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"Pragyaan: Journal of Mass Communication"

(UGC-Care Listed Journal) ISSN No. 0974-5521

Volume 23, Special Issue, January 2025

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From the Editor

The media today wields immense influence, shaping opinions and redefining societal norms. As emerging technologies continue to transform communication landscapes, *Pragyaan: Journal of Mass Communication* remains committed to exploring these dynamic shifts through rigorous academic inquiry. This special issue, themed “Media, Society & Emerging Technologies,” presents a collection of insightful research papers that critically examine the evolving interplay between media, technological advancements, and societal change.

As a UGC Care-listed, open-access journal, we take pride in fostering scholarly discourse on contemporary media trends. This edition features seven original research papers that delve into pressing issues—from the challenges of deepfakes and AI-generated news to the role of social media in shaping digital engagement. Each contribution offers valuable analytical perspectives, reinforcing the journal's mission to advance knowledge in mass communication studies.

These seven papers provide analytical and critical insights that align with the journal's academic focus. The paper “A Study of Media Literacy in the Age of Deepfakes Among Adolescents” addresses a critical concern in today's digital ecosystem—how young audiences navigate an increasingly deceptive media environment. With synthetic media becoming more sophisticated, the paper underscores the urgent need for enhanced media literacy education to combat misinformation. The study “Guerrilla Journalism in India: Evolution, Impact, and Challenges” explores the growing influence of non-traditional journalism in challenging mainstream narratives. The research highlights how independent digital journalists operate amidst political, economic, and technological constraints, reshaping news dissemination in the process.

Another study, “Navigating Trolling: Public Opinion and Student Engagement in WhatsApp Groups” examines the dual nature of online discussions, where platforms like WhatsApp serve as both spaces for constructive debate and hubs for toxic behavior. The findings emphasize the necessity of fostering healthier digital communication norms. Another research study “Trust Factors of News Consumers Among AI-Generated News Anchors” investigates audience perceptions of synthetic media personalities. As AI increasingly infiltrates newsrooms, this study provides crucial insights into trust, authenticity, and the ethical dilemmas posed by automated journalism.

The paper “Role of Social Media in Powering Up OTT Media Consumption in India” analyzes how platforms like Instagram and Twitter drive engagement with streaming content, reflecting broader shifts in entertainment consumption. Meanwhile, “Trust in Social Media Credibility and Cybersecurity Incidents” explores user perceptions of platform reliability amid rising cyber threats, highlighting the delicate balance between convenience and security.

While most studies focus on digital media, “Analyzing the Evolutionary Arc of Ruskin Bond as a Writer” offers a compelling literary perspective, reminding us of storytelling's enduring power in an age dominated by technology.

We extend our deepest gratitude to the authors for their rigorous research and insightful contributions. Their work enriches the academic discourse on media and emerging technologies. We also sincerely thank our panel of referees for their meticulous reviews and constructive feedback, ensuring the publication of high-quality research.

Special appreciation goes to the Vice-Chancellor, the Dean of the School of Mass Communication, Associate Editors, and all faculty members for their unwavering support in bringing this issue to fruition. Their guidance has been instrumental in maintaining the journal's scholarly standards.

We are confident that the research presented in this issue will stimulate further discussion on the transformative role of technology in media and society. As the digital landscape continues to evolve, we remain committed to fostering critical scholarship that addresses emerging challenges and opportunities in mass communication.

We welcome feedback from our esteemed readers, as your perspectives are vital in shaping the journal's future direction. With a steadfast dedication to academic excellence, we look forward to continuing this journey of exploration and innovation in media studies.

Thank you,
Best regards,

Editor-In-Chief
Prof. Neeraj Khattri

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CONTENTS

Research Papers/Articles

- | | | |
|----|---|-------|
| 1. | A study of Media Literacy in the age of Deepfakes among adolescents
Dr. Renu Singh, Dr. Vikash Singh | 1-6 |
| 2. | Guerrilla Journalism in India: Evolution, Impact and Challenges
Dr Ritwik Ghosh | 7-16 |
| 3. | Navigating Trolling: Public Opinion and Student Engagement in WhatsApp Groups
Mr. Praveen, Prof. Umesh Arya | 17-24 |
| 4. | Analyzing the Evolutionary Arc of Ruskin Bond as a Writer
Ms. Nidhi Gupta, Dr Vipin Kumar | 25-30 |
| 5. | Trust factors of news consumers among AI-generated news anchors: A study on the students of GJUST, Hisar
Ms. Saloni Kumari, Prof. Manoj Dayal | 31-38 |
| 6. | Role of Social Media in Powering Up OTT Media Consumption in India: Current Trends & Practices
Ms. Priya Tyagi, Dr. Nitin Kumar | 39-47 |
| 7. | Trust in Social Media Credibility and Cybersecurity Incidents: A study about user's perceptions
Mr. Sumesh Sabharwal, Prof. Umesh Arya | 48-55 |

A study of Media Literacy in the age of Deepfakes among adolescents

*Dr. Renu Singh

**Dr. Vikash Singh

ABSTRACT

Media Literacy has become an essential part of education. The internet and social media have been a part and parcel of our lives. Children are highly involved and engaged with the social platforms. They utilise the digital platforms for socialisation, education, virtual games etc. In this process they are vulnerable to various cyber-crimes, cyber arrest etc. Proper guidance and monitoring should be provided to the children so that they can be able to fight with the misinformation, fake news and deepfakes. The present research tries to understand the awareness level of the adolescents regarding misinformation, fake news and Deepfakes from tier II cities of the state Maharashtra, India. A questionnaire survey of 388 children of age group 13 to 16 will be done to understand their digital usage and their media literacy. Some interviews of parents and teachers will also be taken to understand how they contribute in safeguarding their children from cyber-attacks. Some case studies of children will also be studied to understand how cyberattacks are seen through digital gaming platforms or social media platforms. The age of adolescence is such that when children start behaving like grown-ups but still, they need lot of monitoring and guidance from their parents and teachers. The present research will try to understand the media literacy level of this age group.

