



## AN ERA OF NEW MEDIA AND ITS IMPACT ON JOURNALISM

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### **Abstract**

*Digital technologies have brought in revolutionary changes in journalism and fundamentally altered the nature and function of media in our society, reinventing age-old practices of public communication and at times circumventing traditional media and challenging its privileged role as gatekeepers of news and entertainment. There are so many ways in which new media have impacted on the practice of journalism, from the way reporters gather information and present news stories to how news organizations structure themselves and do business. This paper will explore intersections between new media, journalism and technology in order to enhance the understanding of the influence of information and communication technology on traditional journalism. The researcher in order to investigate the role of the media in the digital age, and to find out how journalists use these new tools to advance their profession, conducted telephonic interviews with working journalists from leading national dailies in the city of Coimbatore, during the month of July 2015. The journalists unanimously agreed that they are required to do multitasking as far as newsgathering and production is concerned, but find it advantageous.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

“Social media is a term used to describe the type of media that is based on conversation and interaction between people online. Social media are media designed to be disseminated through social interaction, using highly accessible and scalable publishing techniques.” – Wikipedia

Marshall McLuhan, coined the terms, *The Global Village* and *The medium is the message*, to express his belief that electronic communication would unite the world. But no one could have predicted the extent to which the earth would become an information-dependent planet. It has been 30 Years since the advent of the internet back in Jan 1983, reported TOI, (Jan. 5, 2013). From then on, the world has begun to undergo a new technology-driven revolution leading toward what is commonly called *The Information Age*. Like all technological revolutions, this one has inspired optimistic hopes and fantasies. The technology determines the society and the society shapes the technology in turn, according to the needs, values, and interests of people who use the technology. Social media is one such ICT (Information Communication Technology) driven technology. Throughout the globe the people are hooked on to the social networking sites for various purposes. The reason being, keeping in touch with old friends, initiating new relationships, forming their own groups for both business and personal use, forming opinion on political parties, journalism and many other social causes.

For almost two decades, the web has changed the world and revolutionized how information is stored, published, searched and consumed. The ripple effect has spread so wide that it impacts not just businesses and industries but crosses over into politics, journalism, medicine, media and breaches geographical locations, cultural boundaries and ultimately, affects people’s day to day lives.

News consumption today is different from the days of the pre-satellite news when people waited for their morning papers or the evening news on television. More recently, a growing number of readers, viewers and listeners are going online for their news. In recent years, newsrooms across the world have adopted a “digital-first” strategy, having realized the inevitability of a non-print world. This means that there is a way to tap the medium’s strengths (interactivity), so that one can go beyond the print’s limitations. There’s enough evidence pointing to the growing importance of social media in the world of news. One of the strongest signals comes from the online analytics firm Parse.ly which stated that the social media now drives more traffic for newsgathering. Parse.ly clients include 400 media outlets, including Wired, Reuters, Mashable and Business insider according to reports. (The Hindu, Aug 26, 2015).

Digital technologies have expanded quickly, permeating society with new formats and possibilities of communication. Digital technology demands more of the reporter, who often has to learn several operating functions, working at the same time as producer, editor and executor.



## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

If the press is the Fourth Estate, William Dutton of the Oxford Internet Institute termed social media as the emergence of the Fifth Estate. For the journalist, the new equation is about doing a lot more with a lot less. “Reporters are now required to submit stories for multiple platforms – television, radio, print and online. For a journalist in today’s media landscape, it is essential to be multi-skilled. Social media help journalists understand what issues people really care about. They are great for networking and for trawling raw information but one must guard against distortions and opinions disguised as fact.” States Roberto Coloma, Bureau Chief, Agence France Presse (AFP) Singapore, as quoted by Jennifer Alejandro in her paper “Journalism in the age of Social Media”.

**Brian Solis, 2008**, author of a book about the new web called “Engage” says the world of socialized media is maturing and along with it, our knowledge, expertise, reach; personal and represented brands are also flourishing. It will continue as long as we realize that these new social tools and networks require an entirely new commitment and embodiment of what we personify and how we can be a genuine resource to the people who define the communities that are important to us.

The blogs are also considered an additional source of information for the journalists In Technorati’s 2008 State of the Blogosphere report, the company observed that blogging is becoming mainstream, leading the way for an Active Blogosphere – defined as the ecosystem of interconnected communities of bloggers and readers at the convergence of journalism and conversation.

**C. Shirky, 2008**, was of the view that “Old media like publishing used to require a printing press. Circulation was limited to a fraction of a geographical location. Broadcasting via radio and television rely on expensive equipment to transmit signals around a country, regionally or globally. Now, once a user connects to the internet, he has access to a platform that is at once global and free. The new model assumes that the devices themselves are smart. This means that one may propose or explore new models of communication and coordination without needing to get anyone’s permission.” He is of the view that traditional media had its own limitations pertaining to the geographical, technical, and financial aspects which could be easily overcome with the new media.

**C. Beckett, 2008**, stated that “New-media technology is not only having a serious effect because of its impact on established journalism. The way that the vast bulk of public and commercial media is changing is more important than the emergence of citizen journalism or the independent blogosphere. Together they offer the opportunity to transform the news media into a more open, trustworthy and useful forum for information and debate. As news becomes non-linear and open-sourced, journalism will change and is changing. This is about more than posting a comment on a blog or sending in a photo to a website”.

