan Times	India Independent: British Rule Ends	0	1	0	0	Neutral

S.No.	Newspaper	News Headline	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Compound polarity score	Result
29	The Hindustan Times	Constituent Assembly Takes Over	0	1	0	0	Neutral
30	The Hindustan Times	Mountbatten's Appointment as Governor General Endorsed	0	0.714	0.286	0.25	Positive
31	The Hindustan Times	Colourful Ceremony Marks the Birth of the Nation	0	1	0	0	Neutral
32	The Hindustan Times	Governors Sworn in as Free India is Born	0	0.68	0.32	0.5106	Positive
33	The Hindustan Times	New Star Rises in the East	0	1	0	0	Neutral
34	The Hindustan Times	Leaders Tell Nation of Tasks Ahead	0	1	0	0	Neutral
35	The Hindustan Times	Attlee's Greetings to Nehru	0	0.517	0.483	0.4215	Positive
36	The Statesman	Two Dominions are Born	0	1	0	0	Neutral
37	The Statesman	Political Freedom for One-Fifth of the Human Race	0	1	0	0	Neutral
38	The Statesman	Power Assumed by Indians	0	1	0	0	Neutral
39	The Statesman	Constituent Assembly Members Take the Oath	0	1	0	0	Neutral
40	The Statesman	Close Friendship with Britain: Nehru's Reply to Attlee	0	0.707	0.293	0.4404	Positive
41	The Statesman	Work for Common Prosperity	0	1	0	0	Neutral
42	The Statesman	Joyful Scenes In Kolkata	0	0.435	0.565	0.5994	Positive
43	The Statesman	Celebrations by Hindus and Muslims	0	1	0	0	Neutral
44	The Statesman	First Governor of West Bengal	0	1	0	0	Neutral
45	The Statesman	First Cabinet of India Begins to Function	0	1	0	0	Neutral
46	Amrita Bazar Patrika	Independent Today	0	1	0	0	Neutral

S.No.	Newspaper	News Headline	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Compound polarity score	Result
47	Amrita Bazar Patrika	Fratricidal Bloodbath Suddenly Ends	0	1	0	0	Neutral
48	Amrita Bazar Patrika	Miraculous Change in City’s Atmosphere	0	1	0	0	Neutral
49	Amrita Bazar Patrika	Mighty Emotional Upsurge on Eve of Independence	0	0.789	0.211	0.1531	Positive
50	Amrita Bazar Patrika	Calcutta Goes Freedom Mad	0.34	0.213	0.447	0.25	Positive
51	Amrita Bazar Patrika	Midnight Revelry	0	1	0	0	Neutral
52	The Pioneer	Free India Cabinet’s Appeal to Nation	0	0.602	0.398	0.5106	Positive
53	The Pioneer	End Violence in Every Shape and Form	0.406	0.594	0	0.6249	Positive
54	The Pioneer	All Differences Must be Resolved by Democratic Methods	0	0.805	0.195	0.1779	Positive
55	The Pioneer	Internal Strife Regarding the Country’s Progress	0	0.641	0.359	0.4215	Positive
56	The Pioneer	Battle for Freedom Over, Battle for Peace on	0.308	0.237	0.456	0.5423	Positive

**Data analysis and interpretation**

From Table 1, the sentiment score of individual headlines can be understood. Compiling the data in the form of positive, negative and neutral sentiments generated some interesting observations which have been presented in the form of Table 2 and Figure 1.

Table 2: Sentiment score percentage

S. No.	Sentiment Score
1. Positive	22(39%)
2. Negative	2(4%)
3. Neutral	32(57%)
4. Total	56

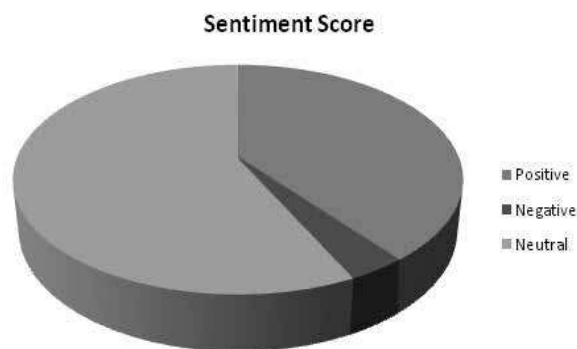


Fig. 1: Representation of sentiment score

- Figure 1 shows that most of the coverage pertaining to independence of India from Britain was covered either with neutral or positive sentiments as 96% headlines and sub-headlines were either neutral or positive. Further, the

- percentage of neutral headlines (57%) exceeds the percentage of positive headlines (39%).
- The negative headlines were even not completely negative but the tone and the selection of words, which are more near to the negative baggage of words imply that the negative tone but even the whole meaning was not negative. The newspapers

publishing those headlines were The Times of India and The Chicago Tribune.

- The most negative sentiment was replicated through a headline published in Chicago Daily Tribune and The Times of India. As the positive counters the negative statements, the national dailies were the one to report maximum news stories with a headline showing the positive sentiment and the percentage in this case reached 39%. It was 'The Times of India' which scored the maximum positive compound polarity score of 0.7783 with headline 'May Bombay Prosper, Governor's Message, Good Wishes to Free India'.
- The other headlines to score positive sentiment score of two were published in The Statesman and The Pioneer with headlines 'Work for Common Prosperity', 'Free India Cabinet's Appeal to Nation', 'Battle for Freedom over, Battle for Peace On.'
- The most negative score was found for a headline published in The Chicago Tribune, mentioning about the riots in Punjab which claimed the lives of 250 people with headline 'Punjab Riots Rage On, 250 Dead' with compound polarity score of -0.9371.

Further, the front-page coverage of national and international newspapers is analysed on the basis of number of news stories, headlines and sub-headlines, pictorial coverage, issues discussed and the sentiment expressed.

The observations and interpretations are as mentioned below:

- While the international newspapers devoted to the one or two-column news on the front pages with jump heads mentioning the Indian victory along with the pain of communal riots, the front pages of Indian newspapers were filled with the different news stories.
- Most of the news stories focused around the issues like division of India into two dominions. While the international newspapers like The Washington Post, The New York Times, Chicago Tribune, and The Irish Times published the news stories like India getting independence after 200 years of British Raj and communal rights in Punjab and Bengal and the sovereignty of Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan, national dailies like Hindustan Times, The Times of India, The Statesman, The Pioneer, Indian Express Swearing in ceremony of cabinet, Governors, Mountbatten's praise of Indian Press, riots and loss of human lives, celebrations in Indian states, names of new cabinet, pledge taken during swearing in ceremony, tribute to Father of the nation Mahatma Gandhi, etc.
- The news stories published in the international dailies were reported rarely with photographs. The only photograph was published in the newspaper 'The Daily Telegraph'. Highlighting the text mentioned in the newspaper, The Indian Express in its article writes, "Large portions of their reports were devoted to the communication between the British and Indian political elite, while a significant section was headed as "Indians praise Britain" and another as "British sagacity". A photograph of the Union Jack at the Residency of Lucknow adorned the front page as well, which said that "the Union Jack flying from the tower of the ruined Residency at Lucknow, from which it had never been lowered since recapture of the town after the siege of 1857. It was hauled down for the first and last time at midnight last night, marking the transference of power to the Dominion of India (Hindustan)."
- The only International newspaper to give the illustration along with the textual news was The New York Times, which presented a map of princely states clearly depicting the hesitancy of states/cities like Jammu and Kashmir and Hyderabad to be merged with India. The American view of such a matter is important because it throws light on the side which was being supported by America in this case.
- The European news daily 'The Irish Times' congratulated the newly independent state with fervour as it had experienced the same heat of colonialism. This country, which also got freedom from British rule, reported the news of Independence with the words "The last stroke of midnight, booming from the dome of New Delhi's Parliament buildings, set off the highest, noisiest and most joyful celebrations ever experienced in the East". It was a congratulatory note to the India and its citizens.
- The massacre faced by the people in Punjab was given more coverage than the same conditions in Bengal. In addition to it, the joy and celebrations from Calcutta were highlighted more in national as well international news dailies.
- In Indian dailies, full page devoted to this news consisted of several headlines, sub-headlines and historic moments related to the eve of independence. Most of the newspapers contributed banner headlines to the news along with other stories focusing on related issues. The most interesting one was presented in the Amrita Bazar Patrika with the special mention of the milestone achieved by India above its mast head with the words 'Independent Today' and clear emphasis on the violence in Bengal with headline

and sub-headlines like ‘Fratricidal Bloodbath Suddenly Ends’ and ‘Calcutta Goes Freedom Mad’.

- The Holiday notice for newspaper employees on the occasion of independence is clearly seen on the front pages of Indian dailies like Hindustan Times and Amrita Bazar Patrika .
- The Tribute to Mahatma Gandhi was published only in national newspapers, as it was the main factor behind the Indian independence and that too by adopting the Gandhian viewpoint of non-violence.
- For Washington Post, especially the news reporting consisted of a mixed emotion of pride, celebratory mood and violence with the headline, “India Achieves Sovereignty, Amid Scenes of Wild Rejoicing.” The paper mentioned, “They began a new chapter of two independent dominions with celebrations in oriental pomp and splendour, marred by bloodshed, death and terror in wide sections of the country”
- As most of the newspapers were focusing on birth of two dominions on the basis of religion along with the congratulatory notes for both nations, Chicago Tribune especially mentioned the nations as Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan. On the second page of the newspaper, the news headlines related to the small section mentioned, “Jinnah frosty as he wins his dream of Moslem state.”
- Hindustan Times on this special milestone reported the celebratory mood around the nations with two special points, one with the banner headline on the front page and second with a special appeal to help refugees who migrated from Pakistan in the space meant for ear panels around the masthead. The text was presented in bold at some places on the page with two photographs showing the prominent personalities like Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, Dr Rajendra Prasad and Lord Mountbatten in one picture and British Prime Minister Clement Attlee in another.
- The Statesman published six news stories with messages ranging from Indo-Britain relations to celebrations and political advancements with a strong message in the form of headline “Power Assumed by Indians” and four photographs showing political scenes amidst the independence eve.
- The Pioneer gave full-page coverage to the news of independence with just two stories and sober layout emphasizing on two points, the promises made by Cabinet to the common man and the strong message in the form of the headline “Battle For Freedom Over, Battle For Peace On.”

## Conclusion

When a colonial nation like India achieves independence after 200 years of British rule, the headlines and news coverage of national and international news dailies portray the world perspective about this milestone achieved by an Asian territory getting independence from European dominance. The sentiment reflected in 57% of the headlines and sub-headlines was neutral as the sentiment was not against a nation or a decision and the headlines were in congratulatory language. Only 4% of the headline and sub-headlines were negative in nature emphasizing the communal riots that killed hundreds of people in Punjab and Bengal. The role of the press in freedom struggle of India has been a remarkable one as press had been the most utilized form of communication, which mobilized the masses. The freedom fighters like Mahatma Gandhi, Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Annie Besant, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and many others were involved in publications that ignited the spark to face the atrocities and make the nation independent. Once the nation got involved in the process of getting independence, the perspective around the world was getting changed and other nations were eyeing on the block, which could be supported by the newly independent territories. Being a Commonwealth nation, India was supposed to follow the European footprints. The western world remained either neutral or positive about this change of guard and the only factor to make it negative for 4% of the international and national headlines and sub headlines.

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# Infant Mortality Rate Reduction in Bihar: A Study on Communication Strategy and Interventions of NGOs

SUJEET KUMAR<sup>1</sup> & ALISHA PATHAK<sup>2</sup>

## ABSTRACT

The infant mortality rate has shown a significant reduction in the last few years in Bihar. In the year 2012, it reduced to 52 per 1000 live births which was very close to the national average. A variety of projects in the form of pilot study were initially started in the state with financial aids from BMGF and the World Bank. NGOs like CARE India and Project Concern International, India (PCI, India) collaborated with the government. They aided them with technical assistance and capacity building. At the same time, a programme launched by BBC Media titled ‘Ananya’ played a vital role in communicating the idea of safe and ideal maternity health and childcare. The programme used different tools of mass media as well as traditional media to convey the message and bring social behavioural change. This study incorporated three objectives for studying the communication strategy used, roles that NGOs played, and factors upon which the communication strategy was based. Content analysis and in-depth interviews were used for data collection. This study found that NGOs played a vital role in increasing awareness about health, nutrition and sanitation along with adherence to guidelines issued by the government under the National Health Mission (NHM). This study also found that interpersonal communication between front-line workers and families in villages is the most effective and practised method of communication.

**Keywords:** ASHA, Care India, Communication strategy, Infant mortality rate, Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY), NGO

## Introduction

As per the census report 2011, the total number of children in the age group 0–6 years is 158.8 million, which is approximately 5 million less than that of 2001. The proportion of the child population in the same age group to the total population was 13.1% in 2011 as compared to 15.9% in 2001. There has been a significant decline of 2.8 points during this decade. The population of children under 0–6 years age group is estimated based on four major parameters namely, early neonatal mortality rate (ENMR), neonatal mortality rate (NMR), infant mortality rate (IMR) and under-five child mortality rate (U5MR). Early neonatal or perinatal mortality is calculated from 154 days of gestation to 7 days of birth, neonatal mortality is calculated up to the first month, infant mortality rate is calculated up to one year and U5MR is calculated up to 5 years of age. As per the Sample Registration System (SRS) Statistical Report 2020 released on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2022 by

the Registrar General of India (RGI), the country has been witnessing a progressive reduction in IMR, U5MR and NMR since 2014 towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) targets by 2030. The infant mortality rate specifically has shown a decline of 28.20% from 2014 to 2020 (SRS).

United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) defines infant mortality rate as “the probability of dying between birth and exactly one year of age”. Infant mortality rate is also defined as the number of deaths per 1000 live births under the age of 1 year. It is one of the indicators used to measure longevity under human development report released by the Human Development Report Office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Many children die in the initial days of their lives; this occurrence is so common in some parts of the world that it is not even regarded as a serious problem. According to the Journal of Perinatology, more people die in the neonatal period

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Mass Communication and Media, Central University of South Bihar (*E-mail*: sujeetkumar@cub.as.in); <sup>2</sup>Research Scholar, Department of Mass Communication, Central University of South Bihar (*E-mail*: alishasci16@gmail.com)

than at any other time of their life. According to a study, in 2003, more than 3.9 million out of 10.8 million children contributing to U5MR died in the neonatal period, i.e., the first 28 days of their lives. Out of all neonatal deaths that occur in the world, 98% occur in developing countries (WHO, 2006).

More than 3,500 children (under the age of 5) die every day in India, amounting to 1.3 million deaths in a year. Most of these deaths are preventable with timely health interventions and improved treatments (Meh *et al.*, 2022).

### Why infant mortality rate matters?

Infant mortality rate is closely related to the development of a country. A country with better IMR is more likely to have stability and prosperity among its citizens. Development is itself a complex concept; it includes different dimensions of society. As a country develops, the potential of its population improves and they are offered more choices and a better place in the economy. IMR has also been correlated to the political stability of a region by some researchers. According to Wise and Darmstadt (2015), as IMR drops, a country attains more political stability. Development is typically associated with stability, democratic regimes, peace and healthy governance.

Therefore, to ensure the wholesome development of a democratic society, it is crucial to pay attention to the improved health of its individuals, and IMR essentially affects the life expectancy of a population. It also helps in identifying the areas where the government needs to pay attention and formulate policies. In the last few years, a drop in IMR has attracted admiration globally for India and ensured the government that it is moving in the right direction with respect to improving maternal and child healthcare.

The infant mortality rate of a country depends highly on the existing status of health, infrastructure and economy of the country. A large number of children die globally only due to the place they are born in. More than 80% of deaths under IMR are due to preterm birth, complications during birth or infections such as pneumonia and sepsis. In India, the biggest reasons for high IMR are birth asphyxia, i.e., the inability of the newly born baby to breathe and sepsis. India is also losing its young mothers and children to some treatable conditions such as anaemia, haemorrhage and sepsis among mothers, and diarrhoea, respiratory infections and fever among children. According to studies by Sartorius and Sartorius (2014) and Bango and Ghosh (2023) on determinants of IMR, the factors responsible for IMR can be grouped into three categories,

namely proximal that includes infectious diseases, intermediate that refers to problems related to water and sanitation and distal that takes socioeconomic status and literacy level of population into account. Improving the health facilities of a country can prevent both the death of mother and baby.

Ill infrastructure that includes the inability of a pregnant lady to reach the hospital at the time of delivery is another factor that leads to high maternal mortality rate as well as infant mortality rate. Lack of knowledge among the health workers to tackle emergencies during delivery and malpractices in healthcare also stimulate the worsening of mortality rates. Sometimes in rural areas, it gets difficult to find transportation and even if a family manages to get one, they are not dropped off exactly at the hospitals they should be reaching. Such practices form a small portion of all the causes that are responsible for high IMR.

### What was done to control IMR?

National Health Mission (NHM) enlists 19 steps that ought to be taken in order to control both infant mortality rate and maternal mortality rates across the country. Controlling IMR was not a unidimensional job, it touched on different aspects of health including family planning, immunisation, nutrition, sanitation, infrastructure, etc. Some steps taken under NHM were:

- Promotion of institutional deliveries under Janani Suraksha Yojana
- Web-enabled tracking of pregnant women for antenatal, intra-natal and postnatal care
- Distribution of iron and folic acid supplements to reduce the risk of anaemia
- Regular Village Health and Nutrition Days (VHNDs) celebrations in rural areas
- JSSK, i.e., Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram entitled every pregnant woman a free delivery in government hospitals
- Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP) – Infants got vaccinated against seven diseases for a year. Mission Indradhanush and Intensified Mission Indradhanush were launched for immunisation.
- Newborn Care Corners (NBCCs), Special Newborn Care Units (SNCUs) and Newborn Stabilisation Units (NBSUs) were set up.
- Home-based Newborn Care (HBNC) was provided by ASHAs.
- Nutritional Rehabilitation Centres (NRCs) had been set up to treat children admitted with medical complications and severe acute malnutrition (SAM).
- Administration of deworming tablets to all



children in the age group of 1–19 years

- India Newborn Action Plan (INAP) was launched in 2014 to achieve the goal of single digit neonatal mortality rate.
- Comprehensive Lactation Management Centres (CLMCs) with SNCUs and Lactation Management Units at sub-district level were made functional to ensure availability of human milk for newborns.
- Early initiation and exclusive breastfeeding for first 6 months and appropriate Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) were promoted.
- Mothers' Absolute Affection (MAA) programme was promoted for improving breastfeeding practices via mass media campaigns.
- Vitamin K injection at birth, antenatal corticosteroids for preterm labour, kangaroo mother care and injection gentamicin for possible serious bacillary infection were introduced.
- Integrated action plan for pneumonia and diarrhoea (IAPPD) was launched in four states with highest IMR, namely Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan.
- ORS and zinc were distributed to tackle diarrhoea and feeding practices.
- LaQshya, a labour room quality improvement programme, was implemented in over 2,100 health facilities.
- Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA) provided antenatal care to all pregnant women on 9<sup>th</sup> of every month.
- Guidelines for standardisation of labour rooms and creation of HDU and ICU were given to states.
- Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK) had been functional to provide health screening for children from 0–18 years of age.
- Information, education and communication (IEC) along with behaviour change communication (BCC) was used to promote awareness and generate demand among public.
- Long-lasting insecticides net (LLINs) and insecticide-treated bed nets (ITBNs) were distributed in endemic areas to control the problem of anaemia due to malaria.
- Dietary counselling was given to pregnant women.
- Capacity building of healthcare providers was done.
- Trainings were given to upgrade the skills of healthcare workers required during pregnancy, delivery and newborn care.

The above-mentioned steps along with a working force of front-line workers like ASHAs, auxiliary nurse midwives (ANMs) and anganwadi workers

(AWWs) led to considerable reduction in IMR across the nation.

### **Why does Bihar need to be focused while talking about IMR?**

Bihar was one of the states with the highest IMR. It stood at 62 deaths per 1000 live births during National Family Health Survey-3 (NFHS-3) (2005–06) but by NFHS-5 (2019–20), it was reduced to 46.8. This reduction in IMR was possible only due to the systematic and appropriate interventions of both government and non-governmental organisations. Their contribution to strengthening the health infrastructure, facilitating communication and providing assistance both in technicality and capacity-building has been recognised globally. This recognition became even more popular when UN reports appreciated the efforts taken by Bihar for IMR reduction. Earlier states like Kerala were the only role models when such development was thought of but underdeveloped states with weak infrastructure, large population and low literacy could barely relate to it. Bihar reached a milestone in this period and gave hope to other states that are considered backward. Despite ill infrastructure and low literacy levels, the workers who were being trained by NGOs like CARE India and Project Concern International, India (PCI, India) did a marvellous job of lowering the IMR and bringing it close to the national average.

According to the Sample Registration System record of 2019, the IMR in Bihar was 29, which was a unit less than the national average of 30. Ultimately, along with other aspects of strengthening the healthcare sector, communication has played a key role in making it possible to generate demand among beneficiaries. Making people aware and disseminating right messages among them was a challenge for the front-line workers (ASHAs, ANMs and AWWs) and higher authorities both. A diverse range of tools, including traditional media, mass media and interpersonal communication, was used. They were experimented with and adapted during pilot studies conducted in different areas. Thereby, figuring out what exactly was adapted and turned out to be an effective strategy for change via different approaches like IEC, BCC, etc. is one of the broader objectives of this study.

### **Review of literature**

Infant mortality rate was one of the eight goals under the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) signed by leaders of 189 countries in 2000 at UN headquarters. Goal 4 of MDGs was to “reduce child mortality” by 2015. According to UNDP, India's under-five mortality rate (U5MR) declined from

125 per 1000 live births in 1990 to 49 per 1000 live births in 2013 while the MDG target was to reduce it to 42 per 1000 live births by 2015. According to the National Health Mission, the IMR in sample registration system (SRS) indicators stood at 34 in 2016 and 32 in 2018.

As per the Sample Registration System Bulletin of Registrar General of India (RGI), IMR has reduced from 37 per 1000 live births in 2015 to 30 per 1,000 live births in 2019 at the national level. For Bihar, the IMR in 2019 was 29, which is a unit less than the national average.

Gerring *et al.* (2012) define IMR as a useful “cross-national and historical measure” for estimating the development of a country. IMR is an indicator of population health and is considered particularly sensitive to general structural factors like socio-economic development and basic living conditions.

According to Syarah *et al.* (2017), the success of assistance activities for social empowerment is determined by participative communication. For any programme to succeed in society and achieve its goals, it is mandatory to be equally supported by both the government and society.

In a study conducted by Guite in 2019 for villages near Kangpokpi city, it was found that the most trusted source of information related to health for rural women was Community Health Centres (CHCs). It also states that there is a high reliance on informal sources such as family members, friends and traditional midwives.

In another study conducted by Berry (1999) in Guatemala, it was reported that some women in the region did not like to include their husbands or families in pregnancy-related decisions because they felt it was only a woman’s task to get pregnant and give birth. Thereby lack of education and awareness about emergencies arising during pregnancy led to an increase in deaths of mothers and newly born babies.

Park and Park (1976) stated that ‘communication’ refers to a social process, i.e., a flow of information, the circulation of knowledge and ideas, and the propagation of thoughts. The role of communication in community health is to help motivate people to accept ideas. The ultimate aim of communication is to bring about changes in behaviour (Park, 1976).

Dance and Larsen (1972) wrote that effective communication is characterised by the following principles. It answers an interaction rather than a direct transmission process. If communication is viewed as a direct transmission process, the senders of messages can assume that their responsibilities as communicators are fulfilled once they have formulated and sent a message. However, if communication is viewed as an interactive process,

the interaction is complete only if the sender receives feedback about how the message is interpreted, whether it is understood and what impact it has on the receiver. Just imparting information or just listening is not enough—giving and receiving feedback about the impact of the message becomes crucial.

In a study conducted by Rajan (2007), it was inferred that to improve the health of people living in rural areas, communication for healthcare is important. The purpose of such communication is to educate the villagers or certain specific groups of practices that are likely to improve the existing status of health in the rural population and lead to their welfare.

The coordinating agency for health planning in “Healthcare for children under five” directs that a mother should attend an antenatal clinic once in the first 7 months of gestation, twice in the next 2 months and once a week afterwards if everything is normal. It also states that a high proportion of mothers in India are from weak socio-economic backgrounds who also work which means their attendance at antenatal clinics leads to loss of daily wages.

Dutt (1962) states that PHCs occupy a key position in the nation’s healthcare system. It is peripheral, yet the most important pivotal around which the rural healthcare services are being built. PHCs are defined as the institution for providing comprehensive, i.e., preventive, promotive and curative healthcare services to the people living in a defined geographical region.

Nwosu *et al.* (2015) states that communication plays a vital role in the prevention and control of diseases and improving health in society. Proper communication is very important, especially in rural areas as far as development activities are concerned.

Simpson and Wood (1998) emphasise the need to identify specific groups that can be used to propagate messages related to health.

Bernhardt (2004) explains the nature and importance of communication in public health as “with its trans-disciplinary nature, ecological perspective, change orientation and audience-centred philosophy, public health communication has the potential to make significant contributions to the health of the public.”

Desai and Alva (1998) show that there is a correlation between maternal education and markers of child health like IMR, immunisation, etc. as an educated mother is more likely to comprehend the health communication messages.

The polio vaccination campaign is one of the most relevant examples of how communication plays a key role in eradicating such diseases. It must be noted that communication played a major role

in eradicating polio from India (“India is now polio free”, 2014).

Wallack (1994) talked about media advocacy as a new strategy emerging in public health. Media advocacy bridges the power gap and not only the knowledge gap which is essential for the public health improvement. It shifts the focus from personal to social causes.

After referring to the above literature, it was observed that although there has been a work around communication, health and IMR, but no specific attention was laid to study the role of NGOs and communication strategy for the reduction of IMR in Bihar.

### **Objectives of the research**

1. To assess the communication strategy used for promoting awareness of infant mortality in Bihar.
2. To study the role of NGOs in reducing infant mortality rate.
3. To find out factors affecting the communication strategy for IMR reduction.

### **Research methodology**

The researcher adopted an exploratory paradigm and carried out a qualitative study to understand the communication strategy used in Bihar for IMR reduction. The rationale for selecting Bihar was that it had been one of the states with the highest IMR in India. It stood at 62 deaths per 1000 live births during NFHS 3 (2005–06) but by NFHS 5 (2019–20), it was reduced to 46.8. This reduction in IMR state was possible only due to the systematic and appropriate interventions of both government and non-governmental organisations. According to Sample Registration System record of 2019, the IMR in Bihar was 29 which was a unit less than the national average of 30. The interventions at block levels done for the last decade have been effective and revolutionising.

Content analyses of secondary data and in-depth interview of individuals involved at different levels in healthcare system were chosen for data collection. For content analysis, the content available on the websites of the Bihar government’s health department, Information and Public Relations Department (IPRD), CARE India and HLFPPPT (Hindustan Latex Family Planning Promotion Trust) were analysed. Data and reports relevant to the study from UNICEF, WHO, NFHS and SRS were also referred to and analysed in the initial phase of research.

For in-depth interviews, 11 respondents involved at different levels of the healthcare system in Bihar were selected based on their expertise and exposure. The respondents’ designation ranged from ANMs

to community health officers. Both telephonic and face-to-face interviews were conducted and later summarised by the researcher. The format of these interviews was semi-structured. The collected data from content analysis and in-depth interviews are summarised and discussed by the researcher using selective coding (Corbin & Stauss, 1990) in the objective-wise analysis of the next section.

### **Findings and discussions**

#### ***Communication strategy used for raising awareness on infant mortality***

From the collected data, the communication strategy used for the above-stated objectives can be understood under two broad categories:

- Interpersonal communication
- Use of media

#### ***Interpersonal communication***

According to a manual released by the Ministry of AYUSH, “ASHA workers are selected by the community, out of residents within the community. They are working on a voluntary basis, although compensation would be provided to them for specific activities and services.”

In the context of IMR, ASHAs play a vital role in mobilising the community towards institutional deliveries. They work for increasing awareness among people for institutional deliveries, breastfeeding, nutrition as well as family planning. Since IMR is closely related to all these aspects of health and not every individual is comfortable in discussing about intimate topics like family planning to everyone, ASHAs go for home visits periodically and talk to the mother and other family members. She explains the need and importance of healthy practices among the family members and also use pair talks as a medium to carry out intimate discussions like family planning. Her efforts are aided by the incentives the government offers for institutional deliveries, proper breastfeeding and complete immunisation.

Auxiliary nurse midwives or ANMs play another important role by giving individual health talks at health and wellness centres. Health talks are face-to-face communication between health workers who are primarily a nurse and a beneficiary. It includes a range of topics that are responsible for reproductive and child healthcare (RCH).

Nurses and ASHAs use ‘individual health talks’ as a medium to make sure a mother is well-informed about when she should conceive, how she should take care of herself during pregnancy and how she should be careful about what she is providing to her baby and herself post-delivery.

According to an ASHA working near Sirdala in Bihar,

*“The workload has increased significantly in the last few years. Earlier we barely had one or two visits every day but now we visit more than 10 homes every day for monitoring if the mother and child are being taken care of.”*

The increase in the workload of ASHAs in Bihar is attributed to the onset of the ANANYA programme that started in 2012 and continued till 2014.

### **Use of media**

Different types of media were used by the government to increase the awareness among people about healthy RCH practices. According to the NIOS module, “Traditional media was discovered several years ago in India as a means of development and educational communication. It has remained a significant tool in the process of motivating people in the desired direction. It is the most appropriate medium for bringing about changes in attitude as it is informal and unscripted in nature.”

Thereby, street plays, demonstrations, pakhwaras, etc. were used by different health centres to propagate their messages among the public. Apart from this, ANMs, CHOs, ASHAs, AWW, etc. also used hand-made posters and flashcards along with the modules provided by the government and NGOs to convey messages related to family planning, nutrition and immunisation. These posters and flash cards were made according to the cognitive demands of the beneficiary and they aided the nurse in ensuring clear and smooth communication. According to a statement from CHO,

*“I make posters myself sometimes when I feel the beneficiary is not able to understand what I am trying to convey to them. This saves my time and helps them retain the messages being provided longer.”*

According to another interviewee who wished to stay anonymous, “The use of mass media is comparatively less in public health because the government wants maximum impact with minimum expenditure.” Thereby, public service advertisements were used for propagating messages but not massively in Bihar. Communication mainly relied on either traditional media or interpersonal interactions. Another way in which the messages were shared in public through Primary Health Centres was by fixing loudspeakers on autos. This mainly informed citizens about the ongoing camps or pakhwaras in nearby areas.

In 2012, the Government of Bihar started an umbrella project called ‘ANANYA’ in collaboration with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, this was fundamentally a pilot study being conducted in 8

cities of Bihar to intervene and help the government in reducing IMR and MMR by bridging the gaps between supply and demand side. This extensively worked on strengthening the healthcare sector by both community-based interventions and facility-based interventions. It had different partners which were basically leading firms in the respective field to get the best possible outcomes. The media partner for this study was BBC Media.

BBC Media carried out many campaigns to improve IMR and MMR, and reduce infectious diseases in Bihar. Some of its campaigns were:

- **Ek Teen Do (One, Three, Two)**- It was a social advertising campaign that ran across different media platforms like television, radio and outdoor ads. It persuaded families to keep a gap of 3 years between two consecutive pregnancies. It was designed in a way to ensure that families understood the financial benefits of spacing between two children.
- **Chaar Gaanth (Four Knots)** – It was also an advertising campaign that talked about ensuring four basic things once a lady is pregnant. The ad made a husband tie four knots on his gamchha, which is a type of scarf used in rural India, as his wife declares her pregnancy. The four things denoted by knots include registering for government services, saving money, deciding a place of delivery and ensuring availability of transport.
- **Khirkhi Mehendiwali (Mehendi opens a window)** – It was a 36-part long story within story show that was broadcast on radio. It discussed child health and maternity health with the help of a fictional character named ‘Mehendi’. The impact of this campaign was significant. According to the BBC Media portal, more than 6,000 women listeners' clubs ensured that a large number of women and families were listening to this show in the remotest areas of Bihar where radio signals were weak.
- **Street plays** – This form of folk media was used by BBC too to reach the local and less-literate segment of the population. It was an interactive medium and could engage the audience with messages related to health and wellness of the community.

### **Role of NGOs in IMR reduction**

For understanding the role of NGOs, the available data focused mainly on two organisations, namely PCI and CARE; hence, interventions of both the NGOs are discussed in this section.

According to “Bihar: Road Map for Development of Health Sector—A Report of the Special Task

Force on Bihar” released by Planning Commission in August 2007, there is one Primary Health Centre per one lakh population in Bihar whereas ideally there should be one PHC per 30,000 population. Besides that, only 6.2% of existing PHCs then were well-equipped with essential equipment in Bihar while the national figure stood at 41.3% for well-equipped PHCs.

According to an external website, “*Although 4.16 million people in Bihar watched or listened to the television and radio campaign of Ek Teen Do at least three times, and 6.95 million people watched the Char Gaanth TV ad at least three times, analysis of the figures showed very low levels of targeted exposure (i.e., women of reproductive age) to the TV ads. This served to further reveal the limited reach of mass media among our target audience and prompted the decision to intensify the focus on community outreach and interpersonal communication activities.*”

Public service announcement (PSA) was being used by BBC Media to propagate messages but it was not viable for long as stated above; hence, a need for intervention by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) was acknowledged. NGOs like CARE India and Project Concern International, India, closely worked with the government to improve the status of maternal and infant mortality rates in the state.

### **Interventions of PCI in Bihar**

PCI started to work on maternal and infant mortality rates in Bihar in 2012 with funding under the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. It gave a unique concept of using self-help groups (SHGs) for bringing social and behavioural change (SBC). It began a pilot study under the name ‘Parivartan’, it integrated health, nutrition and sanitation (HNS) practices with SHGs. It worked with almost 18,000 SHGs concerned with the most marginalised section of society to let them adopt HNS behaviours and the results were so commendable that the Government of India decided to use this strategy at a large scale for different locations in the country. It turned out to be a promising method for ‘demand-side interventions’. The Population Council of India later evaluated and validated the effectiveness of these interventions. Later on, PCI started the JEEViKA Technical Support Programme (JTSP) in 2015 after conducting a similar test on 9,089 SHGs of JEEViKA to improve RMNCH, i.e., reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health in Bihar. JEEViKA, along with technical assistance from JTSP and aid from the World Bank, contributed significantly in bringing behavioural change among the population. The two-time increase in the diversity of newly born babies is one of the

many impacts that discussions of HNS practices in SHGs have had.

### **Interventions of CARE India in Bihar**

CARE India is another technical assistance partner for the government of Bihar under a project named Bihar Technical Support Programme (BTSP). It is a partnership among the Government of Bihar, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and CARE India. BTSP has been in action since 2011 and helped the state in controlling MMR and IMR. In 2005, the IMR in Bihar was 61 per 1,000 births, but after the implementation of BTSP, it came down to 38 per 1,000 births.

This organisation has also been closely monitoring the status of healthcare units like HWCs, PHCs, etc. They train front-line workers; more than 85,000 ASHAs have been trained by CARE India since 2011. According to an estimate, only 39 people per facility per month were using public health facilities, but with efforts from CARE India by 2018, around 10,000 people per facility per month were contributing to the client load of public health facilities.

According to an ASHA, “The modules are provided to us by CARE and people from there also come periodically to check and guide us about how to improve the existing healthcare facilities and sanitation in the hospital”.

An important reason for maternal and infant mortality is that the mother fails to reach the hospital on time in case of complications. Another equally important reason is lack of knowledge and skills among healthcare workers at the hospital. The interventions of CARE India include training such individuals and tackling these issues to ensure the mother gives birth to a healthy child. Even after delivery, the ASHAs and ANMs are sent regularly for ‘in-home counselling’ to monitor the health of the mother and her baby regularly.

### **Major findings**

- NGOs worked in two domains—community-based interventions and facility-based interventions
- They ensured the availability of equipment in hospitals to the best of their abilities.
- They trained ASHAs, ANMs and anganwadi workers (AWWs) to utilise them optimally for spreading awareness among the public.
- They conducted training sessions and awareness campaigns.
- NGOs made sure the schemes of government reached the beneficiaries as much as possible.
- In Bihar, there was a stark difference in attitude of public regarding health, nutrition, sanitisation,

immunisation, etc. before and after organisations like CARE India and PCI started working on the ground.