Keywords: media literacy, deepfakes, fake news, adolescents, cyber crimes

1. Introduction:

Media Literacy is an important skill that should be taught to all the citizen of the country. It should be an essential subject in the curriculum of schools and colleges. Children at all age levels are exposed to digital platforms and video games and they should be literate regarding the uses and misuses of the digital platforms. The youngster of our society will be the one who will have to handle the latest influence techniques of the digital technology like spreading fake news, viral news, propaganda, persuasion etc techniques and algorithms. The technology is growing very fast and the research in the area of Artificial Intelligence is also getting advance in making replica or fake sound, images and videos their make the illusion of certain fake identity or event. It needs our deep understanding of the digital media to understand the uses and misuses of this online platform. People should be aware of the harmful effects of the digital tools they are using and should also be literate how to safeguard themselves from its negative impacts. Thus, the study of Media Literacy remains the major skill that needs to be adopted by each digital media user. The children remain the most vulnerable age group who can be easily manipulated and persuaded by the fake news, so it's

necessary for the children to be given proper media literacy lessons in schools or at home. In the age of deepfakes the idea of gatekeeping is gaining importance because it is difficult to accept and believe on any information provided by the social media. The trend recently is viral related to the news from Bollywood, sports and politics. The faces of Bollywood, sports or political leaders are morphed and their deepfake videos are created. But if these incidents keep growing and if it starts affecting our daily lives there could be serious consequences.

2. Review of Literature:

Media Literacy seems to be the only solution for encountering the consequences of these fake news or miscommunications. Media Literacy inculcates the critical thinking skills and encourages us to understand the aesthetics, human value-based messages and social and political implications of media texts. Now a days it is becoming extremely difficult to fact check or verify the reality. The technology is blending the imaginary or the virtual world with physical reality. Deepfakes are widely used for traditional entertainment to gaming and seems convincing and is available to the public. Shinde (2024) defines Deepfake technology as a "cutting-edge

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development in artificial intelligence that involves creating hyper-realistic digital content, often in the form of videos or images, where individuals appear to say or do things they never did". This high-end technology employs deep learning techniques that creates content that is very difficult to distinguish from the reality. According to Goss (2024) Deepfakes are the products that distinguishes the line between reality and fake to form an illusion of reality. It replicates the voice, behaviours, facial expression, mannerism to create the illusion of fake reality. Thus, a knowledge of digital literacy should be spread among the digital users so that they can handle the situation of cyber bullying, cyber-attacks or cyber-crimes with more maturity and deeper understanding about the digital world.

Media Literacy should be among the essential subject for the youngsters of the country because they will be encountering the advantages and disadvantages of the digital platforms. The children from the very young age are surrounded by the digital gadgets and Applications. They should understand the concepts of digital algorithm, echo chamber, filter bubble etc. According to Eli Pariser "computer monitor is a kind of one-way mirror, reflecting your own interests while algorithmic observers watch what you click". Pariser terms this reflection a filter bubble, a "personal ecosystem of information" (<https://fs.blog/filter-bubbles/>). Every time we click, watch, share, comment, use search engines or social media platforms, we are providing our data to digital world. This led us to become the consumer of the target advertisement that are based on our search history. According to GCF Global "An echo chamber is an environment where a person only encounters information or opinions that reflect and reinforce their own". Echo chambers creates a world of distorted perspective and it tends provide a person similar views and messages that can deprives the person with different perspectives and opinions. It tends to establish a confirmation bias that reinforces the existing beliefs.

3. Research Objectives:

- To study the media literacy level of the children
- To study their knowledge about deepfakes and artificial intelligence
- To understand the knowledge and experience about cyber-attacks of children
- To study the understanding about parents how they deal with children using digital media.
- To understand the psychology of students and study the case study of children dealing deep fakes, artificial intelligence and their knowledge of media literacy.

4. Research Methodology:

A Questionnaire survey was conducted on 388 students studying in class 8th to class 10th between the age group 13 to 16 years. The research was conducted in the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra. Four cities Nagpur, Aurangabad, Wardha and Jalna from Tier II cities of Vidarbha region was selected. Two private schools were selected from each city. The reason behind selection of private school was as we can assume that children might come from decent economical background and were active on digital platforms. The questionnaire was administered to 50 students of class 8th to 10th from each school.

5. Data Analysis:

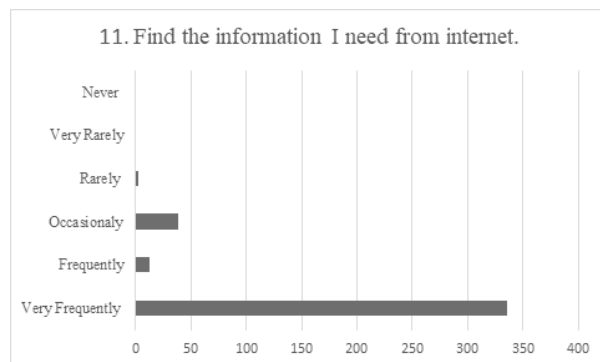
To understand the knowledge and awareness of the children regarding the fake news, misinformation and disinformation concepts, some direct questions were asked whether they know about fake news, deepfakes, ChatGPT, fake calls, digital arrest, fake profiles etc. Some questions were asked on Likert scale to understand the media literacy levels of the students. There were few open-ended questions to understand the level of media literacy among children.

Table: 5.1

Sl. No.	Questions based on media literacy	Yes	No
01	Do you know about fake news	324	64
02	Do you know about deepfakes?	249	139
03	Do you encounter deepfakes during using video games	267	121
04	Do you encounter deepfakes during using Study Material	158	230
05	Do you encounter deepfakes during using social media platforms	331	57
06	Have you or your family member or friends encountered Mobile/WhatsApp fake calls?	368	20
07	Have you or your family member experienced digital arrest?	34	354
08	Are you aware of behaviours that infringe copyright	123	265
09	Are you aware about Plagiarism	135	253
10	Are you aware of the IT Act 2000	112	276