As reported by “The Hindu” - Two years back a Pew Research Center report said on Facebook, “News is a common but incidental experience” What this means is, unlike those who go to websites of newspapers to look for news, many facebook users aren’t actually looking to get news while they are on the network but they end up getting news. Pew research’s “State of the News Media 2015”, report extended this theme thus: “and if news in the social space is more incidental and driven to a large degree by friends and algorithms, then gaining a foothold there may be even more elusive- or at least less in the industries own hands- than a secure financial model” . What’s still in the hands of newsmen is how they can do their best in dealing with the social networks that matter. (The Hindu, Aug 26, 2015)

## OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

A number of news organizations have social media strategies today a few like New York times even have audience engagement editors, who ensure a story travels well in the social space by making it engaging. Nine of the more global news brands, including The Guardian and The BBC are now publishing stories directly to Facebook. They are where their readers are. Also, Facebook is great at monetizing content, even in mobiles. Each platform has its own dynamics for instance social media comes across as a place where people consciously seek out news, it is also increasingly a starting point for many stories, it is where stories break in other words.

The paper attempts to answer the questions

- How social media affect the way journalists receive, gather and distribute news?
- What does it mean for the future of news?



This research paper tries to explore how journalists use and adapt social media in their work through telephonic interviews that were conducted with working journalists from leading national dailies in the city of Coimbatore, during the month of July 2015.

## FINDINGS

Telephonic Interviews were conducted with journalists to realize the objectives of the study.

According to M. Rafi Ahmed, Bureau Chief of “TRINITY MIRROR”, a tabloid Newspaper with the advent of social media, “Arm chair journalism” and whatsapp journalism is on the rise. That is journalists, no longer are required to be on the spot to report or gather news. The information is sent as a mail and photographs are sent through whatsapp. It saves on time and more stories can be filed on a daily basis. Technology according to him is a boon and it has shown increased level of instructiveness amongst the readers. Interviews are done on skype and through phones. The concern today is to do with the authenticity of the reports and the alarming trend of the reporting done in absentia. Commenting on the future, the fast pace world will see the shift from the traditional forms to mobile news.

Anu, a new generation journalist, of Indian Express, feels its advantageous to be a part of the technology driven world. She looks for breaking news from Twitter, Facebook and Reach and develops the story from there on. With having to multitask as reporter, editor, photographer and sometimes in design, it gives the journalist a complete sense of control over the article from beginning to end. The emergence of new media houses like Quint, Storypick and Scroll have established their credibility and proves to be a helpful source in attribution. The present generation according to her relies on the new media more and hence poses a threat to those who still depend on the traditional form of journalism.

It is no longer difficult to write a structured article with an abundance of research material available over the internet says, Selva who writes regularly for The Hindu, Tamil edition. According to him, it used to be a time consuming process to research and write an article and with the New media, it has become simple and deadlines are easily met. With participation from the readers in sharing their opinion about an article, the level of interaction is at an all time high. This also helps in an increase in the readership as many share the news articles on the social media platform. He also feels that the print form will drastically reduce and the shift will be towards online journalism.

A reporter who has witnessed the progress of journalism over the years, K. Jeshi, working with The Hindu, finds the social media to be a boon in the field of journalism. It proves to be advantageous and saves time as compared to the traditional methods of reporting and editing. According to her, accessibility to sources, reaching out to officials is no longer a tedious process. Errors can be avoided as news gathering can be attributed to credible sources such as Scroll.in, Firstpost and The wire who provide news specifically for social media platforms. Though the social media is very demanding making journalist multitask, it can be very exciting. The future of the print medium may be bleak but for now, even though social media has paved its way narrowcasting the preferences of audiences, newspapers will stay on for a while.

The interviews with the journalists in Coimbatore indicate the following shifts:

- The traditional roles played by the journalist as reporter, editor, soundman, cameraman, photographer, photo editor, etc are morphing together.
- Social media has affected the nature of the newsgathering process.
- Getting tips or leads and the changing concept of what scoop or breaking news is
- Beat monitoring
- Getting interviewees for a story
- Journalists as a “filter” for information coming their way -journalists must sift through the rubble of cyber noise and verify facts.
- In general the Social media has affected the way information is disseminated.

## CONCLUSION

In today's world, it is impossible for anyone to escape the relentless process of change. The Media companies are changing with the times. The interview has shown that there is a need for journalists and journalism to transform and evolve along with the changes happening in the technological and cultural scenes. The respondents say they are not worried about making the transition and many of them are already preparing themselves for the digital shift by learning multimedia skills. The god term



of Journalism- the be-all and end all , the term without which the enterprise fails to make sense, encompasses all facets of society and human understanding since the beginning of civilization. The important characteristics of the new media are that media texts are dematerialized in the sense that they are separated from their physical — newsprint — form. The data can be compressed into very small spaces and it can be accessed at very high speeds in non-linear ways. To be a journalist in the digital age, you have to be able to be an editor, a photographer, a videographer, a reporter, a layout designer and a writer all in one. Vineet Kaul, 2013, states that “To accomplish this feat, journalism will have to reinvent itself. Everybody fumbles, but its not longer time to question whether to let the train pass us by or just put one foot out the door. It’s time for innovation for transformation. It’s not “adapt or die,” rather “change or die.”

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