### Factors affecting the communication strategy for IMR reduction

According to a programme officer working at an NGO, *“deciding that a message has to be conveyed is only the first step towards development in a community; the major challenge is designing that message accurately and effectively”*

Designing a message involved certain steps:

1. Demographic study
2. Study of literacy level and socio-economic status of community
3. In-depth interviews of selected individuals to know the prevalence of the subject
4. Brainstorming with experts
5. Developing draft content
6. Field testing
7. Incorporation of required changes based on field testing
8. Finalising the content for use

The factors on which the strategy depended while facilitating social and behavioural changes with respect to health, nutrition and sanitation were:

- **Demography:** The study of a population that has to be mobilised is vital and constitutes a major part of how a policy is formulated.
- **Literacy level:** To quote an ANM, *“A lady who has completed her schooling is more likely to understand the importance of immunisation and nutrition than a lady who has never been to school”*. The kind of modules and media that are used for transferring messages differ according to the literacy level of beneficiaries.
- **Economic status:** A marginal section of the population was being dealt with via these campaigns, but there was still a difference in the type of media they used for gathering information according to their level of income; this greatly influenced the communication strategies that were planned.

### Conclusion

It can be concluded from the above findings that the communication strategy adopted for raising awareness about infant mortality in Bihar includes the usage of traditional media like street plays, wall painting, etc. and mass media like radio, television, etc. In villages, the messages were also conveyed by putting loudspeakers on vans that announced the upcoming health camps or VHNDs. However, in urban areas, the mass media was more prominently used. In periodic meetings of the community where

they actively participated, methods like storytelling, role play, screening, etc. were used that helped the beneficiaries retain information longer.

Flashcards, charts and diagrams were also used to convey the messages related to healthcare, which were mainly provided by the government and NGOs or designed by front-line workers themselves. Further, the role of interpersonal communication is also evident, as it has been used as the primary tool for communication with pregnant ladies and their families.

However, communication is only an aspect of the different measures that were taken to curb IMR. The considerable reduction in the IMR of Bihar would not have been possible if the NGOs had not intervened with their pilot studies and projects at different levels of healthcare. While establishing the findings for another objective of this study, where the role of NGOs was studied with specific reference to Bihar, it was evident that these organisations have worked extensively on block-level development and have successfully achieved the predetermined goals.

NGOs have worked with different stakeholders for years to bridge the gap between demand (among beneficiaries) and supply (from the government) and the results at present show that they have been very close to success. From capacity building of healthcare workers to providing technical assistance and assessing management in labour rooms, NGOs have intervened in almost every segment of the functioning of hospitals.

Lastly, the factors that affect the communication strategy from its designing to implementation are demography, literacy, economic status and religion of the population. Along with these broad categories, the socio-economic status and level of participation play a significant role in ensuring whether the prescribed messages successfully leave an impact on the population or crash right after they are dropped on the ground. As Milton Erickson said, *“The effectiveness of communication is not defined by the communication but by the response”* and to generate an appropriate response, a single method of disseminating information cannot be used. While catering to a diverse range of beneficiaries, both tools and strategies change according to the level of literacy and socio-economic status of the population.

The diversity in culture, customs, language and backgrounds of the individuals in society greatly influence the messages and mediums being used, thereby it becomes mandatory to design messages effectively keeping diversity in mind and also monitor the effectiveness of strategies implemented.

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# Folktales of Tharu Community: Cultural Transmission of Values and Beliefs

KUMARI PALLAVI<sup>1</sup> & SHIVENDU KUMAR RAI<sup>2</sup>

## ABSTRACT

Values and beliefs are critical elements of the culture of any community. These components of culture allow the community members to rejuvenate themselves in the process of learning. In this process, storytelling is a powerful tool which is utilized by the community to culturally transmit their values and beliefs. The folktales of a community have the power to shape the understanding of the community members and how they interact with others. For sharing these folktales among others, the community usually utilizes the cultural transmission process as postulated by Cavalli-Sforza and Feldman. The folktales of a community also work on the basis of ‘mechanism of transmission process’ of a culture where the storyteller works as a ‘cultural caretaker’ who transmits the information and the listener works as an ‘accepter’ of the information. The present study explores the praxis of folktales in the cultural transmission of values and beliefs of the Tharu community in Bihar. It examines the process of cultural transmission of the Tharu community through folktales along with the role of the storyteller as a cultural caretaker of the community and how these folktales propagate their values and beliefs. For this, ethnographic data has been collected through observation and in-depth interviews of the community members of the Tharu community. The results showed that the Tharu community of Bihar has been propagating their values and beliefs through folktales. Their folktales reflect the emotions, beliefs, norms, and values of the community and also showcase a tradition of storytelling in the community.

**Keywords:** Cultural caretaker, Cultural transmission, Folktales, Storytelling, Tharu community

## Introduction

Folktales are the shared information of any community to entertain, educate and enable the transmission of a culture. It is a form of oral tradition of a community. In the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003), it has been mentioned that folktales play a crucial role in the transmission of cultural tradition by bringing people closer together and “ensuring exchange and understanding among them”. It reflects the thoughts, ideas and cultural attributes of the community.

Storytelling is the act of telling stories about the experiences. Basically, it is a traditional form of dissemination of knowledge, values and wisdom (Ganz, 2011). Stories transmit the ideas of diverse cultures, traditions, customs, beliefs, and ways of living (Sirah, 2014). The tales are like anecdotes or narratives to impart knowledge, experiences and living activities.

Mphasha (2015) suggested that, in the process of

storytelling of folktales, three components represent the interrelationship: Narrator (Writer), Folktale (Text) and the Audience (Readers). These three components work together for the initiation and transmission of the folktales.

In communities, folktales help to build trust, cultivate norms, transfer indigenous knowledge, facilitate learning and maintain emotional bonds (Sole, 2002). It is a strong way to disseminate information and practices of the community. Generally, it is passed on in the family from one generation to another. In fact, personal life experiences of the elders may also be shared by them with the younger generation in the form of stories which shape their social behaviour and moral values.

Folktales also help in the promotion and preservation of “community culture” in the form of stories which represent the cultural attributes of the community. With this, folktales also help to maintain the sustenance of the indigenous communication system of the community. It gives a platform to the

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Mass Communication, Galgotias University, Greater Noida; <sup>2</sup>HOD and Assistant Professor, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Tecnia Institute of Advanced Studies, GGSIPU, New Delhi



community members to interact with the society and discern the moral values and the belief system.

### **Tharu community**

Scholars hold different opinions about the origin of the Tharu tribe. Generally, they look at the origin of the Tharu tribe from the etymological point of view. The word “Tharu” consists of “thar” means “hill” and “ru” which means “nearby”. As “Tarhuwa” means “became wet”, it refers to the swampy characteristics of the locality. “Thartharana” illustrates “trembling or quaking during a flight from Hastinapur to the Tarai after an intense battle between the Rajputs and the Muslims.

Nesfield (1885) mentioned that the Tharu community’s name is derived from ‘thare’ meaning halted (after an alleged flight into the forest), and ‘tarhua’ meaning wet, an allusion to the swampy nature of the place they live in. Crooke (1896) opines that the origin of the Tharus can be traced to the word “Tharu” signifying a ‘wine bibber’, based on the belief that this name was given to them by one of the Kshatriya kings of the plains after witnessing the Tharus’ capacity for drinking wine.

Buchanan (1838) had a different perspective about the Tharu community. He believed that the Gurkhas from Magadh were displaced by the Tharus. Basically, they moved from the hills and scattered around the region of the Ghaghara river. But the opinion is also mired in doubt because the Tharus themselves trace Chittor as their original home and to have descended from the Sisodiya clan of the Rajputs. They claim that they were driven out probably in the third siege of Chittor by Akbar in 1567 AD and originally, they were Rajputs who lost caste by using intoxicating liquor and rearing fowls.

However, in the search for the origin of the Tharus, Majumdar (1942) wrote an article ‘The Tharu and Their Blood Group’ which is based on an anthropometric and blood group survey. The article helps in the settlement of the argument about the Tharus’ origin and different viewpoints on the racial affinities by mentioning in the conclusion that the Tharu belongs to Mongoloid tribe and has been discredited as of Rajput origin.

Risley (1994) mentioned that the Tharus residing in the Champaran region of Bihar are farmers and elephant caretakers. Basically, they are scattered in the northern Bihar and the West and East Champaran districts. He believed that the Tharus lived a nomadic life in earlier days and they kept on changing their place. Mainly, they are settled in a scattered manner near the forest region. This also became a ground on which they were divided into different sub-castes. That is why, Risley (1994) made an effort to take an

account of the sub-castes and other sections of the Tharu community but was unable to draw a full list. Still, making a complete list of Tharus’ sub-caste residing in the West Champaran district of Bihar is a matter of concern.

### **Tharu in Bihar**

Tharu is an indigenous community who resides in different states of India such as Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. The presence of Tharu community in Bihar has been a very significant enough as this is the most populated tribal community in Bihar. After the bifurcation of Bihar and Jharkhand in 2000, most of the tribal population came under the jurisdiction/administration of Jharkhand. This posed a problem for the policy makers and social workers with regard to the issues of tribal development in the state(s). Although the government has different development plans and schemes, the condition of tribes is not substantial enough to protect their individuality. In such circumstances, the government of India added three communities—Kol, Kavar and Tharu—in the list of Scheduled Tribes of Bihar in 2003. Among them, the Tharu community has the largest population. The survival and development of the Tharu community became a matter of concern for the Bihar government. That’s why the Bihar government established a special wing ‘Samketik Tharuhat Vikas Abhikaran’ (STVA) in 2009 to look into the development process of the Tharu community.

### **Cultural transmission**

Trommsdorff (2009) said that “the continuity and change over the generation are affected by cultural transmission.” So, the investigation of the cultural transmission process is required for this study to understand the transmission of values and beliefs through the folktales of Tharu community.

The cultural transmission process helps in understanding human behaviour which is shaped by the cultural context of the individual. It is the cultural transmission process that determines the characteristics of the individual. Basically, cultural transmission is a transfer process, carrying cultural information from one generation to the next and from one group to another.

Cavalli-Sforza and Feldman postulated the concept of cultural transmission in 1981. Through this concept, they tried to describe the process of incorporation of a group’s culture in an individual’s nature. According to them, some form of connection need to be introduced between the culture of the group and the nature of the individual. This linkage and connections are defined from the cultural transmission process (Cavalli-Sforza & Feldman, 1981).

Berry, Poortinga, and Segall (2002) have divided the whole process of cultural transmission into three different sub-processes:

1. Enculturation- It is an acquired learning process of the individual where he/she learned the culture of his/her own, without any particular learning instructions. In this process, the individual learns through his surroundings in which parents and other elders of the family are involved.
2. Socialisation- This process of cultural learning also takes place within an individual's cultural zone but with some determined specification. Here, deliberate shaping and formal instruction are essential to acquire cultural traits.
3. Acculturation- In this process of learning, the individual learns from others who are not from his/her culture. Here, the ways for instruction may include both enculturation and socialisation. There is no defined boundary for learning.

The three major sources of cultural transmission are:

1. **Vertical Cultural Transmission** – Cultural transmission from parents to their offspring is termed as vertical cultural transmission by Cavalli-Sforza and Feldman. Different cultural contents like cultural values, skills, beliefs, motives, personality traits, religious beliefs, language and linguistic usage, sex-role, occupation, and political beliefs are transferred through this transmission channel.
2. **Horizontal Cultural Transmission** – It means cultural transmission from peers (in primary and secondary groups) to an individual during the course of development from birth to adulthood. Through this transmission channel, cultural contents like attitudes, career and social mobility, behaviour, children's game and riddles, rituals, stories, and rhymes are transferred.
3. **Oblique Cultural Transmission** – In this cultural transmission, one learns from other adults (including members of one's extended family) and institutions (including community organisation and formal schooling).

### Objective of the research

The objective is to examine the whole process of cultural transmission of the Tharu community through the help of folktales along with the role of the storyteller as a cultural caretaker of the community, and community members as accepters and how these folktales propagate their values and beliefs.

### Research methodology

For this study, ethnography is a suitable methodology as this helps in understanding an indigenous society's social and cultural phenomenon.

Ethnographic data was collected through the observation method and in-depth interviews were conducted with the community members of the Tharu community.

### Research area (West Champaran, Bihar):

Bihar is situated in the Eastern part of India. It is a land-locked area that shares its boundaries with Uttar Pradesh in the west, West Bengal in the east, Jharkhand in the south, and an international border with Nepal in the north. The river Ganga flows from west to east, dividing the whole state into two equal parts. Apart from this, rivers like Gandak, Burhi, Mahananda, Kosi and Saryu flow in the state.

Table 1: Administrative units of Bihar

Division	9
Districts	38
Sub-divisions	101
CD Blocks	534
Panchayats	8,406
No. of revenue villages	45,103
No. of towns	199

Bihar has 9 divisions with 38 districts, 101 sub-divisions, 534 Community development blocks, 8,406 village panchayats, 45,103 revenue villages and 199 towns. The total population is 10,38,04,637, comprising of 52.19% males and 47.80% females as per the census of 2011. The state has a sex ratio of 916 females per 1,000 males. Out of the total population, 88.71% of the population live in urban areas and the rest 11.29% live in rural areas. The state has a population density of 1,106 per square kilometre. There are 1,65,67,325, i.e., 15.91% Scheduled Castes (SCs) and 1,336,773, i.e., 1.28% Scheduled Tribes (STs) of the total population in Bihar. Major tribes of Bihar are Chero, Gond, Kharwar, Munda, Oraon, Santhal, Tharu, and many more. The state has a literacy rate of 61.80%. Of this, male literacy stands at 71.20% and female literacy is at 51.50%.

Table 2: Demography of Bihar (as per census 2011)

Total Population	10,38,04,637
Male	5,42,78,157
Female	4,98,21,295
Sex ratio	918
Density	1,106/km
SC population	1,65,67,325

ST population	13,36,773
Literacy Rate	61.80%
Male literacy rate	71.20%
Female literacy rate	51.50%

Bihar legislative assembly has 243 members. The state also has a legislative council with 75 members. Bihar has 39 members in the Lok Sabha and 14 in Rajya Sabha.

Bihar has experienced a consistent socio-economic development over the last decade, despite limited availability of financial resources. According to the new series of data on Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP), the growth rate of Bihar’s economy in 2018–19 was 10.53% (at constant prices) and 15.01% (at current prices), which is higher than the growth rate for the Indian economy.

The share of primary, secondary and tertiary sectors in the Gross State Value Added (GSVA) was 21.3%, 19.7% and 59.0%, respectively. Within the secondary sector, construction and manufacturing are major contributors to the GSVA; their shares were 9.5 and 8.2%, respectively, in 2018–19 and these shares have remained almost unchanged in the last 5 years. In the tertiary sector, major contributors to GSVA were—trade and repair services (18.2%), and real estate, ownership of dwelling and professional services (9.1%). The share of the overall tertiary sector in GSVA has increased between the financial years of 2012–13 to 2018–19.

**Selection of District (West Champaran) and Community Development Block (Bagaha 2)**

The West Champaran district of Bihar is identified as the research area for the study. Here, 6.3% tribal population of the state resides. With this, the Tharu community is dominantly residing in the district along with tribal communities like Oraon, Gond, and others. And, the research proposes to analyse the initiatives of the Bihar government, especially designed and implemented for the welfare of the Tharu community, which is executing in the area in particular and the Tharuhat region as a whole. It is significant enough to conduct the study in the Tharuhat region of the West Champaran district.

The headquarters of West Champaran district is in Bettiah, which is at a distance of 210 km from the state capital, Patna. The total area of the district is 5,228 sq. km. As per the area, it is the largest district of Bihar. The district is divided into three sub-divisions: Bettiah, Narkatiaganj, and Bagaha. Further, the sub-divisions of the district are segmented into

18 community development (CD) blocks. These CD blocks are Bettiah, Piprasi, Nautan, Bairiya, Majhauria, Bhitaha, Lauriya, Chanpatia, Mainatand, Sikta, Yogapatti, Narkatiyaganj, Gaunaha, Ramnagar, Bagaha 1, Bagaha 2, Thakaraha, and Madhubani. The district has 1,483 census villages and 1,507 revenue villages.

The periphery of West Champaran district touches the hilly areas of Nepal from the north, Gopalganj district and part of East Champaran district of Bihar from the south, Uttar Pradesh from the west and part of East Champaran and Nepal from the east. The district also shares an international boundary with Nepal which also gave international importance to it. The international border touches the five blocks of the district namely, Bagaha 2, Ramnagar, Gaunaha, Mainatand, and Sikta.

The West Champaran district has a population of 39,35,042 people which is the 9th most populated district of Bihar. In terms of population per square kilometre, West Champaran is the 35th most densely populated district in the state with 753 persons per sq. km as against the state’s 1,106 persons. It ranks 24th in terms of sex ratio (909) against the state’s 918. It ranks 8th in terms of child sex ratio (953) against the state’s 935. The literacy rate of the district is 55.70%.

Table 3: Demography of West Champaran district

District	West Champaran
Area	5,228 sq/km
Sub-divisions	3
CD Blocks	18
Villages	1,483
No. of revenue villages	1,507
Population	39,35,042
Density	753 person/km
Sex ratio	909
Literacy rate	55.70%

In the West Champaran district, a Tharuhat region is geographically demarcated to implement special developmental policies and plans proposed by the Bihar government. This region comprises of four community development blocks: Bagaha 2, Gaunaha, Ramnagar, and Mainatand. Out of these community development blocks, Bagaha 2 is the most populated (32.3%) tribal block. The population density of the Tharu community in Bagaha 2 is the primary reason identified by the researcher for conducting the research.

### Identification of village

After selecting the district and community development block for the fieldwork, the researcher has identified some villages like Bankatwa, Mahadeva, Naurangiya, Katharwa, Chhatraul, and Harnatar are selected from the CD block for conducting extensive ethnographic research.

### Tharu Folktales

Stories are not only prevalent in our memories, but they actively configure our memories, knowledge, and beliefs (Schank & Berman, 2002). In the same manner, the Tharu community's folktales work as a tool in continuing their traditional cultural system and indigenous knowledge system. Their folktales revolve around nature-related, devotional, knowledge system-related and social topics. Anyone from the community who can narrate well and has knowledge about the folktales acts as the narrator. Such a person customarily is the headman of the community. In the Tharu community, the "Gumasta" can also act like a storyteller. He is among the community members, who usually tell stories to children and other community members. Mainly, Gumasta works as a storyteller for the community members at the community level, but the elders of the family tell stories to the family or any individual.

Aman (17, Student and community member) said, "I used to listen to stories from our "Gumasta Kaka" (Community headman) in my childhood days. Every evening I and my friends used to gather at the house of "Gumasta Kaka" to listen to stories. He used to tell stories related to forests and nature. Sometimes, he also shared his experiences of collecting munj (grass) and wood from the forest."

The Gumasta (community headman) plays a very significant role in the transmission of cultural values and belief systems of the Tharu community. He is the one who knows the community's cultural attributes in an adequate manner which helps him to formulate intricate values within the community.

Ragini (25, Panchayat Shiksha Mitra) said, "I heard stories from my grandfather. Whenever my siblings and I were free in the night, we used to listen to his stories. He used to tell stories related to friendship among animals and humans, and mythological and personal life experiences. We learned many things from his stories. He imparted us the wisdom to help us face any difficulties of life. Through the medium of stories, he told us different techniques that would eventually help us in our daily chores. Like in our community, we have stories related to farming, fishing, and rearing. Through these stories, we also know about our traditional

systems that were used by our ancestors."

The Tharu community's elders also knew of many folktales which they narrated to the younger generation. Some of the folktales of the Tharu community are as follows:

Homelal Mahto (61, Farmer) told a story: Many years ago, a rat couple lived in a forest. They loved each other very much and were delighted to be together. They just wandered in the forest and ate fruits. One day while roaming, husband rat told his wife, "Hey, do you know that I am the king of this jungle? All the lands your sight can see belong to me." At that precious moment, an eagle took the rat with it. Wife rat shouted and wailed but no one listened to her.

The rat captured in the paws of the eagle tried hard but failed to escape its grip. He thought that the eagle must have heard his self-declaration of being the king of this forest, which is why he captured him. Unable to find a way to escape from its paws, the rat feels dejected. At that moment, the eagle saw a dead body, and so he released the rat and plunged at the dead body. The rat escaped from the eagle and his life was saved. From there, the rat returned to his wife. After seeing him, his wife rejoiced. Then, she asked him, "You told me that you are the king of this forest, then why did the eagle take you with it"? Then he replied, "Who told you that he took me? He is my servant; we went for a visit to my kingdom. While saying this, the rat looked up at the sky, to see if the eagle had heard him again this time or not.

In this folktale, the Tharu community tries to symbolise their survival of the fittest attitude by taking the rat and the eagle as their hero and villain respectively in the story. This folktale showcases the tightly structured discourse of the Tharu community. The community always faced the problem of its survival as majorly it is residing in the foothills of the Himalayas. So, the weather conditions are not very supportive of farming and living in this area. In these areas, people always suffer from drought or flood every year. Mr Ram Shankar Mahto (65, farmer) said, "In my childhood, every year flood or drought occurred in my village. Especially, the condition was worse during the flood because we struggled to get any food and to go out of our homes. So, we used to store food grains for those three months of the rainy season." That's why their survival is one of the most intricate discourses of the community which they tried to discuss in this folktale.

Ragini (25, Panchayat Shiksha Mitra) told another story: Once there was a man from the Musahar caste. He became a successful man with

his hard work. He wanted to marry his daughter to the world's best man. So, he called a meeting of all the wise people in his city. He asked them, "Who is the best man in this world?" An old man said that the whole world is under the care of Lord Shiva. He is the one who makes and destroys every element on earth. Then, who will be bigger than him? Then, another man said, "No, no, no! Himalaya Mountain is bigger than Lord Shiva. Himalaya is the strongest in this world and big in size. So, it is the greatest on this earth." Then, another man said, "No, no, no! Grass is stronger than Himalaya. They grow over Himalaya by tearing its hard surface. So, it is the strongest among them. Then, another man said, "Rats eat grass. So, rats are stronger". Further, another man said, "But, rats are caught by Musahar (it is a socially backward caste in India). So, I think they are the greatest among everyone." In this manner, the discussion about the greatest man on earth ended here and the man married his daughter to a Musahar man.

This tale of the Tharu community is structured on the relationship between the community members and nature. In this story, they also tried to represent the social structure of their community and how people from other communities take them. Being a traditional society, members of other communities consider them as a member of the lower caste which also degrades their identity in the society. Mr Madan Mahto (58, Farmer) told that "In my childhood, members from other communities won't invite us on any occasion and they even don't participate in our events. Nowadays, the situation has changed." That's why through this story they tried to establish the fact that they don't belong to the lower class structure of the society and they are also like the upper class structure only.

Channu Kumar Ram (29, Shopkeeper) told another story: There was once a poor farmer who lived in a small village. He had a small piece of land on which he did farming. Farming was the only source of income for him. He was a hard-working person. So, he never faced any deprivation. In every season, he worked hard on his land and in return, his land yielded a fair number of grains. He would always leave a handful of grains on his land for rats as he believed that the rats were his friends. The rats stayed on his land and never ruined his harvest. So, in this manner after every harvesting, he left over some grains and rats also never damaged his grains. Once due to less rainfall, his harvest decreased. He was faced with a dilemma that if he leaves some grains for the rats then that much amount of grain would be less for his family. He was upset and confused about what could be done.

At last, he decided that this time he would not leave grains for the rats.

After that harvest, when he sowed the grains in the next season, he found the next morning that all his sowed grains were spoiled by rats. He was in big trouble and was perplexed as to what to do. He did not know how to overcome this situation. One day, he was sitting under a tree near his land and thinking about what could be done. At that moment, a saint passed from there and saw the distressed farmer. He came to him and inquired about the reason. At first, the farmer denied talking about his problem but later, he shared his problem with the saint. Then, the saint gave him a suggestion, "The next morning you don't sow the whole land but only a few parts of the land, so that if rats are angry with you then they must again spoil your field. Then, the next morning the saint told him. But this time rats did not spoil the land. So, the farmer became happy and went to the saint and asked him "Baba, how did you do it?" The saint replied, "I did nothing. This is all grace of God." But the saint suggested to the farmer that after this in every season you sow only some part of the field. By following the saying of the saint, the farmer enjoyed a houseful of grains.

This folktale represents the dependency of the Tharu community on the farming and cultivation for their survival. Being a traditional society, the primary occupation of the Tharu community is also farming and fishing. So, this tale showcases the importance of grains and farming in their lives.

### **Analysis and interpretation**

#### ***Cultural transmission process of Tharu's folktales***

The folktales have a few underlying meanings. Some of the morals and ethics commonly found in the Tharu community's folktales are:

1. Protect nature, and it will protect you.
2. Every organism on this planet is equally vital for the existence of humankind.
3. Bad deeds do not lead to good results.
4. Every human being is equal despite his caste and religion.
5. The lesson of kindness.

The above-mentioned folktales of the Tharu community reflect the emotions, beliefs, norms, and values of the community and showcase a tradition of storytelling in the community. In the Tharu community, individuals learn about their indigenous knowledge from their parents, elders, institutions, and peers. The findings of this research suggest that all the cultural traits like values and beliefs that the Tharu community possess are acquired from their own culture. They achieving life with the help of traditional knowledge of the

community in the form of folktales and stories.

Values such as preserving nature, protecting animals, considering trees as human beings, and beliefs like nature protects us and animals are more important for human survival are acquired by the Tharu community members through their family members or community members with the help of vertical transmission.

In the vertical transmission process, the older family members act as a transmitter and the younger generation acts as a receiver. And, in the process of storytelling, the elders of the family tell folktales to their children and try to transmit the values and beliefs of the community through stories. Under this process, the cultural trait's transmission is directly initiated by the older generation, who knows very well about their family's culture. That's why they are treated as a "cultural caretaker" of the family and the younger generation acquires the transmitted values and beliefs which make them an "accepter". So, vertical modes of cultural transmission are employed to learn the values and beliefs of that particular family through folktales.

In the horizontal transmission, one learns from the peer group of the community which interacts at the primary and secondary levels for an individual's development from birth to adulthood (Berry & Georgas, 2009). The members of the Tharu community also follow this process of learning and development. The Tharu community learned various traditional knowledge systems through horizontal transmission and the act of storytelling is one of them.

In the horizontal transmission process, peer groups act as a transmitter and the individual acts as a receiver. This transmission process fosters socialization and enculturation in the Tharu community as the community members transmit information to the individuals to acquire knowledge about the community and internalize it through various folktales, songs, and dance forms.

In oblique transmission, individuals learn from other community members and institutions like schools or colleges. The Tharu community also adopts this type of cultural transmission for learning community-based cultural traits like celebrating community festivals and organising fairs. In this transmission process, the community members especially the community heads act as a transmitter and the other community members as a Receiver.

Under the oblique transmission process, the community head tells folktales to their community members and tries to transmit the values and beliefs of the community through stories. Here,

the cultural trait's transmission is commenced by the community head, that's why he acts as a "cultural caretaker" of the community and the other community members accumulate the transmitted values and beliefs which make them an "accepter". So, oblique modes of cultural transmission play an important role in the process of transmission of values and beliefs of the community through the Tharu community's folktales.

However, the practice of storytelling is shrinking in this fast-moving world. People do not have time to sit together or spend time with their families. Digvijay Rana said, "I used to listen to stories from an uncle in my childhood. Today, I hardly see my niece and nephews insist on anyone in the family for storytelling. I think they do not even understand the happiness and joy we used to feel while listening to stories and imagining them in our minds. They are busy watching T.V. or cartoon videos on their phones. They are not only losing the joy of being with elders, but it is also hampering their understanding of life." This shows a transition in the practice of storytelling in the Tharu community. The community has traditional stories, but they are not transmitting them to the next generation in the manner the community used to. This also leads them to lose their indigenous knowledge system as they used to transmit it through these stories.

### Conclusion

The praxis of storytelling of the Tharu community of Bihar is transmitted through the cultural transmission process. The people of Tharu community are propagating their values and beliefs with the help of folktales. Their folktales reflect the emotions, beliefs, norms, and values of the community and also showcase a tradition of storytelling in the community.

In this transmission process, three modes of transmission: vertical, horizontal, and oblique take place. In vertical transmission, the older generation acts as cultural caretakers and transmits their cultural traits to the younger generation and the younger generation acts as an active receiver and internalizes the community's practices as suggested by the elders in the family which helps in the transmission of family's values and beliefs. Whereas, in oblique transmission, the headman of the Tharu community works as a cultural caretaker and the listeners accept the folktales as they are following their values and beliefs which are visible in their lifestyle. So, this is the most important transmission process of folktales of the Tharu community for the transmission of values and beliefs of the community.

Table 4: Cultural transmission process of Tharu community

Component	Modes of transmission (from own culture)		
	Vertical	Horizontal	Oblique
Transmitter	Family Members	Peer groups	Community members and institutions
Receiver	Individual	Individual	Community members
Process of culture learning	Socialization	Socialization and Enculturation	Enculturation

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## Communication Practices in Maternal and Child Healthcare in Varanasi, India

RASHMI SINGH<sup>1</sup>, ARUN KUMAR DUBEY<sup>2</sup>, BASAVAPRABHU JIRLI<sup>3</sup>, & SADHANA MISHRA<sup>4</sup>

### ABSTRACT

Effective communication between frontline health workers and women in the reproductive age group is crucial for ensuring optimal maternal and child health outcomes. The study aims to explore the existing modes of communication used for maternal and child healthcare in the Harhua block of Varanasi District and identify potential areas for improvement. A qualitative research design was employed to investigate maternal and child healthcare communication practices. The study involved 16 frontline health workers and 12 women with at least one child living in the Harhua block of Varanasi, India. Data collection took place between March and August 2022, employing in-depth interviews as the primary method. The semi-structured interviews allowed participants to share their experiences, perceptions, and suggestions regarding communication during childbirth. Thematic analysis was applied to analyze the interview data, seeking recurring patterns and themes in the participants' responses. Nine themes were identified during the data analysis: Beneficiaries prefer the use of simple words and local language, the use of visual communication and educational tools to understand complex procedures, the use of pictorial and graphical material as an effective communication tool, attention, and respectful communication is the key, home visits are more effective and helpful to understand women's particular needs. The identified themes underscore the vital role of communication across diverse contexts like education, healthcare, and support services. Effective communication should focus on simplicity, utilize visual aids, maintain respect, and provide personalized approaches to cater to beneficiaries' needs. By integrating these principles into program design and service delivery, we can improve outcomes, foster inclusivity, and enhance understanding among various individuals and communities.

**Keywords:** Effective Communication, Healthcare, Varansi, Mass communication, Maternal

### Introduction

Maternal health refers to the health of women during pregnancy, childbirth and the postnatal period (World Health Organization, 2022). Every phase should be a positive journey, ensuring that women and their babies achieve their utmost potential for health and overall well-being. Although important progress has been made in the last two decades, about 287,000 women died during and following pregnancy and childbirth in 2020 (World Health Organization, 2023).

The most common direct causes of maternal injury and death are excessive blood loss, infection, high blood pressure, unsafe abortion, obstructed labour, and indirect causes such as anemia, malaria, and heart disease (World Health Organization, 2022). Most maternal deaths are preventable with

timely management by a skilled health professional working in a supportive environment. Eradication of preventable maternal death must remain at the top of the global agenda. Surviving pregnancy and childbirth alone should not be the sole indicator of effective maternal healthcare. It is imperative to broaden initiatives aimed at minimizing maternal injuries and disabilities in order to enhance overall health and well-being. Every pregnancy and birth is unique. Ensuring the well-being of women and their unborn children necessitates the importance of antenatal care. This preventive healthcare approach empowers women with insights from proficient healthcare professionals regarding healthy practices throughout pregnancy. It enables a better comprehension of warning signs during pregnancy and childbirth, while also providing essential social,

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, Department of Community Medicine, IMS, Banaras Hindu University. (E-mail: singhrashmi9410@gmail.com);

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Community Medicine, IMS, Banaras Hindu University. (E-mail: arun.dubey@bhu.ac.in);

<sup>3</sup>Professor, Department of Agriculture Extension Education, IMS Banaras Hindu University. (E-mail: bjirli@bhu.ac.in); <sup>4</sup>Research Scholar, Department of Community Medicine, IMS, Banaras Hindu University. (E-mail: sadhana@bhu.ac.in)



emotional, and psychological support during this pivotal period in their lives (UNICEF, 2023).

Addressing inequalities that impact health outcomes, particularly in the realms of sexual and reproductive health, rights, and gender, is fundamental to guaranteeing universal access to respectful and high-quality maternity care for all women. If current trends continue, 48 million children under the age of 5 are projected to die between 2020 and 2030, half of them newborns (Sharrow *et al.*, 2022). Globally, every two minutes, a woman dies during pregnancy or childbirth. In 2020, there were an estimated 287,000 deaths worldwide. About 70% of those maternal deaths were in sub-Saharan Africa (World Health Organization, 2023).

As per the sample Registration System (SRS) report by the Registrar General of India (RGI), the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) in India was 113 per 100,000 live births during 2016-18, which is high compared to other developing Nations (SRS, 2016-18). Some of the basic indicators of maternal health include deliveries in healthcare facilities, deliveries overseen by medical professionals, antenatal care (ANC), postnatal care (PNC), and the outcomes of pregnancies. Good maternal and child health depends on effective communication. Strategic communication is the MCH program's steering wheel, guiding it toward its goals. Strategic communication is also the glue that holds the program together or the creative vision that integrates a program's multifaceted activity (Registrar General of India, 2016-18).

Communication for behavioral change has become a major strategy in reproductive and child health as well as for all other national health programmes. Research reports reveal that effective communication is difficult to achieve. In today's globalized world, effective communication is essential to building relationships between people by using verbal and nonverbal language as a tool of communication.

In India, two Ministries, that is the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW, 2013 & 2021) and the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD, 2021), share responsibility for nutrition interventions. Two programs, the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) and Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) aim to improve maternal and child nutrition and health through services provided by frontline workers.

However, operational inconsistency exists between ICDS and NRHM, and the state has taken various actions to address these challenges. These include adapting the 2009 national guidelines for village Health and Nutrition Days (VHND), a monthly outreach program held at the AWC for

integrated health and nutrition services for pregnant and lactating women, adolescent girls, and children under five years of age (World Health Organization, 2023; MoWCD, 2021).

Frontline health workers in India include accredited social health activists (ASHA), Anganwadi workers (AWW), and auxiliary nurse midwives (ANM). The AWWs are primarily responsible for the delivery of ICDS services, while ASHA and ANMs are primarily responsible for the delivery of NHM services (MoWCD, 2021). Effective communication among health care providers and women is one of the key components to ensure women's particular needs and preferences.

### **Research objective**

The study aims to explore the existing modes of communication used for maternal and child health care in the Harhua block of Varanasi and identify potential areas for improvement.

### **Research methodology**

This research utilized a qualitative method to investigate maternal and child healthcare communication practices. There are eight blocks in the Varanasi district, out of which Harhua block was randomly selected. The study involved 16 frontline health workers and 12 women with at least one child living in the Harhua block of Varanasi district, India. A community-based study was conducted in a door-to-door survey from March 2022 to August 2022, employing in-depth interviews as the primary method. These semi-structured interviews allowed participants to share their experiences, perceptions, and suggestions regarding communication during childbirth. Before initiating the study, ethical approval was obtained from the Institutional Ethics Committee of the Institute of Medical Sciences, BHU. Semi-structured interviews (AWWs, ASHAs, and ANMs) were conducted in the local language (Hindi) from March to August 2022. The topics covered during the interview included the ICDS and NRHM program services. Diverse communication methodologies encompass interpersonal communication, mass communication and group communication (ICDS), and national rural health mission (NRHM) programs. Within the purview of these pivotal programs, ASHA, ANM and AWW personnel adeptly employ these communication strategies to disseminate crucial education among women belonging to the reproductive age cohort. As part of the research endeavor, the study incorporates these communication techniques as the dependent variables of interest, which are effectively utilized within

the framework of integrated child development services. All interviews were audio-recorded with the permission of the frontline workers and mothers, and some keynotes were also taken, then transcribed verbatim and translated into English. Each interview lasted 25-35 minutes whereas at the points where no issues were brought up by the participants. It was assumed that saturation had been achieved and data collection was stopped. An inductive method of thematic analysis was used to analyze the data and identify new emerging themes from the data. In the first stage of analysis, the transcripts were manually coded. Once the interviews were fully coded by the first author, a second stage of coding and summarizing for emergent themes and patterns was conducted. Illustrative quotations that captured the key reported by the participants have been included in the results.