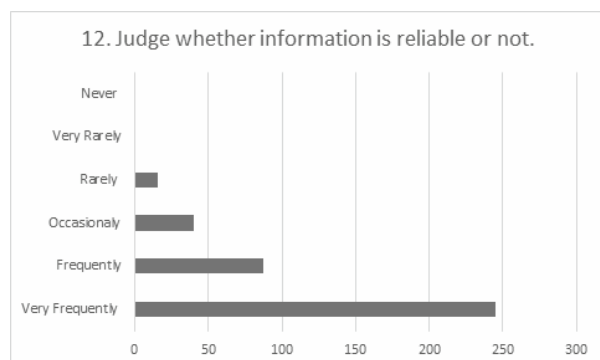
Table 5.1 illustrates the fact that out of 388 respondents 83 percentage of students knew about the fake news and almost 64 percentage of students knew about the concept of deepfakes. Almost 68 percentage of respondents confirmed that they encounter deepfakes during using videogames, while 40 percentage encounter deepfakes during using study material while 85 percentage encounter it while using social media. Almost 94 percentage of students confirmed related to their or their family member or friends encounter of mobile/WhatsApp fake calls. Almost 08 percent of the students, their family members or friends have also experienced the situations of digital arrest as well. Almost 31 percent of the respondents were aware about their behaviours that infringe copyright, while 34 percent were aware about plagiarism and only 28 percent of the respondents were aware of the IT Act 2000.

Graph: 5.1



According to graph 5.1 out of 388 respondents, 336 respondents confirmed that they very frequently visit for information from the internet, while 12 responded they frequently visit, while 38 responded they occasionally and 02 responded they rarely visit internet for the required information.

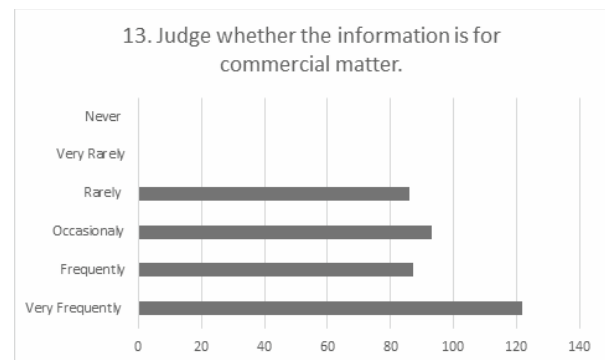
Graph: 5.2



Graph 5.2 analyses whether children are able to judge

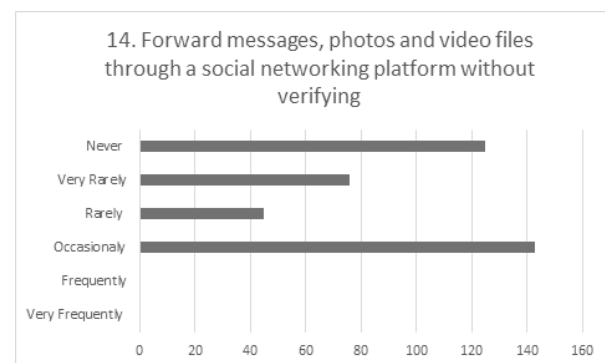
whether the information they get from internet is reliable or not. Out of 388 respondents, 245 children confirmed that they were able to very frequently judge, while 87 responded they frequently judge, while 40 responded they occasionally judge while 16 responded they were able to rarely judge the reliability of the information from the internet.

Graph: 5.3



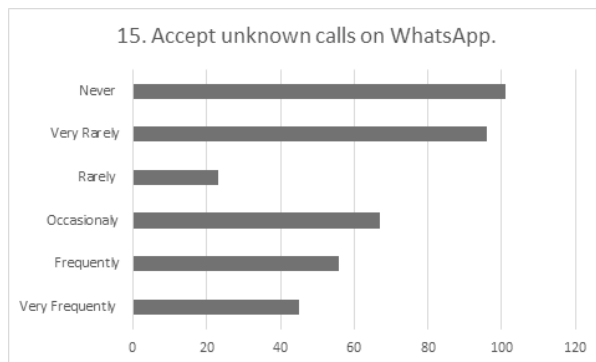
Graph 5.3 analyses whether children are able to judge whether the information they get from internet is for commercial matter or not. Out of 388 respondents, 122 children confirmed that they were able to very frequently judge, while 87 responded they frequently judge, while 93 responded they occasionally judge while 86 responded they were able to rarely judge the commercial value of the information from the internet.

Graph: 5.4



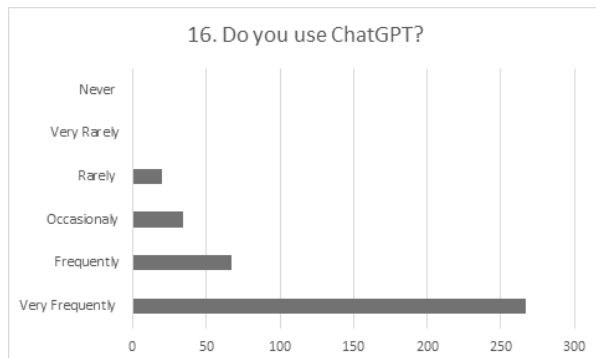
According to graph 5.4 out of 388 respondents, 125 respondents confirmed that they never forward messages, photos and video files through social networking platform without verifying. There were 76 respondents who confirmed they very rarely, while 45 confirmed they rarely while 143 respondents confirmed they occasionally forward messages, photos and videos through a social networking platform without verifying.

Graph: 5.5



Graph 5.5 tries to understand the reaction of children regarding unknown WhatsApp calls. Out of 388 respondents 101 children responded they would never attend the WhatsApp call, while 96 children responded they would very rarely attend, 23 children responded they would rarely, 67 children responded they would occasionally, 56 children responded they would frequently while 45 children responded they would very frequently accept the unknown WhatsApp calls.

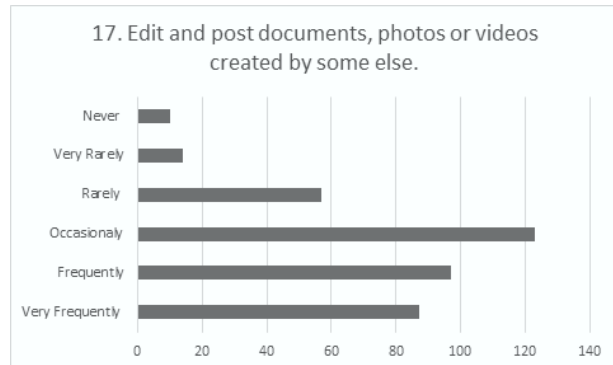
Graph: 5.6



Graph 5.6 tries to understand the frequency of the usage of ChatGPT by the students. Out of 388 respondents 267 students responded they very frequently used ChatGPT, 67 students responded they frequently, 34 students responded they occasionally, while 20 students rarely used ChatGPT.

