

A Study on Public Relations, Journalists, and Social Media Using the Lens of Trust or Distrust

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Abstract

Today's journalists, regardless of the kind of story they are covering, have access to an enormous amount of information. Information comes from a variety of sources, including digital sources, in addition to primary and secondary forms. The purpose of this study is to investigate the link between journalists' direct usage of social media for reporting in two Indian cities, Hyderabad and Delhi. It also investigates whether public relations agencies and corporate communication specialists communicate with journalists on social media on behalf of their customers. Is social media usage assisting journalists in producing better stories in terms of information sourcing in this digital era when information has become power and time is of the essence? Is social media—whether it be Google, Facebook, Blogs, Twitter, LinkedIn, or YouTube—becoming an additional source of information for journalists, surpassing published content in the public domain and direct sourcing? The study also skims the surface to see whether publishers and journalists are attempting to utilise social media to increase their audience reach. In a recent presentation at a brand conference in Bangalore, the BBC Global Marketing Head said that social media is enabling broadcast news organisations to reach a wider audience by using content across various platforms to target consumers according to their needs. TV networks and newspapers are using social media information gathered via surveys and informal interviews with media and communication professionals in Delhi and Hyderabad, two Indian cities, to learn more about this topic with media and communication professionals in Delhi and Hyderabad, two Indian cities. In addition to being a helpful information source, the viewpoints from the two cities would aid communication practitioners in understanding the function of social media as a tool for reaching journalists and in developing it as an efficient medium for sharing messages, updates, trends, and developments.

Keywords: Distrust, Digital source, Journalists, Social media, Trust.

1. Introduction

The advent of digital media in the 21st century has revolutionised global information and communication systems. The news media is now undergoing a process of adaptation to the societal changes that are taking place.^[1] The communication sector functions as a whole. In addition to internal and external communications, it includes branding, journalism, public relations, advertising, media relations, TV, and radio.^[2-4] This ecosystem functions within a society and shares information via business and media channels, including crisis communication. The environment in which eco-system members operate is dynamic. It's critical to understand how new media will affect the way the communication sector operates, as well as how to meet the demands of this sector and overcome obstacles.^[5] In light of this, it is important to comprehend how technology, namely digital media and the news business, drives the communication sector and how news affects society and vice versa.

This paper aims to comprehend the effects of new media, particularly social media, on public relations specialists and journalists in only two Indian cities: Hyderabad and Delhi. The research used to develop this article and study is focused on the global changes that media outlets are going through as well as the ways in which public relations experts are adapting to the demands of social media, which is "ALWAYS ON" (i.e., available around-the-clock).

1.1. Social and digital media definitions

Over the last several years, social media has become more and more popular. Social media began with a few well-designed Web 2.0 websites that included mostly user-generated content.^[6] From there, it quickly grew and included more technologies. Almost every online presence is now categorised as "Social Media." Differentiating "Social Media" from all other forms of digital media should be done clearly.^[7]

A connection that involves numerous persons having a two-way "conversation" is by definition "social." "Social networking" sites are ideal for this kind of social contact since they facilitate simple social connections via a variety of media.^[8] Unlike industrial or conventional media like newspapers, television, or movies, social media are different. Compared to industrial media, which often need large resources to produce information, they are very affordable and accessible, allowing anybody to create or access information. The capacity to reach both small and big audiences is one feature that industrial/traditional media and social media have in common. The following characteristics aid in defining the distinctions between industrial and social media:^{[9][10]}

- **Reach:** both are scalable and able to reach audiences throughout the world, but social media is decentralised, less hierarchical, and characterised by various sites of production and usefulness, while industrial media have a centralised framework of organisation, production, and dissemination;
- **Accessibility:** although social media technologies are often freely or inexpensively accessible to the public, conventional media production methods are controlled by the government or privately held;
- **Usability:** Social media does not need the specialist skill sets needed for conventional media;
- **Immediacy:** When it comes to the time lag problem, social media trumps conventional media, and
- **Permanence:** While adjustments in conventional media are challenging, they are simple in social media.

1.2. Sites for Social Media

On the social networking site YouTube, users may publish videos, and commenters can respond with text or video. Twitter users are limited to 140 characters or fewer while chatting. Twitter also places a strong emphasis on the mobile market.^[11] It is simple to use as a smartphone application or for text messaging, and it works with any kind of phone, anywhere.

Just as Facebook concentrates on the social aspect of life among friends and family, LinkedIn links business professionals. Foursquare allows you to share images, leave comments, do business directly with consumers, and integrate a gaming interface with your location.^[12]

1.3. Digital Media

Any "Digital Media" primarily focuses on its website, and a small business's ability to succeed depends on having a contemporary, functional website.^[13] Some tools make it possible to build a decent website at a reasonable cost. The emphasis of blogs has expanded to include almost every kind of website.^[14] A blog is an excellent tool to inform website visitors and customers. Although "placing" pages may be found on other search engines and social networking sites, including Facebook and Foursquare, they are most popular on Google.^[15] Controllable and spatially associated with a company location is a "Place" page. Place pages are effective in the mobile market since customers often choose them when they search close to the location.

1.4. Social Media

The term "social media" refers to a wide range of online and mobile-based tools that facilitate two-way conversation between groups of people, communities, and businesses. Social media is further referred to as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content."^[16] Social media is widely available and made possible by scalable communication

strategies. Looking at the bigger picture can help one understand how the digital revolution is affecting news media organizations and journalists throughout the world.