## Results

Table 1 provides a comprehensive overview of the socio demographic characteristics of the frontline workers. The majority of frontline health workers in this study are the Anganwadi Workers (AWWs) and the Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs), each comprising 43.75%, while Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANMs) constitute 12.5% of the sample. In terms of age distribution, a significant proportion of them were from the age group 30-39 years (56.25%), followed by the 40-49 age group (25%) and the 50-59 age group (18.75%). Caste-wise, the majority of them belonged to the OBC category constituting half (50%), followed by SCs (31.25%) and the general category (18.75%). Regarding experience, majority of them (50%) had 11-15 years of experience, while 31.25% had 6-10 years and 12.5% had five or fewer years. Education levels vary, with 31.25% having completed graduation, followed by intermediate and post-graduation each at 31.25%, and high school at 25%.

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of frontline health workers

Variables	Categories	Number	Percentages
Frontline health workers	AWW	7	43.75
	ASHA	7	43.75
	ANM	2	12.5
Age-Group	30-39	9	56.25
	40-49	4	25
	50-59	3	18.75
Caste	General	3	18.75
	OBC	8	50
	SC	5	31.25

Variables	Categories	Number	Percentages
Experience group	5 or less	2	12.5
	6-10	5	31.25
	11-15	8	50
	16-20	1	6.25
Education	Graduation	5	31.25
	High-School	4	25
	Intermediate	5	31.25
	Post-graduation	2	12.5

This study identified nine themes of existing modes of communication in the context of utilization of maternal and child healthcare-related themes from the perspective of healthcare providers, beneficiaries prefer simple words and local language, the use of visual communication and educational tools to understand complex procedures, the use of pictorial and graphical material as an effective communication tool, attention and respectful communication as a key, home visit are more effective and helpful to understand women's specific needs. From the perspective of women, the theme was identified as, beneficiaries seeking an opportunity to ask questions, beneficiaries desiring to be treated as unique persons with unique needs, privacy in terms of women's particular needs, and good behavior establishing trust among beneficiaries.

### Themes under modes of communication from health provider's prospective

1. Beneficiaries prefer the use of simple words and local language.

Health workers mentioned that they use simple words in the local language to make messages clearer and easily comprehensible; this is important to make them understand this condition and how to take care of themselves properly. Asha stated as:

*We talk to the women in the same way they converse with us, we talk to them in Bhojpuri too. First, we ask about their well-being, and then enquire about some new development in their lives with special reference to pregnancy, and then they gradually disclose. (ASHA-2)*

2. Use of visual communication and educational tools to understand the complex procedures.

Health workers use visual communication to make complex medical information simpler and more acceptable for beneficiaries with limited education. These tools empower them to make informed decisions. One ANM mentioned as:

*For the women who come to us, we try to make them understand prenatal care, vaccinations and exclusive breastfeeding through the means of posters*



and videos. (ANM-1)

3. Use of pictorial and graphical materials as an effective communication tool.

Health workers use visual aids to make information more memorable. It helps improve the understanding and recall of important health-related information.

*We educate them about prenatal care and what they need to perform, through the means of booklet containing different pictures regarding the processes to be followed. The interesting pictorial representations instigate them to ask their doubts, we answer their queries and tell them that if they follow the processes, the way it has been represented in the booklet, you as well as their child will be healthy (ASHA-3).*

*Posters and banners consisting of pictorial representations as well as descriptions about vaccination, exclusive breastfeeding, and nutrition are available at our center. Few ladies understand by visualizing and those who don't understand are taught in VHND, Mahila Mandal Samiti, and AAA meetings.) (AWW-4)*

4. Attention and respectful communication is the key.

Most health workers agreed that listening to the patients carefully, treating them with respect, and communicating health information effectively is very important. This develops trust, involvement, and a better care experience for the beneficiaries. One of the ASHA stated as:

*We make home-to-home visits to meet women and try to make them aware. Few ladies listen to us attentively while few say that, we get money for preaching but they don't get anything. Showing their disinterest, they pretend to be busy and ask us to come later. (ASHA-6)*

5. Home visits are more effective and helpful to understand women's particular needs.

The health worker said that when they visit the beneficiary' home, they get the opportunity to

observe her living conditions environment, and the care available to her. This helps in understanding her situation more accurately and provides personalized care. It also builds rapport with the woman and her family.

*When we keep visiting regularly, then they seem to mingle with us, and slowly and gradually, they start to share their issues. Few women pass through extremely miserable conditions; to such women, we keep on visiting more frequently. In this way, they also gradually develop confidence in us and start sharing their problems. (ASHA-3)*

**Themes under modes of communication from beneficiary's perspective**

Table 2 presents the socio-demographic profiles of the women surveyed, providing valuable insights into their age distribution, caste, religion, education, and family structure. The data reveals that the majority of women fall within the age groups of 15-24 and 25-34, constituting 41.7% each, while the 35-44 age groups represent 16.7%. Caste-wise, the sample is diverse, with 33.3% belonging to the General and ST categories each, 16.7% to OBC and SC each. Regarding religion, a significant majority, 75%, were Hindu, while 25% were Muslim. The majority of the women, 33.3% had primary education, 16.7% each for secondary and intermediate education, 25% with high school education, and 8.33% had undergraduate studies. Regarding family structure, 66.7% were part of joint families, while 33.3% lived in nuclear family setups.

Table 2: Socio-demographic profiles of women

Variables	Categories	Number	Percentages
Age-Group	15-24	5	41.7
	25-34	5	41.7
	35-44	2	16.7
Caste	General	4	33.3
	OBC	2	16.7
	SC	2	16.7
	ST	4	33.3
Religion	Hindu	9	75
	Muslim	3	25
Education	Primary	4	33.3
	Secondary	2	16.7
	High School	3	25
	Intermediate	2	16.7
	Undergraduate	1	8.33
Family Structure	Joint	8	66.7
	Nuclear	4	33.3

1. Beneficiaries desired to be treated as unique persons with unique needs.

This finding reveals that the beneficiaries felt that the health worker does not fully understand their concerns, and this indicates the importance of interpersonal communication.

*"I am unable to convey my problems to them in whatever way I feel. They just come and return after doing their works." (Women-1)*

*"I feel like ASHA is not able to understand my problems and needs properly, had she focused on my situation then that would have been beneficial." (Women -2)*

2. Beneficiaries seek opportunity to ask questions

This highlights that the beneficiaries desired to ask questions and seek clarification from the health worker but they face difficulties due to limited time and a lack of willingness on the part of the health worker to address their concerns.

*"I have several queries related to pregnancy but I feel hesitant asking ASHA, as I feel that she would not devote a significant amount of time to my questions; if she provides me the opportunity to ask question that would be helpful." (Women 5)*

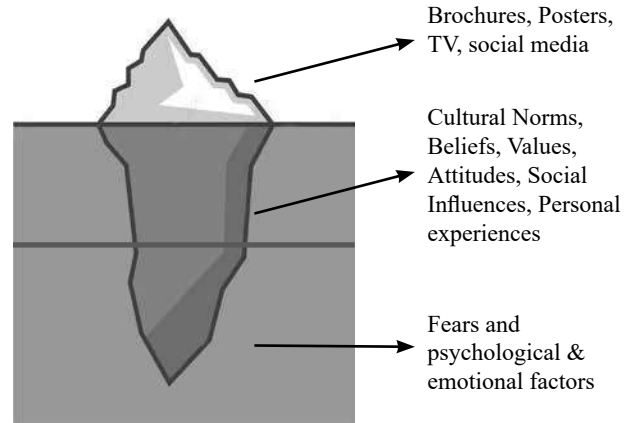
3. Privacy in terms of women’s particular need

During the discussion with ANM, this sentence highlights the concern of beneficiaries regarding privacy and the need for a more confidential setting to address their specific needs.

*"When ANM visits our home, in the presence of all family members, I am unable to share my issues with her." (Women 4)*

4. Good behaviour establishes trust among beneficiaries.

This finding highlights the need for positive behaviour towards the beneficiaries. This will help in



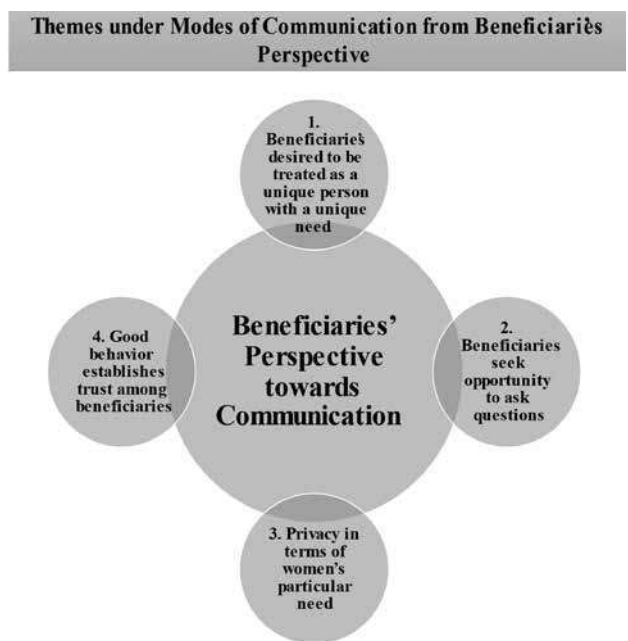
making communication effective and trust building between beneficiaries and health workers.

*"When ASHA talks to me properly, then I develop trust on her and whenever I am in need, I call and ask her regarding my problems." (Women 5)*

In health communication, the “Iceberg Model” serves as a metaphorical concept used to grasp diverse levels of communication, and factors that influence health-related behaviours and outcomes. It is a useful framework for comprehending the underlying and often hidden determinants that affect how individuals process and respond to health messages.

The model is named after the structure of an iceberg, where only a small portion is visible above the waterline, while the vast majority remains submerged beneath the surface. Similarly, in health communication, overt, explicit, and visible factors significantly impact the effectiveness of health messaging and interventions. The iceberg model in health communication typically consists of three layers.

1. Visible layer (above the waterline) - This layer represents the overt and explicit aspects of communication, which are visible and easily noticed. The actual content of health messages, the medium through which messages are delivered (brochures, posters, TV commercials, social media), and the language used in the communication.
2. Hidden layer (below the waterline) - This layer represents the underlying and less apparent factors that influence how individuals interpret and respond to health messages. For example, cultural norms, beliefs, values, attitudes, social influences, personal experiences, and emotions related to health and the targeted health behaviour.
3. Deeper hidden layer (Deep below the waterline): This layer represents the subconscious or unconscious factors that shape health-related



decision-making and behaviours. For example, past traumas, fears and other psychological and emotional factors can profoundly impact health behaviours.

In health communication, effective messaging requires considering not only visible contents but also the hidden and deeper hidden layers. Understanding the full spectrum of factors that influence health-related behaviour allows communicators and healthcare professionals to develop more tailored and impactful interventions.

**Discussion**

Table 3: Themes under modes of communication

Themes under modes of communication	
Healthcare provider’s perspective	Beneficiaries prefer the use of simple words and local language.
	Use of visual communication and educational tools to understand complex procedures
	Use of pictorial and graphical materials as an effective communication tool.
	Attention and respectful communication is the key.
Beneficiaries perspective	Home visits are more effective and helpful to understand women’s particular needs.
	Beneficiaries desired to be treated as unique persons with unique needs.
	Beneficiaries seek opportunity to ask questions
	Privacy in terms of women’s particular need
	Good behavior establishes trust among beneficiaries

*Use of visual communication and educational tools to understand complex procedures:* This study found that they utilize visual aids and educational resources to comprehend complicated processes. According to this study, health professionals utilize visual aids to make complicated medical information easier to understand and more accessible to patients with low levels of education. They are equipped with these tools to make wise selections. In a related study, images that are closely related to spoken or written language can significantly boost recall of health education material when compared to text alone. When a graphic demonstrates connections between ideas and spatial relationships, it can also help with comprehension. Visuals can alter adherence to health recommendations, but whether or not they raise or reduce target behaviours depends on the emotional

response to the visuals (Houts *et al.*, 2006).

**Attention and respectful communication a key:** It is crucial to communicate with care and consideration. The survey revealed that the majority of healthcare workers felt it was essential to pay close attention to patient’s needs, treat them with respect, and effectively convey medical information. This encourages engagement, trust, and better care for the recipients. A study in Nigeria revealed that individuals, both women, and providers, have reported instances of encountering or observing physical mistreatment, including actions like slapping, securing a delivery bed, and confinement in the hospital. Additionally, verbal abuse has been described, involving behaviours such as yelling, intimidating, and making threats of physical harm towards women (Bohren *et al.*, 2017). Patients should be allowed to participate in all treatment-related decisions and be fully informed about their course of therapy. Even when a patient has difficulties, effective doctor patient communication can help the patient feel less worried and have a positive delivery experience (World Health Organization, 2016).

*Pregnant women should receive the right care, at the right times:* WHO recommends a woman consult her health provider at least 8 times throughout her pregnancy to detect and manage potential problems and reduce the likelihood of stillbirth or neonatal death. Antenatal care also allows health workers to offer various forms of support and information to pregnant women, including on healthy lifestyles, preventing diseases, and family planning. In a study by Ojelade in Southwest Nigeria, women emphasized that rather than being rude and dismissive healthcare providers should listen and respond to the needs of the women (Ojelade *et al.*, 2022). Women also desired personalized attention from health providers, where each woman is treated as a unique person with a unique need. Women do not want healthcare providers to “think of what they handle every time”. Rather, women said they would prefer that the providers treat every woman in labour with extreme care and attention, regardless of her parity, recognizing “that this person is new; they should not use such statements as ‘after all, this is not your first baby, not your second baby. You know the way’” when health care providers used phrases such as ‘don’t shout, don’t disturb me’” for the women in labour, women felt discouraged (Bossche *et al.*, 2022). A similar study suggests that although less-educated women rarely read the handbook themselves at home, they became familiar with health information and options related to MCH through personalized guidance provided by health providers at health

facilities utilizing the MCH handbook (Hagiwara *et al.*, 2013).

In a similar study, most respondents, 84% of participants, knew about IEC materials, and 16% of healthcare providers did not know about printed IEC materials. Approximately 30% of the study participants always used IEC material. Most of the participants used posters followed by flip charts and leaflets. Most of the study participants used IEC material in the ANC room and the wards. The majority of participants did not use IEC due to the inaccessibility of IEC materials (29%) and the lack of appropriate IEC materials (29.9%) (Geleta *et al.*, 2022).

A similar study, finding indicated that 83.6% had ever used IEC materials, 60.9% had used them in the past year, and 75.1% had used them in the past month. Around half of the study participants used posters, followed by flip charts (16.4%). Most of the study participants used IEC materials at the ANC, followed by the wards. Ninety-two percent of the study participants expressed an intention to use printed IEC material in the future. One-third of the study participants did not utilize the IEC material due to the inaccessibility of the printed IEC materials as well as due to the lack of appropriate printed IEC materials (Geleta *et al.*, 2022).

Age, sex, marital status, having sufficient time to provide health education, and perceiving IEC as more important were significantly associated with the utilization of IEC materials. A study finding indicated that 83% of participants had used printed IEC materials. This finding was higher than a study conducted in the Jimma Zone. In this study, it was found that pictures can also improve comprehension when they show relationships among ideas or when they show spatial relationships. Pictures can change adherence to health instructions, but an emotional response to pictures affects whether they increase or decrease target behaviours (Houts *et al.*, 2006).

*Beneficiaries desired to be treated as unique persons with unique needs:* This finding reveals that the beneficiaries felt that the health worker did not fully understand their concerns, and this indicates the importance of interpersonal communication. Saha and Saha (2010) conducted a similar study, which showed that Indian women's health status is negatively impacted by their status in society. The factors that constitute their status include maternal and child health, violence against women, nutritional status, and unequal treatment of girls and boys (Saha & Saha, 2010). Further insights emerged from the study that revealed that women in India often receive inadequate health care due to their low status and

special health needs, which can lead to inadequate diets and less access to healthcare (Key, 1987). A similar study has been done that showed that women's health in India is vital for maintaining family health and achieving the Millennium Development Goals (Sadgir, 2021).

*Privacy in terms of women's particular needs:* During the discussion with ANM, when ANM visits our home, in the presence of all family members, I am unable to share my issues with her highlighting the concern of beneficiaries regarding privacy and the need for a more confidential setting to address their specific needs. Another study showed that contextual conditions exert a powerful influence on midwives' behaviour toward complementary and alternative medicine (Hall *et al.*, 2013). The most significant factors identified in this study include the context of professional work, the midwife's beliefs and knowledge, and the women's expectations and health. Further insights have revealed that while most ASHA workers possess good knowledge of antenatal care, their understanding of the danger signs of pregnancy remains inadequate (Kaur *et al.*, 2022). Another study indicates that frontline workers in India see limited adolescent clinics and limited access to antenatal care as barriers, with mothers-in-law and husbands being significant influences in women's access to health services (Sharma *et al.*, 2021).

## Conclusion

The identified themes underscore the vital role of communication across diverse contexts like education, healthcare, and support services. Effective communication should focus on simplicity, utilize visual aids, maintain respect, and provide personalized approaches to cater to beneficiaries' needs. By integrating these principles into program design and service delivery, we can improve outcomes, foster inclusivity, and enhance understanding among a wide range of individuals and communities. The future will likely witness further advancements in communication technology, focusing on seamless integration and enhanced user experiences. However, it is crucial to balance digital and in-person interactions to maintain meaningful relationships and human connections.

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## An Analysis of Indian Business Journalism Over Three Decades

DISHA BATRA<sup>1</sup> & AKSHAY UPMANYU<sup>2</sup>

### ABSTRACT

This paper discusses a corporate shift in business news production after the emergence of Indian economic reforms in 1991. Most of the studies in the West analysed the influence and interference of corporate houses and revealed strong corporate influence over media production. Against this backdrop, this paper studies the transition of a socialist economy (India) to a market-oriented economy when pushed by 1991 reforms in the context of business media houses. The content analysis conducted over three decades on three prominent Indian business publications (Economic Times, Business Standard and The Hindu Business Line) subsequent to economic reforms has unveiled a significant transformation in both the manner and the subject matter of news production. After a thorough analysis, a shift in the Indian business media's preference for corporate sources has been observed, which is highly supported by an increase in coverage of corporate and financial news stories. These conclusions have been examined with the help of a two-way ANOVA test, revealing statistically significant differences between the change in news source citation along with the change in coverage of economic, business, and financial news stories by three different business newspapers over the period of time (three decades) with  $p$  value less than 0.05 ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Keywords:** Business news, Corporatisation, Economic reforms, Indian newspapers, News source

### Introduction

The information of trading, and thus the trading of information, resulted in the establishment of a foundation for the current business newspaper industry. This business newspaper industry has gone through several waxing and waning phases and transformed itself. This transformation gave rise to certain paradigm shifts in the industry itself. One of the major shifts occurred after the emergence of economic reforms in the country in 1991. Business journalism in India has evolved significantly over these past three decades. This evolution has not only been a response to changing societal and technological dynamics but has also been influenced by a notable shift in the business approach within journalism. In this context, the term “business approach” refers to the increasing commercialisation, corporate influence, and profit-driven orientation of media outlets, which play a crucial role in shaping the content and priorities of business journalism (Picard, 2014; Tumber, 1993; White & Mazur, 1995). This paper explores the corporatisation of Indian business news production and highlights the

paradigm shift in business journalism during this period. Also, the formation of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) and the advent of new information and communication technologies have changed the nature and scope of knowledge and information dissemination across the nation. After liberalisation and the formation of SEBI, the business press has undergone a drastic change with the flood of an enormous number of industries and the deregulation of public sector industries. Indian business journalism has witnessed significant growth and transformation in recent decades (Dutta & Bhattacharya, 2009). With the liberalisation of the Indian economy in the early 1990s, there has been a surge in business publications and television channels dedicated to financial news. As business journalism grew and became more focused on profit, it became more sensitive to a variety of emerging trends. Now, how this expansion of business journalism after economic reforms has been handled and managed by contemporary business news organisations in India is a question to figure out.

Conceptually, economic liberalisation means

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication (SMcH), Manav Rachna International Institute of Research and Studies, Faridabad, India (*E-mail*: dishabatra100@gmail.in); <sup>2</sup>Research Scholar, Sharda University, Noida, India (*E-mail*: akshayupmanyu@gmail.in)



opening the market to free trade. For India, it meant a departure from its socialist economy to a market-oriented economy (George, 2008). In other words, allowing private or foreign investment in the domestic market and minimising government interference. Operationally, these reforms further reformed the way business news stories were gathered and reported. Davis (2000) stated that the expansion of corporate PR coincided with a strong political shift towards free-market policy-making, which clearly benefitted the cause of corporate capital over labour. Against this background, it becomes relevant to analyse the kind of sources that set the business news agenda in the economy, i.e., what kind of sources journalists or reporters usually cite while covering business news stories after economic reforms. Chang (1999) analysed the content of the New York Times and the Detroit News and concluded that the “auto elite” set the agenda for both newspapers. Grafstrom and Pallas (2007) introduced the concept of negotiation—previously used mainly in the field of political journalism—into a new setting, the field of business news. The empirical study conducted by Grafstrom and Pallas indicates that the term “negotiation” is relevant and useful in analysing interactions between business media and corporate sources. The study further revealed that the interaction between business media and corporate news sources is highly institutionalised and follows well-established routines. In this paper, the researcher focuses on examining the three-decade-long journey in terms of shifts and changes when it comes to the news sources that set the news agenda for Indian business newspapers.

Those who have produced studies of business news source dominance (Glasgow University Media Group, 1976, 1980; Tumber, 1993; Mitchell, 1997) or historical accounts of the development of the corporate PR industry (Bernays, 1923; Dreier, 1982; Nelson, 1989; Tulloch, 1993; Cutlip *et al.*, 1994; Stauber & Rampton, 1995; Ewen, 1996) are very clear about the effective use of corporate PR. In each case, it is assumed that business sources frequently manipulate and slant news coverage to their own needs and that PR is, in essence, another corporate tool with which to bend the public will (Davis, 2000). With these evidences, it becomes necessary to examine the Indian context of business news production, specifically whether there has been a sudden or gradual shift in news sources following the transition from a socialist to a market-oriented economy.

Various studies also observed that parallel to the growth of corporate PR, business and financial news also expanded in Britain during the same period

(Jones, 1987; Parsons, 1989; Tumber, 1993; Tunstall, 1996). Jones (1987) in a study observed in the 1980s that industrial relations reporting was seriously declining and that the main growth area was financial reporting—a sector that had come to occupy one-third of the editorial space in *The Times*, *The Independent*, and *The Daily Telegraph*. The inclination towards corporate sources for business news production is altogether supported by the increase in coverage of corporate and financial news in these studies. Also, certain studies, in addition to an increase in the coverage of corporate news with financial news, alarmingly identified high levels of advertising as a dominant source. Kopel (1982), Andrew (1990), and White and Mazur (1995), all emphasise the closed circle that has developed between financial PR practitioners (PRPs), city editors, analysts, institutions, and top management. As a result, journalists covering financial and business news tend to move in small and exclusive circles consisting almost exclusively of city sources. The few studies of business and financial media that exist (Dreier, 1982; Ericson *et al.*, 1989; Parsons, 1989; Andrew, 1995) come to similar conclusions about business-source dominance. These also tend to agree that business news is paid for by business advertising and is largely for business consumption (Davis, 2000). The Indian media landscape, much like its global counterparts, has witnessed a remarkable commercialisation of news media (Picard, 2014).

This shift has been accompanied by significant changes in media ownership and funding models, which have had profound implications for the content and nature of business journalism. The influence of corporate ownership on news outlets is increasingly noticeable, as media organisations seek advertising revenue and engage in partnerships with corporations (Tumber, 1993; White & Mazur, 1995). This relationship between media ownership and corporate interests has raised questions about the autonomy and impartiality of business journalism. The study further examines whether the shift and changes in Indian business news production after a departure from being a socialist economy to a market-oriented economy have been additionally led and supported by high coverage of corporate and financial news. In addition, the study also looks for the differences in coverage of major Indian business newspapers with a comparative analysis of the news source citations by the respective newspapers.

### **Significance of the study**

This research holds substantial significance within the domain of media studies and journalism, particularly in the context of India’s evolving economic

landscape. By examining the paradigm shift in business journalism over three decades following economic reforms, this study offers valuable insights into the transformation of news production. Understanding how contemporary business news organisations have managed the expansion of business journalism post reforms is crucial for media professionals, scholars, and policymakers. Additionally, the investigation into the sources typically cited by journalists in business news stories provides a nuanced view of information dissemination. The research sheds light on the complex interplay between news organisations, government officials, corporations, and independent sources, influencing the media's role in shaping public discourse. Furthermore, the study's focus on the Indian context—transitioning from a socialist to a market-oriented economy—contributes to a deeper understanding of how economic reforms impact news sources and agendas. By addressing these aspects, this research not only enriches academic discourse but also offers practical insights for media practitioners and policymakers seeking to navigate the evolving landscape of business journalism in India.

#### Data collection

The data collection process involved extensive research at the National Library of India in Kolkata, which is a repository renowned for its comprehensive archive of newspapers. Accessing this valuable resource aligned with the Government of India norms, the researcher meticulously gathered data. Within the archive, the selected samples of the respective newspapers—*Economic Times*, *Business Standard*, and *The Hindu Business Line*—spanning a consistent three-decade period following economic reforms, were diligently retrieved. This process ensured access to the complete historical records of these publications, offering a rich and authentic source of content for the study. The researcher's physical presence at the National Library of India underscored the commitment to accuracy and completeness in data collection, contributing to the robustness of the research findings.

#### Content Analysis

For analysing the three-decade long journey of the news sources that set the news agenda for Indian business newspapers, the researcher has relied upon the content analysis method which, according to Walizer and Wienir (1978), is a systematic procedure to examine the content of recorded information, and a descriptive approach, whose ultimate objective is to tell “what is” instead of “how/when/why”. As the study intends to examine the changes in news sources after economic reforms in India, this

technique has been used to study the content of three leading business dailies—*Economic Times*, *The Hindu Business Line* and *Business Standard* (IRS 2017, 2018) in an effort to find out the growth and development of business newspapers in post liberalisation era. The sample is constituted of the newspapers of every year from 1991 till 2021. The year 1991 is taken as the starting year due to the fact that the LPG policy of the 1990s marked a remarkable change in industry and business. Deregulation of public sector enterprises, privatisation, liberalisation of the licensing system, and foreign policy regulations were the factors which played an important role in the overall growth and development of the industrial system in India. The formation of SEBI (1992) has also resulted in the diversification of the content of business newspapers. The sampling has been based on a systematic random sampling method in which the newspapers from each year have been taken into consideration.

#### The universe and the sample

**Universe:** The population of the study consisted of Indian business newspapers (top 3 business newspapers as per IRS 2017 and 2018)

**Unit of data collection:** A complete subject matter of business newspapers comprising of its size, area, number of pages, number of news stories, type of news stories, story source, number of editorials, theme of editorials, number of articles, theme of articles, number of photographs, space devoted to photographs, number and different type of illustrations, space devoted to illustrations and different types of headlines.

**Sample size:** The Indian economic liberalisation was announced in July 1991. Therefore, the time frame from July 1991 to July 2021 was taken into consideration for the sample of respective business dailies. For drawing samples, the researcher has visited the National Library of Kolkata where a copy of every newspaper has been treasured by the administration on a daily basis. Furthermore, the systematic random sampling method has been adopted. A systematic sample size of 356 newspapers was undertaken, representing a quarterly sample from each year. The actual sample size of the study should be 372 issues (number of years  $\times$  quarterly issue  $\times$  number of business newspapers, i.e.,  $31 \times 4 \times 3 = 372$ ). The variation in the sample size is due to the fact that the newspaper *Business Line* started its publication in the year 1994.

#### Intercoder reliability

Two trained coders coded 20% of the sample stories ( $n=70$ ) initially. The excel sheets were created

by two observers who assign the count of news stories with respect to all the variables undertaken for the study. The intercoder reliability up to a satisfactory level was attained for each variable (i.e., >.80) with respect to the alpha agreement for coding (Krippendorff, 2004). High intercoder reliability is required in content analysis to ensure quality when more than one coder is involved in data analysis. These standards have been adopted in numerous content analyses in the social sciences and they might continue to serve as guidelines. After initial reliability was established, the remaining stories were coded accordingly.

**Data analysis**

Researcher has done the content analysis of 356 units from three different business newspapers (Business Standard = 124, Economic Times = 124 and The Hindu Business Line = 108) from 1991 to 2021. Three different Excel code sheets (of three different newspapers) have been prepared according to the instructions mentioned in the code book. A number of variables (v) have been studied and coded during the content analysis coding process and are as follows:

- v1. Date of issue:** On each code sheet, enter the date of issue of the newspaper.
- v2. Size of the newspaper:** Measure and indicate the size of the newspaper (cm. sq.)
- v3. Number of pages:** Indicate the total number of pages in the newspaper.
- v4. Number of news stories:** Count and indicate the total number of news stories in the newspaper.
- v5. Story source/origin (designated by story byline):**  
**S1=** Special or Principal Correspondent (Business/Law/Legal)  
**S2=** News agencies

- S3=** Newspaper’s own reporter, editor or correspondent
- S4=** Newspaper’s business bureau or any independent source
- S5=** Stock broking firms
- v6. Primary story theme:**  
**E=** Economic news stories related to government policies, infrastructure, poverty, unemployment, retail, trade policies and business laws in the newspaper  
**B=** Business news stories related to domestic and multinational corporations, brands, aviation, automobile and information technology in the newspaper  
**F=** Financial news stories related to finance, equity, shares, commodities, banking, insurance, money and markets in the newspaper  
**IB=** News stories related to international business in the newspaper  
**P=** News stories related to politics in the newspaper  
**S=** News stories related to sports in the newspaper

Statistical tools are vital for every research analysis. Various statistical tools for data analysis have been applied in this research for the purpose of presenting the result in brief and precise language. Further, data was analysed using SPSS statistical software version 25. Descriptive statistical measures for all the 3 newspapers for the study periods were calculated. Bar chart were used to represent the mean values of variables for the three newspapers. Bar graphs are ideal for comparing two or more values, or values over time. Single bar graphs have been used to convey the number of news stories in the different newspapers over the period of time (Tables 1 to 3). Further, clustered bar graph have been used to represent the number of news stories of all the newspapers altogether in a grouped format.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for Business Standard newspaper (n = 124) for the period 1991-2021

Variables	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
No. of news stories	69	23	92	53.26	18.399
Size of newspaper	662.00	1890.00	2552.00	37899.15	210.07165
No. of pages	22	12	34	18.42	4.765
Special or Principal Correspondent	15	0	15	1.87	3.977
News agencies	45	2	47	12.60	8.307
Newspaper’s reporter, editor or correspondent	34	0	34	5.69	7.836
Newspaper’s business bureau or any independent source	74	6	80	32.50	16.118
Stock broking firms	1	0	1	.02	.127
Economic news stories in the newspaper	37	4	41	17.29	8.950
Business news stories in the newspaper	25	5	30	14.47	5.793

Variables	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Financial news stories in the newspaper	19	3	22	10.69	5.130
International business or world news stories	26	0	26	7.32	5.961
Political news stories	12	0	12	3.05	2.950
Sports news stories	3	0	3	.35	.726

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for Economic Times newspaper (n =124) for the period 1991-2021

Variables	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
No. of news stories	95	0	95	61.73	19.436
Size of newspaper	1323.00	945.00	2268.00	40701.3117	220.06793
No. of pages	20	12	32	20.07	4.442
Special or Principal Correspondent	8	0	8	.90	1.617
News agencies	52	0	52	14.94	11.450
Newspaper's reporter, editor or correspondent	70	0	70	33.85	24.422
Newspaper's business bureau or any independent source	60	0	60	11.77	20.437
Stock broking firms	10	0	10	.23	1.311
Economic news stories	40	0	40	14.32	8.712
Business news stories	31	0	31	15.82	6.822
Financial news stories	30	0	30	12.05	6.101
International business or global news stories	35	0	35	9.24	8.401
Political news stories	32	0	32	8.55	5.017
Sports news stories	14	0	14	1.74	2.942

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for The Hindu Business Line newspaper (n =108) for the period 1991-2021

Variables	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
No. of news stories	104	58	162	97.37	22.810
Size of Newspaper	415.75	1880.25	2296.00	43158.9684	191.89425
No. of pages	16	12	28	21.07	3.781
Special or Principal Correspondent	40	0	40	8.80	10.858
News agencies	52	9	61	27.13	11.909
Newspaper's reporter, editor or correspondent	20	0	20	2.37	5.384
Newspaper's business bureau or any independent source	100	12	112	59.67	22.503
Stock broking firms	0	0	0	.00	.000
Economic news stories	47	7	54	26.20	11.705
Business news stories	45	10	55	30.46	11.368
Financial news stories	42	5	47	28.50	8.893
International business news stories	20	0	20	6.02	4.432
Political news stories	21	0	21	5.57	6.927
Sports news stories	3	0	3	.33	.673

Two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) has been used to study the difference in mean values of study variables on three newspapers and different study periods from 1991 to 2021. ANOVA stands for analysis of variance and tests for differences in

the effects of independent variables on a dependent variable. A two-way ANOVA is an extension of the one-way ANOVA (analysis of variances) that reveals the results of two independent variables on a dependent variable. Tukey's Honest Significant

Difference (HSD) post hoc test was used to compare mean values of study variables among the three newspapers and in different years. When the *p*-value is less than 0.05, it is considered statistically significant.

The measure of central tendency, such as mean, has been undertaken to describe the centre or average of the data set of every variable. Measures of variability such as standard deviation have been measured to describe the dispersion and variance of data within the data set. A low standard deviation indicates that the data points tend to be close to the mean of the data set, while a high standard deviation indicates that the data points are spread out over a wider range of values.

Besides these, range values have also been measured to know the spread of the data from the lowest to the highest value in the data set. Range value has been used to understand the amount of dispersion in the data. A large range value indicates greater dispersion in the data. A small range value indicates that there is less dispersion in the data. The minimum and the maximum represent the smallest and the largest values in the data set. Tables 1, 2 and 3 show the descriptive statistics for all three different newspapers, including range, minimum, maximum, mean and standard deviation values.

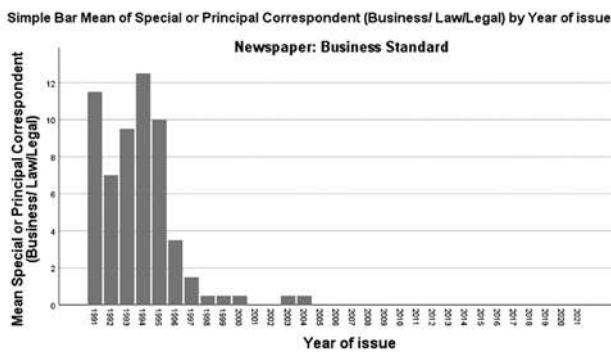


Fig. 1(a): Simple bar mean of news stories reported by special/principal correspondent by year of issue (Business Standard)

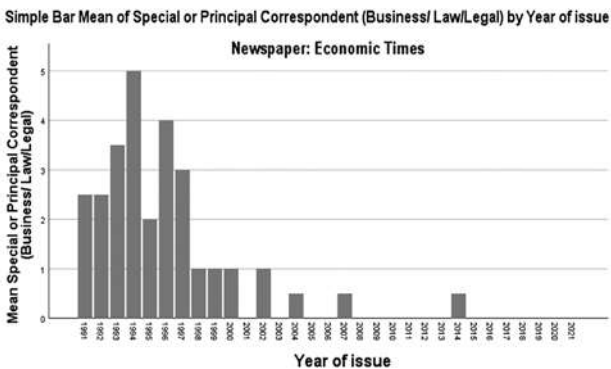


Fig. 1(b): Simple bar mean of news stories reported by special/principal correspondent by year of issue (Economic Times)

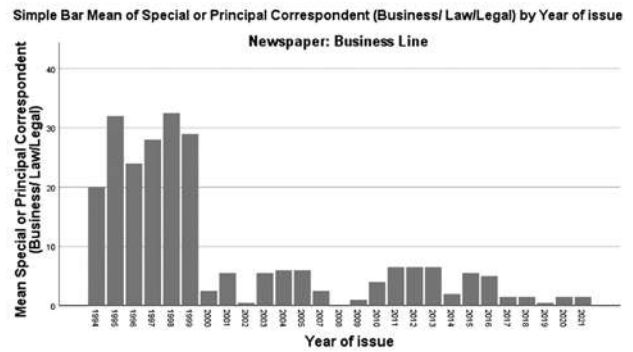


Fig. 1(c): Simple bar mean of news stories reported by special/principal correspondent by year of issue (Business Line)

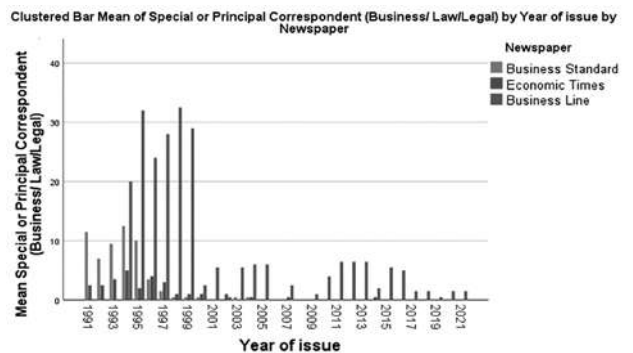


Fig. 1(d): Clustered bar mean of news stories reported by special/principal correspondent by year of issue

As indicated in Figures 1(a), 1(b) and 1(c), there has been a rise in the average number of news stories reported by principal correspondents after economic reforms. The initial decade after economic reforms saw a surge in the stories reported by principal correspondents as a source. These special/principal correspondents have used Indian government officials as their sources for the information. In the mid- and the later decade, the graph suddenly shows a decline with a major shift towards other sources of information. However, Figure 1(d) shows that the newspaper, The Hindu Business Line, has somehow used principal correspondents as a source in the mid- and later decades.