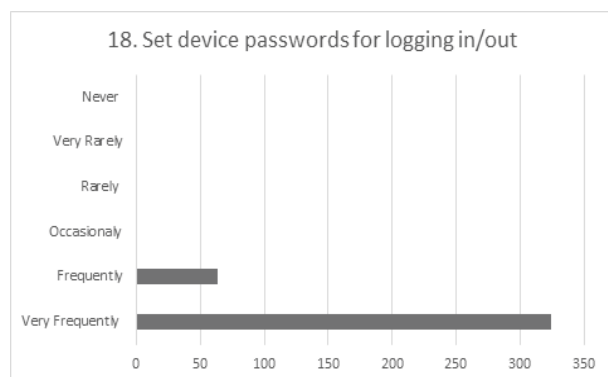
Graph 5.7

Graph 5.7 tries to understand the reaction of children regarding editing and posting documents, photos or videos created by someone else. Out of 388 respondents 87 children responded they would very frequently, while 97 responded they would frequently, 123 responded they would occasionally, 57 responded they would rarely, 14 children responded they would very rarely while 10 children responded they would never edit and post



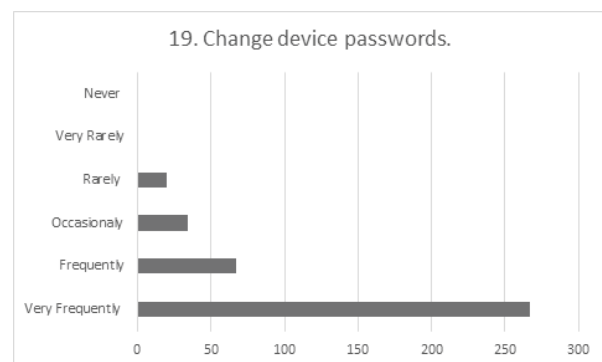
documents, photos or videos created by someone else.

Graph: 5.8



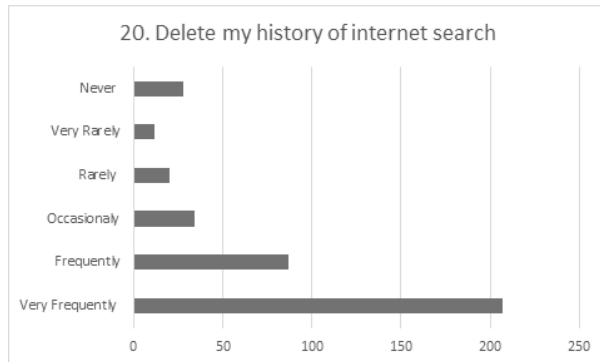
Graph 5.8 tries to understand how children are prompt in setting device passwords for logging in/out. Out of 388 respondents 324 respondents confirmed that they very frequently and 64 respondents confirmed that they frequently set device passwords for logging in/out.

Graph: 5.9



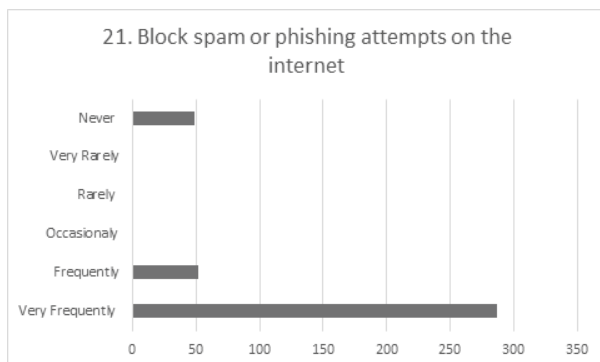
Graph 5.9 tries to understand how frequently students change the password of their device. Out of 388 respondents 267 respondents confirmed that they very frequently and 67 respondents confirmed that they frequently, 34 respondents confirmed they occasionally while 20 respondents confirmed they rarely changed the passwords of their device.

Graph: 5.10



According to graph 5.10, out of 388 respondents, 207 respondents confirmed that they very frequently deleted their history of internet search. There were 87 respondents who confirmed they frequently, while 34 occasionally, 20 respondents confirmed they rarely, 12 respondents confirmed rarely and 28 respondents confirmed they never deleted their history of internet search.

Graph: 5.11



Graph 5.11 tries to understand how frequently students block spam or phishing on the internet. Out of 388 respondents 287 respondents confirmed that they very frequently and 52 respondents confirmed that they frequently block spam or phishing on the internet. But there were 49 students who confirmed they never block spam or phishing on the internet.

The open-ended questions provided space to students to share their experiences related to disadvantages they encountered during using the social media. Most of the students agreed on the fact that the social media or the digital games is a big waste of time it is like a time killing drug. Few students shared their stories related to how they were innocently involved in the group chats of the Instagram and were later punished by their school administration. Students shared few cyber bullying events also when they were being humiliated by their classmates

for their snaps with their family. Some of the students mentioned about their stories of fake calls on WhatsApp and mobile phones. The fake WhatsApp call even produced the AI generated voice of their near and dear ones to convince them and take them in digital arrest. Children were also asked whom they approach to if they are involved in any cyber bully, cyber-attack situation. Children mostly replied they first discuss the situation with their friends, elder brother/ sister and then with their parents. Children are very much aware of the fake or AI generated photos and videos and thus they tend to question the reality of the content whenever they see any viral news. The concept of critical thinking is very much found in the students because they tend to enquire the originality of the content, if they find the fake profiles of their friends, fake phone calls, or even deep fake videos.