N. Ram, a former editor of The Hindu, said at an Indian History Congress conference held at Punjab University in Patiala, India on December 10–13, 2001, that the advent of the digital revolution—which includes the development of the Internet, the emergence of new media, and the growth of online social networks—has changed the media landscape.^[17]

At the World Newspaper Congress and World Editors Forum in Vienna in October 2011, Christoph Riess, CEO of the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA), gave a presentation on World Press Trends 2011. He stated that the major challenge facing the traditional news industry is audience engagement and the dire financial consequences of floundering network news divisions is giving way to one in which the gathering and distribution of news is more widely dispersed.^[18]

2. The Newspaper Industry

It is projected that the newspaper industry will fall from 83.28 billion USD in 2024 to 77.85 billion USD in 2029.^[19]

Newspapers are being distributed via a variety of platforms, including digital advertising, mobile, video, digital audio/podcast, and data mining and analytics. Digital platforms serve as an intermediary between readers and publishers. The difficulty of digital content comes from the abundance of free internet material and other types of content that newspapers in all media and entertainment sectors must contend with. International Print Periodicals and Magazines the market was estimated to be worth USD 124.70 billion in 2022 and is projected to increase at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of -2.3 percent from USD 121.83 billion in 2023 to USD 101.14 billion by 2031 (2024–2031). However, there has been a drastic change in the "terms of trade" that favors a drastic change in the "terms of trade" that favor the Web, mobile devices, and more recent interactive digital platforms. Approximately 160 billion US dollars are made by the newspaper publishing business globally each year, and over three billion individuals, or 72% of all literate adults, routinely read a newspaper. Globally, there are about twice as many newspaper readers as there are Internet users.

Currently, over three-fourths of the top 100 daily newspapers worldwide are published in Asia, particularly in China and India, which are considered "the world's absolute leaders in the newspaper industry" These countries' daily circulations currently hover around 110 million copies apiece.

2.1. The Indian Media

India, home to little over one billion people, has a very expansive and varied media landscape.

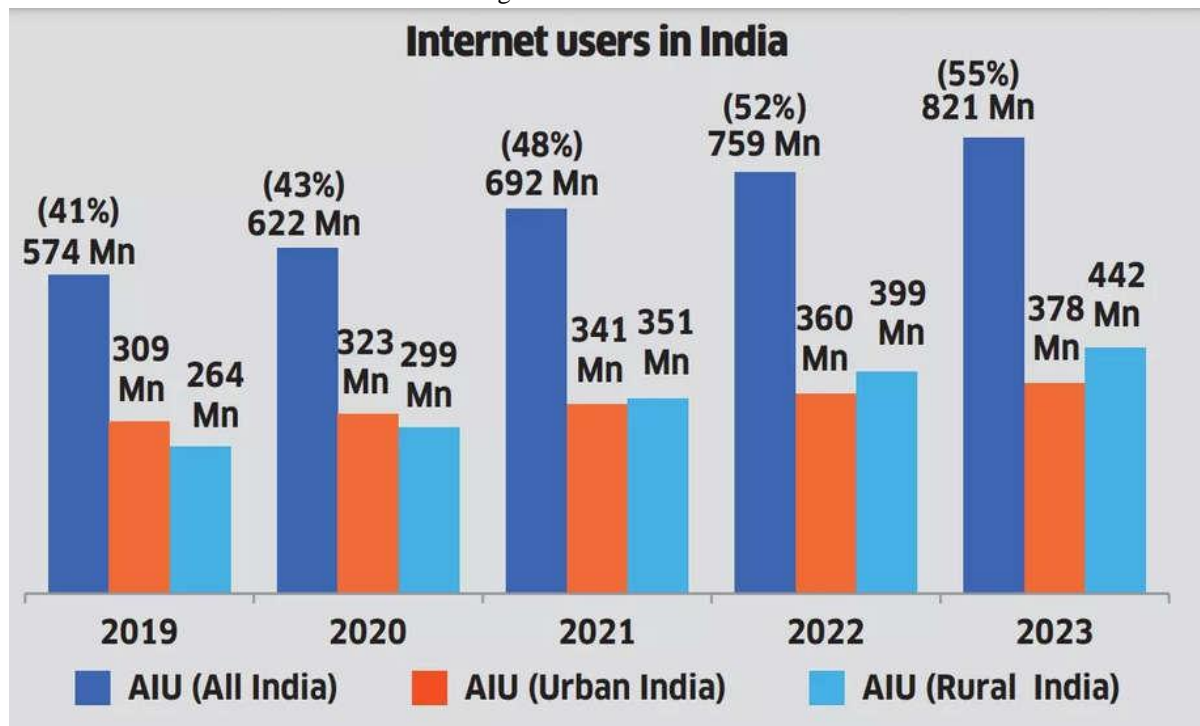
Newspapers: Despite the uncertainties facing the print sector in the West, the 55th Annual report of the Registrar of Newspapers for India (RNI) shows that the circulation of newspapers in India increased by 8.23% in 2010–11. Regional language dailies contributed significantly to this growth. It is not necessary to overstate the significance and buoyancy of this trend, however, given it stems from a severe undervaluation of cover prices.