The two-way analysis of variance test result shows that the news stories from special or principal correspondent in three different newspapers are significantly different ( $p < 0.05$ ), the number of news stories from special or principal correspondents in the different years are significantly different. Also, there has been a significant interaction observed between some newspapers for the news stories reported by special or principal correspondents in these newspapers. In addition, no significant interaction effect has been observed between Business Standard and Economic Times for the news stories reported by special or principal correspondents.

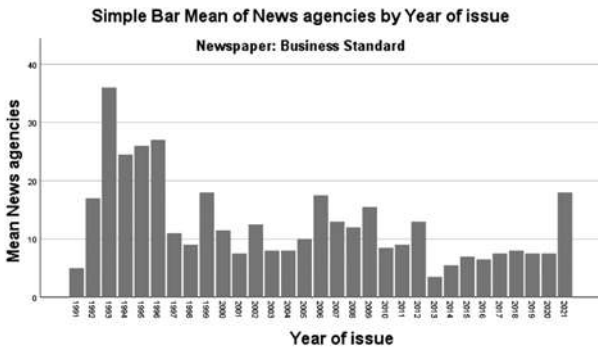


Fig. 2(a): Simple bar mean of news stories taken from news agencies by the year of issue (Business Standard)

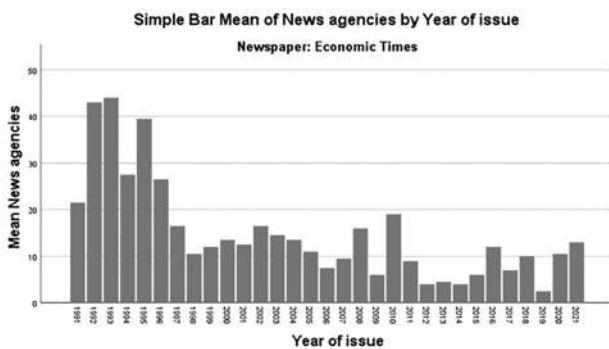


Fig. 2(b): Simple bar mean of news stories taken from news agencies by the year of issue (Economic Times)

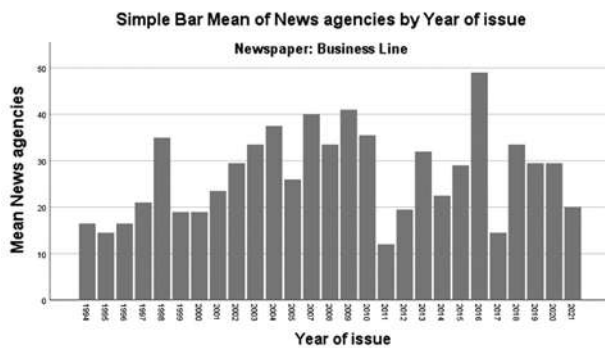


Fig. 2(c): Simple bar mean of news stories taken from news agencies by the year of issue (Business Line)

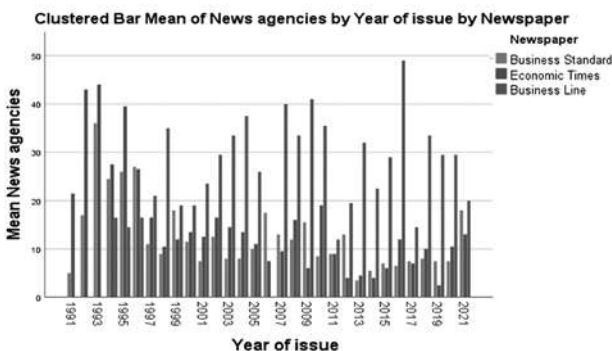


Fig. 2(d): Clustered bar mean of news stories taken from the news agencies by the year of issue

As indicated in Figures 2(a) and 2(b), there has been a rise in the average number of news stories taken and published from news agencies after economic reforms. The initial decade after economic reforms saw a surge in the stories taken from news agencies as a source. In the mid- and later decades, the graph has shown a decline with a major shift towards other sources of information. From Figure 2(c), it has been interpreted that The Hindu Business Line has used news agencies as a source throughout the decades. The graph indicates a bell-shaped curve which shows the use of news agencies as a source dominantly in the mid-decade by the respective newspapers. Figure 2(d) further indicates all the three newspapers dominantly using news agencies as a source after economic reforms. However, The Hindu Business Line has used this source of information dominantly throughout the period as compared to the other two newspapers.

The 2-way analysis of variance test results shows that the news stories from news agencies in all the newspapers are significantly different ( $p < 0.05$ ), the number of news stories from news agencies in the different years is significantly different. Also, there

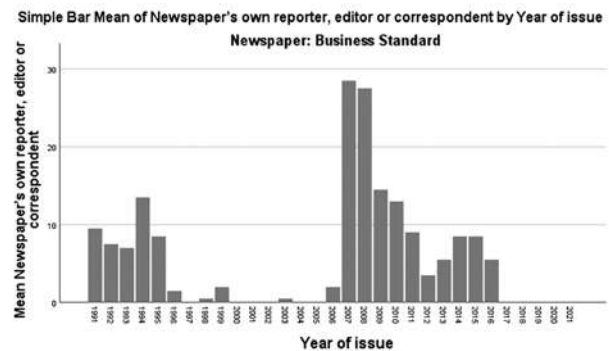


Fig. 3(a): Simple bar mean of news stories reported by newspaper's own reporter or editor by the year of issue (Business Standard)

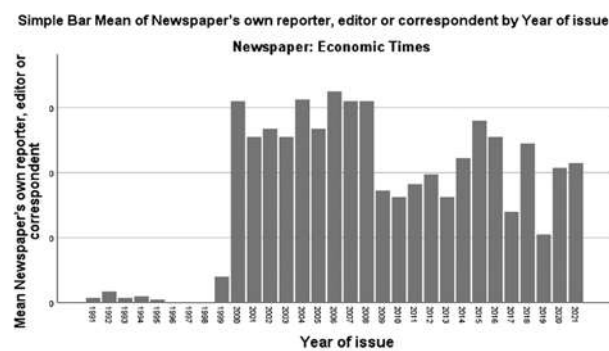


Fig. 3(b): Simple bar mean of news stories reported by newspaper's reporter or editor by the year of issue (Economic Times)

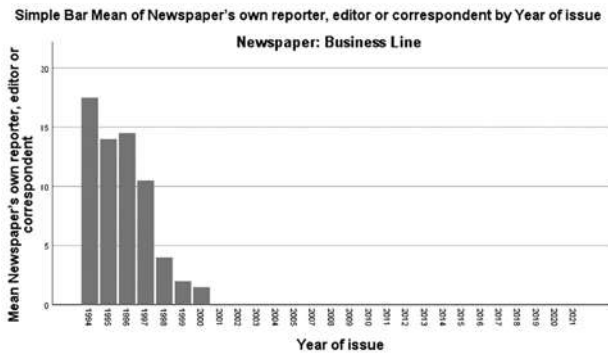


Fig. 3(c): Simple bar mean of news stories reported by newspaper's own reporter and editor by year of issue (Business Line)

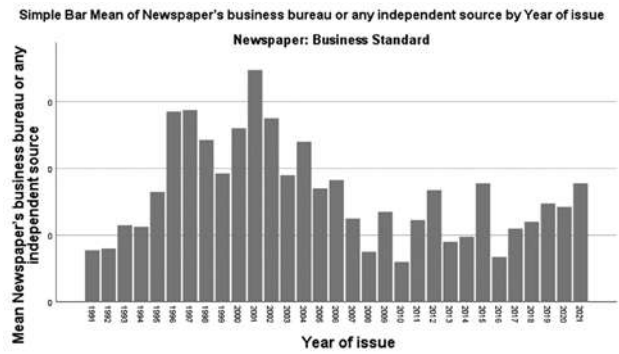


Fig. 4(a): Simple bar mean of news stories reported by newspaper's business bureau by year of issue (Business Standard)

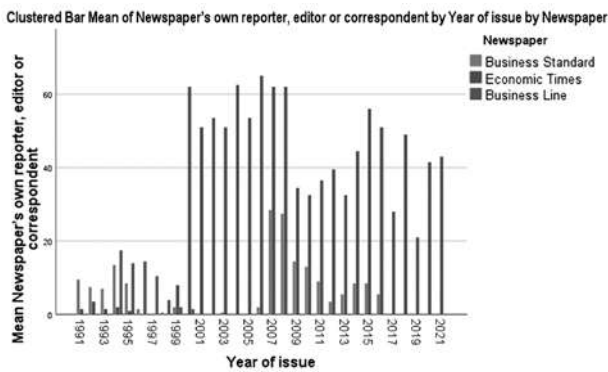


Fig. 3(d): Clustered bar mean of news stories reported by newspaper's own reporter or editor by year of issue

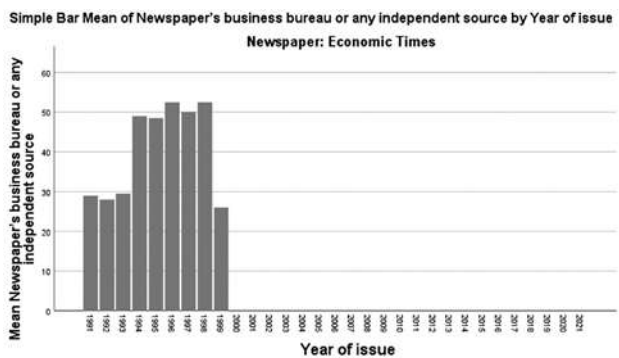


Fig. 4(b): Simple bar mean of news stories reported by newspaper's business bureau by year of issue (Economic Times)

has been a significant interaction effect observed between some newspapers over the period of time for the news stories taken from news agencies. In addition, no significant interaction effect has been observed between Business Standard and Economic Times for the news stories taken from news agencies.

As indicated in Figure 3(a), the use of newspaper's own reporter and editor as a source by the newspaper Business Standard is minimal throughout the years irrespective of a minor push in the later half of the mid-decade. Figure 3(b) shows that the use of newspaper's reporter and editor as a source by the Economic Times is negligible in the initial decade. Also, Figure 3(c) signifies a negligible reliance on the respective source of information by The Hindu Business Line. Figure 3(d) further indicates that this source of information has been rarely used by all the newspapers in the initial decade. Although from the mid-decade the newspaper Economic Times has used this source of information dominantly throughout the period irrespective of the other two newspapers.

The 2-way analysis of variance test results show that the news stories from newspaper's own reporter, editor or correspondent in all newspapers are significantly different ( $p < 0.05$ ), the number of news stories from newspaper's own reporter, editor or correspondent in the different years were

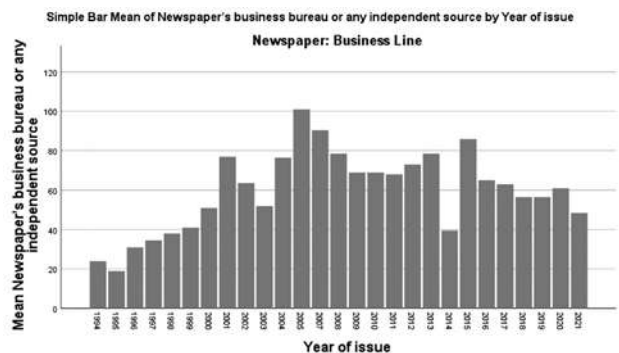


Fig. 4(c): Simple bar mean of news stories reported by newspaper's business bureau by year of issue (Business Line)

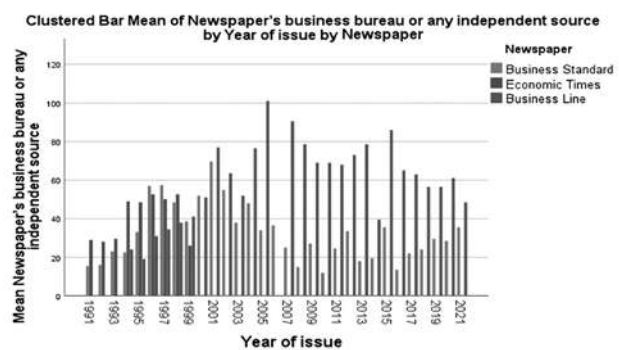


Fig. 4(d): Clustered bar mean of news stories reported by newspaper's business bureau by year of issue

significantly different. Also, there has been a significant interaction effect observed between some newspapers and different years for the news stories reported by the newspaper's own reporter, editor or correspondent. In addition, no significant interaction effect has been observed between Business Standard and Business Line newspapers over the period for the news stories reported by newspaper's own reporter, editor or correspondent.

As indicated in Figures 4(a) and 4(c), there has been a rise in the average number of news stories reported by the newspaper's bureau after economic reforms. The initial decade after economic reforms saw a surge in the stories taken from the newspaper's bureau as a source. From Figure 4(b), it has been interpreted that the newspaper Economic Times has used the newspaper's bureau as a source in the initial decade only. The newspaper Economic Times relies on other sources of information in the mid- and later decades. Figure 4(d) further indicates that all the three newspapers have used their bureau as a source of information throughout the years after economic reforms. However, The Hindu Business Line has used this source of information dominantly throughout the period irrespective of the Economic Times, which has relied on this source in the initial decade only.

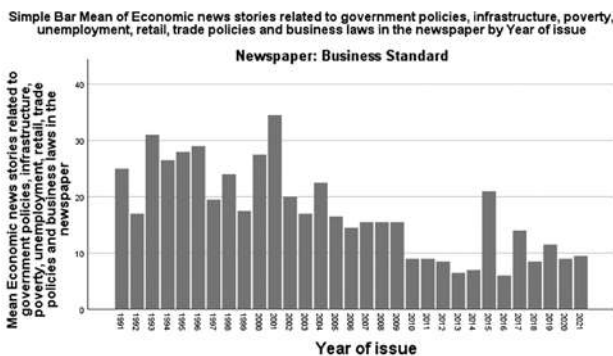


Fig. 5(a): Simple bar mean of economic news stories reported by newspaper by year of issue (Business Standard)

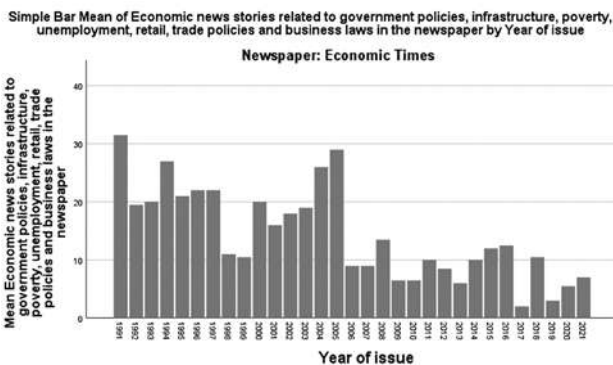


Fig. 5(b): Simple bar mean of economic news stories reported by newspaper by year of issue (Economic Times)

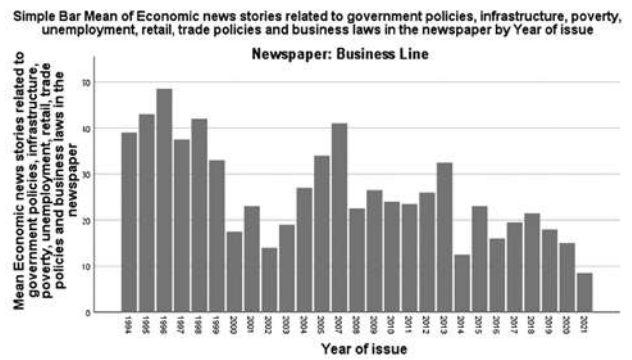


Fig. 5(c): Simple bar mean of economic news stories reported by newspaper by year of issue (Business Line)

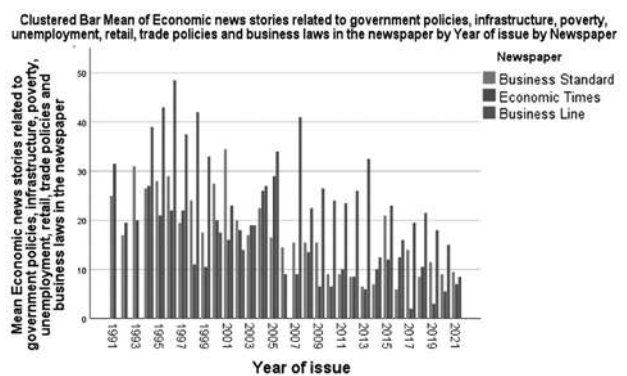


Fig. 5(d): Clustered bar mean of economic news stories reported by all the newspapers by year of issue

The 2-way analysis of variance test results shows that the news stories from the newspaper's business bureau or any independent source in all the newspapers are significantly different ( $p < 0.05$ ). Also, the number of news stories from newspaper's business bureau or any independent source in the different years are significantly different. In addition, there has been a significant interaction effect which has been observed between newspapers over the period of time for the news stories reported by the newspaper's business bureau or any independent source.

Figures 5(a), 5(b) and 5(c) show that there is a fall in the average number of economic news stories reported by the newspapers. The later decade shows a major fall in the reportage of economic news stories related to economy in general. Figure 5(d) indicates that out of all, The Hindu Business Line reports a large number of economic news stories.

The 2-way analysis of variance test results shows that the economic news stories related to government policies, infrastructure, poverty, unemployment, retail, trade policies and business laws in all the newspapers are significantly different ( $p < 0.05$ ), the number of economic news stories in the different years are also significantly different. In addition, there



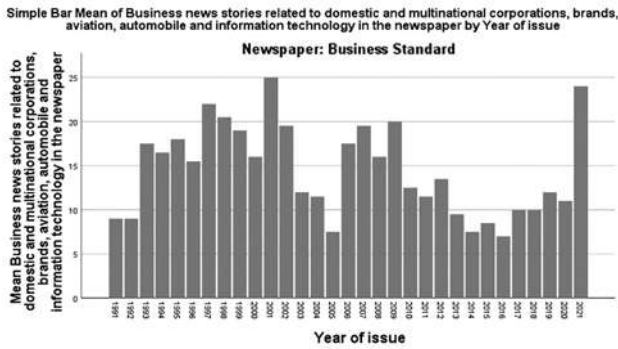


Fig. 6(a): Simple bar mean of business news stories reported by newspaper by the year of issue (Business Standard)

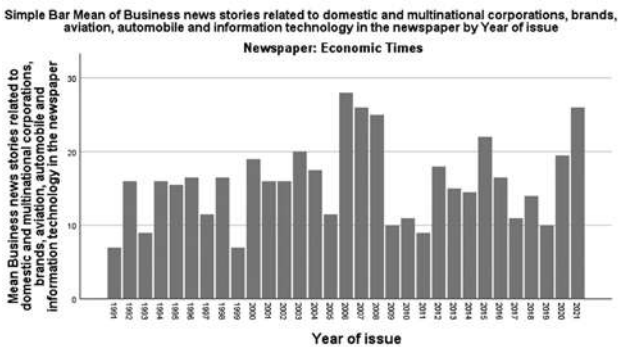


Fig. 6(b): Simple bar mean of business news stories reported by newspaper by the year of issue (Economic Times)

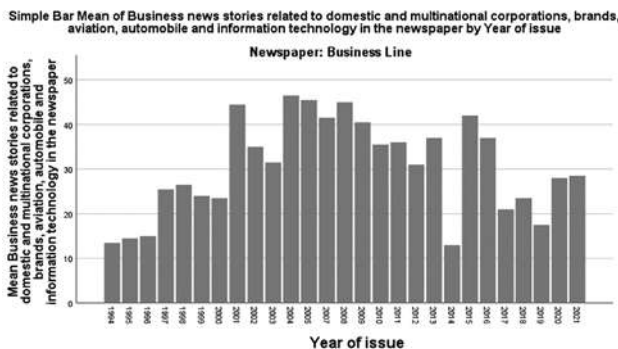


Fig. 6(c): Simple bar mean of business news stories reported by newspaper by the year of issue (Business Line)

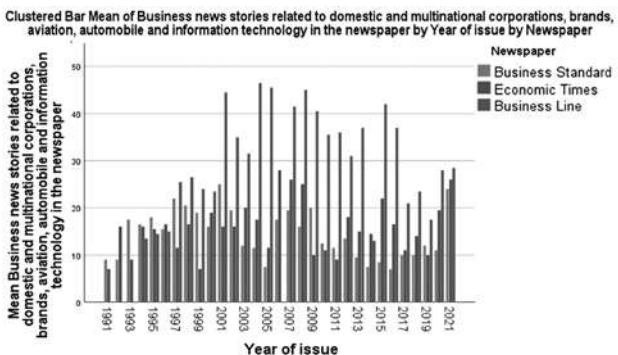


Fig. 6(d): Clustered bar mean of business news stories reported by all the newspapers by the year of issue

has been a significant interaction effect observed between newspapers over the period of time for the coverage of economic news stories.

Figure 6(a) indicates that there has been a sudden rise in the reportage of business news stories by Business Standard after economic reforms. Figures 6(b) and 6(c) indicate a bell-shaped curve which shows that there has been a rise in reportage of business news stories in the mid-decade and not immediately after the economic reforms by both newspapers. Figure 6(d) shows that The Hindu Business Line has reported a large number of business news stories throughout the period as compared to other newspapers.

The 2-way analysis of variance test results shows that the business news stories related to domestic and multinational corporations, brands, aviation, automobile and information technology in the newspaper in all the newspapers are significantly different ( $p < 0.05$ ), the number of business news stories in the different years is significantly different. Also, there has been a significant interaction effect observed between some newspapers over the period of time on the coverage of business news stories. In addition, no significant interaction effect has been observed between Business Standard and Economic Times over the period of time on the coverage of business news stories.

Figures 7(a), 7(b) and 7(c) show that there has been a rise in the reportage of financial news stories just after economic reforms by all the three newspapers. The mid-decade has seen the maximum

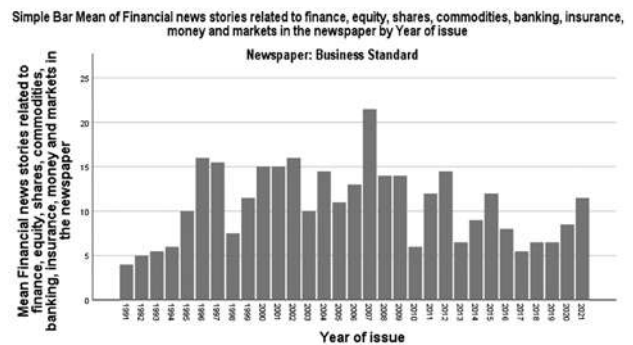


Fig. 7(a): Simple bar mean of financial news stories reported by newspaper by the year of issue (Business Standard)

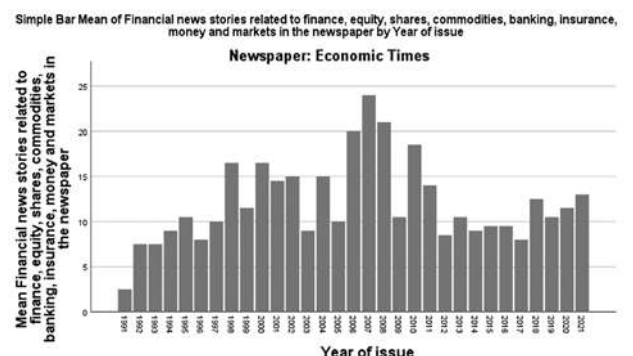


Fig. 7(b): Simple bar mean of financial news stories reported by newspaper by the year of issue (Economic Times)

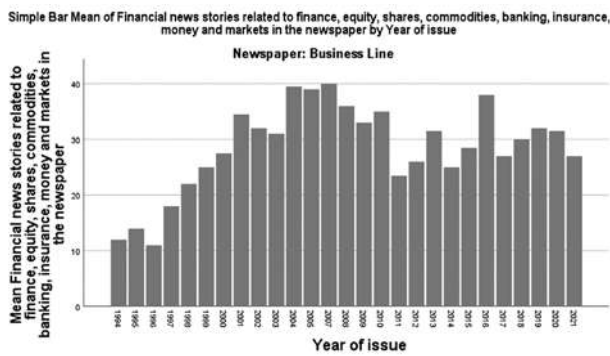


Fig. 7(c): Simple bar mean of financial news stories reported by newspaper by the year of issue (Business Line)

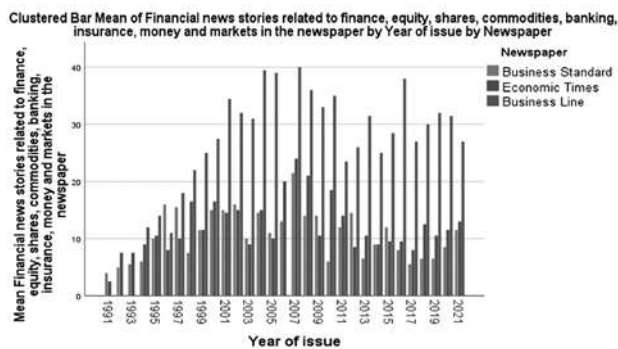


Fig. 7(d): Clustered bar mean of financial news stories reported by all the newspapers by the year of issue

number of financial news stories being reported out of three decades. Figure 7(d) shows that the newspaper The Hindu Business Line has reported a large number of financial news stories throughout the period as compared to other newspapers.

The 2-way analysis of variance test results show that the financial news stories related to finance, equity, shares, commodities, banking, insurance, money and markets in the newspaper in three different newspapers are significantly different ( $p < 0.05$ ), the number of finance news stories in the different years is significantly different. Also, there has been a significant interaction effect observed on some newspapers over the period of time on the coverage of finance news stories. In addition, no significant interaction effect has been observed between Business Standard and Economic Times newspaper over the period of time on the coverage of finance news stories.

### Switching of news source

News sources' examination during content analysis has revealed the kinds of sources that set the business news agenda in the economy, i.e., what kind of sources journalists or reporters usually cite while covering business news stories after economic reforms. Indian business newspapers have used special correspondents, experts, and news agencies as dominant sources in reporting news stories in

the initial decade after economic reforms. These correspondents and agencies majorly cite Indian government officials, government press releases, government meetings, and government documents in their news stories. As indicated by Figures 1(a), 1(b), and 1(c), there has been a rise in the average number of news stories reported by principal correspondents after economic reforms. The initial decade after economic reforms saw a surge in the stories reported by principal correspondents as sources. The graph abruptly declines in the later decades, with a significant shift towards other sources of information.

This provides the interpretation that for a state-controlled economy like India, business newspapers had to rely predominantly on Indian government officials for information. This finding is consistent with Menon's research, which revealed that developing nations were found to be heavily reliant on government sources of information. This suggests that in the absence of other authoritative and reliable sources of information, the media relies on government sources. After an initial decade of economic reforms, Indian business newspapers gradually began to rely on their own reporters, business bureaus, or any other independent source for news stories. These sources usually cite industrialists, corporations, or "auto elites" (Chang, 1999) in the news stories. There has been a rise in the average number of news stories reported by publications' own reporters, business bureaus, or any other independent source. Figure 4(d) also shows that in the mid- and late 20th century, all the three newspapers used their bureaus as a source of information. The Hindu Business Line relied heavily on this source during the period, as opposed to the Economic Times, which relied heavily on its own reporters.

This provides an interpretation that the changes in EBF (Economic, Business and Financial) content with more coverage of business and financial stories, as shown in Figures 6 and 7 (a, b, and c), are in direct proportion to the switch in news gathering source over the decades. Over time, Indian business media relied heavily on big corporations and industrial houses for information, thereby setting the agenda for their publications. Business reporters nowadays are the mouthpieces of PR personnel who interact with the media just to shield their organisations from intense and investigative business reporting. Subsequently, George in the book "Free Markets, Free Media," edited in 2008, stated that if a business reporter genuinely and openly wants to cover a business, "there are a wide variety of records and documents that are useful in

investigating businesses, such as tax statements, disclosure of financial assets by public officials and their contributors to political campaigns, corporate profiles, annual reports, and news releases.” Business directories and organisations such as the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Regional Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Associated Chambers of Commerce & Industry of India (ASSOCHAM), National Association of Software and Service Companies (NASSCOM), and Leadership Initiative Conclaves that include the media, business leaders, business academicians, and union cabinet ministers are all sources that can give insights into business. All the sources stated above by Prasad (2007) belong to the former category of government sources of information, i.e., Indian government officials, government press releases, government meetings, and government documents for citing the news stories, but the researcher has seen a drastic reduction in these citations after the initial decade of economic liberalisation.

This transformation reflects a shift in the Indian business media’s preference for corporate sources following the first decade of economic reforms, which is strongly supported by an increase in coverage of business and financial news stories.

### **Changes in EBF (Economic, Business and Financial) content**

The content of newspapers, especially news about economic matters, has changed with an increase in the coverage of business news about individual corporations that is likely to result in greater earnings for newspaper companies. Because the media can determine what the public thinks about the economy and how the public thinks about the economy (McCombs, 2014), a shift in economic journalism from news about the economy in general (macro-economic news) towards individual corporate interests raises serious questions about a weakening of journalism’s responsibility in a democratic society.

The results of the study show that over the past three decades, Indian journalists have redirected their attention away from broad national economic issues towards greater coverage of executive management and individual corporations. In the last 30 years, the majority of all newspapers have been devoted to business and financial news stories. Allowing foreign institutional investors to invest in the Indian capital market and Indian companies to issue shares abroad drew more media attention.

Although every news organisation differs

somewhere in its coverage of economic, business, and financial news, the coverage by the Business Standard newspaper is intended to inform citizens about issues of public importance regarding the economy and thereby maintain public trust. With the expansion of markets and corporate expansion, the reporting of economic news stories in newspapers has had little impact. The newspaper covered economic news in greater quantity when compared with business and financial news. In other words, if the findings of this study suggest that business newspapers such as Economic Times and Business Line have marginalised economic news about government policies, agriculture, infrastructure, poverty, unemployment, retail, trade policies, and business laws, then the public may have distorted perceptions about their economy. These news organisations may be falling behind in their duty to inform citizens about issues of public importance regarding the economy in general, including issues with political ramifications such as unemployment and government policy. Although these newspapers used to publish general economic news items in the past.

There has been a decrease in coverage of economic issues by news organisations such as Economic Times and Business Line, especially since the emergence of economic reforms, which has also been strongly influenced by the deregulation of the licencing system, the interlinkage of the nation’s economy with the global economy, and the automation of the country’s trading system. Over the last 30 years, these organisations have largely devoted themselves to covering business and financial news, highlighting the advancement of newspaper companies’ commercial interests at the expense of the public interest. In that context, Lee and Baek (2016), in a study, pointed out that the public expects the media to contribute to the public interest rather than advance the financial benefits of the newspapers. Members of the public who are aware of what is happening may in the future lose trust in the credibility of the news media industry, which is the foundation for journalism. In other words, this suggests that if the Indian business media continue to pursue their own financial interests at the expense of the public interest, then the newspapers may lose the public trust that is the foundation for journalism’s credibility among the public. The stated differences are significant and critical in nature and were examined through a two-way ANOVA and thus revealed a statistically significant interaction between all the business newspapers over the period of time for the coverage of certain types of news stories. This comparative

analysis showed that business and financial news stories reported in different newspapers were significantly different over the three decades. Overall, the findings of this study point to several important implications. Previously published news about the economy in general in India's major newspapers has given way to an increasing number of stories and articles about corporations and markets.

Subsequently, newspapers like Economic Times and Business Line suggest the possibility that India's business newspapers may have turned to corporate advertisers for financial support and, as a result, may have short-changed public concerns by marginalising issues about the economy in general. The newspaper Business Standard emerged from the controversy as a model for other business media organisations by establishing an independent class of journalists who adhere to business media professional ethics while maintaining balance in the coverage of various types of business news stories. In today's era, the biggest challenge for the business media in developing countries like India is to detach itself from its dependence on the state and corporations for its stories and funding. As long as journalism is seen as a route to a PR job rather than the other way around, the journey is not complete.

### Conclusion

Expansion of the business newspapers after economic reforms can be best identified as an act of reinterpretation which describes it as an unremarkable process of the increase in circulation of certain privileged business newspapers, a major switch in the news source, technological upgrade with the import of machinery and composition, rush for seeking advertisements by employing capitalist mindset and positioning of more and more financial and business news stories. There is general agreement among researchers that from the 2000s onwards, both increased commercialisation and emerging digitalisation have considerably challenged and changed journalism and news production throughout the world (Picard, 2014; Humprecht & Esser, 2018). In the landscape of contemporary Indian business journalism, sources have played a pivotal role in shaping news narratives. In the initial decade after economic reforms, a substantial reliance on Indian government officials, government press releases, government meetings, and government documents was observed. This reliance was indicative of the transition from a predominantly state-controlled economy to a market-oriented one, where government sources

held significant authority and credibility.

Findings revealed that Indian business newspapers used special correspondents, experts and news agencies as a dominant source in reporting news stories in the initial decade after economic reforms. These correspondents and agencies majorly cite Indian government officials, government press releases, government meetings and documents in the news stories. Over time, Indian business media heavily relied on big corporates and industrial houses for the information, subsequently setting the agenda for their publications. Gradually, after economic reforms, in the mid- and the later decades, Indian business newspapers switched to their own reporters, business bureaus or any independent source for reporting news stories. These sources usually cite industrialists, corporates or auto elites in the news stories. There has been a rise in the average number of news stories reported by publications own reporters, business bureaus or any independent source. The above-mentioned differences are significant and critical in nature which are examined through the two-way ANOVA and thus revealed a statistically significant differences between the news stories sourced from the organisation's own reporter, business bureaus or any independent source by three different business newspapers over the period of time with  $p$  value less than 0.05 ( $p < 0.05$ ).

In effect, the corporate sector, combining PR with its advertising and news source advantages, has 'captured' business and financial news. The study shows that there is a fall in the average number of economic news stories reported by the newspapers. The later decade shows a major fall in the reportage of economic news stories related to the economy in general. Results also indicate a bell-shaped curve which shows that there has been a rise in reportage of business news stories in the mid-decade and not immediately after the economic reforms by both newspapers. Also, there has been a rise in the reportage of financial news stories just after economic reforms by all the three newspapers. The mid-decade has seen the maximum number of financial news stories being reported out of three decades. The above-mentioned differences are significant and critical in nature which are examined through two-way ANOVA and thus revealed statistically significant differences between different types of news stories reported by three different business newspapers over the period of time with  $p$  value less than 0.05 ( $p < 0.05$ ).

The results are in line with the previous studies which stated that even though business elites may be in conflict and journalists may

be active in their reporting, business news will always follow corporate agendas and ignore non-corporate interests (Davis, 2000). This research has illuminated the multi-faceted nature of business journalism in India, its adaptability in response to economic reforms, and the evolving role of sources in shaping news narratives. As India continues its journey as a market-oriented economy, the dynamics of business journalism will remain integral in shaping the nation's economic discourse and public understanding.

As one might conclude that for business news production, if the majority of news stories are sourced from corporate networks and is altogether supported with the rise in coverage of financial and business stories then the cumulative results are likely to be rather negative for the social and economic conditions of the population at large.

### Recommendations for further research

In light of the research paper's findings, several avenues for further research emerge. Because of the wider sample and time restrictions, the study only focused on examining and analysing the content of the top three business newspapers listed in IRS 2017 and interpreted the same in a systematic manner, it can be extended beyond the major publications analysed in this study. Examining a broader spectrum of Indian business newspapers, including regional and vernacular ones, would shed light on whether the observed shifts in news production are consistent across diverse linguistic and regional contexts. Additionally, a comparative international analysis could be beneficial, drawing parallels and distinctions with global cases of business journalism to enrich the understanding of the relationship between media, business, and economic reforms.