6. Findings and Conclusion:

It was observed during the field visits that the children were very frequently using the digital platforms for searching their required information. Children are also quite frequently using the digital games and the social media platforms. Thus, the children are quite exposed to the fake news, misinformation and deepfakes. Thus, it will be very important to understand whether they understand the basic concepts of being a media literate. Most of the students were aware of the fake news (83%), deepfakes (64%) and have encountered the deepfakes during using digital games (68%), social media (94%) or consulting for study materials (40%). This clearly ensures that children are quite exposed to the fake news and deepfakes. But considerably less percentage of students (31%) were aware of the behaviours that infringe copyright. Only 34 percentage of respondents were aware about plagiarism and only 28 percentage were aware about the IT Act 2000. Children were mostly successful in finding the reliable source for their required information and were mostly successful in judging the commercial value of the news. But the children are still occasionally and rarely forwarding messages, photos and video files through social media without verifying it. Children are quite frequent in receiving unknown calls from WhatsApp and other social media platforms. The messages, photos, videos, calls on social media is mostly free of cost and the children are tempted to attend to them. Children should be made aware that nothing on the digital platforms is free. In exchange of the messages, photos, videos, free calls or other services provided by the social media platforms, we tend to provide a large amount of data about our daily life. Every service provided on internet is based on a bargain. Children were quite frequent in using

ChatGPT but were quite unaware about plagiarism and copyright. They were quite frequently editing and posting documents, photos or videos created by someone else. Children were quite prompt in setting device password for logging in/out and changing device passwords quite often. Children were also prompt in deleting their history of internet searches and blocking spam and phishing attempts on the internet. It was found during the field visit that the parents were quite against the children for using social media or the digital games, so children were quite prompt in using password on their device or deleting their history of internet searches. Thus, the children are very much media literate as they are the experienced digital users but still, they lack on few aspects like they become the easy and vulnerable consumer of free digital services. They are aware of fake news, misinformation and deepfakes, thus they use the critical thinking skills when it comes to fake viral news related to their friends, classmates, family, Bollywood, politics, sports etc. Children are highly aware of the disadvantages of the digital media but still the media literacy education will enhance their ability of critical reasoning and understanding the basic construction of news/information, its marketing and how it is consumed by the users.

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Guerrilla Journalism in India: Evolution, Impact and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

Guerrilla journalism is a dynamic and unconventional form of reporting that operates outside the traditional boundaries of mainstream media. In India, this form of reporting has evolved significantly. The proliferation of social media and rise of citizen journalism makes this topic more pertinent for a subject of in-depth understanding. Rooted in the principles of independence, advocacy and social justice, guerrilla journalism in India has a history dating back to various social movements, political upheavals and struggles for rights and freedoms. From grassroots community radio initiatives, to independent online platforms and citizen journalism networks, guerrilla journalists in India have employed a diverse array of practices and strategies. This study attempts to analyse guerrilla journalism in India, exploring its evolution, impact and challenges. The methodology used in the study are case studies and personal observations in the backdrop of an extensive review of literature. By understanding the characteristics, practices and societal implications of guerrilla journalism in India, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of alternative media in India and its significance from a broader perspective on media landscape and democratic participation. Through meticulous examination of the evolution, societal impact and challenges, this study sheds light on the democratization of media, amplification of marginalized voices and the challenges that come along with it.

Keywords: Guerrilla Journalism, Reporting, Grassroots Journalism, Press Freedom, Citizen Journalism

1. Introduction

Guerrilla Journalism, a term borrowed from military tactics, has found its place in the realm of media and journalism. In the context of India, this form of reporting has evolved significantly, redefining the landscape of news dissemination.

Guerrilla journalism, characterized by its grassroots origins and alternative characteristics, has emerged significantly within the dynamic Indian media landscape. As a country of diverse cultures, languages and socio-political complexities, the mainstream media often struggles with the challenge of adequately representing the multitude of voices and perspectives of the society.

Rooted in the principles of independence, advocacy, and social justice, guerrilla journalism in India has a rich history dating back to various social movements, political upheavals and struggles for rights and freedoms. From grassroots community radio initiatives, to independent online platforms and citizen journalism networks, guerrilla journalists in India have employed a diverse array of practices and strategies to democratize the media landscape and empower marginalized voices.

Mahatma Gandhi wrote in *Young India* (1-12-1927),

“Democracy is an impossible thing until the power is shared by all.... Even a pariah, labourer, who makes it possible for you to earn your living, will have his share in self-governance.”

Guerrilla journalism though as a subset of citizen journalism contributes to a broader discourse, reflecting the intersection of grassroots activism with participatory media practices. Originating from debates on public involvement in journalism by Walter Lippman and John Dewey since 1920s, guerrilla journalism shows a shift as technology came into the hands of common man. Individuals outside traditional news organizations leveraged low-cost digital technologies to produce and disseminate news. These citizen journalists prioritize community-oriented narratives, advocacy and interpretive reporting over conventional objectivity and fact-based journalism raising concerns too. Both citizen journalism and guerrilla journalism fill the gaps of traditional media by addressing unmet community needs. Citizen journalism is into participatory, para-journalistic, watchdog and community-focused roles. Guerrilla journalism often become a more confrontational and takes an activist stance (Lindner, A. M., 2018).

While guerrilla journalism holds immense promise in

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diversifying media representation and promoting social change, it also faces certain challenges. Issues such as censorship, legal constraints, financial sustainability and questions regarding credibility often matter when it comes to the effectiveness of guerrilla journalism.

In the backdrop of rapid technological advancements and shifting media consumption patterns, the role of guerrilla journalism in India continues to evolve. Digital platforms and social media have provided new avenues for media pluralism (Reporters Sans Frontiers, 2016) and also for guerrilla journalists to reach wider audiences and bring into light grassroots issues. Also posed are new challenges in terms of information overload, algorithmic biases, misinformation or online harassment, which come along with it.

2. Review of Literature

By studying and analysing key historical events, social movements and technological developments in the previously available literature and findings, the aim is to shed light on the complex dynamics of alternative media in India and its significance for the broader discourse on media and democracy.

2.1 Definitions

Guerrilla journalism is a term used to describe the activities of journalists who step out of the traditional paths of journalism to do more than what journalism is expected to do for society (Angula, 2020).

Guerrilla journalism allows for the general public to see the news from a large variety of perspectives (Davis, 2020).

Guerrilla journalism as a counterpoint, offers an alternative for the marginalized, activists and citizen journalists to amplify their voices (Reynolds, 2006).

It is a form of citizen journalism, which is based upon public citizens "playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing, and disseminating news and information" (Wikipedia Contributors, 2019).