However, print in India is still surprising the rest of the globe, according to the Pitch Madison research. Against an anticipated worldwide print degrowth of -4%, it projects 7% growth in print by 2024. Should this occur, the print adex is expected to exceed the pre-Covid 2019 levels and reach Rs 20,000 crore.^[20]

Television: From 2020 to 2023, the number of TV homes in India increased by 1.1% CAGR to 217 million. The nation's television sector has benefited from technological innovations like DTH and IPTV as well as the constantly shifting content of Indian television. In 2022, there were 226 million television households in India.^[21] Considering the potential increase in cord-cutting patterns in the nation in the next years, TV households were projected to reach 248 million by 2026. With an estimated 231 million homes in India, there is a significant amount of room for this medium to flourish.^[22]

Internet: Currently, over 820 million people in India are active users of the internet. Currently, 442 million, or more than half of them, are from rural areas of the nation. Internet penetration increased by 8% annually in 2023.^[24]

Figure-1: the Indian internet Users



Annapurna Roy (The Economic Times: 10 March 2023).^[23]

3. The Functions of the Press

Intellectually and politically, it is interesting to consider the possibility that knowledge, and particularly the news media, might influence public opinion formation in society and public policy about important social, political, and economic problems. Within a larger context, the extensive experience of the Indian press over a long period of time points to two primary responsibilities that newspapers have fulfilled in the modern era. These roles may be categorized as (a) critical-investigative-adversarial and (b) credible-informational.^[24]

One significant change has been the introduction of Julian Assange and WikiLeaks, a brand-new, non-profit organization powered by digital technology, to the world of media. In less than five turbulent years, WikiLeaks has altered the game for newspapers and the news media worldwide, including in India, particularly after July 2010, when it ramped up to a new level of journalistic operations and involvement.

Yet another matter needs careful consideration. It is the result of the press and other news media's manipulation or fabrication of consent. The two primary roles—the critical investigative adversarial and the credible informational—can be seen as being subverted in this way. This liberal thinking on the media and democracy is squarely challenged by the propaganda model proposed by Herman and Chomsky (1988)^[25] in their seminal book *Manufacturing Consent*.

In light of these circumstances, this paper aims to comprehend how journalists and public relations professionals use social media in the context of the evolving media landscape and newsroom dynamics, as well as the rapidly expanding digital environment and the growth in print media readership and circulation in India, despite a decline in global numbers.

4. Methodology

The media's influence on public opinion has been significant. The most influential parties in this process historically have been journalists, newspapers, and television media. However, as digital media has developed, the reach of these experts has changed, and technology has played a significant part in this shift. As a result, PR professionals now play a more multifaceted role. Since social media is interactive by nature, the way journalists and PR specialists use it and operate on it contributes significantly to the formation of public opinion. This research focused on how journalists and public relations specialists utilize social media, the significance of the story type being pursued, community members' adaptation to new media, and the use of organization support as a lever to reach wider audiences.

For this research, 60 journalists and public relations professionals in the Delhi case were contacted. Only 35 people answered in the end; however, since some of the people contacted did not use digital media in their daily reporting, while others were either too busy or unable to participate due to organizational policy. Four from the mainstream English-language press, three from the financial press, five from online news portals and bloggers, two from national TV, and nine from the local vernacular press made up the final sample of 19 Delhi journalists that answered the poll. Three public relations agencies, seven corporate communications departments, and six freelance consultants made up the 16 public relations practitioners who replied. A number of public relations experts needed to be made aware of the ongoing discussion around digital media, its effects on PR operations, or how it interacts with the journalistic community. The sample of 19 journalists and 16 public relations specialists in Delhi were asked five questions over the phone and via email.

Responses from a prior survey of 440 journalists in Hyderabad were analyzed to look at their reliance on digital media. The survey was carried out using a closed-ended questionnaire that was posted on [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com). For this research, interviews were conducted with ten public relations practitioners in Hyderabad who work in the business and government sectors. For the 2024 poll, 440 journalists who worked mostly in major print and electronic media were included in the non-probability purposive sample. These journalists included reporters, writers, editors, editorial staff, columnists, producers, and assistant producers. Fourteen percent of the sample consisted of senior employees with over six years of experience. To get their opinions on the matter, five questions similar to those provided to the practitioners in Delhi were also addressed to ten senior public relations practitioners with over a decade of experience from consultancies, the corporate, and government sectors. Telephone interviews were used to get information.

The following questions were posed to all respondents in Delhi, including journalists and public relations specialists; the identical questions were posed to public relations specialists alone in Hyderabad.

1. Do journalists utilize social media as a source of information while covering stories?
2. Are social media platforms reliable sources of information, and are there trust issues?
3. How do public relations specialists, journalists, and clients interact while using social media?
4. How do public relations professionals and the industry use social media to contact journalists?
5. How are news organizations using social media to reach a larger audience of readers?

In this study, participants answered five questions about the news-gathering process, the use of social media, and the role of social media in their daily work as journalists reporting and public relations practitioners exchanging information. Participants also discussed the significance of comprehending how social media expands their audience's reach within the framework of social media evolution. The opinions are summed up in the paper's following section.

5. Discussion on the process of gathering news and the use of social media.

In the study "Use of Social Media Sources in news gathering process and implications on PR practitioners," by Liz Bridgen of De Montfort University in the UK, it was found that while some regional and vernacular media representing newspapers

were excited about social media's potential, most had little knowledge or interest in it. Social media was not considered a news collecting resource; instead, it was considered a helpful tool for fact-checking (using sites like Wikipedia and Google, for example). In order to provide news and meaning for their readers, journalists continued to rely on official sources, such as press releases, in-person conversations, and papers from state and federal governments. Due to their lack of understanding and trust, many journalists still have misgivings about websites and other internet sources.