Moving beyond the immediate scope of this study, several pertinent areas merit further investigation. One such area is the transformative impact of digital platforms and social media; there is a compelling need to explore how these emerging trends influence business journalism in India. This involves an examination of how news organisations adapt to the digital age and the implications for news sourcing, distribution, and credibility. Furthermore, studying corporate communication strategies and their interaction with the media in shaping public perception is of increasing relevance. Understanding the dynamics between corporate public relations efforts and media coverage of business-related topics can illuminate the evolving media landscape.

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## Recall of and Emotional Response to TVCs of Select FMCG Product Categories among Teenagers

KENSTINA SHARON NIGLI<sup>1</sup> & P.E. THOMAS<sup>2</sup>

### ABSTRACT

Emotions have a powerful effect as they transform events or the knowledge gained from different sources into memories that will further lead to better recall. Today, as the marketplace is filled with an ocean of products and brands, the advertisers are forced to come up with creative advertisements to position themselves in people's minds. The effectiveness of advertisements relates to their capability to make the target audience think and feel for the brand. Feeling ranks higher as people rely more on emotions than on information. Researchers in the 1970s and 1980s stated that recall is one of the leading advertising intrusiveness to measure advertising effectiveness. Earlier, it was seen that recall was higher for rational television commercials and lower for emotional ones but it isn't the same today. Consumers are bombarded with a deluge of commercials focused on emotional themes rather than the actual content that influences a purchase. This paper attempts to find the interconnection between recall and emotion with respect to the 'valence/arousal based model of emotion' as the more significant emotional intensity in a commercial, the higher the recall. Teenagers' recall (memory decoding), their purchasing behaviour (based on ad effectiveness), and altered preference (brand desirability) in terms of their age, were analyzed in this study concerning consumer culture and ad effectiveness. The study found that emotional responses help increase attention and brand liking. Consumers indeed remember the products or the specific brands that are advertised only at the time of purchase. Brand preference choices are made based on their memory of the commercials. Emotion is hence proven to enhance the long-term memory of persuasive cultural commercials with increased recall.

**Keywords:** Advertising culture, Altered preference, Arousal, Emotional response, Purchasing behaviour, Recall

### Introduction

Advertising has positioned itself as a part of our global culture. Advertisers are forced to come up with effective or creative commercials to attract their target audience. Since advertisers are spending a lot on advertisements, they are targeting children, especially teens to establish a strong brand preference as early as possible (McNeal, 1992). Children who are exposed to advertisements just like adults are forced to create a need that didn't remain earlier (Coffee, 2018). Markets are using this segment of consumers as their best target audience who are capable of promoting and sharing necessary information about a product or brand to their friends and family. There is a rise in competition among marketers and advertisers, as they feel that teenagers are the ones who do not

remain loyal to a brand but remain loyal to the best. This allows the marketers create effective emotional advertisements to influence this segment of the TV-viewing public and to make them stick to a particular brand (Lapowsky, 2014).

Emotion plays a very big role in influencing a person to buy something. It is seen that commercial contents with emotional pull have more power and success in drawing people's attention rather than the actual content. Commercials are created with emotional concepts or themes that trigger a person's sentiments to emotionally connect with them to make a purchase. Emotionally charged content in commercials has the power to create powerful memories, which ultimately makes consumers try or prefer the brand they recall during their purchase

<sup>1</sup>PhD Research Scholar, Dept. of Communication and Media Studies, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India (*E-mail*: kenstinanigli14@gmail.com); <sup>2</sup>Professor, Dept. of Communication and Media Studies, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India (*E-mail*: thomascms@buc.edu.in).

when compared to the rest in the marketplace. The goal of every marketer or advertiser indeed is to tap into the emotions of the consumers to increase their demand and sales (Oetting, 2019). According to Hollis (2013), “Everyone wants to be famous, so does every brand, and TV is the best medium for making and keeping brands famous”. Television advertising creates, builds and helps a brand grow. It builds brand fame and keeps the brand alive for a long time. Several reports have stated that there is nothing more effective than television, both in long-term and short-term strategies (Lonova, 2016, July 18). Adding up emotion or appeal makes it more attractive, and the product gets positioned in the minds of the people (Hollis, 2013, June 28).

## Review of literature

### *Impact of television commercials on children*

The “Impact of TV Advertisements on Teens” was studied by Almehairi in 2013. The research paper says that advertisers are spending more and are seeking advertising spaces to reach kids and adolescents with their advertisements. The young teenagers’ undeveloped brains and immature understanding make them the most sustainable market segment in society. According to the marketing research companies, it is seen that teenagers persuade the entire family to purchase a particular product or a brand. Their admanance for a product or the desire to have something makes them spend on small and large household purchases and hence, influences their lifestyle and overall trends to change the society. Pediatrics (2011) in its study states “Children and adolescents view 40000 advertisements per year on TV alone”. Moschis and Mitchell (1986) found that children between ages 12 and under convince their parents to spend around millions a year. Teenagers influence each other to purchase gadgets and other products. It creates a nature of tension in them to strive for what they think is the best by competing with each other in terms of fashion, gadgets, trends, and other things that benefit the advertising companies. Studies have shown that children in India watch about 28 hours of TV per week and are exposed to 20,000 ads a year (Coon & Tucker, 2001). This ascertains that television commercials influence and impact the lives of children in India as well.

“Television advertising viewing is positively related to the youth’s propensity to play a more influential role than their parents in mentioning the need for products, discussing the purchase of products, deciding what should be purchased, and actually buying products” (Moschis & Mitchell, 1986). Matrade (2005), studied consumer behaviour

and its aspects in India, and found that Indian consumers are alarmed with their traditions and values. The study was done to find whether Indians consider their family advice or are influenced by their family members to purchase something. A slight change has been noticed in this aspect as people are willing to stand up for themselves, their likes and dislikes today.

### *Advertising culture*

A study proposed by Shavitt and Cho (2016) insists on the strong influence of culture on consumer behaviour. One’s culture shapes their goals (Yang *et al.*, 2015) the way one respond to prices (Bolton *et al.*, 2010 & Lalwani & Shavitt, 2013), brand images (Torelli *et al.*, 2012), and also the advertising elements (Kwon *et al.*, 2015). It influences the thinking styles of the consumers with unique processing strategies (Briley *et al.*, 2014 & Riemer *et al.*, 2014). These cognitive differences shape their feelings and personal decision-making preferences (Hong & Chang, 2015). The article examines culture and consumer behaviour focusing on horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism. Although research has addressed both individualism and collectivism, it is important to address power or hierarchy, uniqueness or personal status across societies. Triandis and Gelfand (1998) managed the distinction within individualism and collectivism along with horizontal (emphasizing equality) and vertical (emphasizing hierarchy) orientations.

Another interesting study, ‘Horizontal and Vertical Cultural Differences in the Content of Advertising Appeals’ by Shavitt *et al.* (2011), studied the link between culture, contents, and the persuasiveness of appeals in television commercials that attract consumers. One’s culture influences the way in which one processes information that comes with a message (Aaker & Maheswaran, 1997; Aaker & Williams, 1998; Aaker & Sengupta, 2000; Alden *et al.*, 1994). When it comes to studying culture and persuasive appeals, most of the studies have dealt with cultural distinction – the distinction between individualistic (independent) and collectivistic (interdependent) cultural variables. The independent or individualistic (IND) culture indicates people who prefer independent relationships with others and focus on their own personal goals. In a collectivistic (COL) or interdependent culture, people prefer interdependent relationships with others and focus on their in-group goals (Hofstede, 1984). Independence, uniqueness, personal rewards and goals are some of the IND cultures and ad appeals contexts that help to study advertising and consumer persuasion, while appeals that emphasizes group goals, interdependent



relationships, harmony, conformity, and consensus are some of the prevalent COL cultures and contexts (Han & Shavitt, 1994; Kim and Markus, 1999; Shavitt *et al.*, 2008).

**Recall and emotions in television commercials**

Recall is one of the key measures used to test advertising effectiveness along with persuasion and advertising liking (Mehta & Purvis, 2006). Earlier, it was seen that recall favours more ‘rational’ commercials over ‘emotional’ ones. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, researches stated that advertising effectiveness resulted in recall, which was higher for rational commercials than emotional ones. This aspect is seen to change slowly. Recall of the commercials result in high in-market business. It can be used to study both emotional and rational types of commercials. Krugman (1977) also stated that recall is an excellent measure to study television advertising. Consumers remember a product only at the time of purchase based on what they watch or hear. Their brand purchase choices are made with the memory of the commercials or the messages they have come across about a particular brand or product. Advertisers believe that the commercials they create should arouse some emotion to make them effective.

Poels and Dewitte (2008) researched ‘The role of Emotions in Advertising: A Call to Action’. They have stated that emotion plays the central role in advertising. Kover (1995) also argued about the importance all the advertising practitioners give to study the role of emotions in commercials. The effective messages are sure to touch the heart of the television viewing audience. Advertising research has proven that emotions in commercials gain more attention and are accepted as an automatic catalyser of behaviour (Janizewski, 1993; following Zajonc, 1980) or as a mediator of cognitive and behavioural responses to advertising (Edell & Burke, 1987; Holbrook & Batra, 1987). Comparing the differences between emotions generated by real-life situations and the emotions brought forth by advertising stimuli, Frijda (2017) states that whatever we take as real elicits emotions, while what isn’t real will also evoke emotions based on how one perceives it as though it is real. Lang *et al.* (1993) argue that advertising images also have the ability to evoke strong emotions, which further increases one’s mental imagery and also promotes mental stimulation based on real-life situations (Fennis *et al.*, 2011). Kleinginna and Kleinginna (1981, p. 371) defined emotion as,

*Emotion is a complex set of interactions among subjective and objective factors, mediated by neural/hormonal systems, which can (a) give rise to affective feelings of arousal, pleasure/displeasure;*

*(b) generate cognitive processes such as emotionally relevant perceptual effects, appraisals, labeling processes; (c) activate widespread physiological adjustments to the arousing conditions; and (d) lead to behavior that is often, but not always, expressive, goal-directed, and adaptive.*

**Theoretical background of the study**

‘The Valence/Arousal Model of Emotion’ enables a better understanding of the relationship between emotion and recall in advertising. Arousal means a physiological and psychological state of alertness (Shapiro & MacInnis, 2002). In the study of emotions, arousal is related to processes such as awareness and attention (Boucsein, 1992). Previous literature review suggests that arousal affects ad effectiveness (leading to purchase/purchasing behaviour of teenagers, brand desirability (altered preference), and memory decoding (memory) (Jeong & Biocca, 2012). Studies show that emotionally charged contents or events create powerful memories in people’s mind. Similarly strong emotions in advertising persuade people to make an expensive purchase or even to donate money for a cause.

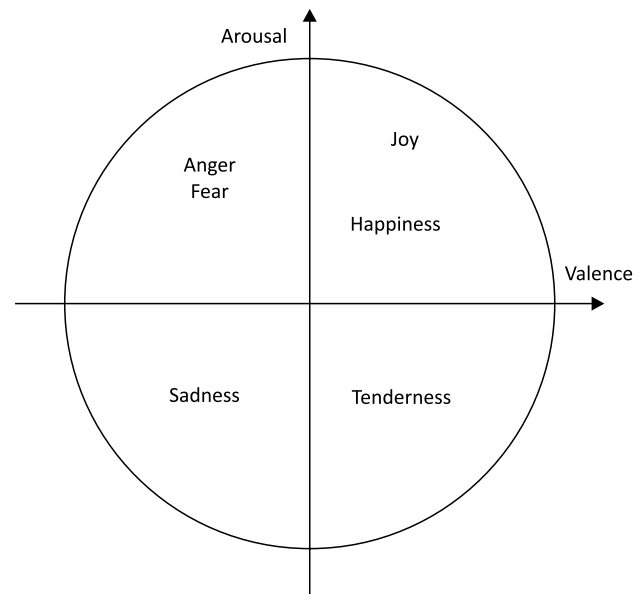


Fig. 1. The Valence/Arousal Model of Emotion

Arousal refers to the intensity of emotion (how calming or exciting content, events, or a situation is), while valence speaks about the character of the emotion, i.e., whether it is positive or negative. Advertisements with positive character or valence such as joy, pride, love, uniqueness, etc., are said to have high or positive valence. Likewise, those commercials with negative characters or connotations, such as anger, fear, sadness, etc., are said to have low or negative valence. High arousal refers to those commercials that are highly exciting,

inspiring, etc. while low arousal refers to information that are soothing or calming. Studies have found that advertisements with high-level arousal and positive valence are more memorable and create pleasant associations in the brains of the consumers (Frenay, 2016). In this study, television commercials of select FMCG product categories were coded by the researcher to find the emotional themes and to classify them based on their levels of arousal and valence.

### Methodology

Firstly, an inter-coder reliability test among five coders along with the researcher coded 15 commercials of select FMCG product categories for the degree to which it emphasized five benefits (status, relationship, pleasure, and uniqueness, utilitarian benefits) to examine whether the commercials represent either vertical or horizontal advertising culture, that is, predominant today. Secondly, the commercials were content analysed to check the recurring themes of emotional response (based on empathy/creativity) that are involved in them. The recurring themes are Pride, Love, Unique achievement or Uniqueness, Memories, Loneliness or Friendship and Man's empathy, as well as the normal emotions found in commercials such as Happy, Sad, Surprised, Angry, Afraid and Disgusted. On the basis of creativity and empathy, empathy contents make people empathise with or feel close to a brand after seeing an advertisement. This is achieved by showing images such as children, cats, dogs and babies in ads. Creativity in an ad makes a person feel that the brand is ahead of its competitors or is imaginative. The tone of the voice-over, proper casting, setting, storyline and even the background music are made perfect to achieve creativity. The commercials were coded based on their levels of arousal and valence to check the advertisements' effectiveness. Finally, 480 teenagers between 11 and 19 years were selected for an experimental study (using convenient sampling and were stratified into three stages of adolescence [early adolescents (11-13 years); middle adolescents (14-16 years); and later adolescents (17-19 years)] based on David E. Barrett's (1996) study. They were exposed to a program with commercials of different products and brands inserted at equal intervals to test their recalling ability. Teenagers' recall (memory decoding), their purchasing behaviour (based on ad effectiveness), and altered preference (brand desirability) in terms of their age were analysed in this study concerning consumer culture and ad effectiveness.

### Objectives of the study

1. To identify the nature of media viewing habits among teenagers.
2. To examine the advertising culture and advertising effectiveness based on the commercials advertised.
3. To analyse advertising effectiveness based on the recall (memory coding) of commercials among teenagers.
4. To examine teenagers' purchasing behaviour based on ad effectiveness.
5. To analyse teenagers altered preference (brand desirability) based on ad effectiveness in terms of their age.

### Findings

1. All 15 commercials of select FMCG product categories emphasized all five benefits, i.e., status, relationship, pleasure, uniqueness, and utilitarian benefits, representing both the horizontal and vertical advertising culture in them. The commercials focused on concepts valuing equality, uniqueness, and group goals, as well as emphasising hierarchy, independence, personal rewards and goals, harmony, etc. Commercials focus on both the individualistic and the collectivistic or the independent and interdependent cultural orientations proving to influence the same in the lives of the TV-viewing public.
2. The recurring themes that were used in the commercials are Pride, Love, Uniqueness, Loneliness or Friendship and Man's empathy. 'Memories' as a theme wasn't used much. Most of the commercials tried to bring forth positive and happy content and visuals to connect with their audience. Though a few commercials started with a sad note, a transition from sad to happy content creation was seen in all the commercials. On the basis of creativity and empathy, most of the commercials have emphasized both to increase the effectiveness of the commercials and its contents.
3. Teenagers showed a strong liking towards the commercial of *Nestle KitKat*, which focused on creativity and humour. More than the commercial of *Cadbury Dairy Milk Silk*, which is well-known for its jingle 'Kiss Me' they liked the commercial of *Nestle KitKat*.
4. All 15 commercials displayed positive valence or connotation such as optimism, pride, happiness, quality, uniqueness, satisfaction, warmth, humour, etc., with low and high arousal contents.
5. Though the commercial of *Nestle KitKat* emphasised low arousal content, it got the

attention of teenagers because of its creativity and humour.

6. All the teenagers from 11 years to 19 years chose the Internet as their preferred media that entertains them the most. As age increased, teenager’s preference for the Internet also showed an increase, displaying their strong dependence on the Internet. A high preference for the Internet is seen among the later adolescents. Internet tops in preference among all the three groups of adolescents, followed by Television. Among mass media, Television takes the lead followed by Print media, i.e., Books/Magazines/Newspapers and finally Radio (Table 1).
7. Most of the teenagers among all the three groups of adolescents chose Television as the medium where they come across commercials the most. Television stands as the 1<sup>st</sup> medium and Internet as the 2<sup>nd</sup>, which exposes them to commercials.

This confirms that children are exposed more to television commercials and they influence them better. Though the Internet is teenagers preferred medium, Television still stands as the medium that informs, educates, entertains, and persuades teenagers (Table 2).

8. Most of teenagers of all the three groups watch Television for up to 2 hours, while some watch for 3 hours and more. Most of them change the channel during the commercial break as the commercials are ‘boring’. This was the main reason opted by most of the teenagers. The remaining who change the channels during breaks gave reasons like the commercials are long, repetitive, and irritating. On the contrary, few teenagers said they don’t change the channel during breaks and that they like to watch commercials as they are ‘creative and interesting’, and a few said that the commercials are informative and entertaining (Table 3).

Table 1 Crosstab Tabulation - showing difference between Age and Teenagers Media preference

Media	Teenagers Media preference based on Age											
	11-13 years				14-16 years				17-19 years			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Books/Magazines/ Newspaper	22.5%	15.0%	40.0%	22.5%	23.8%	22.5%	36.2%	17.5%	7.5%	13.8%	48.8%	30.0%
Television	30.0%	43.8%	18.8%	7.5%	25.0%	40.0%	25.0%	10.0%	17.5%	63.8%	12.5%	6.2%
Radio	5.0%	15.0%	28.8%	51.2%	0.0%	10.0%	28.8%	61.2%	6.2%	5.0%	35.0%	53.8%
Internet	42.5%	26.2%	12.5%	18.8%	51.2%	27.5%	10.0%	11.2%	68.8%	18.8%	3.8%	8.8%

Table 2 Crosstab Tabulation - showing difference between Age and Exposure to commercials

Media	Exposure to commercials based on age					
	11-13 years		14-16 years		17-19 years	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Books/Magazines/Newspaper	33.8%	66.2%	25.0%	75.0%	10.0%	90.0%
Television	91.2%	8.8%	81.2%	18.8%	75.0%	25.0%
Radio	21.2%	78.8%	5.0%	95.0%	7.5%	92.5%
Internet	33.8%	66.2%	62.5%	37.5%	31.2%	68.8%

Table 3 Crosstab Tabulation - showing difference between Teenagers TV viewing period and their Reasons for not changing the channel during commercial break

Teenagers TV viewing period	Reasons for changing and not changing channel during commercial break															
	Boring		Repetitive		Long		Irritating		Interesting		Creative		Entertaining		Informative	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
	Upto 2 hours	49.2%	50.8%	34.2%	65.8%	38.3%	61.7%	27.5%	72.5%	5.8%	94.2%	5.8%	94.2%	5.0%	95.0%	10.0%
Upto 3 hours	46.3%	53.7%	29.3%	70.7%	48.8%	51.2%	14.6%	85.4%	0.0%	100.0%	4.9%	95.1%	2.4%	97.6%	0.0%	100.0%
Upto 4 hours	37.5%	62.5%	29.2%	70.8%	37.5%	62.5%	16.7%	83.3%	4.2%	95.8%	4.2%	95.8%	4.2%	95.8%	4.2%	95.8%
Others	34.5%	65.5%	38.2%	61.8%	27.3%	72.7%	29.1%	70.9%	5.5%	94.5%	0.0%	100.0%	3.6%	96.4%	3.6%	96.4%

9. Most of the teenagers stated that they ask their parents to buy them something that they have seen in the commercials and they also save money to purchase something of their choice. Commercials persuade teenagers to make a purchase either with the help of their parents or by themselves. Though most teenagers depend upon their parents, they also focus on their independent likes and develop their needs and wants based on the commercials. This is obvious from the next set of teenagers as they do not ask their parents for anything: instead; they save money to buy something of their choice (Table 4).

Table 4 Results of McNemar Test - showing the association of product purchase by parents and product purchase by teenagers themselves

	Value	Exact Sig. (2-sided)
McNemar Test		.000a
N of Valid Cases	480	

a. Binomial distribution used.

10. On studying the recalling ability of the teenagers, the later adolescents performed really poorly when compared to the early and middle adolescents. This explains the difference in the recalling ability and it is obvious that an increase in age leads to decrease in the level of attention and recall. The above findings show that the recalling ability of the brands and products depends upon

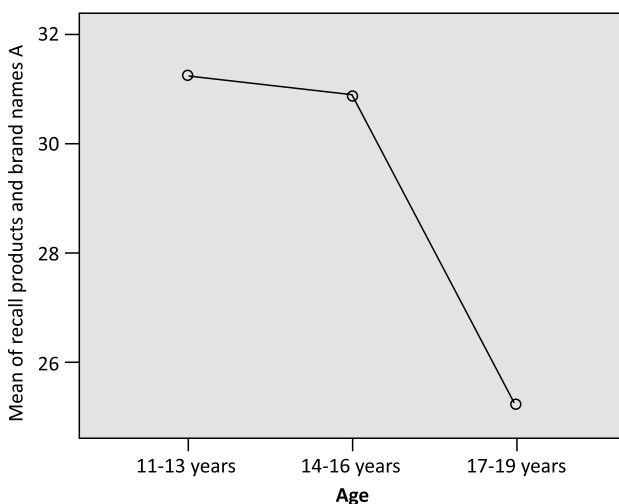


Table 5 Results of ANOVA Test - showing the difference in the recall of products along with their brands in terms of age of the respondents

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1803.258	2	901.629	25.739	.000
Within Groups	8301.925	477	35.029		
Total	10105.183	479			

the nature of the commercial and the attention one pays to them. Effective commercials based on the emotional themes used hold interest and help in better recall (Table 5, Fig 2).

**Means Plots** Figure 2 Results of ANOVA Test - showing the difference in Recall of products along with their brands in terms of Age of the Respondents

11. *Nestle KitKats*' commercial was recalled by almost all the teenagers among the other chocolate brands that were screened. As you know, *Cadbury Dairy Milk Silk* remains as the top and the most familiar brand of chocolate, yet the recall level for this brand was poor. *Nestle KitKat* was better recalled because of the creative and funny contents of the commercial. The positive valence with low arousal content that was soothing and funny to see made it stand out. The commercial got the attention of all the teenagers making it the most recalled brand among chocolates. This deviates from the previous findings that high arousal contents hold better recall.

12. *Cadbury Dairy Milk Silk* is one of the most famous chocolate brands, and it is also known for its attractive 'Kiss me' jingle, yet only a few teenagers were able to recall the brand. High arousal content, which was exciting and interesting didn't help in the brand's recall when compared to *Nestle KitKat*. When a commercial is played too many times, Television viewers tend to ignore the commercials or change the channel during a commercial break as they know the brand that is advertised and also the contents in its commercial. They pay less attention to commercials, especially the ones that are repeated often.

13. Utmost teenagers preferred to purchase nothing from the commercials that were screened. Though they favoured some particular brands and products from the commercials screened they didn't want to purchase anything, not even their favourite brand. Only a few chose to purchase *Cadbury Dairy Milk Silk* as that was their favourite brand of chocolate and also *Nestle KitKat*. An altered preference is noticed as the teenagers wanted to purchase some other brand in addition to their favourite brand due to the screening of the

Table 6 Cross tabulation between teenagers’ preference for chocolate brand and their altered preference due to the screened commercials

Preference for chocolate brand			Altered preference due to the screened commercials					Total
			None	Cadbury Dairy Milk Silk	Nestle Kitkat	Nestle Bar one	Miscellaneous	
Preference for chocolate brand	Cadbury Dairy Milk	% within Name the chocolate brand you like the most	46.8%	35.4%	5.1%	1.9%	10.8%	100.0%
		% within From the commercials that you have just seen, which of the following would you purchase?	66.7%	88.9%	29.6%	33.3%	56.7%	65.8%
	Kitkat	% within Name the chocolate brand you like the most	38.1%	9.5%	35.7%	2.4%	14.3%	100.0%
		% within From the commercials that you have just seen, which of the following would you purchase?	14.4%	6.3%	55.6%	11.1%	20.0%	17.5%
	Miscellaneous	% within Name the chocolate brand you like the most	52.5%	7.5%	10.0%	12.5%	17.5%	100.0%
		% within From the commercials that you have just seen, which of the following would you purchase?	18.9%	4.8%	14.8%	55.6%	23.3%	16.7%

commercials (Table 6).

14. An association was seen between the choice of the commercials and the choice of the product purchase from the screened commercials. Most of the teenagers didn’t like any commercials that were screened during the program and most of them didn’t wish to purchase anything from the commercials that were screened. But they also showed an interest in buying both *Cadbury Dairy*

*Milk Silk* and *Nestle KitKat*. The commercial of *Cadbury Dairy Milk Silk* attracted most of the teenagers because of its song and they found it interesting and creative. The high arousal content and the positive valence, such as joy and sharing, made it effective. The commercial of *Nestle KitKat* stands as the second most preferred brand among teenagers with positive valence and low arousal content in the commercial. Though the

Table 7 Cross tabulation between choice of the commercial and the choice of product purchase from the commercials screened during program

Choice of commercial	Choice of product purchase from the commercials screened				
	None	Cadbury Dairy Milk Silk	Nestle KitKat	Nestle Bar One	Miscellaneous
None	83.3%	10.0%	3.3%	0.0%	3.3%
Cadbury Dairy Milk Silk	41.7%	40.0%	6.1%	1.7%	10.4%
Nestle KitKat	35.3%	15.7%	31.4%	5.9%	11.8%
Nestle Bar One	30.0%	20.0%	0.0%	40.0%	10.0%
Miscellaneous	50.0%	11.8%	8.8%	0.0%	29.4%

teenagers preferred to purchase a particular brand of chocolate, their interest and liking towards several commercials varied. They showed a liking for the commercial of the same brand but were attracted to the other creative commercials. Creativity in the commercial made *Nestle KitKat* lead in recall (Table 7).

## Discussion

### *Teenagers and television commercials*

Teenagers of the age group 11-19 years are chosen as the most persuading segment because they can be influenced easily. The teenagers of this age group prefer to watch commercials in order to know about brand or a product and to choose one from what they have seen. A good commercial will help in increased sales and demand for a particular product or a brand (Herhold, 2017). A Digital Marketing Survey conducted by Kristen Herhold (2017) on how consumers view advertising found that 90% of consumers are influenced by advertisements and that they make a purchase after seeing or hearing about something on television. The result of this study shows that teenagers prefer the internet more than television as the media, which entertains them the most. As the children of this era are much into technology and gadgets, they have shown much preference for digital media. But television is still chosen by teenagers as the medium, which exposes them to commercials for different products and services. This shows that television is still an influential medium. Several reports have stated that there is nothing more effective than television (Lonova, 2016).

From the study, it is evident that most teenagers watch television only for 2 hours, while a few watch for 3 hours and more. Previous studies have shown that children in India watch about 28 hours of TV per week and are exposed to 20,000 ads a year (Coon & Tucker, 2001). This ascertains that television commercials influence and impact the lives of children in India. Stanford Children's

Health, a health care system in San Francisco Bay Area committed to pediatrics has stated that children watch too much television and that it's essential to set good television viewing habits. Hence, it is good that children spend less time in front of the television. Martin and Gentry (1997) in their study stated that advertising to teenagers results in increased sales but it may affect teenager's physical and mental health. Therefore, spending less time will reduce the negative impact of commercials on children.

The "Impact of TV Advertisements on Teens" was studied by Almehairi in 2013. The research paper says that advertisers are spending more and are seeking advertising spaces to reach kids and adolescents with their advertisements. This finding is similar to the present study where it is seen that teenagers ask their parents to buy them something that they had seen in the commercial and they also save money to buy the same. Commercials have turned teenagers to nag their parents in order to get them something, whereas few teenagers save money to buy what they want rather than asking their parents to get them. This is similar to the findings of Moschis and Mitchell (1986) who have also stated that some teens save money in order to buy something that was advertised, or they earn money to buy it. This shows that teenagers focus on their independent likes and are trying to depend on themselves to satisfy their needs and wants.

### *Advertising culture*

Triandis (1995) along with Gelfand (1998) in their paper 'Individualism and Collectivism' and 'Converging measurement of horizontal and vertical individualism and Collectivism' mentioned that countries such as the U.S., Great Britain, and France, under Vertical-Individualist (VI) societies as people there only focus on gaining their personal status by means of competition, achievement and also by surpassing others. Countries such as Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Australia, fall under the Horizontal-Individualist (HI) societies

where people focus on uniqueness and equality rather than improving their personal status, while India and other East Asian countries fall under the Vertical Collectivist (VC) societies because people focus on cohesion and status of their in-groups, they sacrifice their own personal goals and are influenced by their peer groups. Brazil and some other Latin American contexts were seen to fall under the Horizontal-Collectivist (HC) societies where people value interdependence and emphasize on benevolence and sociability but not hierarchy. Select Indian television commercials were studied for this research paper to check whether India still lies as a Vertical Collectivist society.

The result is similar to the study done by Nigli & Thomas (2018) and deviates from the previous findings of Triandis and Gelfand (1998) that conclude that India is no longer a Vertical Collectivist society because people are focusing on their personal status goals and are, seeking opportunities to stand out and to impress others by valuing equality and by expressing uniqueness. This shows that commercials are definitely persuading the TV viewing public. Teenagers are also influenced and, in turn, are seen to influence each other to purchase gadgets and other products. It creates a nature of tension in them to strive for what they think is the best by competing with each other. Though most teenagers prefer not to watch television commercials during commercial breaks, it is obvious that the commercials are influencing them to make a purchase.

### **Recall and Emotions**

The word emotion has been interchangeably used with other words such as feelings, affect, moods and sentiments. Emotion definitely has an influence on people because Gorn (1982) has already found that the music in an advertisement will have an effect on the consumer's product preference depending upon the involvement he/she has with the situation. The effectiveness of advertisements in the Telecom and Beverage sectors in Bangladesh was studied by Anwar & Shakib in 2013. The study concludes that those commercials that included 'emotional references' were successful in attracting the TV-viewing public, and they also created awareness among the consumers by influencing their purchasing behaviour. The recall was because of the taglines and other attributes of the commercials and not because of the intended facts mentioned in the commercials. It is essential for a commercial to have a dominant appeal to connect with the audience.

Mehta and Purvis (2006) in their study found

that attention paid to commercial will help to measure recall and also to understand one's advertising liking. Recall levels for different types of commercials were analysed in this paper. Kastenholtz and Young (2003) stated "liking and emotional response to advertising are undoubtedly linked" (p, 310). People rely on emotions rather than information hence, emotional contents seem to hold better attention and recall. Highly emotional commercials perform better when sound/sight is synched above average. Ambler and Burne (1999) found that emotions enhance long-term memory of the commercials, hence increasing recall. Thorson and Friestad (1989) concentrated on recalling emotional advertising. They concluded that the greater the emotional intensity of a television commercial, the higher the recall. Thorson (1991) also stated that emotional intensity enhances attention, advertising and brand liking and learning. Hazlett and Hazlett (1999) gave a similar conclusion that commercials that arouse emotional responses show higher recall for the brand advertised. This shows that recall and emotions are interconnected. This is similar to the findings of this research that humour, creativity, storyline, background music or the jingle and the teens in *Cadbury Dairy Milk Silk's* commercials made it the favourite commercial and the preferred brand of purchase. This speaks about the desirability of that particular product. Similarly, *Nestle KitKat* was recalled better because of the humour and creativity that played strong roles in its commercials. This result deviates from the previous findings that advertisements with high levels of arousal and positive valence are more memorable and create pleasant associations in the brains of the consumers (Frenay, 2016).

Previous data from television research shows that highly involving programs result in greater advertisement effectiveness (Clancy and Kweskin, 1971; Krugman, 1977; Leach 1981; Menneer, 1987; Siebert, 1978; Television Audience Assessment, 1984) and certain studies have also spoken about the negative correlation between viewer involvement and advertising effectiveness (Bryant & Comisky, 1978; Kennedy, 1971; Soldow & Principe 1981; Thorson, *et al.*, 1985). With regard to recognition and recall of television commercials, it was seen in the previous study that the viewer's involvement in the program made them stick to the same channel and watch all the commercials during the break. This involvement happens only because of the emotional pull one receives from the channel or the program, making them stick to the same. This further helped in the recognition and recall of the television commercials. It is not always about how

many people are exposed to the commercials, but it is all about how many retain some effect and respond to it. Basically, it insists on the importance of being persuaded rather than just remembering them (Srull 1983).

Donovan *et al.*, (2003) conducted a research on 'Continuous tracking of the Australian National Tobacco Campaign: advertising effects on recall, recognition, cognitions, and behaviour (2003)' to relate the campaigns advertising to its outcome measures. The result of the study showed that greater the media weight greater the recognition and recall mediated by the message of the advertisement. Ads with clear figure-ground execution formats were found to be more memorable than those without it, and health effects advertisements were more memorable than those ads which encourage quitting. This shows that recall depends upon the type of advertisement aired. More than the information that is being conveyed in a commercial, consumers are also looking at the way in which the commercials are created, whether it is based on empathy or creativity. This uniqueness makes the commercial stand out and also be better recalled.

#### ***Altered preference among the teenagers***

A Digital Marketing Survey conducted by Kristen Herhold (2017) on how consumers view advertising found that 90% of consumers are influenced by advertisements and that they make a purchase after seeing or hearing about something on television. Hence, it is true that commercials, influence consumers to make a purchase. Similarly, teenagers were also influenced by the commercials that were advertised. Most of the teenagers preferred to purchase nothing from the commercials, but there was a slighting altered preference seen in them as the teenagers who preferred to purchase their favourite chocolate brand preferred to try and purchase the other competing chocolate brands too. Though the preference is so minimal, an altered preference is noticed among the teenagers. This shows the significant association between teenager's preference for chocolate brands and their altered preference due to the screened commercials. Gorn and Goldberg (1980) suggest that additional exposure and varied set of commercials are required to achieve altered preferences and behaviour. Increasing the number of exposure to a varied sets of commercials will have a positive effect on the children's preferences and behaviour. Exposure to the same commercials three to five times will annoy and negatively affect the children's behaviour and interest for the product. Hence, it is important to concentrate on the nature of the commercial and

its attributes in order to make a commercial stand out among the rest. If it is unique and content with the audience emotionally, it is sure to get the attention of the TV-viewing public. Advertisers look at teens as loyal consumers, a consumer for life. Advertising helps in creating a brand image and this sells a brand to the teenagers; in turn teens recommend their friends and family members to purchase the same. This helps in creating a positive chain of consumerism (McQuerrey, 2019).

#### **Conclusion**

From the study, it is evident that television commercials definitely play a big role in persuading consumers, especially teens, to make a purchase. The result is highly convincing as it shows television, a mass medium being preferred even today despite this era of digital media. This explains the necessity behind the development of effectual commercials to grab the audience's attention. Rather than just trying to build exposure, a commercial is successful only when the targeted audience retains some effect and responds to it in the form of a purchase. Persuasion is the key element and not mere remembrance (Srull 1983, 1984). Hence, this research has tried to figure out the nature and the recurring themes of emotion used in the commercials that are influential to the TV viewing public and for this reason, teenagers were chosen for the study. It is significant to create emotionally attractive commercials to make the audience stick to the same channel or the commercial they are watching. 'Feelings' definitely have proven to rank higher than 'thinking'. Though all the commercials chosen were of unique emotional content, they differed in their themes and the types of emotional responses, i.e., based on empathy or creativity used in them. Rather than choosing either empathy or creativity, advertisers are trying to create commercials that include both types of emotional responses. Even if the commercials are fashioned with low arousal contents, the positive valence or characters make them stand out. It doesn't really matter whether it is high or low arousal content, teenagers have shown strong preference towards creative content that shows positivity resulting in an altered preference (brand liking) and recall.