2.2 Historical Context

The roots of guerrilla journalism in India can be traced back to the country's rich history of social movements, political activism and struggles for independence. Throughout the colonial era, Indian nationalists and freedom fighters utilized alternative media channels such as pamphlets, underground newspapers and street theatre to mobilize public opinion and challenge British colonial rule. These early forms of guerrilla journalism played a crucial role in galvanizing support for the independence movement and fostering a sense of national identity among the Indian populace.

Following India's independence in 1947, the democracy met with the challenge of building a pluralistic media (Reporters Sans Frontiers, 2016) ecosystem that could adequately represent the diverse voices and perspectives within the country. While the Indian Constitution highlighted the freedom of speech and expression as a fundamental right, the mainstream media landscape remained largely dominated by a few powerful conglomerates, often reflecting the interests of the elite and political establishment.

In response to this perceived lack of diversity and representation, grassroots movements and social activists began to mobilize around the idea of alternative media, seeking to create platforms that could amplify the voices of marginalized and challenge existing power structures. The 1970s and 1980s witnessed the rise of alternative media initiatives such as community radio stations, independent newspapers and activist-led magazines, which played a crucial role in raising awareness about issues such as social justice, environmental conservation, human rights, etc.

In the 1980s, *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, then edited by Pritish Nandy, carried a cover story titled 'The Typewriter Guerrillas'. This evocative headline highlighted investigative journalists who fearlessly exposed corruption and political secrets (Rajagopal, 2024).

The liberalization of India's economy in the 1990s and the subsequent proliferation of digital technologies further accelerated the growth of guerrilla journalism in the country. The inception of the internet and social media platforms provided new avenues for citizen journalists, activists and independent media outlets, to bypass traditional gatekeepers and reach a global audience (Angula, 2020). Online platforms such as blogs, vlogs, podcasts and social networking sites empowered individuals to share their stories, mobilize support for social causes and hold those in the misuse of power accountable.

2.3 Characteristics and Practices

Guerrilla journalism is a dynamic and unconventional form of reporting that operates outside the traditional boundaries of mainstream media (Staff, 2014). Some key characteristics of guerrilla journalism are that it is often associated with citizen journalists, everyday individuals who take it upon themselves to report on newsworthy events. These citizen journalists use various platforms, including social media, blogs and independent websites to share information and perspectives (Davis, 2020). Unlike mainstream media, which may prioritize certain stories, guerrilla journalism focuses on underreported or

neglected topics. Guerrilla journalists operate independently, free from corporate or political influence. They have the agility to respond quickly to unfolding events, providing real-time updates and alternative viewpoints. While guerrilla journalism empowers marginalized voices, it also faces challenges like quality control, accuracy and ethical considerations can be contentious issues. Some guerrilla journalism may spread misinformation or lack rigorous fact-checking. Guerrilla journalism has influenced public discourse, especially during social movements, protests and crises. It amplifies diverse perspectives and challenges dominant narratives.

2.4 Background and Significance

In January 2025, the case of journalist Mukesh Chandrakar found prominence specially on social media. The journalist who exposed road scam in Chhattisgarh was found dead in a septic tank at the contractor's premise in a mysterious condition. Mukesh with 10 years of experience in journalism was a stringer with a leading national news network and an independent journalist managing a YouTube channel, Bastar Junction. In 2021 he also was also instrumental in facilitating the release of CRPF jawans taken captive by the Maoists. The state police acknowledged Mukesh's role as highly significant. Mukesh extensively covered various concerns impacting Bastar (Kamble, 2025).

This study holds significance in terms of contributing towards the understanding of the functional aspects of guerrilla journalism in India, strengthening the theoretical foundation of journalism studies by highlighting the functional aspects and shedding light on of the evolving dynamics of media, communication and society in contemporary India.

In the light of the functional aspects and significance of guerrilla journalism in India, it leads to the following research questions:

1. What have been the factors that contributed to the emergence of guerrilla journalism in India?
2. How has guerrilla journalism in India evolved over the time with the changing socio-political environment and technological shifts in the country?
3. What have been the impact, challenges and controversies around guerrilla journalism in India?
4. How can the understanding of guerrilla journalism in India contribute towards effectiveness, sustainability and meaningful media democratization and social change?

The outcome will provide in-depth insights to media practitioners, policymakers and academicians.

3. Research Objectives

1. To examine the historical background of guerrilla journalism.
2. To identify and analyse the various factors that have contributed to the emergence of guerrilla journalism in India.
3. To analyse the impact, challenges, and controversies around guerrilla journalism in India.
4. To find out if the derived insights of guerrilla journalism in India can help contribute towards effectiveness, sustainability and meaningful media democratization and social change.

4. Research Methodology

Extensive reviews of literature, case studies and personal observation methods have been used in this study. A qualitative functional and content analysis method has been used in the triangulation and interpretation to derive the outcome of the study. Themes were developed by using reflexive thematic analysis based on subjective interpretations of the relevant literature and case studies.

Steps involved, a thorough review of literature to establish the background and framework for the study. It also helped in tracing the evolution of guerrilla journalism in India. Ten prominent cases which made headlines were picked from the internet, studied and analysed for findings. Also seven cases were shortlisted as personal observations, and findings stated based on the interpretation. Triangulating the findings lead to the formation of themes and outcome.

5. Data Analysis

5.1 Case Studies

In recent years, guerrilla journalism in India has gained increasing prominence as a vital force for social change and democratic engagement. Following are some of the prominent cases studied and analysed.

1. Cobrapost is an independent news portal that conducts undercover sting operations like 'Operation Duryodhana'. They have exposed corruption, money laundering, and other illegal activities involving politicians, celebrities, and business figures. Their work has been controversial and has faced legal challenges.
2. In 2001, the investigative news magazine Tehelka conducted a sting operation known as 'Operation West End'. They exposed corruption within the Indian defense establishment by capturing politicians and military officials accepting bribes on hidden cameras. The scandal led to the resignation of the then Defense

Minister, George Fernandes, and other officials (Wikipedia, 2023).