Information sharing has changed as a result of social media for audiences of all kinds, including journalists and public relations professionals. Social media makes it easier to share information without going through the formal channels that PR professionals used to regulate. The emergence of citizen journalism and non-professional journalists who voluntarily provide information in the form of images, videos, and blogs adds another layer to the news gathering process made possible by social media.

5.1. Journalists and Social Media: Trust or Distrust?

i. The Delhi Case:

Do journalists get information for reporting from social media platforms?

The English mainline, or mainstream, media was candid in their responses on the function and use of digital media in their routine reporting; yet, they expressed scepticism over the platform's information source. The seniority of the journalist and the organization's support in leveraging technology's usage and function revealed as another significant factor.

Are social media platforms reliable information sources, and are there trust issues?

A well-known national daily, The Hindu, has been a strong advocate for new media, using it to gather ideas for original articles and get feedback. At the same time, a story is being developed, and it validates any developments in the news. Twitter is seen to be a dependable interactive social media medium for monitoring the changes above. To ensure the accuracy of information, it is necessary to ascertain the correct Twitter handle of the person in question in order to get comments or reactions on news developments. For instance, during the most recent tsunami alert in Indonesia, TV channels raised alarms by monitoring developments and providing constant ticker updates, which were subsequently followed by online versions of newspaper and wire agency websites. This was due to the Indian Meteorological Department's lack of a Twitter handle and the lack of updates regarding the tsunami alert's impact on India. Additionally, reporters for newspaper and TV networks were forced to fend for themselves when it came to news developments since the Indian Center for Tsunami Alert, INCOIS, did not have a Twitter account or news bulletins on their official websites.

As businesses, lawmakers, and the government embrace this new digital platform for information sharing, social media is starting to provide valuable news sources for National TV stations. The question of trust still needs to be resolved. Still, once the integrity of the individual posting information on social media (FB/Twitter) is verified, that person is utilized as a source for articles. Journalists and public relations professionals should exercise caution when relying too much on social media and steer clear of more conventional means of making connections since many media outlets in Tier II cities still need to be proficient in utilizing these platforms.

Although the Financial Dailies was rather open, the answers were biased according to the places. Younger reporters for financial newspapers are increasingly active on social media; they use Facebook and Twitter to follow the news, look for background material, and keep an eye on activities. Twitter feeds are often used in place of real first-person statements that the writer personally gathered. Traditional reporters may choose not to utilize this information source since social media usage is discouraged by technological barriers. In contrast, tech-savvy reporters or "mojos" (mobile journalists) may find it more useful. However, there is a problem with sourcing information utilizing social media if there is no appropriate supervision, training, or resources for information verification. The greater problem with social media is authenticity and trustworthiness. Some journalists take advantage of this by making provocative remarks on Facebook or Twitter feeds, creating a stir, and then retracting or changing their positions when the situation gets out of hand.

Utilizing YouTube to upload videos?

Governmental organizations, corporations, and agencies are increasingly posting material from press conferences and media briefings on social media platforms. As a result, social media platforms enable journalists to get this data and write about it without having to speak with sources directly. But regular communication is impossible without. The US Consulate shared a link to a YouTube video of US Ambassador Mr. Eric Garcetti's recent visit to India with media outlets. This is a perfect example of controlled messaging, which helps to prevent misunderstandings and inaccurate reporting by journalists.

How do public relations specialists, journalists, and clients interact while using social media?

In addition to being a source of information, social media can be used to establish connections and research potential subjects, and it even has become a central hub for journalists to communicate with other stakeholders in related industries. Notwithstanding problems with legitimacy and trust, social media is valued for its speed, broad geographic reach, and ability to facilitate cross-referencing of information. The way journalists, PR specialists, and industry people connect has changed significantly. For the better since before the advent of social media, and this trend is only becoming better with time.

It's interesting to note that social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn have developed tailored programs in response to user demand and to fit better and streamline broadcasts as well as member-news media interactions. Additionally, social media is starting to serve as a one-stop shop for users to get all the information, shopping, entertainment, and other needs they may have. Social media, being a two-way street, facilitates communication and engagement between people and groups. Protecting news values is a journalist's first responsibility. This is especially true with social media, where anybody may host content. Therefore, it becomes critical to independently check and evaluate material before utilizing it as a source for a story. This is particularly true for TV channels, which are visual mediums. Players media has been a huge help to sports journalists covering. It has as players, board members, and pundits provide news, information, and statistics on their Twitter accounts. Reporters use these accounts to their fullest potential to share updates with their audience.

On the other hand, PR professionals who oversee social media accounts for their clients find it challenging when a disgruntled client leaves a remark on a blog, Twitter, or Facebook page. , yet more clear. Thus, it harms the company's brand and image when the media report them to report them further even cricket when the media reports such remarks; they have the potential to harm the company's brand and image has Players would have found it simpler to block reporting on this kind of material, but now that this new medium has emerged, it is becoming more challenging.