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## Effectiveness of Social Media during the COVID-like Health Emergencies in Nepal

VIDHU PRAKASH KAYASTHA<sup>1</sup>, BALBIR SINGH BHATIA<sup>2</sup> & RAKESH KUMAR UPADHYAY<sup>3</sup>

### ABSTRACT

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, individuals turned to web-based media, particularly social media, and online news portals to stay informed with the latest updates. While social media emerged as a popular source of COVID-19 information, concerns arose regarding its reliability and usefulness. This study utilized an online survey approach, employing a well-structured questionnaire to gather insights from 100 participants residing in the Kathmandu Valley and its outskirts during the health crisis. Respondents were selected through random sampling. Results revealed that 55% of participants viewed information on COVID-19 from web-based media as trustworthy and valuable. Additionally, it was noted that 100% of respondents utilized social media, with Facebook being the most utilized platform. Notably, 36% of participants relied on social media for obtaining COVID-19 updates during the pandemic. While social media proved to be an effective information source, concerns were raised regarding the proliferation of unsubstantiated claims and misinformation, undermining user trust. It is imperative to disseminate filtered and verified information on social media platforms to enhance their efficacy during emergencies.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Emergencies, Information, Pandemic, Social media, Nepal

### Introduction

Social media is not only a phenomenon that has changed the way people interact and communicate around the world, but it also influences many aspects of human communication. Media and communication theorist Marshall McLuhan coined the term “global village” in 1964 to describe the simultaneous contraction and expansion of world cultures due to widespread technological advances that enabled the immediate sharing of cultures. McLuhan said that the global village is a close-knit social media world where people connect regardless of borders. In this way, we can bring people from all over the world together like a small village, ignoring cultural differences and national borders (Fischer, 1999).

With the rapid changes in technology in the 20th century, social media platforms also developed swiftly. After developing the first supercomputers in the 1940s, scientists and engineers began developing networks between these computers, which later led to the birth of the Internet and the World Wide Web. Network technology was improved in the 1960s and the 1970s, with UseNet in 1979 allowing users to communicate via virtual bulletin board and digital

bulletin board systems. In 1999, the first blog became popular thanks to user-generated content, starting a social media trend that continues to this day. Today, web-based social media plays an important role in connecting people around the world.

The term “social media” generally refers to modern means of communication used to communicate through various applications and digital platforms such as Facebook, Twitter (now X), Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest, TikTok, and Google+.

Social media websites allow you to network with other people and share useful information. Most of us are familiar with how social media appeals to and connects people all over the world. During crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, people have used social media to receive and transmit information. Social media platforms like LunarStorm, Six Degrees, Cyworld, Ryze, and Wikipedia have popped up in the internet world.

### History of social media platforms in Nepal

Acharya (2009) mentioned in his study brief article, “Online Media in Nepal: Short History” that, in Nepal, Mercantile Office Systems launched

<sup>1</sup>Ph.D. Scholar, RIMT University, Mandi Gobindgarh, Punjab (E-mail: vidhuprakashkayastha.phd@rimt.ac.in); <sup>2</sup>Professor and Pro-Vice-Chancellor, RIMT University, Mandi Gobindgarh, Punjab (E-mail: bsbhatia@rimt.ac.in); <sup>3</sup>Associate Professor, IIMC, Delhi (E-mail: rakeshiime9@gmail.com)

commercial e-mail in June 1994 through another entity called Mercantile Communications. Earlier, the Nepal Academy of Science and Technology (NAST) and Nepal Environmental Journalists Forum used e-mail service on a trial basis. On July 15, 1995, Mercantile began offering full online access via leased lines through Nepal Telecom, which had a Singaporean backbone. By the end of 1995, Mercantile had about 150 subscribers, primarily international non-governmental organizations in Kathmandu. During the same time, WorldLink began offering dual dial-up Internet service, dialing into the United States four times a day. By January 1996, there were about 60 subscribers. On September 1, 1995, *The Kathmandu Post*, the broadsheet daily, was posted online on the University of Illinois website. In 1998, Mercantile Office Systems founded a portal called South-Asia.com, that archived seven daily and weekly newspapers. However, the website only offered a digital version of the printed release. In 1999, it moved to NepalNews.com, the first online news portal of Nepal. This paved the way for more newspapers to publish their content in cyberspace. At the beginning of 2023, there were 15.85 million internet users in Nepal, with an internet penetration rate of 51.6%. Nepal has 12.6 million social media users as of January 2023, representing 41.0% of the total population (Acharya, 2009; Kemp, 2023).

### ***Role of social media in dissemination of information regarding COVID-19 in Nepal***

Besides connecting immigrants with their families at home, as well as informal and formal networks abroad during the chaotic situation, social media provided them a platform to express their concerns, access updates on travel, quarantine and social distancing protocols in Nepal, and seek food and material assistance from formal and informal networks. The Facebook pages of the embassies, as well as pages run by the leaders in Nepali migrant groups and communities, have become indispensable resources for common people. A growing number of calls for help and questions were answered on the Facebook page and social media groups like IMO, WhatsApp, Viber, etc. Capital-centered messages, coordinated through social media groups, urged immigrant groups and community leaders scattered across the country to provide food and other material assistance (Lara-Guerrero, 2021).

The Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) of the Government of Nepal (GoN) was also engaged in the dissemination of information regarding COVID-19 on their web portals. (HOEC, 2018; NHEICC, 2022).

### **Review of literature**

Literature on the usage and impact of social media during health emergencies was selected both in the global context and the context of Nepal. The reviewed literature offered an overview of the effectiveness of social media in receiving health information. The concerned research studies were analyzed to understand the advantages and disadvantages of social media as it has abilities of the quick dissemination of both genuine information and misinformation to a large audience.

One of the reviewed reports offered the latest data on digital Nepal, mentioning an internet penetration rate of 51.6%. Nepal has 12.6 million social media users as of January 2023, which counts 41.0% of the total population of Nepal (Kemp, 2023).

González-Padilla and Tortolero-Blanco (2020) focused on the effectiveness of social media as an educational tool during the COVID-19. Social media platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic have been extensively used for arranging collaborative research projects, surveys, and multi-center studies. Social media platforms support ongoing education with online and recorded webinars via platforms like YouTube, Skype, and Zoom (González-Padilla & Tortolero-Blanco, 2020).

Tang *et al.* (2021) mentioned that more than 2.9 billion individuals were attached to web-based media consistently. These online media have incredible delivery speeds, placement and access rates. According to the authors, the COVID-19 pandemic attracted a great deal of attention from governments, researchers, and the public in various countries. Cautioning about the appearance of misinformation on social media, the authors said that it is necessary to coordinate the search for sources and identify and reduce the spread of misinformation. The authors urged that the WHO, academic institutions, and other public health agencies should consider using influential social media to disseminate accurate medical information to the public during health emergencies (WHO, 2021; Tang *et al.*, 2021).

Acharya *et al.* (2021) focused on the increasing popularity of the usage of digital content in Nepal. According to the researchers, there were 10.78 million web users in Nepal in January 2021. The number of web users in Nepal expanded by 567 thousand (+5.5%) somewhere between 2020 and 2021. There were 13.00 million web-based media clients in Nepal in January 2021. The survey conducted by the authors showed that the number of web-based media users in Nepal increased by 3.0 million somewhere in the range of 2020 and 2021. There were 38.61 million mobile phone connections in Nepal in January 2021.

The findings of the study indicated the challenges and opportunities of e-learning in the education sectors at the time of the lockdowns and other restrictions like social distancing, affecting over 90% of students worldwide, including in Nepal (Acharya *et al.*, 2021).

Kolluri and Murthy (2021) in their study examined the pandemic's extensive and protracted coverage contributed to COVID-19 information fatigue, making it more difficult to disseminate updated information. The misinformation comes in many forms in the case of COVID-19, from conspiracy theories about the virus being manufactured as a biological weapon in China to claims that coconut oil kills the viral infection. Such misinformation can cause people to overreact or underreact, seeking inefficient and destructive remedies. It is, therefore, important to understand why an individual believes and spreads misleading information about COVID-19. Concerns over misinformation and fake news fueled the development of CoVerifi, a platform that could help combat the infodemic (Kolluri & Murthy, 2021).

### Research gaps

On the basis of the studies discussed in the literature review, the following research gaps were identified:

- A guiding criterion in setting goals and objectives for social media use in future pandemics was not addressed.
- A viable mechanism for curbing the spread of misinformation and fact-checking via social media was not mentioned.
- The need for mass awareness campaigns via social media in relation to health emergencies.
- The importance and effectiveness of illustrative content and regional languages in social media content during the pandemic.

### Objectives

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the entire world had passed through unprecedented hardship including restrictions like lockdowns and social distancing. Services provided by internet including social media, have kept Internet users linked with their social and professional lives. This study has been carried out to understand the influence of social media in Nepal during health emergencies with the following objectives:

- i. To study the reach and access of social media among respondents during the COVID-19.
- ii. To study the effectiveness of social media during the outbreak of COVID-19.
- iii. To find out the most preferred social media platform by the respondents regarding COVID-19

information.

- iv. To evaluate the impact of information shared by Health Care Professionals (HCPs) through the social media platforms.
- v. To find out the reliability of social media regarding COVID-19 information.

### Significance of research

This research topic was chosen to explore the reach and effectiveness of social media during the pandemic in Nepal. The methodology and modalities of analysis were carefully designed to analyse the usage and impact of information shared through the digital platform. The study covers the broad implications of research for making general contributions to the effective usage of digital media during health emergencies.

### Research methodology

The study covers the geographic location of the Kathmandu Valley and its suburbs in Nepal. Stratified sampling was used from randomly selected predefined groups engaged in online work during the lockdown. The data was collected through online mode due to the lockdown in the region. The questionnaire consisting of a series of closed-ended, and open-ended was used to collect data. A total of 100 respondents were chosen randomly online and were surveyed. The participants were from the general public, government officials, and freelancers, who are engaged in their respective fields in different parts of Nepal.

### Findings and discussion

The survey was carried out in July 2022. The participants were asked about the effectiveness of social media for receiving and sharing information on the spread of the coronavirus during the pandemic when restrictions like lockdowns and social distancing were imposed.

Data shown in Table 1 were collected via online mode, 70% of respondents were male, and 30% were female. Regarding the age group of the respondents, 50% of them were from the 25 to 40 years age group, 36% were 41 to 60 years old and 14% were older than 60 years. Out of 100 respondents, 88% of them hailed from urban areas and 12% of respondents lived in the rural area. The proportion of respondents according to the level of study showed that 75% of respondents had master's degrees, and 20% of respondents had bachelor's degrees. Government officials are more active on social media than the general public, with Government officials at 76%. The general public made up only 24% of all respondents.

Table 1: Socio-demographic details of respondents

Independent variable	Socio demographic factors	Percentage	Total
Gender	Male	70.0%	100.0%
	Female	30.0%	
Age group	25-year to 40-year age group	50.0%	100.0%
	41-year to 60-year age group	36.0%	
	above 60 years.	14.0%	
Residence	Rural	12.0%	100.0%
	Urban	88.0%	
Level of education	Literate	5.0%	100.0%
	Bachelor’s degree	20.0%	
	Master’s degree and above	75.0%	
Employment affiliation	General public	24.0%	100.0%
	Government officials	76.0%	

Source: Primary data collected by the author

Table 2: Frequency of usage of social media among respondents

Respondents (n =100)	Yes	No
Male	70	100.0%
Female	30	100.0%

Source: Primary data collected by the author

Table 2 indicated that access to the internet and social media was good in Nepal, as 100% of respondents used social media for various purposes. However, data reflected that women were less active on social media than men.

Table 3 demonstrated that all respondents had good access to social media. According to the data, 60% of respondents use Facebook, which is significantly more than any other social media user. Of all respondents, 65% of men and 55% of women used Facebook. YouTube was the second choice for respondents, with 22% of female respondents and 18% of male respondents using it. This reflected that YouTube is more popular among women than men. Preference for Facebook was 70% higher among younger age groups 25-45 than older age groups, and 65% and 45% among 41-60 and 60+ age groups respectively. Among YouTube users, 40% in the 60+ age group used YouTube, while only 10% of respondents in the age group 25-40 and 41-60 used YouTube. Facebook users had a high percentage of bachelor’s degree graduates, 68%, and in the group of master’s degree graduates, 58% used Facebook. The percentage of Facebook users among the less educated respondents was 54%. Government officials had better access to social media, with 64% using social media than the general public, with 56% of them using social media.

Table 4 shows that male users of social media is higher than females. Among the male respondents, 85% used social media on a regular basis, while 47% of female respondents were found to be using social media every day. The data showed that 80% of urban respondents used social media daily, which is higher than rural respondents, with 52% of them using social media on a regular basis. In the educational attainment group, 75% of bachelor’s degree holders and 61% of master’s degree holders used social media daily. Under the employment group, it was found that 68% of government officials regularly used social media, whereas 64% of the general public used social media daily.

Table 5 shows that 82% of respondents agreed to use social media to obtain information about COVID-19, out of which 90% of the respondents were male and 74% were female. In the age group, 85% of young people aged 25 to 40 were more active than the elders. According to the data, 82% of those aged 41 to 60, and 79% of those aged 60+ used social media to learn about COVID-19. Data reflected that 84% of urban respondents used social media to receive information on COVID-19. The percentage of rural respondents was a little less in this regard with 80% of them relying on social media for information on COVID-19. Regarding the level of education of respondents, it was found that 86% of respondents with a master’s degree were using social media for information about COVID-19, while 82% of the respondents with a bachelor’s degree were using social media in this regard. On the employment front, government officials scored a higher percentage in this regard, with 84%, than the general public with 80%.

The data presented in Table 6 shows that 56%

Table 3: Type of social media platforms most used by respondents.

Respondents		Facebook	Twitter	YouTube	Instagram	Multiple social media	Neutral	Total
Gender	Male	65.0%	7.0%	18.0%	4.0%	5.0%	1.0%	100.0%
	Female	55.0%	3.0%	22.0%	2.0%	15.0%	3.0%	100.0%
Age group	25-year to 40-year age group	70.0%	5.0%	10.0%	5.0%	7.0%	3.0%	100.0%
	41-year to 60-year age group	65.0%	9.0%	10.0%	3.0%	12.0%	1.00%	100.0%
	above 60 years.	45.0%	1.0%	40.0%	1.00%	11.0%	2.0%	100.0%
Residence	Rural	49.0%	6.0%	24.0%	4.0%	15.0%	2.0%	100.0%
	Urban	71.0%	4.0%	16.0%	2.0%	5.0%	2.0%	100.0%
Level of education	Literate	54.0%	7.0%	22.0%	3.0%	12.0%	2.0%	100.0%
	Bachelor's degree	68.0%	2.0%	26.0%	1.0%	2.0%	1.0%	100.0%
	Master's degree and above	58.0%	6.0%	12.0%	5.0%	16.0%	3.0%	100.0%
Employment affiliation	General public	56.0%	7.0%	18.0%	4.0%	12.0%	3.0%	100.0%
	Government officials	64.0%	3.0%	22.0%	2.0%	8.0%	1.0%	100.0%
Total sample (n) = 100		60.0%	5.0%	20.0%	3.0%	10.0%	2.0%	100.0%

Source: Primary data collected by the author

Table 4: Time spent on social media by respondents.

Respondents		Everyday	Sometimes a week	Neutral	Total
Gender	Male	85.0%	12.0%	3.0%	100.0%
	Female	47.0%	46.0%	7.0%	100.0%
Age group	25-year to 40-year age group	82.0%	15.0%	3.0%	100.0%
	41-year to 60-year age group	64.0%	32.0%	4.0%	100.0%
	above 60 years.	52.0%	40.0%	8.0%	100.0%
Residence	Rural	52.0%	40.0%	8.0%	100.0%
	Urban	80.0%	18.0%	2.0%	100.0%
Level of education	Literate	62.0%	30.0%	8.0%	100.0%
	Bachelor's degree	75.0%	22.0%	3.0%	100.0%
	Master's degree and above	61.0%	35.0%	4.0%	100.0%
Employment affiliation	General public	64.0%	30.0%	6.0%	100.0%
	Government officials	68.0%	28.0%	4.0%	100.0%
Total sample (n) = 100		66.0%	29.0%	5.0%	100.0%

Source: Primary data collected by the author

of respondents preferred the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) portal. The data shows that 62% of female respondents used the MoHP portal, 12% more than male respondents, who made up 50% of

users. For the 25-40 and 41-60 age groups using the MoHP portal, the percentages were similar at 60%. However, the MoHP portal users in the 60+ age group dropped significantly to 48%. The data shows



Table 5: Social media as a main source of COVID-19 information

Respondents		Yes	No	Neutral	Total
Gender	Male	90.0%	8.0%	2.0%	100.0%
	Female	74.0%	20.0%	6.0%	
Age group	25-year to 40-year age group	85.0%	12.0%	3.0%	100.0%
	41-year to 60-year age group	82.0%	13.0%	5.0%	
	above 60 years.	79.0%	17.0%	4.0%	
Residence	Rural	80.0%	14.0%	6.0%	100.0%
	Urban	84.0%	14.0%	2.0%	
Educational attainment	Literate	78.0%	18.0%	4.0%	
	Bachelor’s degree	82.0%	15.0%	3.0%	
	Master’s degree and above	86.0%	9.0%	5.0%	
Employment affiliation	General public	80.0%	12.0%	3.0%	100.0%
	Government officials	84.0%	16.0%	5.0%	
Total sample (n) = 100		82.0%	14.0%	4.0%	100.0%

Source: Primary data collected by the author

Table 6: Frequency of usage of online portals of health information

Respondents		MoHP	WHO	Multiple portals	Neutral	Total
Gender	Male	50.0%	40.0%	5.0%	7.0%	100.0%
	Female	62.0%	26.0%	5.0%	5.0%	
Age group	25-year to 40-year age group	60.0%	36.0%	3.0%	1.0%	100.0%
	41-year to 60-year age group	60.0%	30.0%	6.0%	4.0%	
	above 60 years.	48.0%	33.0%	4.0%	13.0%	
Residence	Rural	70.0%	21.0%	5.0%	4.0%	100.0%
	Urban	42.0%	45.0%	5.0%	8.0%	
Level of education	Literate	56.0%	33.0%	5.0%	6.0%	100.0%
	Bachelor’s degree	62.0%	27.0%	5.0%	6.0%	
	Master’s degree and above	50.0%	39.0%	5.0%	6.0%	
Employment affiliation	General public	68.0%	19.0%	4.0%	9.0%	100.0%
	Government officials	44.0%	47.0%	6.0%	3.0%	
Total sample (n) = 100		56.0%	33.0%	5.0%	6.0%	100.0%

Source: Primary data collected by the author

that 33% of respondents over the age of 60 used the WHO portal. Similarly, 70% of rural respondents used MoHP portals, compared to 42% of urban respondents.

Table 7 reveals that 36% of respondents followed a healthcare professional (HCP) on social media, and 44% of those did not follow the HCP for information

on COVID-19. Of the respondents, 20% remained neutral. Among the male respondents, 50% of them followed the HCP’s social media accounts, while only 22% of the female respondents followed their social media accounts. HCPs social media account followers were more common in the 25-40 age group, with a score of 60%, compared to 30% and

Table 7: Frequency of usage of Health Care Professionals' (HCPs) social media for the COVID-19 information among the respondents.

Respondents		Yes	No	Neutral	Total
Gender	Male	50.0%	40.0%	10.0%	100.0%
	Female	22.0%	48.0%	30.0%	100.0%
Age group	25-year to 40-year age group	60.0%	20.0%	20.0%	100.0%
	41-year to 60-year age group	30.0%	54.0%	16.0%	100.0%
	above 60 years.	45.0%	27.0%	28.0%	100.0%
Residence	Rural	30.0%	40.0%	30.0%	100.0%
	Urban	42.0%	48.0%	10.0%	100.0%
Level of education	Literate	38.00	42.0%	20.0%	100.0%
	Bachelor's degree	33.0%	46.0%	21.0%	100.0%
	Master's degree and above	37.0%	44.0%	19.0%	100.0%
Employment affiliation	General public	40.0%	40.0%	20.0%	100.0%
	Government officials	32.0%	48.0%	20.0%	100.0%
Total samples (n) =100		36.0%	44.0%	20.0%	100.0%

Source: Primary data collected by the author

45% in the 41-60 and 60+ age groups, respectively. It was found in the survey that 30% of respondents in rural areas said they followed the HCP's social media accounts while the percentage of the followers was 42% in urban areas.

Table 8 shows that 55% of respondents said that the information about COVID-19 on social media

was reliable, but 22% said that the information published on social media was not authentic. Of the men surveyed, 60% said the information posted on social media was genuine, but only 30% said the information available on social media was not genuine.

It is noted that 65% said the information on

Table 8: Authenticity of information in the social media

Respondents		Yes	No	Neutral	Total
55.0%		22.0%	23.0%	100.0%	
Gender	Male	60.0%	30.0%	10.0%	100.0%
	Female	50.0%	14.0%	36.0%	100.0%
Age group	25-year to 40-year age group	55.0%	15.0%	30.0%	100.0%
	41-year to 60-year age group	65.0%	24.0%	11.0%	100.0%
	above 60 years.	45.0%	27.0%	28.0%	100.0%
Residence	Rural	50.0%	30.0%	20.0%	100.0%
	Urban	60.0%	14.0%	26.0%	100.0%
Level of education	Literate	50.0%	30.0%	20.0%	100.0%
	Bachelor's degree	55.0%	21.0%	24.0%	100.0%
	Master's degree and above	60.0%	15.0%	25.0%	100.0%
Employment affiliation	General public	60.0%	17.0%	23.0%	100.0%
	Government officials	50.0%	27.0%	23.0%	100.0%
Total samples (n) = 100		55.0%	22.0%	23.0%	100.0%

Source: Primary data collected by the author

social media was real, 24% said it wasn't true, and the remaining 11% remained neutral. Among the respondents, 45% said the information on social media was real, 27% said it wasn't, and the remaining 28% remained neutral.

Rural respondents' opinions favored the information on social media, with 50% saying it was real, 30% saying it wasn't real, and 20% remained neutral when asked. To the same question, 60% of the urban respondents said the information was true, 14% said it wasn't true, and 26% of them were neutral.

Of educated respondents, 50% said the information was genuine, 30% said it was not, and 20% remained neutral. Similarly, 60% of respondents with master's degrees said the information was genuine, 15% said the information was unreliable, and a whopping 25% were neutral.

When asked about the credibility of information about COVID-19 on social media, 60% of general respondents said they trusted it, but 17% said it wasn't real and 23% said they were neutral on the subject. Likewise, 50% of the government officials believe information posted on social media is genuine, but 27% disagree and 23% remain neutral on the issue.

## Conclusion

The survey clearly showed that most respondents are using social media to search for information about COVID-19 during the pandemic. Respondents said they rely on social media to collect, share, and disseminate information about COVID-19. Respondents' opinions on the credibility and integrity of social media were mixed. A significant number of respondents, 23% of all respondents, did not comment on issues with the accuracy of information about COVID-19 available on the social network. Indeed, public distrust of the expert opinion of competent organizations, amid unsubstantiated claims circulating on social networks, has created a rift between senders and recipients of COVID-19-related messages.

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## COVID Blues, Health Awareness and Social Media

HUMA PARVEEN<sup>1</sup>, MUSTAFA AL SABRI<sup>2</sup>, & HINA HABEEB<sup>3</sup>

### ABSTRACT

The current study is aimed to explore the relationship between social media usage, health awareness practices, and panic among Indian youth during COVID-19. A survey was conducted among university students in the Delhi-NCR region to assess the effect of social media on their health behaviour. An online survey of 263 students was executed employing a 5-point Likert scale-based self-administered questionnaire. The data was analyzed using smart PLS-SEM (partial least squares structural equation modeling). The results indicate that behavioural change in a person is critical to protection against coronavirus. Social media-induced panic does not trigger a positive behaviour change, nor does it lead to protective practices. It also shows that the higher the awareness about COVID-19, the greater the likelihood of exhibiting positive health behaviour and adopting protection methods. It is also revealed that while social media promotes behavior change, safety, and public awareness, it may also infuse panic among the users.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Health awareness, Panic, Protection, Social media, Youth

### Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic erupted around the waning end of 2019 in China and soon gripped every corner of the world. The disease led to a global epidemic that hasn't ceased to continue ever since. Different parts of the globe have been witnessing waves of COVID-19, one after another, with the appearance of new mutations of the virus growing deadlier and stronger taking a heavy toll on human health and lives.

The arrival of the pandemic transformed the world in a myriad ways. How people communicated, behaved, and dealt with each other underwent a metamorphosis, with technology becoming the primary tool providing much-needed support in such times.

While digitally driven social media was already an all-time favourite among the netizens, there was a huge shift in the way these media were used and utilized by everyone during the pandemic. Not only was there a huge spike in the rate of adopters of new media, but also was a massive change in how these media were used and utilized to bridge the gap that arose out of social distancing.

As far as the information function is concerned, social media comes in handy. Research has shown that a lot of people depend on social media to fulfill

their information needs on an everyday basis. Internet usage has become far easier and more accessible with the advent of smartphones, with the world recording 4.66 billion active internet users as of January 2021. Interestingly, 92.6% of this population uses the internet through mobile devices (Johnson, 2021).

Social media platforms also carry a considerable amount of information regarding health issues. The high degree of reach and impact of social media is what makes it an ideal instrument by disseminating useful and important information to the public.

In the case of a lethal disease like COVID-19, social media platforms were used by governments worldwide to increase the level of awareness about the virus. The developing countries have been especially facing more significant challenge, as they grapple with weak economic infrastructure and poor healthcare systems. It was ideal for them to nip the problem in the bud, and make people understand the value of 'prevention is better than cure'. This would ensure that the lesser the number of people infected, the lesser would be the pressure on the healthcare system.

Thus, the governments intentionally tried to harness the power of social media to spread their messages to the public. Indeed, not only the governments but also a large number of other institutions and activists turned to social media to

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor; Dept of Mass Communication, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh (*E-mail*: huma.mc@amu.ac.in); <sup>2</sup>Former Research Scholar; Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh (*E-mail*: alsabri1971@gmail.com); <sup>3</sup>Guest Faculty; Haridev Joshi University of Journalism and Mass Communication, Jaipur (*E-mail*: hinahabeeb8@gmail.com).

drive the point home about the dreaded disease.

While it can be simply said that social media is an important tool to increase public awareness about significant health issues, efficacy needs to be established through systematic scientific procedures. The present study endeavours to answer such questions about the relationship between social media and public health awareness.

## Literature review

### *Social media and health*

Social media offers a great possibility to successfully make people aware of serious diseases and health issues. Lyson *et al.* (2019) explored whether specific messages precisely designed to increase people's understanding of human papillomavirus (HPV) and cervical cancer were able to accomplish the desired goal. The results revealed that participation in such campaign driven through social media for a short period of time could actually lead to an increase in awareness about HPV.

In a post-advent-of-corona world, the overall use of the internet has jumped to record new heights. Social media usage also spiked enormously in every country during the lockdowns that ensued, with India being no exception (Bhattacharya *et al.*, 2021).

Social networking sites have also emerged as one of the major sources of acquiring first-hand information from the public. The information is not only received but also shared further with family and friends (Jang & Paek, 2019).

Indeed, the more the world lives online, the more it is shaped by the new media technologies it consumes. Liu (2020) examined the linkages between COVID-19 preventive behaviours and various digital media applications used. It was found that a majority of people actually took preventive measures like washing hands with soap or hand wash, social distancing and wearing masks after being exposed to such messages through digital media platforms.

The extent and efficacy of social media as a potent tool for providing information to the target population is an area being researched worldwide. It is roped in not only by the masses, but also the experts and veterans. A study conducted by Mohammed *et al.* (2021) found that health educators and students in Saudi Arabia extensively used social media as a platform to achieve health awareness objectives, leading to a better understanding of health issues and improved health habits.

Indeed, social media offers infinite possibilities to be exploited by healthcare professionals, patients and the public alike for disease prevention and control (Madhumathi *et al.*, 2021)

### *Infodemic, misinformation and panic*

Social media opens doorways to a world full of helpful information, exploited unprecedentedly in the wake of the raging coronavirus pandemic. It is the first pandemic of its kind that saw the world connect in novel ways through new media, which also aided in maintaining their safety, productivity and knowledge. However, this deluge of information also projected a downside, as it enabled and amplified an 'infodemic' creating hurdles in the pathway of fighting the challenge. An infodemic occurs when there is a barrage of information, be it positive or negative. It may include both calculated and inadvertent efforts to disseminate wrong details to jeopardize the health response of the public. Be it misinformation or disinformation, they are very dangerous as they can lead to a detriment in public health measures and cause widespread damage to the countries' faculty to fight the disease (World Health Organization, 2020).

Undeniably an enabler as a source of knowledge and channel of communication, social media is also responsible for a lot of misinformation in the society related to coronavirus disease (Garrett 2020; Ball & Maxmen, 2020).

Radwan *et al.* (2020) studied the role of social media in the spread of panic about COVID-19 among school students in the Gaza Strip in Palestine. The results evinced that Facebook was the most frequently used platform with news about health being the most read, watched or heard. It also revealed that social media contributed considerably to spreading panic, also taking a toll on the students' mental and psychological health. However, the number of students physically affected was quite low.

The 'side effects' of technological advancements have been very much discussed in recent pestilential times. While internet-driven media can be immensely handy for combative purposes, they can also wreak havoc on public safety and security if misused. The World Health Organization (2021) conducted a study to find the pattern of 'engagement with technology' of the young adult population (Gen Z and Millennials) from 24 countries across five continents. Interestingly, contrary to the general belief that young adults are largely indifferent to the ongoing crisis, the results exhibited that the majority of the said population was either 'very concerned' or at least 'concerned' about the issue. Moreover, most of them were more worried about the health and safety of their family and friends.

The pandemic has presented blatant examples of how misinformation can cause damage to life and health. In Iran, messages circulating on social media said that drinking methanol alcohol can cure COVID-19. This random piece of information led

to the death of hundreds of people who followed it blindly (Iranpour *et al.*, 2020). Several other countries also faced similar panicky situations with social media rumours rife about an imminent shortage of food and medicine supplies, causing panic buying and price fluctuations (Zarocostas, 2020).

In a study aimed to examine the level of panic in the Indian context, it was found to be significantly higher in people in their 30s as compared to others. The mortality rate owing to COVID-19 was higher in an older population, and the younger ones were reportedly equally alarmed. It is pertinent to note that the female population was far more panicky than the male counterparts (Bhattacharya *et al.*, 2021)

Alotiby (2021) measured the efficacy of media in warding off the misinformation regarding the use of natural home remedies for coronavirus disease in Saudi Arabia. It was revealed that the government's use of social media platforms achieved positive results in this case.

Projecting some positive figures, a study by Almotawa and Aljabri (2020) showed that while a lot of people may be misled by false information disseminated through social networking sites, there is also a sizable chunk of people who tend to take things with a pinch of salt. The study based on a survey of university students, healthcare workers, and the general public indicated that while they all consumed social media, yet for reliable and authentic information about the pandemic they instead turned to the government's health website.

### **News consumption through social media**

Research shows that people's use of social media as a news source has been on the rise. Apart from simply socialising with others, these social networking sites have turned out to be favoured sources for receiving news by a considerable chunk (48%) of the American adult population, as revealed in a Pew Research Center survey in 2021 (Walker & Matsa, 2021).

India has also emerged as a hub of social media users with higher penetration of smartphones and internet facilities. This has also resulted in huge transformations in the news media exploiting the digital platform to accomplish far wider reach. India has a whopping 600 million internet users, who are also active on social media, thus employing their smartphones to satiate their news diet every day. The year 2020 saw this consumption grow even further as the number of people accessing news online increased by nearly 16 percent (Statista Research Department, Sep 8, 2021)

More recently, in the Digital News Report 2022 prepared by the Reuters Institute based in the UK, the

majority of Indian respondents admitted to having used social media as a source of news in the week preceding the time of the survey (Chatterjee, 2022). Overall, the online news consumption has increased ever since the dawn of the pandemic.

### **Theoretical background**

The current study takes into account the Health Belief Model by social psychologists Hochbaum, Rosenstock, and others, which says that when people feel seriously threatened by something, they tend to take preventive measures (McKellar & Sillence, 2020). These health interventions should address the specific perceptions of individuals about susceptibility and benefits (Laranjo *et al.*, 2015).

In light of the aforementioned theory, the information received through social media about the unabated spread of the coronavirus and the need to stay safe can be presumed to have an effect on people's behaviour and their everyday practices.

Evidence has also been found through past research studies about the pivotal role played by social media in the context of human healthcare. A study by Majali *et al.* (2021) attempted to examine how Malaysian healthcare practitioners (MHPs) utilized social media to deliver their messages. According to the review of previous related literature, it was found that the factors contributing to the acceptance of social media as a healthcare promotion tool are Performance Expectancy, Effort Expectancy, Social Influence, and Facilitating Condition.

### **Objectives and hypotheses**

The broad objective of the study is to examine the effect of social media on public health awareness. An extensive review of the existing literature points out that social media may influence users' behaviour, thus projecting a need to explore the relationship between panic, public awareness, behavioural change and protection. The study proposes nine hypotheses to examine the abovementioned constructs:

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant effect of behavioural change on protection.

H<sub>2</sub>: There is a significant effect of panic on behavioural change.

H<sub>3</sub>: There is a significant effect of panic on protection.

H<sub>4</sub>: Public awareness has a significant effect on behavioural change.

H<sub>5</sub>: There is a substantial effect of public awareness on protection.

H<sub>6</sub>: There is a significant effect of social media on behavioural change.

H<sub>7</sub>: There is a significant effect of social media on panic.

H<sub>8</sub>: There is a significant effect of social media on protection.

H<sub>9</sub>: There is a significant effect of social media on public awareness.

**Methodology**

**Operational definitions**

**Social Media:** It refers to all internet-based platforms that allow users to communicate, create and share content.

**Behavioural change:** It refers to bringing about a change in an individual’s practices as a preventive measure against COVID-19 and for example, avoiding handshakes and hugs, social distancing, avoiding crowded places, contactless transactions, etc.

**Protection:** It refers to using protective gear/items to prevent coronavirus infection, like wearing masks and PPEs, using sanitisers, hand washing, disinfectants, etc.

**Panic:** It refers to the rise in fear and anxiety

levels of an individual, which may take a toll on one’s mental and physical well-being.

**Public Awareness:** It refers to the spread of correct information about COVID-19, its causes and prevention among citizens.

**Research instrument**

The present study was conducted utilizing a 5-point Likert scale-based questionnaire consisting of 23 questions. The self-administered questionnaire was developed through Google Forms and distributed online using purposive sampling. The language of the questionnaire was kept simple and understandable to save any confusion at bay. The participants were university students in Aligarh and NCR region, to represent the educated youth. The questionnaire was sent to around 300 people, specifically out of which 286 responses were obtained. A total of 263 complete responses were obtained, after weeding out the incomplete ones. The data was tabulated and statistically analysed using the multivariate analysis method smart PLS-SEM.

**Data analysis**

Table 1: Factor loading

	Behavioural change	Panic	Protection	Public awareness	Social media
PHC1	0.865				
PHC2	0.886				
PHC3	0.845				
PHC4	0.851				
PRO1			0.864		
PRO2			0.787		
PRO3			0.88		
PUAW1				0.894	
PUAW2				0.915	
PUAW3				0.919	
PUAW5				0.839	
PAN1		0.874			
PAN2		0.876			
PAN3		0.671			
SOM1					0.819
SOM2					0.811
SOM3					0.78
SOM4					0.812
SOM5					0.745
SOM6					0.753
SOM7					0.584

\* PHC refers to behavioural change, SOM refers to social media, PAN refers to panic, PUAW refers to public awareness, and PRO stands for protection.

Table 2: Reliability and validity

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Behavioural change	0.884	0.885	0.92	0.742
Panic	0.742	0.79	0.852	0.66
Protection	0.799	0.812	0.882	0.713
Public awareness	0.914	0.919	0.94	0.796
Social media	0.877	0.886	0.905	0.58

**Path analysis and hypothesis testing**

The data has been analyzed using smart PLS-SEM (partial least squares structural equation modeling), a method applied to path models involving latent variables to explore complex cause-effect relationships.