3. In November 2010, Open magazine published transcripts of phone discussions involving Nira Radia, who served as both a political lobbyist and a public relations figure, conversing with politicians, industrialists, corporate officers and senior journalists. These recordings obtained through wiretaps conducted by the Income Tax department based on a tip from the Central Board of Direct Taxes, exposed the clandestine dealings occurring at the upper power holders in the nation (Pal, 2017).
4. P. Sainath, a veteran journalist, is known for his extensive reporting on rural India. His work focuses on agrarian issues, poverty, and social justice. His reporting has shed light on the struggles faced by marginalized communities.
5. Kundan Srivastava is an investigative journalist who has exposed corruption, human trafficking, and other social issues. His work often involves undercover reporting and confronting powerful individuals. He has faced threats and attacks due to his fearless reporting (D. C. Correspondent, 2019).
6. Rachna Khaira in her investigation for The Caravan discovered that Truecaller's popularity in India could be attributed to the insufficient privacy regulations in the country. So anyone who wants to use Truecaller would by default give access to the app to their complete phone contact list, resulting in Truecaller's database to include users who neither signed up nor agreed to have their numbers, details or metadata shared (Tiwari, 2022).
7. During the farmers' protest in January 2021 against agricultural reforms, journalists covering the demonstrations faced repression and violence. Mandeep Punia, a freelance journalist, was detained and arrested at the Singhu border. Dharmender Singh of Online News India also faced detention at the same protest site (George & Inamdar, 2021).
8. Gauri Lankesh, a prominent journalist and editor, was known for her strong views and criticism of right-wing extremism. She was assassinated in 2017 outside her home in Bengaluru. Her murder highlighted the risks faced by journalists who challenge powerful interests.
9. In 2021, reporters from the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) exposed that India's domestic spy agency purchased hardware matching Pegasus spyware specifications from the Israeli NSO Group. This investigation raised concerns about surveillance and privacy.
10. Land acquisition issues in Chhattisgarh, extensively reported by platforms like Scroll.in and The Wire, highlight the exploitation of tribal and marginalized communities for industrial and mining projects. These acquisitions often violate the Forest Rights Act (FRA), displacing indigenous families without proper consent or compensation.

Analysis

Table 1: Analysis of the Cases

	Case	Details	Tactics	Impact	Result/ Drawbacks
1	Cobrapost Investigations	Undercover stings exposed corruption, money laundering, and unethical practices involving politicians and business figures	Hidden cameras, undercover reporting	Public exposure of systemic corruption; sparked legal and political debates	Faced legal challenges; credibility questioned by critics
2	Tehelka's Operation West End (2001)	Exposed bribery in defence procurement involving politicians and military officials	Hidden cameras, sting operation	High-profile resignations; prompted discussions on transparency in defence deals	Journalists faced lawsuits; allegations of sensationalism
3	Nira Radia Tapes Scandal (2010)	Published transcripts of lobbyist Nira Radia's conversations with power players, exposing collusion among politicians, industrialists and journalists	Leak of wiretapped data	Highlighted unethical power dynamics; raised awareness of media-politics-business nexus	Criticized for breach of privacy; controversy around that it lacked strong legal action against those exposed

4	P. Sainath's Rural Journalism	Chronicled the struggles of rural and marginalized communities, focusing on agrarian distress and poverty	Grassroots-level reporting, direct engagement	Brought neglected rural issues into mainstream discourse; inspired grassroots journalism	Not undercover; impact limited to awareness rather than direct policy action
5	Kundan Srivastava's Investigations	Exposed corruption, human trafficking, and social injustices through undercover reporting	Hidden cameras, direct confrontation	Sparked action against trafficking networks; raised awareness of human rights violations	Faced personal threats and attacks; limited institutional support
6	Rachna Khaira's Truecaller Investigation	Revealed privacy violations in Truecaller's database due to insufficient regulations, exposing risks to user data	Data analysis, investigative reporting	Highlighted gaps in India's privacy laws; initiated public debate on data protection.	Privacy issues exposed without immediate policy action or regulatory overhaul. CCI dismissed the complain
7	Farmers' Protest Coverage (2021)	Documented repression and violence during farmers' protests against agricultural reforms	On-ground reporting, interviews	Amplified farmers' voices; highlighted police aggression and countered biased mainstream narratives	Journalists (like Sandeep Punia & Dharmender Singh) faced arrests, violence and threats; some coverage dismissed as biased
8	Gauri Lankesh's Work	Critiqued right-wing extremism and reported on political and social injustices; assassinated for her views	Editorials, activism	Sparked global outrage over journalist safety; inspired calls for press freedom and justice	Her murder underscored the risks faced by journalists challenging entrenched powers
9	Pegasus Spyware Investigation (2021)	Exposed India's intelligence agency acquiring spyware, raising concerns about surveillance and privacy rights	Document analysis, international collaboration	Publicized concerns about mass surveillance; added scrutiny to government practices	Lack of immediate transparency or confirmation from the government
10	Land Acquisition in Chhattisgarh	Highlighted exploitation of tribal communities for mining projects, violating forest and land rights	Grassroots reporting, policy analysis	Brought tribal rights violations into focus; grassroots resistance movements	Little direct policy change; no change observed in corporate and state interests

Findings

The findings from each of the cases in Table 1 highlights:

- Innovative Tactics: Undercover stings, wiretaps, and ground-level reporting.
- Challenging Power: Investigations targeted corrupt institutions, powerful individuals, or systemic failures.
- High Risk Challenges: Journalists faced legal, physical and reputational risks, reinforcing the importance of their work.