Due to convenience and speed, the information exchange process between journalists, PR firms, and businesses has moved online; yet, this has decreased the quality of interaction since direct communication is always preferable and less confusing. Since the social media provider has access to all information—even direct messages—and uses it to serve his commercial interests, utilizing social media for journalism raises privacy concerns. The journalistic and PR practitioner groups still use it sparingly. It is expected to expand further has events practitioners who choose to disregard the medium do so at their own risk.

The paradoxical situation in Delhi at the time of this study is that, unlike in the mainstream English or financial dailies, the use of social media for news gathering is restricted, despite the fact that the regional media is driving the growth of the Delhi newspaper industry in terms of both readership and circulation. This limitation, which reflects the restricted access to technology that vernacular journalists have, is pushed more by organizations than by journalists.

ii. The Hyderabad Case

A quantitative investigation on slightly comparable issues in the Hyderabad example was conducted in 2024 with 440 respondents (Dhillon, M. K. & Kiranjit Kaur, 2010); the findings are discussed in this work. Their views reinforce the goals of this research, which were studied in relation to the Indian situation.

What part does the PR sector and professionals play in using social media to reach journalists?

Journalists' preferred outlets for news releases from public relations specialists:

The first objective was to find out how journalists like to receive news releases from public relations experts. Because it is simpler to access, save, and refer to, the majority of journalists (92.4%) preferred to get press releases via work email. This was followed by a preference (50.3%) for receiving press releases and information in person since it allowed for instantaneous and two-way conversations between the public relations specialist and the journalist. Because they did not provide the same ease of contact or reference, the journalists regarded the usage of fax (48.3%), courier and snail mail (22.1%), and text messaging or SMS (14.7%) as less popular ways of getting press releases.

Preferred outlets via which public relations specialists may offer stories to journalists:

The second objective was to determine how journalists prefer to receive story pitches or ideas from public relations specialists. Once again, the majority of respondents (90.6%) said that they preferred the work email option. With 59.4% of respondents, the office phone was the second most popular form of contact, followed by in-person story pitches with 55.3%. Twitter and Facebook were not among the journalists' top picks. Indeed, over 56% of participants said that they would like story ideas to be given via Twitter, while just 33.5% stated they would rather get them via Facebook. For story ideas, journalists often turned to digital media (emails) rather than social media (blogs).

Therefore, even if email is a widely used method of obtaining news items from organizations, Hyderabad journalists do not see social media sites like Facebook or Twitter as their primary sources of news. This isn't meant to imply that journalists don't utilize social media; rather, it just highlights how useful email is for obtaining more detailed information and how simple it is to follow up on a more one-on-one correspondence channel.

Do journalists utilize social media as a source of information while covering stories?

Using social media to investigate stories or get ideas for new ones:

The journalists were also questioned about the frequency with which they conducted research for their articles or sourced story ideas from social media. In general, few journalists use social media significantly or regularly to find ideas for stories. Facebook was the social media platform most often used for work-related objectives, according to 37.8% of respondents who said they used it frequently each week. The use of different social networking platforms varies somewhat, however. For instance, Twitter was not a preferred option among the participants since the majority (51.9%) reported never using it for work-related objectives. While some respondents (50.4%) expressed interest in utilizing YouTube for work-related objectives, the majority utilized it sparingly often.

This overall lack of dependence on social media suggests that journalists in Hyderabad have yet to embrace the culture of social media for work-related objectives completely. This might be due to a number of factors. This may be partially because reputable organizations need to utilize social media as a source of information; moreover, journalists are prevented from embracing these channels as trustworthy sources of information owing to a lack of credibility and trust. Journalists who work in mostly government-affiliated media may be reluctant to depend on social media as a source of news because of the political climate in which the opposition views it as a weapon for information distribution.

Even after being prodded and asked many times, the print media in the vernacular (Telugu) was reluctant to participate in responding to the queries. Their limited exposure to social media and their use of it for news gathering may be the cause; news report creation is still controlled and conventional, and they need more organizational assistance in the form of free Internet or mobile devices with Internet access. Not even major newspapers like Sakshi, Andhra Jyothi, or Eenadu—the top Telugu newspapers in Andhra Pradesh—have established technology as a criterion for reviewing various social media sites, such as Wikipedia, Google, or Twitter, for news collecting.

Telugu TV networks, on the other hand, were more adept at using it and open to exploring. In order to track news developments and obtain comments on stories, social media is being used more and more in the news break area. The use of social media by reporters is very restricted as they are neither granted access to smartphones nor given the authority to use them for news gathering or reporting. Though they still need to advance up the value chain in terms of interacting with them, even local TV channel reporters are incorporating remarks posted on celebrities' Twitter accounts in their feature reporting. It is limited to collecting and reporting their Twitter remarks.

How do journalists, public relations specialists, and clients interact on social media platforms? Are social media platforms reliable information sources, and are there trust issues?

Utilizing blogs for research and story updates:

Finding out whether journalists often read blogs to stay up to date on the topics they were working on for articles was one of the study's other goals. According to data, blogs are a well-liked source of alternative information for the respondents. Sixty-eight percent of those surveyed said they routinely read three or more blogs. This suggests that, in contrast to Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and other social media platforms, blogs run by specific people who are well-known to journalists have grown in popularity as reliable information sources that provide journalists with an alternate point of view on subjects.

Using an RSS feed to subscribe to blogs, podcasts, company websites, or other news services

The number of blogs, podcasts, company websites, or other news services that journalists often get via an RSS feed was another question posed to them. Forty-one percent of the respondents said they did not utilize RSS feeds to stay up to date with business websites, blogs, podcasts, or other news services. Merely 19.2% of participants said that they get updates from over five different websites.