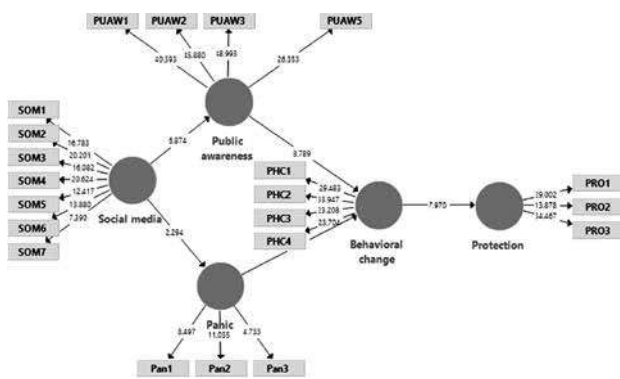


Fig. 1: Factor loading

H<sub>1</sub> endeavored to examine whether a behavioural change has a significant effect on protection against COVID-19. The results reveal that there exists a strong connection between the two variables (p-value=0). H<sub>2</sub> and H<sub>3</sub> attempt to test the effect of panic created by social media usage on behavioural change and protection. The results indicate an insignificant relationship in both cases (p-value is 0.196 and 0.20, respectively).

H<sub>4</sub> and H<sub>5</sub> test the effect of public awareness on behavioural change and protection. The results show that there is a significant effect of public awareness about COVID-19 on an individual's behaviour and the protection measures adopted (p-value= 0 in both). H<sub>6</sub>, H<sub>7</sub>, H<sub>8</sub> and H<sub>9</sub> aim to examine the relationship between social media usage and 'behavioural change, panic, protection and public awareness'. The results show that there is a significant effect of social media usage on all the four variables with p- values in each case being less than 0.05 (p-value= 0, 0.022, 0.001, 0 respectively).

The results of the hypothesized model have been illustrated in the figure below.

**Discussion**

The current study employs a survey method to explore the connections between social media and health awareness among the youth in India. It strives to investigate various dimensions of social media usage and its connections with behavioural change, protection, panic and public awareness during COVID-19.

Bringing about a change in one's habits and following 'COVID-19 appropriate behaviour' is something that the government in India has been asking the citizens to comply with. H1 suggests that a positive change in behaviours (according to COVID

Table 3: Summary of hypothesis testing

		P Values	Decision
1	Behavioural change -> Protection	0.000	Accept
2	Panic -> Behavioural change	0.196	Reject
3	Panic -> Protection	0.200	Reject
4	Public awareness -> Behavioural change	0.000	Accept
5	Public awareness -> Protection	0.000	Accept
6	Social media -> Behavioural change	0.000	Accept
7	Social media -> Panic	0.022	Accept
8	Social media -> Protection	0.001	Accept
9	Social media -> Public awareness	0.000	Accept



protocols) is key to protection against the deadly virus. Michie and West (2021) also contend that while the pandemic was a result of human actions, it is human behaviour that is vital to abate its attack. The countries able to tackle the menace effectively are the ones where citizens persistently exercise behaviour change en masse.

Hypothesis H<sub>2</sub> suggests that there are no effects of panic on behavioural change and protection. The results are in consonance with the observations made by Nicomedes and Avila (2020) that an overabundance of information from social media leads to anxiety and panic, which is many times visible in social withdrawal and an increase in obsessive health consciousness, which may have rather negative repercussions.

H<sub>4</sub> and H<sub>5</sub> show a significant impact of public awareness on behavioural change and protection. Al-Dmour *et al.* (2020) also conclude that social media has a huge capability of informing the public, leading to behavioural change, thus contributing to the public's safety against the coronavirus disease. They suggest a more strategic use of social media platforms to reach the masses and spread the right knowledge of fight COVID-19.

H<sub>6</sub>, H<sub>7</sub>, H<sub>8</sub> and H<sub>9</sub> aim to examine the relationship between social media usage and 'behavioural change, panic, protection and public awareness.'

The study by Shehata and Abdeldaim (2021) also projects similar inferences wherein a heightened use of social media to receive information about COVID-19 increased anxiety levels and led to panic among Egyptian adults. The effect witnessed was mostly psychological in nature.

The results can also be seen in consonance with the cognitive-behavioural theory (CBT), which suggests that there is an inter-relationship between life events and how people make sense of those cues in their lives and respond. The CBT argues that the more an individual consumes information about an illness, the higher are the levels of anxiety experienced about one's health (Liu, 2020).

Previous studies (Strekalova, 2017; Lwin *et al.*, 2018) have also established that social media has grown in significance as a tool for crisis management during disease outbreaks as its use is related to 'perceived threat and self-efficacy', which are essentially a part of COVID-19 preventive protocol. Basch *et al.* (2021) found that people were very frequently turning to YouTube, a popular video-sharing social media platform, to receive relevant and valuable information on coronavirus. When used wisely, social media are great platforms to promote healthy behaviour and boost the public health system.

A study based in Lebanon found a good level of

awareness about COVID-19 in the adult population, with respondents showing cognizance of reasons for the spread of the virus along with preventive measures. People who used social media, more so Facebook and WhatsApp, were found to be better informed than non-users (Taleb *et al.*, 2021).

The immense potential of social media to act as a catalyst in tackling health crises has been much talked about. Choi *et al.* (2017) argue that it is a potent tool being utilised by users to look for relevant information in the wake of a disease outbreak, helping them handle the situation effectively.

Positive and relevant knowledge about COVID-19-appropriate behaviour can go a long way in tackling the virus. Clements (2020) set out to study determinants of knowledge and behaviours in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States. The results revealed that the increase in knowledge was directly proportional to positive and responsible COVID-19 behaviour. People were more likely to avoid panic buying and huge gatherings and encouraged to use medical masks.

Even in the case of MERS, social media usage was found to have a positive correlation with risk perception of the disease, acting as a source of important information to the public (Yoo *et al.*, 2016).

Similar inferences were drawn by Abbas *et al.* (2021) in their study based on exploring the mental health challenges and implications with respect to social media during COVID-19. Social media were found to be crucial resources of health-related information leading to sensitization of the masses. Users of social media were more inclined to practice social distancing, frequent hand washing, wearing masks and extending social support. The researchers also observe that taking a break from social media once in a while ameliorates mental health.

Al-Dmour *et al.* (2020) also found a substantial and positive role of social media spreading awareness about COVID-19 and promoting preventive behavioural change among the public.

Liu (2021) concluded through empirical investigation that heavy usage of social media is prone to make an impact on the users' perceptions of their accountability in the wake of a collective challenge like that of COVID-19, thus leading to a change in their behaviour.

The results exhibit that the health belief model also holds true that the continuous flow of information regarding the looming danger of virus infection received through social media, caused people to act responsibly and adopt preventive measures. While at the other end of the spectrum, the tenets of the aforementioned cognitive behaviour theory also hold water, as a huge number of individuals did

manifest frantic and panicky behaviour as a result of high social media usage. However, in large part, the panic could also be traced back to the spate of misinformation circulating on these platforms. Thus, it can be inferred that there is a dire need to sensitize people to strike a balance on their social media usage and also be wary of the content they consume.

### Conclusion

As social media became the focal point of almost all human transactions with the advent of COVID-19, scrutinizing its effects on and relationships with health behaviour and practices is essential. Since India is a key player both in terms of social media usage as well as a country badly affected by the pandemic, this study examines the health behaviour of Indian youth with relation to its social media consumption. The results indicate that behavioural change in a person is key to his protection against the lethal virus. While social media-induced panic does not trigger a positive behaviour change, neither does it lead to protective practices. Moreover, it also shows that the higher the level of awareness about COVID-19, the more likelihood of exhibiting positive health behaviour and adopting methods of protection. It is also revealed that while behaviour change, protection and public awareness go hand in hand with social media usage, it also infuses panic among the users, which may have far-reaching repercussions.

### Limitations

The studies has several limitations, in that; it only considers a small sample size. Similar study using a larger sample size may be conducted. The target population here is only the youth; future research can focus on other age groups as well. This study talks only about social media, while there are other ways of communication (including traditional) as well and their influence cannot be ignored. Studies can also focus on those modes of communication as well.

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# Empowering the Agricultural Community: The Transformative Role of Media in India's Farming Landscape

VIRENDER KUMAR BHARTI<sup>1</sup> & PAWAN KOUNDAL<sup>2</sup>

## ABSTRACT

Agriculture is not an isolated industry in today's interconnected world; rather, it influences and benefits from other industries. This mutual relationship extends to the exchange of raw materials and knowledge, underscoring the importance of diverse communication methods for educating farmers about agricultural practices. In India, where the majority of the population is deeply rooted in agriculture for livelihood, the dissemination of knowledge through media—particularly radio, television, and, increasingly, digital platforms—plays a pivotal role in enhancing agricultural practices and rural development. This study investigates the multifaceted impact of traditional and digital media in transmitting advanced agricultural technologies and methodologies to farmers, highlighting the critical integration of information and communication technology (ICT) with traditional extension services. It emphasizes the significant contributions of media in modernizing agriculture, addressing challenges like digital literacy and infrastructure, and advocating for targeted interventions to ensure content relevance and accessibility. Through a comprehensive analysis, the paper calls for a strategic and inclusive media approach to empower the agricultural community, suggesting that leveraging both traditional and digital media is key to fostering innovation, improving productivity, and securing food sustainability in India's changing global landscape.

**Keywords:** Agricultural communication, Community radio, Development communication, ICT, Mass media, Traditional media

## Introduction

India is an agrarian country where 70% of the population depends on farming and animal husbandry. Agriculture is the backbone of the Indian economy, and mass media plays a pivotal role in the distribution of information. Radio and television have been recognized as the most effective media for transferring knowledge to farmers, thereby holding vital significance because they convey ultra-modern agricultural technology to both literate and illiterate farmers, even in remote areas, within a very short time. Kumar and Singh (2015) explain how mass media, including radio and television, play an important role in India's agricultural landscape. With the majority of the Indian population actively engaged in agriculture, TV could serve as an appropriate medium for disseminating farm information and specialized knowledge of the agriculture sector. Farmers can easily understand operations, technology, and instructions through TV. Community

radio, social media, and traditional media continue to play an important role in enhancing the knowledge of farmers in India.

In particular, Sharma (2017) has emphasized television as a powerful tool for rural development, providing a visual medium that makes complex agricultural operations and technologies easily understood. This attribute of television makes it an invaluable resource for the majority of the Indian population engaged in agriculture, providing them with accessible and specialized knowledge that is crucial for the modernization of farming practices. Furthermore, the advent of social media and the continued relevance of community radio augment the traditional media landscape, creating a multifaceted information dissemination ecosystem. Gupta and Jain (2016) underscore the significance of social media in agricultural development, pointing out its capacity to facilitate a broader and more interactive exchange of information and experiences among farmers.

<sup>1</sup>Professor and Head, Department of Publications, Indian Institute of Mass Communication, New Delhi (E-mail: vkbharti.iimc@gmail.com); <sup>2</sup>Associate Professor, Indian Institute of Mass Communication, New Delhi (E-mail: pawankoundal@gmail.com)

This dynamic interaction enhances the collective knowledge base, fostering an environment conducive to innovation and growth in the agricultural sector.

Moreover, the work of Reddy and Ankaiah (2005) provides a comprehensive review of agricultural extension in India, emphasizing the critical role of mass media as an extension tool that complements traditional extension services. The seamless blend of traditional and modern communication methods enriches the agricultural information dissemination process, ensuring that farmers at the grassroots level receive timely and relevant information. Patil and Basavaraja (2013) further reinforce the importance of ICT in agriculture and rural development, highlighting how ICT, including radio and television, serves as a linchpin in the quest for agricultural advancement and rural empowerment. Through these channels, farmers gain access to a wealth of information on best practices, market trends, and climatic advisories, which are essential for enhancing productivity and ensuring food security in the face of changing global climates. The agriculture sector is no exception; every aspect of modern farming must be communicated to the end-users of technology as swiftly as possible, i.e., without delay. Indian farmers are utilizing all available communication media to stay updated with important agricultural information (Jangid, 2003).

Agriculture has always been a knowledge-driven sector, continuously absorbing information. The quest for authentic, credible, and practical information — drawing from both established systems and traditional practices — is increasingly important in today's dynamic global landscape. Farmers strive to operate efficiently and compete economically amidst rapid changes brought on by the WTO, globalization, urbanization, climate change, shifting consumer preferences, and ongoing agricultural advancements. These changes underscore the importance of timely, relevant, and straightforward information and knowledge to tackle a myriad of practical challenges. Effective extension services, education, and communication strategies are crucial for promoting agricultural growth, strengthening food security, and fighting hunger and malnutrition. However, diverse socio-cultural backgrounds, language barriers, geographical distances, and existing biases make the task of disseminating information challenging.

Radio has played a pivotal role in India's agrarian development post-independence, beginning with the establishment of All India Radio (AIR) stations that broadcast agricultural programs in local languages. The liberalization of broadcasting licensing policies has ushered in a new era for community radio in India, a form of participatory communication that

has shown remarkable success in driving social and economic development at the grassroots level. Community radio, operating alongside commercial and public broadcasting as a non-profit platform, effectively addresses local needs often overlooked by mainstream media. Extension workers leverage radio to share information on innovative farming techniques, pest and disease management, weather updates, and agricultural news, utilizing formats such as speeches, group discussions, folk songs, and dramas to engage the audience (Adhiguru, 2020).

### Review of literature

The development race of the last decades has demonstrated that progress is crucial for food security. Universities, private companies, research institutes, and farmers themselves are developing new agricultural technologies. Agricultural information services, which include traditional extension services, consultancy, business development, and agricultural information dissemination, are expected to distribute these new technologies within the farming community (Bharti & Bharti, 2019). Mass media serves as a vital conduit of information for farmers, shaping their decision-making processes in agriculture in multifaceted ways. By disseminating agronomic knowledge, mass media captures farmers' attention and equips them with essential information for their farming practices. Furthermore, the media's influence extends beyond mere information provision. It plays a pivotal role in enhancing the productivity and economic outcomes of the nation's agricultural sector, thereby impacting farmers' choices and strategies (Sinha, 2022).

The use of mass media in agricultural extension services has been a game-changer in various regions, especially in countries like India, where agriculture plays a vital role in the socio-economic landscape. Mass media platforms serve as indispensable tools for farmers seeking information to improve their agricultural practices and financial outcomes. These mediums, including newspapers, radio, television, smartphones, and the internet, act as conduits for delivering crucial knowledge and resources to farmers, enabling them to enhance their agricultural techniques and profitability (Purushothaman *et. al*, 2003). The study by Kavaskar and Sharmila (2019) explores the use of ICT tools among extension personnel in Tamil Nadu, India. It highlights that a majority of these personnel utilize internet/web services and agri-portals to acquire knowledge and transfer technology to farmers. This research highlights the value of ICT in sharing agricultural technologies and knowledge, indicating that ICT tools play a critical role in helping farmers close the

information gap.

Reddy's (2003) study emphasizes the significant impact of mass media, especially radio and television, in disseminating scientific knowledge to both literate and illiterate farmers. Given India's low literacy levels and the vast agricultural sector, mass media emerges as a critical channel for the diffusion of modern agricultural practices, thereby accelerating agricultural development. Kalita and Deka's (2024) research in the Upper Brahmaputra Valley Zone of Assam examines the correlation between socio-economic factors and the knowledge and utilization of ICT in agriculture. The study identifies education, landholding, income, and mass media participation as positively correlated with ICT utilization. However, it also points out significant constraints, such as a lack of awareness and high costs, suggesting the need for targeted interventions to enhance ICT adoption among farmers.

Shah (2022) discusses the scope and implications of applying ICT in India's agricultural sector. It argues that ICT applications can integrate the agri-food supply chain, benefiting a wide array of stakeholders, including farmers, food processing companies, and suppliers. Shah advocates for substantial investments in ICT by both the public and private sectors to realize the potential of ICT in transforming agriculture. Malhan and Rao (2009) focus on the dissemination of agricultural knowledge through e-communication in rural India. It identifies the non-accessibility of information as a major barrier to agricultural productivity and proposes an e-communication model to facilitate the transfer of agricultural knowledge. This model aims to overcome the challenges of information dissemination in rural settings, highlighting the role of both the public and private sectors in enhancing accessibility.

Chowdary *et al.* (2024) provide an in-depth analysis of social media's role in agricultural extension services from a stakeholder perspective. Their findings reveal that different stakeholders utilize various social media platforms for agricultural purposes. For instance, farmers prefer YouTube for crop production technologies, whereas extension functionaries favour WhatsApp and input agencies use Facebook. This diversity in platform utilization underscores the need for a multi-platform approach to agricultural extension services to cater to the preferences of different stakeholders effectively. Singh and Hasan's (2023) study on climate-smart agriculture practices in India highlights the pressing need for sustainable agricultural methods in the face of climate change. They emphasize the importance of adopting climate-smart agriculture to ensure food security while minimizing greenhouse gas

emissions. This paper suggests a potential area where ICT and social media can play a significant role in disseminating knowledge on climate-smart practices among farmers. Burbi and Rose (2016) explore how the internet and social media facilitate the diffusion of knowledge and innovation among farmers. They note that these digital platforms offer a means to overcome traditional barriers to communication, such as distance and time constraints, allowing farmers to share experiences and innovations. The study illustrates the vital role of social media in supporting sustainable farming practices by enabling farmers to access advice and mentoring remotely.

### Research objectives

- To examine the role of media in disseminating agricultural knowledge and technology among Indian farmers.
- To evaluate the impact of ICT and social media on improving agricultural productivity and farmer engagement.

### Research questions

- How have traditional and digital media platforms influenced the adoption of advanced agricultural practices among farmers in India?
- What are the key factors that determine the effectiveness of ICT and social media in facilitating communication and knowledge exchange within the agricultural community?

### Research methodology

This study employed a secondary, exploratory research methodology to delve into the impact of media on agricultural development in India, leveraging a wide array of secondary sources, including academic journals, government and NGO reports, and digital media outlets. By conducting a qualitative analysis of these materials, the research aimed to synthesize existing insights on the use of traditional and digital media in disseminating agricultural knowledge and fostering innovation within the sector. The study acknowledged limitations inherent in secondary research, such as the potential for outdated information and the selective focus necessitated by the vast scope of media's role in agriculture. This condensed approach facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the media's influence on agricultural practices and farmer engagement across India, highlighting successful strategies and identifying areas for further investigation.

### Findings, analysis and discussion

Various communication tools have played pivotal roles in advancing farmers' access to information,

thereby enhancing their knowledge and skills. Traditional tools such as radio broadcasts and community meetings have long been the backbone of rural information dissemination, offering easily accessible platforms for sharing best agricultural practices, weather forecasts, and market prices. Print media, including newsletters and agricultural journals, continue to provide in-depth analysis and research findings to those with access. In recent years, digital platforms have emerged as powerful allies; mobile phones, social media, and specialized agricultural apps deliver real-time information, enabling farmers to make informed decisions swiftly. Furthermore, interactive platforms like community radio and video tutorials offer personalized advice and learning opportunities, bridging the gap between modern technology and traditional knowledge. Each of these tools, whether modern or traditional, plays a unique role in the information ecosystem of the agricultural sector, contributing significantly to the empowerment and advancement of farmers worldwide.

Advancements in development over the last decades have shown that resource development is essential for food security and social integration. The role of research and advisory services is to provide highly accurate, specific, and unbiased technical and operational information and advice in direct response to the needs of their users. Due to poor coordination between research and monitoring services, the adoption of new agrarian technologies by growers is often very slow, and research does not always focus on the actual needs of growers. In many countries, low agricultural productivity has been attributed, among other factors, to poor coordination between research, advisory services, and farmers, as well as to ineffective technology delivery systems, which include poor information packaging, inadequate communication systems, and ineffective methodologies. Agricultural development is leading to changes in the socioeconomic conditions of millions in rural areas (Gowda & Theodore, 2020).

#### ***Traditional media: Effective communication tool for rural development***

Communication plays a crucial role in the development of a nation. It is a process through which beliefs, ideas, emotions, and information are exchanged to achieve a mutual understanding. Effective dissemination of practical messages to the target audience requires diverse communication strategies, which should be understood within the context of its social structure. To engage rural farmers in making efficient, productive, and sustainable use

of their land and other resources, it is essential to provide information, advice, education, and training through traditional media. In India, the majority of the population resides in rural areas, where traditional media is deeply ingrained in the culture of the rural populace, especially among farmers. With this understanding, specific traditional media forms are employed to raise awareness about the organic farming system. These include farm visits, demonstrations, street plays, motivational talks, etc. Community farming radio plays a vital role in facilitating nation-building and socio-economic development, making it accessible and beneficial to millions of rural inhabitants.

In examining the interplay between traditional media and its impact across various spheres—social development, rural development, and brand building—Chapke and Bhagat (2003) highlight the pivotal role of traditional folk media in promoting social development in India, underscoring its effectiveness in engaging rural communities through culturally resonant practices such as *Tamasha*, *Bhajan*, and *Kirtan*. These traditional forms are not only avenues of entertainment but also potent tools for information dissemination and societal upliftment, especially in areas where modern media's reach is limited or culturally misaligned. Despite the proliferation of modern communication technologies, traditional media—characterized by oral poetry, storytelling, and festivals—remain central to knowledge sharing and communal unity, thereby facilitating development in rural settings (Bamigboye *et al.*, 2017).

The rise of social media and personal selling underscores a broader trend towards personalization and interaction, which traditional media formats are less equipped to provide. This divergence highlights the growing importance of engagement and dialogue in building brand loyalty and driving consumer actions in today's digital-first marketplace. Contrasting perspective by evaluating the efficacy of traditional media against modern platforms lies in the context of brand building. In the realm of consumer engagement and brand loyalty, traditional media advertising is less effective than firm-created social media, user-generated content, and personal selling. This shift highlights the changing dynamics of audience engagement and the growing preference for interactive and personalized media experiences over passive traditional media consumption (Istijanto & Purusottama, 2023).

#### ***Use of traditional media for sustainable agriculture***

Traditional media plays a crucial role in raising awareness, particularly for farmers, by enabling them

to use their land and agricultural resources more efficiently, productively, and sustainably through accessible information, training, and education. Identifying specific traditional media outlets can help agricultural workers enhance their farming techniques and methods, leading to increased production, efficiency, and income. This, in turn, elevates their standard of living and contributes to higher social and educational levels in rural communities. Personal farm visits allow for a direct interaction with individual farmers or groups, facilitating a comfortable environment for discussing issues. These visits enable immediate problem-solving and discussion of local challenges among groups of farmers. Training sessions on new farming techniques and methods provide practical knowledge, effectively addressing doubts and challenges. Such sessions can be held directly on community farms.

Demonstrations serve as a vital channel for disseminating information and motivating farmers to adopt technologies suited to their specific conditions. Agricultural fairs focused on organic farming systems are excellent for quickly spreading awareness about advanced technologies among a wide audience. They offer farmers the opportunity to discover new technologies and methods showcased by their peers and various organizations, alongside engaging discussions in a relaxed setting. Visits and motivational tours to other farms, research institutions, or successful individuals in agriculture allow farmers to engage with experts directly. This not only provides immediate solutions to their problems but also inspires them by showcasing success stories in the field.

In rural settings, traditional media emerges as a powerful educational and societal reform tool, embraced by the rural populace for blending educational messages with entertainment, vibrant colors, costumes, and dance. Its acceptance is largely due to its integral role in cultural experiences, making it a relatable and influential medium (Hansra, 2020).

### ***Role of ICT and social media in empowering farmers***

The social media revolution can be experienced throughout the country, especially among the nation's farmers. It empowers farmers with knowledge. Farmers consistently require knowledge about new grains, pesticides, rainfall and snowfall, ministry updates, and market news. Social media helps in smarter farming and husbandry through information and programs by gaining knowledge from agricultural experts, progressive growers, and community study leaders. Social media is well-suited to break the chain of ignorance that has left

small and marginal growers at the mercy of dealers and middlemen. Services similar to Digital Green and Spoken Web are using audio and video uploads to convey crop information and solicit inquiries (Prasad, 2020). Social media empowers farmers to overcome the urban-rural divide. Farmers dealing in horticulture, organic farming, dairy, and floriculture have understood the need to reach new customers and explore new varieties so that they can customize their products using websites and blogs. Small tea farmers in West Bengal use Facebook and Twitter to interact with overseas customers. The digital revolution is promising to help millions of Indian farmers transition out of poor living conditions and achieve financial security.

The use of social media among agricultural youth symbolizes a shift towards more accessible, real-time information exchange and collaborative learning. The empowerment of agricultural youth through social media platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook serves as a conduit for sharing knowledge on sustainable farming and precision agriculture, fostering a culture of innovation and collaborative learning among young farmers. Platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook empower those aged 18 to 35 with knowledge, collaborative opportunities, and marketing avenues, driving innovation and sustainability in agriculture (Kumar *et.al.*, 2023)

Social media can significantly impact rural economies by streamlining market access, promoting sustainable practices, and enabling farmers to make more informed decisions. Social media's impact on commercial vegetable farming in Bharatpur, Rajasthan, emphasizes its role in connecting farmers with customers and service providers. This connection not only improves agricultural productivity but also contributes to rural development by enhancing livelihoods, empowering farmers, and increasing access to financial and agricultural services (Gyawali, 2022).

The application of WhatsApp for quality control illustrates social media's practicality in addressing specific agricultural challenges. It showcases the ability to create focused, impactful interventions that can lead to significant improvements in product quality and public health. Kamani (2016) presents a case study on using WhatsApp to improve raw milk quality in India. By facilitating direct communication between rural milk producers and dairy experts, the study showcases how social media tools can promote "Clean Milk Production" practices, thereby addressing public health concerns and processing challenges related to milk quality.

The necessity for infrastructural and educational



investments to maximize social media's benefits for rural development and agricultural extension is equally important. Social media's evolving role in agricultural extension services highlights the opportunities and challenges of utilizing digital platforms for rural development. The critical need for infrastructure development and training to leverage social media effectively in agricultural extension is reflecting on its growing importance amidst limitations such as digital literacy and access (Chepkirui, 2021).

Social media is a valuable tool for information dissemination, but its effectiveness is contingent on various factors, including digital literacy, content quality, and the relevance of the information provided. The effectiveness of agricultural information shared via social media in Southern Telangana indicates a moderate perception of effectiveness among farmers, suggesting that while social media serves as a valuable informational resource, its impact is influenced by factors like digital literacy and the relevance of disseminated content (Sandeep *et al.*, 2022).

The critical role of accessible ICTs in empowering marginalized farming communities suggests that targeted interventions could enhance agricultural productivity and livelihoods in tribal areas. Social media for networking and collaboration among agricultural researchers and extension professionals in India highlights Facebook's popularity, underscoring social media's potential to facilitate professional connections and knowledge exchange within the agricultural scientific community (Meena, *et al.* (2013). The use of ICT tools, including social media, by tribal farmers in southern Rajasthan for accessing agricultural information emphasizes the critical role of mobile phones and television in disseminating agricultural knowledge, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to support ICT use among marginalized communities (Jat *et al.*, 2021).

The use of social media trends suggests a shift towards more interactive, community-oriented approaches to agricultural information sharing. The popularity of WhatsApp, YouTube, and Facebook among farmers underscores a trend towards digital community building, facilitating peer-to-peer learning and direct engagement with agricultural experts (Meena, 2012).

The COVID pandemic highlighted social media's potential as a resilient, flexible tool for maintaining and even expanding agricultural extension services during crises, underscoring its value in ensuring continuity of support for farmers. The increased use of social media by extension professionals during

the COVID-19 pandemic reveals a significant shift towards digital platforms to maintain agricultural extension activities, highlighting social media's resilience as a tool for continuous farmer support during crises (Srikar, *et al.*, 2020).

## Conclusion

A comprehensive analysis of the role of media in India's agricultural sector reveals its significant influence on modernizing farming practices, enhancing farmer knowledge, and advancing rural development. Traditional media outlets like radio and television have long been pivotal in bridging the gap between scientific advancements and their practical application in agriculture, reaching even the most remote farming communities. The emergence of digital media and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has further revolutionized this landscape, offering real-time information exchange, peer-to-peer learning, and access to a broad spectrum of resources. This synergistic combination of traditional and digital media forms an intricate information ecosystem that not only facilitates the adoption of innovative agricultural techniques but also empowers farmers economically by improving their access to market information, leading to better decision-making and improved livelihoods.

However, the utilization of media in agricultural development is not without challenges. Issues such as infrastructural limitations, digital literacy, and the relevance of content to diverse farming needs necessitate targeted interventions by the government, the private sector, and civil society. Addressing these challenges is crucial for maximizing the impact of media on agriculture. Future efforts should focus on creating a more inclusive media strategy that combines both traditional and digital forms, ensuring all segments of the farming community benefit from media-driven agricultural advancements. By prioritizing innovation, enhancing digital literacy, and ensuring the accessibility of relevant content, the strategic use of media can continue to be a formidable force in supporting sustainable agricultural growth, contributing to the socio-economic development of rural India, and ensuring food security in an ever-changing global landscape.

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# Citizen's 'Right to Know' about the Candidates Contesting the General Elections: An Insight into the Indian Political Communication

SANTOSH KUMAR<sup>1</sup> & MANUKONDA RABINDRANATH<sup>2</sup>

## ABSTRACT

The discourse around citizens' 'Right to Know' about candidates and political parties hardly becomes a narrative in the public sphere. Every election sets a record regarding money and resources spent on political campaigning. Despite all these resources and campaigning by stakeholders, do citizens know the relevant background of their candidates? Moreover, do they have a right to know about their candidates' appropriate background and criminal history? Do the political parties and candidates make their criminal antecedents public? If not, how and what are we supposed to be informed, except party propaganda? 'Free and fair' elections are the essence of democracy. A free and fair election is an illusion without knowing the candidates' backgrounds. This paper investigates these fundamental questions: do the citizens have a 'right to know' about their candidates contesting elections? This research paper is a case study of the general elections to the Karnataka Legislative Assembly. It investigates which national party complied with the guidelines of ECI issued in pursuance of the Hon'ble Supreme Court's Judgments and regarding the citizens 'Right to Know.'

**Keywords:** Criminal antecedents, Elections, Political communication, Political propaganda, Right to know

## Introduction

A democratic form of governance has many countable attributes like an independent judiciary, civil liberties, elected representatives, transparency in government, protection of fundamental rights, rule of law, etc. Among other contributing factors, the ubiquitous mediation of the election due to the ever-increasing presence of media and communication technology has caused elections to become part of our popular culture. It has become a part of our popular culture at the cost of other characteristics often ignored and not valued as much as it should be. It is mediated at such a scale that merely the presence of it gives a 'perception' of enough evidence of a democratic form of governance. The absence of elections alone gives an idea of the absence of democracy. In a way, elections have become the index and essence of democracy. But merely the presence of an election without other attributes makes democracy a farce. Therefore, the spirit of democracy lies in the transfer of power through free, fair, and participatory elections (Union of India v. Association for Democratic Reforms, 2002, p.16).

Election for any democratic political position involves specific processes (according to the law of the land) and stakeholders like political parties, political candidates, election commission, media, and citizens. Media (not limited to newspapers, radio, and television), one of the critical stakeholders in the whole process, is supposed to prepare a well-informed citizenry, which is an indispensable prerequisite for a mature democracy. The role of media during elections in setting progressive agendas, shaping public opinion, and making people aware of the prevailing issues and the relevant particulars of the candidates is vital. It is significant in making the election process truly participative and democratic.

Free and fair elections are the necessary foundation for parliamentary democracy. If a free and fair election is compromised, the whole foundation of democracy is breached (Digvijay Mote v. Union of India, 1993). Now, the question is how to conduct free and fair elections. It may have many vantage points. Political parties could seek a level playing field through various provisions laid out by India's constitution and Election Commission.

<sup>1</sup>Ph.D. Research Scholar, Centre for Media Studies, JNU, New Delhi (E-mail: santos74\_ssm@jnu.ac.in); <sup>2</sup>Professor & Chairperson, Centre for Media Studies, JNU, New Delhi (E-mail: manukonda@mail.jnu.ac.in)

For a candidate, it could be freedom of speech and expression during the election campaign. What about citizens? How can they participate in the election ‘freely and fairly’? We must contemplate whether we exercise our ‘free’ will while voting for any candidate or if our choice is even shaped by selective exposure to an ideology or propaganda material. The concurrent second point of contemplation emerges regarding whether the *modus operandi* of election campaigning is ‘fair’ for a healthy democracy.

What are the prerequisites for citizens in a democratic election? India has a parliamentary system of government. Article 326 of the Indian constitution defines the ‘Universal adult franchise’ as the basis for elections to all levels of elected government. The universal adult franchise means that all citizens 18 years and above, regardless of caste or education, religion, colour, race, and economic conditions, are free to vote. But how will they know whom to vote for? On what basis should they vote for? Where will they learn about the candidates’ issues, policies, and backgrounds contesting the election? What if they are not aware at all about many of these? What if they vote for a corrupt candidate despite knowing their criminal antecedents? What if citizens vote for criminal candidates because they are unaware of their misdeeds? These are some of the fundamental questions that need our conscious attention and critical investigation. This paper underlines some of these questions to investigate the citizens’ right to know about the candidates’ contesting elections through various judgments from the Honourable Supreme Court and High Courts in India regarding freedom of speech and expression. The paper also investigates the expenditure reports of the political parties submitted to the Election Commission of India to determine their compliance with the Supreme Court’s Judgments.

### Review of literature

Political parties and candidates spend heavily on campaigns during elections in different ways, like (1) the travel expenses of star campaigners, as mentioned in explanation 1 of section 77 of the Representation of People Act (1951), (2) Expenses of media advertisements (print and electronics, bulk SMS, cable, website, and TV channel), (3) Expenses on publicity material, including posters, banners, badges, stickers, arches, gates, cutouts, hoardings, and flags and (4) public meetings/processions/rallies. This expenditure runs in billions of rupees in the guise of freedom of speech and expression. Political parties and candidates invest heavily to inform people of their candidacies, agendas, and policies. They try their best to draw the attention of potential voters.

According to the expenditure reports submitted to the ECI by the political parties, during the Lok Sabha Elections 2019, the 7 national parties and 25 regional parties spent a sum of Rs. 1495.41 crores on general party propaganda, out of which Rupees 1166.15 crores were spent on media advertisements, 222.10 crores on publicity materials, and Rs 107.16 crores on public meetings (Association for Democratic Reforms, 2020). Now the question is if the publicity and propaganda are taking place at such a large scale with such vast resources, what is left to know and be informed about? The answer comes from the Greek philosopher Plato’s book *The Republic* (2007), who had a sceptical view of democracy and warned of the danger in democratic societies that rhetoric (i.e., the persuasive use of language) will replace knowledge in the political process. Indeed, in today’s mass-mediated environment, how something is communicated, e.g., style or format overwhelms what is being displayed. Modern politicians have learned to use the media and communication channels to manipulate ‘public opinion’ (Lippmann, 1922). Political advertising as a political communication tool has been increasingly used for this purpose. Tons of ‘Magic Bullets’ (Lasswell, 1927) of political propaganda are fired from across the party lines, but the authentic information about the (1) funding of political parties and candidates, (2) criminal antecedents of candidates, (3) the actual value of the property of candidates, (4) educational qualification of the candidates, are opaque or translucent.

What is the legal framework for citizens’ right to know about the candidates contesting elections? The catena of judgments pronounced by the Supreme Court of India has established that the “right to know of the citizen is derived from the right to freedom of speech and expression.” Without knowledge, the right to freedom of speech and expression is futile. How is one supposed to express one’s views and deliver a speech unless one does not know what to speak? The Honourable Supreme Court of India has made some conspicuous observations concerning citizens’ ‘right to know,’ which is worth revisiting to enrich the discourse.

In ‘*Romesh Thappar v. State of Madras (1950)*’, the Honourable Supreme Court of India highlighted the significance of ‘free political discussion’ in a democratic form of governance, even at the risk of abuse by some. The Court said, “It is better to leave a few of its noxious branches to their luxuriant growth than, by pruning them away, to injure the vigour of those yielding the proper fruits.” The Supreme Court further observed that “... members of a democratic society should be sufficiently informed that they may influence intelligently the decisions, which may

affect themselves.” While considering the question of whether “privilege can be claimed by the government of Uttar Pradesh under section 123 of the evidence act,” in ‘State of Uttar Pradesh v. Raj Narain and Others (1975, Para 74)’, the Court observed that “the right to know, which is derived from the concept of freedom of speech, though not absolute, is a factor which should make one wary, when secrecy is claimed for transactions which can, at any rate, have no repercussion on public security.” The Court categorically observed, “The people of this country have a right to know every public act, everything done in a public way, by their public functionaries. They are entitled to know the particulars of every public transaction in all its bearing...”