Using business websites to do subject-matter research for writing:

The respondents were asked about the significance of business websites as a favoured source of information for news stories, such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, the corporate website for work-related purposes; 41.3 % said they visited a corporate website more than once a week, and 81% said they visited one at least once a month.

Overall, the results above demonstrate that while public relations professionals may use social media to disseminate information, journalists prefer to use more established digital media—particularly email—to get and gather material for their news articles. They did, however, also rely on carefully chosen blogs run by respectable individuals to provide them other facts or story ideas. There was little impact of other social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn on news articles published by mainstream media.

5.2. Public Relations and Social Media: Trust or Distrust?

i. The Delhi Case:

The PR community in Delhi had responders who were from all across the nation. It was noted that social media use among journalists and PR pros in metros (or cities) was often greater than that of those in non-metros, and that this usage was also influenced by the nature of the journalist's beat.

To what extent do public relations professionals & the industry use social media as a tool to connect with journalists?

Public relations specialists working for the client, agency, or independent consultants see digital media as a revolutionary tool for changing consumers' attitudes. Long-term customer and problem perceptions may be greatly enhanced by combining conventional in-person interaction with the habit of exploiting the digital media platform. The degree to which social media content is used and accepted by the journalistic community as well as by their organisation depends on the

location, reputation, and credibility of the PR professional. Their answers to the questionnaire and their comprehension of the platform reflect these factors.

Every day, public relations specialists use social media to spread the news about their clients, engage with consumers, and address inquiries or issues. Social media platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter have grown in importance as tools for public relations professionals. Recent data from comScore indicates that Facebook now accounts for 12.3% of US internet time, up from 7.2% the previous year. Meanwhile, Twitter has over 200 million users and posts more than 110 million messages per day. PR professionals are finding it challenging to manage social media activities and to understand how to adapt to these new technologies and their effect while dealing with this expectation of "24 by 7" service. Over the last two years, the number of users on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn has increased dramatically in India, which is starting to emerge as a significant market.

Celebrities, politicians, and businesspeople have used Twitter to share some of the most significant breaking news items and controversial stories in India's conventional media. Examples of these include the controversial tweets that caused Shashi Tharoor, the socio-political analyst, to lose his position as chairman of the Indian Premier League and his fallout with the BCCI; Vijay Mallya and his responses to media reports about financial difficulties at Kingfisher Airlines; and Amitabh Bachchan, who announced on social media the pregnancy of his well-known actress daughter-in-law, Aishwarya Rai, and later the arrival of his granddaughter. All of these were shared on social media and subsequently picked up by traditional media outlets, newspapers, and television stations.

Journalists often search social media for client updates, and public relations professionals oblige by consistently sharing updates. Unlike happy news that is more analogous to conventional media, negative news on social media may quickly gain traction and become viral. Public relations professionals routinely monitor journalists' blogs, Twitter feeds, and Facebook updates to get insight into their opinions and adjust their information-sharing procedures appropriately.

On the other hand, clients are very exposed on several fronts and, because of the total lack of predictability, are at the mercy of all parties involved in their business, including suppliers, customers, current and potential workers, the government, and the media.

Social media is beautiful because it's an egalitarian platform that blurs class lines and allows individuals to communicate with each other more quickly. In the digital age, it is easier to connect with prominent figures such as corporate titans Ratan Tata and Anand Mahindra, political figures Omar Abdullah, Abhishek Manu Singhvi, and Sushma Swaraj, and television anchors Prannoy Roy, Barkha Dutt, Arunabh Goswami, Rajdeep Sardesai, and Druv Rathod. This makes social media an extremely effective tool for exchanging information.

ii. *The Hyderabad Case*

Public relations professionals in Hyderabad were big fans of utilising social media to interact with their clientele and the broader public. They seldom ever utilised other social media platforms, meanwhile, outside of email and the company website, to interact with journalists. In order to provide an exploratory analysis of the news collecting procedure and the function of social media in Hyderabad, the practitioner replies are grouped in accordance with the following questions.

Do journalists utilize social media as a source of information while covering stories?

Many media firms have given their reporters smartphones so they may submit their reports right away. In order to complement conventional media, the majority of mainstream news organizations—including television and newspapers—have an online presence via their own news portals, necessitating the prompt publication of news. One person brought up the point that reporters for the Telugu vernacular newspapers Eenadu and Saakshi deliver their reports via the Apple-I phone that their organization gives them.

Journalists often send inquiries to representatives of organizations or public relations professionals. They exclusively utilize social media to find leads for stories. Every responder said that, for journalists interacting with public relations practitioners, the phone remains the main means of communication, with email coming in second.

Are social media platforms reliable information sources, and are there trust issues?

All of the respondents felt that social media is not nearly as trustworthy as they would want it to be. As a source of information, they see journalists shifting more and more to business websites from other social media platforms. It is observed that journalists keep an eye on social media to track conversations and get a sense of what is going on, but they need more data for articles. Therefore, in order to get inside information for articles, journalists depend increasingly on interpersonal interactions, such as phone calls. If not, they get information directly from the organisation using the email. The public relations professionals said that by doing this, they could be able to keep their story leads confidential and get inside information for their reports. PR professionals question why journalists would want their rivals to know what leads they have. Furthermore, it was noted that the journalists sometimes accessed the company websites in search of further details.

Social media is often used by the media as a source for story leads. Journalists and public relations professionals continue to disagree on the matter of placing total faith in social media. A senior public relations official for the government said that journalists sometimes kept an eye on social media for discussions on topics and policies of the government. He used the current discussion in Telangana over the "Dharani Portal" as an example. He clarified that even while the media was pursuing leads from concerned people and activists on Facebook and via emails, they were still required to confirm any information they learned from the social media with the official government source. Before publishing reports, the media has been instructed to get formal remarks on any government-related topics or policies from the appropriate government department. However, the administration has been aggressively using social media to communicate with the general population rather than just the media.

According to the respondents, websites and blogs are seen as more trustworthy than Facebook since they are more controlled, while Facebook is often perceived as unmanageable and consequently lacking credibility. According to one of the responders, the majority of her customers believe that social media material is superficial and uninformative. Furthermore, regardless of whether someone is on LinkedIn, Facebook, or YouTube, one never truly knows who is on the other end of the social media contact chain or if they are trustworthy, as one of the respondents put it.

How do journalists, public relations specialists, and clients interact on social media platforms?

According to practitioners, big organizations often won't utilize social media to communicate information, particularly about large topics. These organisations like to provide information via having in-person conversations with journalists about significant topics. in which emails pertaining to important policy concerns were misinterpreted, they would not even answer queries on such subjects. Occasionally, they would respond to emails from journalists asking inquiries, such as those that needed direct replies on a project.

Certain organisations utilise Facebook and Twitter to continue the conversation about concerns brought up by the general population. The PR department will, however, cease responding on social media if it seems that the problem is still unresolved. Rather, they would include the pertinent answers to the frequently asked questions on their website. Instead of purposefully using social media as a component of their communication strategy, their usage of the platform is often more reactive, i.e., in response to inquiries on the platform. e can write or publish on these social networking sites, as the responder noted. To handle the content in more depth with illustrative examples and accompanying data, they need the additional space on their website.

Additionally, the respondents said that encouraging their consumers to utilise social media was a barrier. Relatively few customers are willing to spend money on social media as a public relations strategy. There is a belief that monitoring talks is time-consuming and costly, and that there is no control over them. In addition, there is a generational divide that exists

between the public and the media, and conservative viewpoints that prioritise profit above all other considerations are also present. There is also the idea that using social media, like Facebook and Twitter, is not very productive and does not provide access to a wealth of knowledge. The focus remains on using the more regulated company websites for background information and useful research. Instead of actively participating in social media, clients will want that you mostly observe it in a passive capacity for news about their brands and goods. It is still preferred to rely on their own authorized sites using more conventional techniques. One responder said that social media would be aggressively used by the marketing department, not public relations, to promote the product and build brand awareness. Senior editors, who are typically older than the customers, also prefer in-person meetings with the media because they feel they can get more in-depth stories in this way. Many of the clients' decision-makers are still from the older generation.

However, lately, the government has placed more emphasis on using social media to collect information for policy proposals. Actually, in order to communicate with the public, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has instructed members of his cabinet, as well as other lawmakers and high-ranking government officials, that businesses could be more that they rely more on their own authorized more actively. As one responder pointed out, things were different for the government since public servants and politicians must interact with the general public, which makes social media an important forum for them. She used the website in order to organize businesses that needed to be as involved with social media.

To what extent do public relations professionals & the industry use social media as a tool to connect with journalists?

Every responder acknowledged that public relations uses social media as a platform for public communication, although journalists almost ever use it for that purpose. They believe that this is not necessary since journalists can easily contact public relations specialists, and they typically prefer face-to-face, email, or phone conversations. A responder posed the following question: "So why do they need to source from social media, especially when we can provide more comprehensive information with graphical information via face-to-face or through emails?"

In general, all of the respondents agreed that using social media to contact the media was a mistake. Due to connections or shared interests, one consultant said she utilized Facebook to establish a professional contact with a media practitioner who was active on the platform. However, it was seen as impractical since it was unclear if the effort was directed appropriately. According to every response, the majority of journalists covering subjects related to their organizations are people they directly know, thus there's no need to follow them on social media. Making a phone call or sending an email was more convenient and simpler for them.

Another professional made the observation that the sort of business one was in also affected how one used social media. She suggested people in morally dubious industries, like the pharmaceutical industry, wouldn't communicate on social media due to concerns about their reputation and the need to maintain information control—something that social media makes impossible.

They both agreed that social media was quickly taking over as a popular means of reaching the public—but not the media. They all acknowledged that while they still favored email correspondence and in-person meetings, they had not fully used social media for media relations.

In conclusion, public relations professionals believed that social media traffic was not very high and that it was not often utilized to interact with the media in a meaningful way. Additionally, social media was seen as a venue for social interaction rather than professional, competitive work.

6. News media's utilization of social media

The majority of media organizations have websites because of their online news portals. They are considered essential to compete with the expanding alternative online news sites and reach the younger digital ag. Furthermore, the programs for smartphones, iPads, and similar devices enable people to share the most recent news stories and advertise their own print

newspaper by using teasers. As part of their advertising efforts, they also hold contests on Facebook and Twitter and share certain tales to entice users to return to their medium.