Another underlying support for citizens’ ‘Right to Know’ comes from the observation made by the Court in ‘Indian Express Newspapers (Bombay) Private Ltd. and Others etc. v. Union of India and others (1985)’. The Court observed, “The purpose of the press is to advance the public interest by publishing facts and opinions without which a democratic country cannot make responsible judgments...” This observation by the Honourable Court highlighted the role of media in a democracy, which is to advance the public interest. It meant that “The members of a democratic society should be sufficiently informed to form their own beliefs and communicate them freely to others. This informed decision would include their decision to vote in favour of a particular candidate. A voter’s informed decision to vote is strengthened by disclosures by a candidate.

In sum, the fundamental principle is the people’s right to know ...” The ‘right to know’ principle was again firmly held in “Secretary, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India and Others v. Cricket Association of Bengal and Others (1995)”. The Hon’ble Court held that “... the right to freedom of speech and expression also includes the right to educate, inform and entertain and the right to be educated, informed, and entertained. The former is the right of the telecaster, and the latter is that of the viewers. The right to telecast sporting events will, therefore, include the right to educate and inform the present and prospective sportsmen interested in the game and inform and entertain the lovers of the game. Hence, when a telecaster desires to telecast a sporting event, it is incorrect to say that the free-speech element is absent from his right.” The Court thereafter held that “True democracy cannot exist unless all citizens have a right to participate in the affairs of the polity of the country. The right to participate in the affairs of the country is meaningless unless the citizens are well informed on all sides of the issues, in respect of which they are called upon

to express their views. One-sided information, disinformation, misinformation, and non-information all equally create an uninformed citizenry, which makes democracy a mobocracy and farce....”

‘Underlining the same principle of citizens’ ‘right to know’ in ‘Dinesh Trivedi, M.P. and Others v. Union of India and Others (1997)’, the Court observed “in modern constitutional democracies, it is axiomatic that citizens have a right to know about the affairs of the Government which, having been elected by them, seek to formulate sound policies of governance aimed at their welfare.” The Court also observed, “Democracy expects openness and openness is concomitant of a free society. The sunlight is the best disinfectant.”

To sum up, the legal and constitutional position of citizens’ ‘right to know’ from the cumulative reading of a plethora of decisions of the Honourable Supreme Court of India, it can be stated that (a) “Fair election requires disclosure by the candidate of his past,” (b) “The little man of this country has the basic elementary right to know full particulars of a candidate who is to represent him in Parliament where laws to bind his liberty and property may be enacted.” (c) “The right to get information in democracy is recognized throughout, and it is a natural right flowing from the concept of democracy,” and (d) “... Citizens’ speech or expression in case of election includes casting of votes; that is to say, a voter speaks out or expresses by casting a vote. For this purpose, information about the candidate to be selected is a must. A citizen’s ‘right to know,’ including the criminal past of the candidate contesting election for MP or MLA, is much more fundamental for the survival of democracy.”

### **Research objectives**

The primary objective of this paper is to contextualize and extend the citizen’s ‘Right to Know’ in the field of elections and political communication. People should know they have a ‘right to know about the criminal antecedents of the candidates’ contesting elections and seeking our votes. The paper aims to highlight that a voter’s decision-making process would include his/her ‘right to know’ about public functionaries required to be elected by them. This paper also aims to investigate how political parties comply with the Supreme Court Judgments and ECI guidelines (2020).

### **Research questions**

To meet the stated aims and objectives of this study, this paper investigates the following research questions:

RQ1. Does a voter have the fundamental right to get relevant information, to be educated and

informed, and to judge the suitability of a candidate contesting the election as Member of Parliament and Member of Legislative Assembly?

RQ2. What are the guidelines for contesting candidates with criminal antecedents about the citizen’s ‘right to know’ in an election?

RQ3. What are the guidelines for the political parties setting candidates with criminal antecedents about the citizen’s ‘right to know’ in an election?

RQ4. How are national political parties faring in compliance with the Supreme Court Judgments’ and ECI Guidelines about the Publicity of the criminal antecedents of the candidates?

**Research methodology**

This paper uses the case study method to get insights concerning the stated objectives and research questions. The case study method gives enough scope to grasp the accurate picture of the phenomena undertaken for investigation. This paper analyses the Supreme Court Judgments, expenditure reports of political parties related to the Karnataka Legislative Assembly election 2023, ADR reports (2023) on the Karnataka Election, ECI notification, and Guidelines to grasp the regulatory framework available and the reality of these guidelines being followed by political parties. This paper investigates the Karnataka Legislative Assembly election 2023 on different variables, namely the number of contesting candidates with criminal antecedents, the name of the party that gave tickets to the candidates with criminal antecedents, the amount spent on making citizens aware of the criminal antecedents of the candidates, and compliance of the political parties with the Supreme Court Judgments and ECI guidelines concerning the publicity of criminal antecedents of the candidates.

The Karnataka state election was notified on 13<sup>th</sup> April 2023. The last date for nominations was 20<sup>th</sup> April 2023, and the last date for withdrawal of candidature was 24<sup>th</sup> April 2023. The poll date was 10<sup>th</sup> May 2023, and the results were declared on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2023. As per the data feed in the ‘Know Your Candidate’ app, 473 candidates out of 2615 had criminal antecedents. This paper also analyses the data of all the 473 candidates and expenditure reports of all the national political parties.

**Findings and analysis**

Out of 224, there were 44 constituencies where no single candidate had criminal cases pending against him/her. There were 22 political parties that gave tickets to at least one candidate with criminal antecedents. Six political parties gave tickets to at least two candidates with criminal antecedents, and

two political parties gave tickets to 3 candidates, each with criminal antecedents. Indian National Congress contested 223 seats, and 105 candidates had criminal antecedents out of those. And with no surprise, 79 candidates out of these 105 candidates were chosen as Members of the Karnataka Legislative Assembly in the election. It means that INC gave 47% of the tickets to the candidates with criminal antecedents. Nine hundred seventeen independent candidates contested for MLA seats in Karnataka General Election to Assembly Constituency. Of those, 98 (10%) candidates had criminal antecedents as declared by the submitted affidavits. BJP set up 224 seats in the Karnataka Assembly election, and they gave tickets to 81 (36%) candidates who had criminal cases against them. Out of these 81 candidates with pending criminal cases, 34 won the election. Janta Dal (Secular) fielded 56 candidates with criminal antecedents; 9 won the election out of that. Aam Aadmi Party, which always boasts of a high moral ground in public outreach, gave tickets to 37 candidates with criminal antecedents.

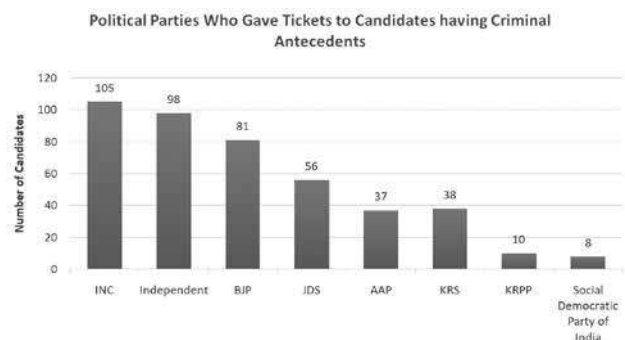


Fig. 1: Political Parties

The Supreme Court of India has recognized the citizens’ ‘right to know’ and has awarded a catena of judgments to protect the same. In pursuance of these judgments, ECI has notified the stakeholders of the guidelines for making the citizenry aware of the candidates’ backgrounds. Similarly, before the Karnataka Legislative Assembly election, the ECI notification (2023) on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2023 via letter number ECI/PN/24/2023, in pursuance of the judgment of the Supreme Court in ‘Lok Prahari v. Union of India & Others’ (2018) and ‘Public Interest Foundation & Ors. Vs. Union of India’ (2019) stated that “Candidates with criminal antecedents were required to publish information in this regard in newspapers and through television channels on three occasions during the campaign period.” This letter also stated, “A political party that sets up candidates with criminal antecedents is also required to publish information about the criminal background of its candidates, both on its website and in newspapers and television channels on three occasions.”

Election Commission of India (2020) vide its letter No. 3/4/2019/SDR/Vol.IV, dated 16<sup>th</sup> September 2020, has directed that “the period specified will be decided with three blocks in the following manner so that electors have sufficient time to know about the background of such candidates:”

- (a) Within the first four days of the Nominations withdrawal date.
- (b) Between next 5<sup>th</sup>- 8<sup>th</sup> days.
- (c) From the 9<sup>th</sup> day till the last day of the campaign (the second day prior to the date of the poll)

As per the dates stated by ECI, the last date for withdrawal was the 24<sup>th</sup> of April 2023, and the poll was on the 10<sup>th</sup> of May 2023; the first block for publishing the declaration was between the 25<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> of April 2023; the second and third blocks were between 29<sup>th</sup> April to 2<sup>nd</sup> May and 3<sup>rd</sup> May to 8<sup>th</sup> May 2023, respectively.

Accordingly, “candidates are also required to maintain expenditures incurred by them in publishing information of their criminal antecedents in newspapers and through television channels in their accounts, and the same shall be reflected in their Abstract Statement of election expenses (Schedule 10) to be submitted by them to the concerned DEOs along with their accounts of election expenses within 30 days of declaration of results.” Similarly, “Political parties are also required to show the expenditures incurred by them on publishing information about the criminal background of their candidates in their Statement of Election Expenses (Schedule 23A, 23B) to be submitted by them to ECI (recognized political party)/CEO (unrecognized political party) within 75 days of completion of Assembly Election.”

### 1. Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)

Aam Aadmi Party contested 209 seats in the Karnataka Legislative Assembly election and forfeited deposits on all seats. The gross expenditure incurred by AAP on general party propaganda was 5.33 crores, and the cost incurred on publicity of criminal antecedents of the candidates was 19.64 lakhs.

### Observations

AAP did not mention the period during which the criminal case details were published on their website in the expenditure report submitted to the ECI, which means that AAP did not comply with the ECI guidelines. AAP did not give details of the newspaper publication of the pending criminal cases of its 37 candidates with criminal antecedents, which they were required to do on three different occasions. AAP did not give details of the broadcast/telecast of the criminal cases of its 37 candidates with criminal antecedents, which they were required to do on three different occasions. AAP published its candidates’ criminal cases on one occasion, e.g., on 22/04/2023 in one local vernacular and one national newspaper. AAP fulfilled just one requirement: publishing the details of the selected candidates within 48 hours of the selection in one local vernacular newspaper and one national newspaper.

### 2. Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP)

Bahujan Samaj Party spent 2.43 crores on general party propaganda and 32.55 lakhs on publishing criminal antecedents of the candidates. BSP contested 133 assembly seats and gave tickets to two candidates with criminal antecedents, and both lost the election.

### Observations

BSP is the only party that complied with the stated guidelines of ECI notification. It displayed the details of the pending criminal cases on its website, published in newspapers on three different occasions, and broadcast on television on three separate occasions. The only non-compliance that could be found was that they didn’t publish the details of the pending criminal case in vernacular languages, as they did on three different occasions in national newspapers.

### 3. Indian National Congress (INC)

Indian National Congress spent 88.97 crores on general party propaganda and 2.32 crores on

Table 1: Expenditure incurred by Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)

Sl. No.	Website	News Paper		Television			
		Name of newspaper	Date of publishing	Expenses incurred	Name(s) of the channel	Date & time of insertion/telecast	Expenses incurred
1		Vaaritha Bharti (Kannada)	22/04/2023	5,84,719	-----	-----	-----
2		The Indian Express (English)	22/04/2023	13,79,936	-----	-----	-----
	Total			19,64,665			



Table 2: Expenditure incurred by Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP)

S. No.	Website	News Paper			Television		
		Period During which displayed	Name(s) of newspaper	Date(s) of publishing	Expenses incurred in (Rs.)	Name(s) of the channel	Date(s) & time of insertion/ telecast
1	26/04/2023	Vijayvani & The New Indian Express (Format C7)	22/04/2023	5,24,924	-----	-----	-----
2		Vijayvani & The New Indian Express (Format C7)	22/04/2023	5,56,248	-----	-----	-----
3		Vijayvani & The New Indian Express (Format C7)	22/04/2023	5,00,623	-----	-----	-----
4		Vijayvani & The New Indian Express (Format C7)	22/04/2023	4,97,297	-----	-----	-----
5		New Indian Express (Format C-2)	26/04/2023 30/04/2023 04/06/2023	5,15,592	Digvijay TV	27/04/2023 at (08:09:54) 29/04/2023 at (08:44:10) 03/05/2023 at (09:20:35)	102660
6		New Indian Express (Format C-2)	26/04/2023 30/04/2023 04/06/2023	5,58,558	Digvijay TV	27/04/2023 at (18:25:54) 29/04/2023 at (21:25:12) 03/05/2023 at (19:14:07)	
Total				31,53,242		1,02,660	

Table 3: Expenditure incurred by Indian National Congress (INC)

S. No.	Website	News Paper			Television		
		Period during which displayed	Name(s) of newspaper	Date(s) of publishing	Expenses incurred in (Rs.)	Name(s) of the channel	Date(s) & time of insertion/ telecast
1	20/04/2023	Uday Kala & Indian Express	20/04/2023	1,40,29,690	-----	-----	-----
2	21/04/2023		21/04/2023		-----	-----	-----
3	22/04/2023		22/04/2023		-----	-----	-----
4	23/04/2023		23/04/2023		-----	-----	-----
5	25/04/2023		25/04/2023		-----	-----	-----
6	29/04/2023		26/04/2023 30/04/2023 04/06/2023		-----	-----	-----
7	03/05/2023	Uday Kala & Indian Express	03/05/2023	92,43,975	-----	-----	-----
8	04/05/2023/		04/05/2023/		-----	-----	-----
9	05/05/2023		05/05/2023		-----	-----	-----
Total				2,32,73,665			

publicity of criminal antecedents. INC contested on 223 assembly seats and won 135. INC set up 105

candidates with criminal antecedents, the highest among all political parties.

## Observations

INC displayed the details of the candidate's pending criminal cases on their website per the guidelines. They also published the details in one vernacular newspaper and one national newspaper. However, INC did not broadcast/telecast the same on television channels, which is mandatory for a political party as per the ECI notification.

### 4. Communist Party of India (Marxist) - CPI(M)

The CPI(M) contested from four seats: KR Pura, Gulbarga Rural, Bagepalli, and Kolar Gold Field. Out of these four contested seats, two candidates of CPI(M), in KR Pura and Bagepalli, had criminal antecedents, according to the affidavit filed by the candidates, which is available on the 'Know Your Candidate' App. CPI(M) spent 10.14 lakhs on general party propaganda and zero rupees on publishing criminal antecedents of two of its candidates. According to the expenditure report submitted to the ECI, CPI (M) did not even mention the duration or date during which they published the criminal antecedents of their candidates on its website, let alone the details of newspapers and television.

### 5. Bharatiya Janta Patry (BJP)

Bharatiya Janta Party, the ruling party in the Central Government of India, contested 224 assembly seats and won 66. The Hon'ble Supreme Court of India had directed in 'Common Cause Vs. Union of India in 2005' that "political parties should also submit a statement of expenditure of elections to the ECI and such statements are required to be submitted within 75 days of assembly elections and 90 days of Lok Sabha elections." As per the Supreme Court's direction, 25<sup>th</sup> July was the last date for

submitting a statement of expenditure to ECI. As of 04/12/2023, BJP's election expenditure report is yet to be available on the ECI website. Therefore, details of the publicity of criminal antecedents of candidates are not available.

### 6. National People's Party (NPP)

The expenditure report of NPP was not available on the ECI website as late as December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023; therefore, this paper has yet to analyze their compliance with the guidelines.

## Conclusion

None of the national parties has followed the requirement of making citizens aware through publication in one local newspaper and one national newspaper, broadcast on television, publication of details on the party website, and submitting the details to ECI in letter, let alone spirit.

Out of all the national party's compliance analyzed in this paper, BSP has complied most with the guidelines of the ECI. The expense report of BJP and NPP was unavailable on the ECI website until December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023. The last date for the same lapsed on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2023.

There seems to be an ambiguity regarding the guidelines of ECI, which need to be notified and clarified to all the stakeholders so that they do not interpret it differently. Whereas it is very clearly stated that the selection of candidates with criminal antecedents needs to be publicized in one local vernacular and one national newspaper, it is not clear that the mandatory publication of the pending criminal cases on three different occasions must be done again in one local vernacular and one national newspaper or not.

Table 4: Compliance table of the political parties with the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India's judgments and ECI Guidelines.

S. No	Political party	Display on website	Publicity in newspaper	Broadcast on television	Publishing details after the selection of candidates	Complied with the timeline
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	AAP	No	No	No	Yes	Only for Column 6
2	BJP	*	*	*	*	*
3	BSP	Yes	Yes (only in national N/P)	Yes	Yes	Yes
4	CPI(M)	No	No	No	No	No
5	INC	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
6	NPP	*	*	*	*	*

\* The expenditure report of BJP and NPP was not available on The ECI website till 12/05/2023

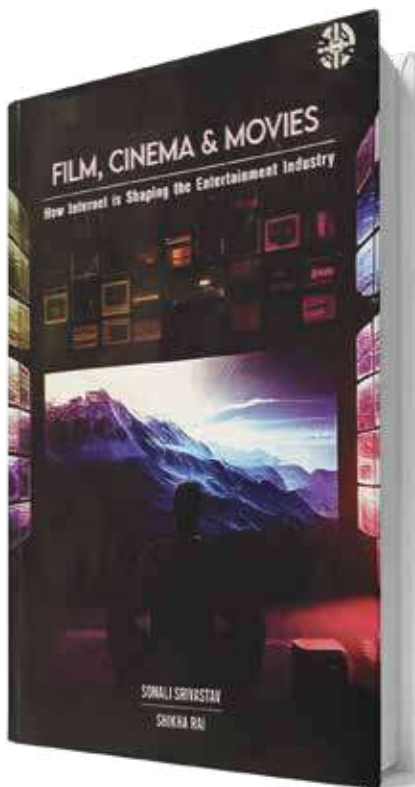
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## BOOK REVIEW

### **‘Film, Cinema and Movies: How Internet is shaping the Entertainment Industry’ by Sonali Srivastav and Shikha Rai**



*Film, Cinema and Movies: How internet is shaping the entertainment industry*

Author: Sonali Srivastav and Shikha Rai

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*“We are all narratives we construct and consume,”* this quote by Dibakar Banerjee in the foreword of the book, encapsulates the essence of this illuminating journey into the multifaceted content and context of cinema. The book delves into the historical patterns that constitute cinema as we know it today. It elucidates current transformations in the way content is created and consumed; simultaneously

engaging with the future of technologies and its infinite possibilities. To span the dimensions of the past, present, and future of cinema within the same framework is a credit to the authors Sonali Srivastav and Shikha Rai. Their effort presents a critical study that gives the reader a 360-degree view of the complexities embedded within a contemporary cinematic discourse.

*Rebuilding the Phoenix: Indian Cinema* begins with an elucidative introduction defining what a film is and its evolution since its inception, particularly in the Indian context. The authors unravel the artistic dimensions of cinema and the way its various audio and visual elements are orchestrated to entertain and connect with an audience. The role played by technology from records, cassettes, CDs to digital platforms is a significant perspective that is connected with the overall creation and consumption of this medium. To extrapolate the past, present and future is a significant and insightful approach that the authors take ensuring that the reader gains an informed understanding of the medium, that is, cinema.

The focus to trace the evolution of Indian cinema through the prism of its many technological, economic, ideological, global, and cultural influences sets an essential framework to navigate through the complex journey of Indian cinema from its past to its present form. Inclusion of the definitions and discourses on culture ranging from the philosophy of Aristotle, Oscar Wilde, studies of Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer’s perspectives and even extending to the literature of Shakespeare form a rich tapestry for intellectual deliberation. A discussion, that is, mindful to gazing at Indian cinema as a ‘product’ of its socio-cultural and economic environment rather than purely an artistic endeavor.

This viewing of Indian cinema is thought-provoking as it systematically discusses the presence of the first film families: the Chopras and Kapoors, the cinema they created and the audience for that

kind of cinema. The book touches upon the rise and growth of Indian parallel cinema, the Avant Garde cinema's artistic content influenced by its exposure to global art movements German Expressionism, Italian Neorealism, among others. Moving on to include the infamous phase in Indian cinema when the looming threats of the Indian mafia had a stronghold on actors and finances for films dictating the kind of films being made during that phase. The authors attempt to connect the various pivotal moments, artistic developments and the significant dissonances in Indian cinema to prevent a one-dimensional reading of this complex art form.

The book draws attention to the long-term imprint the opening of the Indian economy made, as it ushered in numerous opportunities for the influx of foreign capital in various industries. The Indian film Industry was not isolated from the impact of globalization. It relays how the arrival of Disney, Star shaped new prospects. Earmarking the ways in which this period saw the arrival of Diaspora films, whereby international recognition was received by films made by Indian origin directors, actors, musicians and so on. It delves deeper into the way globalization drew attention to Indian content and the vast untapped accompanying mass audience base.

Simultaneously, authors Rai and Srivastav pick and sift through significant tangents emerging from a new world order with the advent of the internet. The shrinking of the global marketplace and accessibility to global content through internet platforms completely changed the landscape and the traditional reach and scope of content. These are important points of reflection as they hone into the overall cultural transformation in the conception, production and ultimately the consumption of this content. The rapidly changing technology saw an unprecedented proliferation of availability of information and access to content leading to the rise of a different type of 24/7 viewership audience and content creation cycle.

The following chapter *Tell Me A Story: Internet and Narratives*, looks at the significant impact the advent of technology has made on the structures and practices of storytelling. The rise of dystopic narratives in Hollywood exploring the conflicts arising from confrontations between man and machine gave a tremendous impetus to the science fiction genre. This chapter provides crucial insights into the way Indian cinema has responded to these changes. It follows the trajectory of the way genres evolved to suit the changing interests of an audience that was gradually getting exposure to varied international film and television content. The authors interestingly map the ways in which the grammar of television shifted to accommodate the inclusion and intrusion of internet in

our daily lives. From the initial novelty value of seeing TV serials and films with VFX to the establishment of Web 2.0 with its parallel social media tools Orkut, Facebook and Twitter in the subcontinent are key moments traced by the authors. This convergence of technology met the users need for constant entertainment and search for platforms allowing forms of self-expression. This chapter enables readers to get a sense of how these moments burgeoned into the vast virtual space we now find ourselves a permanent part of.

From blogs, memes, photo galleries, podcasts to vlogs, the nature of storytelling has undergone a sea change. The arrival of these formats met the pathbreaking arrival of Netflix that revolutionized the idea of Video on Demand to an OTT platform; one that is a personalized trove of audio-visual narratives accessible at all times. This chapter covers a wide range of relevant aspects of OTT and its fundamental narrative structure. It elucidates the salient features of the narratives made for OTT, audience consumption patterns, narrative arcs, modes and tropes of storytelling specific to this medium.

This examination highlights the more contentious aspects of OTT and social media platform consumption patterns. Authors Rai and Srivastav go beyond the rudimentary confines of chronicling the rise and growth of the internet and its content. Their observations reflect a critical awareness of the ways in which this internet proliferation has transformed the socio-cultural, economic and personal canvas of the lives of people. The continuous demand for new content has now become a primal necessity as the accessibility to content has become mobile. Smart Tablets, Smart TV, Smartphones, Wi-Fi connects are now staples in most households. The reception patterns of the audience have completely transformed since through these devices users are constantly online. This work offers an understanding of the intricacies of the vast canvas of the internet and its users. This chapter sheds light on the ways in which the virtual world provides a wide platform to users not only to receive content but also to react to it in real time. An integral facet they delve into in much more detail later.

The economic or revenue model of content creation on the internet is pertinent to cultivating an informed perspective of the growth, development and impact of technology and the internet. The instant gratification through the twenty-four-hour content availability has given rise to innumerable digital creators and artists as well as an audience base that supports their content. There is a monetization module, that is, able to generate revenue for content creators. This has facilitated the rise of YouTube,

as a platform showcasing all variety of content on an unprecedented scale; that is, simultaneously fueling the consumption of audio-visual content at an unparalleled rate. The digitization of the world as we see it today has a much larger context that the authors explain through their in-depth study. The gradual accent from the video on demand model (to the ‘web of things and web of thoughts’) is an imperative analytical insight into the gamut of this digitized matrix. Importantly this work explains the transition of the virtual world into the way we see and know it now. This extrapolation provides insights into the ways in which content is created, received, and understood.

The third chapter *Cinematic World: Digital or Real* delves into the fundamental ways the approach to filmmaking has changed. Digital storyboarding, writing scripts on software with preset templates, the influx of MCU and DC Comics content that has captured the imaginations of children and adults across the globe. All these developments have had and continue to have a profound impact and influence on the way we understand filmmaking. Over the years, this transition from analogue modes of filmmaking to the digital has sparked many debates among filmmakers. Celebrated filmmaker Martin Scorsese has been extremely vocal in his rejection of these new digitized approaches in filmmaking and the use of visual effects and graphics. This chapter closely looks at Scorsese’s approach to cinema, which is “*aesthetic, emotional and spiritual.*” In contrast to the graphics dependent visual spectacles like *Avatar* (2009), *Avengers Endgame* (2019) and many more, which have created a different niche and passionate audience for their style of storytelling.

Alongside this artistic debate among filmmakers the chapter pertinently raises the concerns of archiving and preserving film heritage. It talks about the collective efforts by renowned film makers Woody Allen, Steven Spielberg, Ang Lee and Christopher Nolan are a part of the initiative taken by Martin Scorsese to ensure the preservation of cinema in its traditional analogue forms.

The progression from analogue modes to digital is well explained by the authors to enable readers even with no prior knowledge to comprehend the intricacies of these processes. Tools and processes involved in the process of filmmaking are lucidly explained as well with the help of simplified tabular references. Inclusion of the above-mentioned explanations would cultivate more nuanced perspectives among its readers and stimulate more informed discussions and debates. The chapter takes the discussion ventures further to touch upon the integral accompanying aspects of copyrights and piracy.

The increased access to availability and filmed content has raised important concerns about the eventual digital piracy of the same. The vastness of the virtual space, which on the one hand has eased accessibility and on the other hand it has also led to a spread of carefully curated filmed content from the legal platforms of OTT giants Netflix, Amazon, Hulu on unauthorised networks. This has become a viable threat to the revenue generation models of these platforms. In addition, issues of copyrights have increasingly become contentious as content creators are scrambling to preserve the sanctity of intellectual property in the face of their instant reproduction and imitation via multiple internet platforms, be in Instagram, Facebook or YouTube. This chapter discusses the vulnerability of OTT platforms and burgeoning of content creators on different internet platforms. Challenges of excessive accessibility are an issue that filmmakers, scriptwriters, producers and creators continue to grapple with. The ethical implications of these issues are simultaneously discussed to facilitate well-rounded and informed discussions by the authors.

The fifth chapter *Stars in their Eyes: Celeb Currency* is a significant inclusion as it looks at the dimensions of the concurrent creation of celebrity culture. This chapter traces the history of the star-culture in Indian cinema that has been and continues to be a driving force of the commercial viability of films. From Rajesh Khanna to the Khans, the celebrity culture is one of the cornerstones of the way audiences consume Indian films, not only in India but also among the widespread Indian diaspora spread across the world. Publicity and promotional activities have become an inseparable part of the gamut of filmmaking processes. This chapter provides significant insight into the contemporary practices in marketing and publicizing of film content. Being able to cut through the clutter of existing and the ever-growing market driven explosion of fresh audio-visual content, has led to innovative promotional tactics and methods. The chapter explains these aspects through numerous contemporary examples. The rise of social media influencers and YouTube stars is another recent phenomenon that the chapter effectively deals with.

Important contemporary practices such as *social media image management*, entailing carefully curated images or internet personas of stars, is also touched upon using relevant examples. The use of social media as an agency for advocacy is another related facet that the chapter explores. The pandemic was a catastrophic moment that saw the global rise in outreach facilitated by the reach of social media. Social media activism and its scope and relevance

today are examined. Giving readers a glimpse of the platform provided to crucial social issues through internet driven social media platforms and its innumerable users. The scope of social media engagement harnessed to propagate and raise awareness for important social causes is an integral facet that is touched upon. The availability of news on the internet, the availability of film reviews on the click of a button has also transformed the way in which infotainment is created and disseminated. The chapter also looks at the numerous possibilities of film festivals hosted, attended and curated online. The film festival is a practice, that is, expanding further in the reach and the scope of filmed content globally.

The following chapter *Cult Worship: From Audience to Stakeholders* introduces the sense of agency and empowerment extended to the new age cinephile. The popularity of films, OTT series and related content is now subject to a much wider range of opinions. There is a growing sense of ownership among audiences, as they express their likes and dislikes freely through various social media platforms. The audience is no longer a passive consumer but as the authors Rai and Srivastav rightly identify them as *prosumers*. The freedom of choice has taken previously structured programmed content on television sets and theatrical releases of films to personal laptop and mobile phone screens. The repercussions of this phenomenon are examined as it sees the audience grow into connoisseurs. The spread of fandoms, fanfiction and other audience driven forms of consuming film content are becoming a major factor in estimating audience trends and engagement.

The next chapter is an extension of this essential thought, as it talks about the *Scholarship Behind the Camera: Studying the Magic*. The personal

investment of time and thought into the critical analysis of film content is also raising the level of a cinephile to that of a studied and informed scholar of film. The discipline of Film Studies is gathering more and more interest among those passionate about this medium. This chapter provides a cogent and concise history of cinema as well as the origin and expansion of the field of film studies and film theory. The theoretical frameworks elucidating the way films are analyzed and minutely studied is gaining momentum. There is a growing interest in studying the layers of meaning created in a film. The significance of film schools is increasing as they provide scholars with the tools and academic grounding in film analysis to create and study cinema at the undergraduate and postgraduate level. The concluding chapter *Back to the Future: Experiments and Expectations* includes a well-informed introduction to the fields of Artificial Intelligence, Augmented Reality, Virtual Reality and Gaming Industry. The impact of these new technologies is transforming the ways in which audio-visual content is created and consumed by the audience. This chapter incorporates what filmmaking would look like in the future, with the help of these different powerful tools.

The book enumerates the various challenges faced by today's creators and audiences in an era dominated by the internet. It brings perspectives on Indian Cinema and culture to the fore from Indian scholars. This enhances the level of engagement and ethnographic understanding of Indian cinema with a discourse rooted in the Indian context.

**Dr Meera Shirodkar**

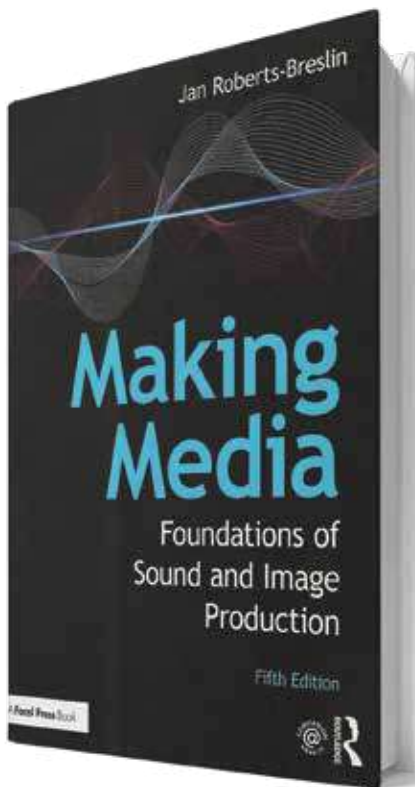
Assistant Professor, Times School of Media  
Bennett University, Greater Noida, UP-201310  
Meera.Shirodkar@bennett.edu.in



## BOOK REVIEW

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### **Making Media - Foundation of Sound and Image Production (Fifth Edition) by Jan Roberts-Breslin**



*MAKING MEDIA - Foundation of Sound and Image Production (Fifth Edition)*

Author: Jan Roberts-Breslin

ISBN: 978-0-367-63831-3 (Hard Bound)

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Taking essential media production processes, this book deconstructs them into the most basic components. Through this book, students can understand the concepts of media production, sound, light, time, motion, and sequencing and be able to

apply them to any medium they choose, from film and television to fine art and online applications. They will also become well-acquainted with the digital work environment and the tools required to produce media in today's digital environment. The author has emphasized the primacy of content and the importance of an ethical approach to media making.

This is the fifth edition of this book, which is embedded with features updates on technology and processes. New information on shooting with a cell phone, developments in mirrorless cameras, color grading, tips for recording good audio, intimacy training, and much more are included. Fully illustrated, this book includes sidebar discussions of pertinent issues throughout. There is also a companion website with interactive exercises for each chapter, allowing students to explore the of media production process.

The author has stated that the content is primary to making media. The book presents various classifications of content, as well as the importance of cultural perspective and attention to ethical and legal concerns. The development stage of production is broken down into budgeting and financing. In the book, the range of visualization techniques is illustrated in script formats.

While discussing the primacy of content, the author very lucidly stated that different aspects of media production may draw you to the practice. It may be the challenge of understanding and mastering the technology that can turn light and physical vibrations into mediated sounds and images of breathtaking fidelity and clarity. It may be the aesthetic satisfaction of a stunning composition, evocative sound mix, or artfully choreographed camera movement. It may be the collective energy of a collaborative process or the satisfaction of individual creation. And it may be the power of mediated sound and image to express, confess, inform, persuade, and subvert. Ultimately there has to be something you want to say. The message can be literal and direct or abstract



and implied. You may want to communicate to an audience of one or to the world.

This book is about the production process and the ways of realizing story ideas through sound and pictures. However, if we do not recognize the importance of content, the rest is in vain. All the virtuosity in the world when it comes to camera work, sound recording, lighting, and editing is not what brings us to the movie theater or causes us to turn on the TV, radio, or computer. We want information, we want to be entertained, we want to feel emotion or get a glimpse of life through another person's point of view. The techniques of media production are the tools that make expressing yourself possible.

In the broadest sense, with a focus on story ideas, the author refers to imagined events enacted by made-up characters. It also refers to information you want to teach or messages you want to share. An emotional response elicited from abstract sounds and images tells a story of sorts. Sometimes, production is a process of realizing your own story idea; sometimes, it is a matter of interpreting an idea developed by someone else. There are many techniques for encouraging creativity, such as keeping a dream journal and creating a scrapbook of intriguing news. Careful observation of everyday life helps us to create fictional characters and situations that are believable.

Media helps us in keeping involved in the community and informed about social and political issues that spurs the desire to inform and persuade others. The author focuses on the appreciation of other art forms, such as painting, sculpture, theater, live music, and dance, helps in making artful media. Ultimately, we can say that passion, keen observation, and perseverance mark good storytellers.

Focusing more on the matching medium to the message, the author categorizes a work of audiovisual media in many different ways. We can consider the type of programming: fiction feature, sitcom, installation, webisode, documentary, and so on. Also, we can consider the method of production used to create the programming: digital camera, audio recording, or even film. We can also consider the means of distribution, the specific form of media on which the programming has been distributed. This could be a movie theater, streaming service, museum or gallery, or website.

In the past, the relationship between the programming, the method of production, and the means of distribution was much more straightforward

than it is today. Movies were shot on film and viewed in the theater. Television programming originated live and was broadcast to the TV set in your living room. Radio programming, also broadcast live, traveled through the air via radio waves and was heard in your house or car. Museums and galleries were for paintings, sculpture, and sometimes photography.

A basic premise of this book is that certain underlying concepts and concerns apply to all types of media productions, from Hollywood blockbusters to museum video installations. As you make your way through this book you will find that concepts such as framing, sound, time, and movement exist in all types of media, but you will also find that it becomes necessary or convenient at times to be able to classify works of media production, even though those classifications can overlap. One way of starting to organize the types of media production is to set up categories that apply to the relationship of the content to reality, or whether the content of the production is fiction or nonfiction.

This book also carries chapters focusing on composing the frame where the concepts of framing and composition are covered—shot sizes, balance, closure, the rule of thirds, headroom, and look space. The chapter on creating the image focuses on cameras used to create our visual frames. Cameras (still or motion picture, film or digital) are made up of a lens, through which light travels to a camera body. Within the camera body is the image plane, the surface onto which the image is reflected. Understanding lens theory—the type of lens used and its characteristics—is central to all forms of image making and understanding the different types of materials that can reproduce images is well covered in the book.

The importance of lenses, media illusion and light are well defined in the book. This book will be of great interest to scholars and researchers of media studies on courses including media production, film production, audio production, and photography.

**Prof. (Dr.) Virender Kumar Bharti**

Head, Department of Publications and

Editor, 'Communicator' Journal

Indian Institute of Mass Communication

Ministry of Information and Broadcasting,

Govt. of India

Aruna Asaf Ali Marg, JNU New Campus,

New Delhi-110 067

Ph: 9810867916, e-mail: vkbharti.iimc@gmail.com



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