Social media platforms like Twitter are being used to gather leads or viewpoints to support or follow a discussion, and they are also becoming a source for breaking news stories as well as bits of information or quotations that might assist journalists buttress their perspective of narrative. The way journalists use social media to engage with readers and tell their stories—a "Collaborative Reporting" paradigm that is igniting change and activism—is one way that social media is transforming the news business. Social media and conventional media are integrated via reporting, making it simpler for journalists to interact with individuals who have something interesting to say or are somehow connected to a subject they are covering. This is more challenging when using traditional media. Newspaper sales, both in print and digital formats, are a clear indicator of the offline effects of online marketing.

While social media sites like Twitter and Facebook are often cited directly as the source of news by journalists covering areas like entertainment and fashion, this practice is uncommon in other types of reporting. Social media is the **ONLY** resource that journalists utilize for preliminary investigation; they do not always distinguish between social media and other online content. To comprehend trends and the pulse of public opinion on important subjects, they frequently consult social media.

The following are some ways that social media has benefited journalists:

1. Choosing a trend: Twitter is taking the place of TV's "Breaking News" segment;
2. Reputable source for quotes: A number of politicians, celebrities, businessmen, and spokespersons are tweeting their thoughts on a certain piece of news.
3. To get information and a 360-degree perspective from user-generated material as opposed to obtaining it just via the Internet, where information may be limited to that supplied by the government, business, or organization, resulting in a regulated flow of information; and
4. Participative journalism: In this style of reporting, journalists utilize social media to successfully acquire information about a topic by posing queries to readers or viewers and, in the event of breaking news, soliciting comments and first-hand experiences.

Reporters may now use bloggers as a new source of information, and the growing acceptance of social media has spurred an ongoing discussion regarding social media's place in traditional media among journalists. While Facebook may not be a well-liked source of information, blogs and Twitter are quickly becoming as important resources for journalists looking for leads and ideas. The platform itself is not as important as the content source when it comes to legitimacy and trust. Technology reporters often get their news from reliable blogs, discussion boards, and tweets, particularly in the IT industry.

Because there are so many connections across groups on social media, content may spread quickly and get viral. As a result, false or malicious information can spread swiftly as well. The norm of being faceless does not apply and there is more credibility when recognized owners make comments and thoughts on social media sites like Facebook and Twitter. Social media should only be used as a conduit, not as a strategy, and the best approach to use it depends on your target audiences' habits. Social media is just another instrument available to journalists; conventional journalism is not inherently threatened by social media. Digital media may sometimes disseminate false information quickly across countries and even before a journalist has a chance to investigate the subject. Social media helps to legitimize such material because there is no accountability for any false posts made there.

For those who are always on the go and in need of news, social media also contributes to the creation of an "Informed Society." Over the course of the next ten years, citizen journalists and bloggers will increasingly join established journalists as news providers. The interaction between public relations professionals and journalists is rather strong. The journalist may utilize the CEO's opinions on a topic to inform their article and then retweet the finished piece. The customer may share this narrative on Twitter, the business blog, and the organization website to increase exposure and reputation. CEOs and other corporate executives are interacting with stakeholders on social media platforms in an effort to further their

companies' interests. Social media is the message for clients, the source of information for journalists, and a better way for public relations specialists to reach a wider audience.

People will use social media more and more in order to get the information they need due to convergence and the sharp increase in smartphones with affordable Android apps. This trend is also evident in the everyday interactions that news organizations have with their viewers. News media and public relations professionals are exchanging information via various channels such as RSS feeds, Twitter feeds, and iPad apps. Publishing is also evolving as a result of digital media.

A story is not compelling in the internet age until it has gone viral. Because viral stories are social phenomena, it makes sense for social news consumers to take an active role in the debate rather than simply observe from the side-lines.

7. Conclusions

Social media is an essential tool for expanding one's audience and should not be disregarded. When compared to global standards, its use in Delhi and Hyderabad is still in its infancy. Social media is an effective "force multiplier" that, in addition to boosting website traffic and elevating brand salience, allows for reaching a larger audience and overcoming geographical barriers. Unless their companies mandate that they promote news online, journalists often utilize social media to personally connect with bigger audiences.

Social media conversations may serve as a starting point for creating a news story, and Twitter, one of the interactive digital platforms, is a useful place to look for breaking news. Slowly, this is making its way into the news gathering process for the media in Hyderabad and Delhi. One responder from India said that journalists are "Late Adopters" and "Early Rejectors" of technology.

The shift from in-person to phone, text, email, and now gradually to social media has been a noticeable change in the news gathering process. However, in order to obtain the correct story, media outlets and journalists must be able to reduce the coefficient of exaggeration and hype. These days, a journalist's toolkit for obtaining information includes Twitter, Facebook, Blogs, Wikipedia, and Google. Journalists now have an advantage in filing articles and using information efficiently due to the proliferation of smartphones and increased internet access. While novice journalists are investigating this alternative for information, older journalists have their own networks and depend on them more. In order to fully use social media, journalists and public relations professionals still have a way to go before realizing all of its potential. On social media, however, information manipulation is simpler because there is no oversight and it bypasses the conventional processes of absorption, collation, editing, and newsroom dynamics. Information interchange is open and uncensored as there is no moderator or input editor, making it challenging to trust both inputs and outputs. The rise of digital media, sometimes called the "Fifth Estate," bodes well for a country's democracy and has the potential to establish the "Fourth Estate" as an indispensable part of the democratic process.

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