Analysis

5.2 Personal Observation

Following cases of personal observation were selected for study:

1. Anna Hazare Movement (Jantar Mantar)
2. Demonitization
3. Third Gender Protests/Movement (Jantar Mantar)
4. Farmers Protest
5. Covid-19
6. Shaheen Bagh Protests (CAA)
7. Sonam Wanchuk Hunger Strike

Table 2: Analysis of Personal Observation Cases

	Case	In-Real Life Observations	Social Media Reports (Citizen Journalism)	Reports of Independent Journalists (Online)	Comparison of Online Alternate & Mainstream News Portals
1	Anna Hazare Movement (Jantar Mantar)	Peaceful protests with significant youth participation. Slogans and speeches highlighted anti-corruption demands. Activism boosted by social media	Citizen journalism/ coverage on Facebook and Twitter; viral videos of speeches and protests	Alternative journalists critiqued corporate-political nexus fueling corruption	Mainstream portals focused on Anna Hazare as the face of the movement. Alternate portals analyzed systemic issues beyond just the Lokpal demand like ineffective governance, political-corporate nexus, judicial backlog, electoral funding opacity
2	Demonetization	Long queues outside banks and ATMs; frustrated people due to cash unavailability. Mixed public opinion on the decision and confusion	Citizen journalism on social media with real-time updates on long queues, cash shortages, hardships. Stories of weddings and farmers suffering due to cash crunch	Highlighted the implementation gaps and its disproportionate impact on marginalized sections. Questioned claims of curbing black money	Mainstream portals initially praised the decision but later reported implementation issues. Alternative portals emphasized the human cost and questioned its long-term benefits
3	Third Gender Protests/Movement (Jantar Mantar)	Strong presence of the LGBTQIA+ community and allies. Demands for legal rights, societal acceptance and policy reforms, propagated awareness, advocacy and activism	Citizen journalism on social media covering live stories	Focused on structural discrimination, financial disparity, lack of healthcare access and employment opportunities for third genders	Mainstream portals covered surface-level protest details. Alternate platforms provided deeper insights into lived experiences of the community and systemic issues

4	Farmers Protest	Massive turnout of farmers; display of regional culture - langar, songs, etc. Display of demands against farm laws and lack of trust in government policies, propagation of activism through citizen journalism	Citizen journalism and spread of information. Live broadcast on social media	Independent platforms focused on economic and policy implications of farm laws and narratives of affected farmers	Mainstream outlets often highlighted government statements than farmers' grievances. Alternate media emphasized farmers' perspectives and gave voice to dissenting views
5	Covid-19	Panic buying, deserted streets during lockdowns. Emotional toll on frontline workers. Shortage of oxygen, inequities in vaccine access, confusion and chaos, much mobilization due to citizen journalism	Heavy citizen journalism, DIY like masks, home remedies, indigenous medicines, citizen initiatives, warriors and heroes. Viral stories of migrant workers, distress, fake news, misleading information	Journalists covered the healthcare system's collapse, migrant worker crisis, distress and data manipulation by authorities	Mainstream portals often amplified government efforts and vaccination drives. Alternate media critiqued mishandling, delays, lack of transparency
6	Shaheen Bagh Protests (CAA)	Women-led sit-in protest with strong community support; display of art, songs, speeches against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). Citizen journalism boosted activism, advocacy, also in other cities	Heavy citizen journalism. Live social media broadcasts, viral stories, opinions, fake and misleading information also	Focused on constitutional concerns, the secular ethos of the protest, narratives of communal harmony	Mainstream portals often displayed polarized opinions. Alternate media provided nuanced insights into constitutional debates and human stories
7	Sonam Wangchuk Hunger Strike	Emphasis on climate action and sustainable development for Ladakh. Hunger strike drew support from environmental activists. Citizen journalism helped in the propagation of information	Citizen journalism showcased Wangchuk's peaceful strike and called for solidarity, his fasting and condition, other participants voices	Covered the ecological threats posed to Ladakh and Wangchuk's sustainable development model	Mainstream media provided limited coverage, focusing more on his persona. Alternate platforms amplified climate action calls and critiqued policy negligence towards Ladakh's environment

Findings

The findings from each of the cases in Table 2 highlight:

- Citizen Journalism and independent journalists' ground reports
- Citizen journalism spreading awareness and adding to/ boosting activism
- Covers uncovered or less covered issues & grassroots
- Contribution: Tool for social change, democratization, activism
- Drawbacks: at times unreasonable creating confusion, fake news, mislead information
- Lack of in-depth analysis and ground reporting by mainstream media

5.3 Themes Derived

On the basis of study of the above selected cases, review of literature and personal observations following themes were derived:

Grassroots Empowerment Guerrilla journalism in India often emerges from the grassroots, driven by individuals and communities seeking to address social injustices and amplify their voices.

Independence and Autonomy Unlike mainstream media outlets that may be influenced by commercial interests or political agendas, guerrilla journalism in India typically operates independently, free from external pressures.

Advocacy and Activism Guerrilla journalism in India often serves as a platform for advocacy and activism, to promote social justice causes, human rights campaigns and grassroots movements.

Innovative Storytelling Guerrilla journalists in India employ innovative storytelling techniques to engage audiences and challenge conventional narrative structures. They may utilize multimedia formats such as video documentaries, photo essays, podcasts and web platforms to convey their messages and reach wider audiences.

Citizen Participation Citizen journalism plays a significant role in guerrilla journalism initiatives, with ordinary individuals contributing first-hand accounts, eyewitness testimonies, and alternative perspectives on news events. Digital technologies and social media platforms have enabled citizen journalists to report on local issues, share information in real-time and bypass traditional gatekeepers.

Community Engagement Guerrilla journalism in India often prioritizes community engagement and participation, fostering dialogues, and collaborations

between journalists, activists, and community members.

Digital Connectivity Social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube provide guerrilla journalists with powerful tools for reaching wider audiences, mobilizing support and organizing campaigns.

Resistance and Resilience Guerrilla journalism in India often operates in challenging and hostile environments, facing censorship, legal threats and harassment from powerful interests.

Exposing Social Injustices Guerrilla journalists in India often focus their efforts on exposing social injustices, including caste-based discrimination, gender inequality, environmental degradation and human rights abuses through investigative reporting, documentary filmmaking and citizen journalism initiatives.

Fostering Civic Engagement By providing alternative sources of information and facilitating public dialogue, guerrilla journalism empowers individuals to make informed decisions, engage in political activism and contribute to social movements.

Holding Power Accountable Through investigative reporting, whistleblowing and advocacy journalism, guerrilla journalists expose corruption, abuse of power and violations of human rights, often leading to tangible reforms and accountability measures.

Bridging Divides Guerrilla journalism initiatives bridge geographic, linguistic, and cultural divides, fostering solidarity and collaboration among diverse communities across India.

Inspiring Social Movements Guerrilla journalism has played a pivotal role in inspiring and mobilizing social movements and grassroots campaigns across India. From the Narmada Bachao Andolan to the anti-corruption protests led by Anna Hazare, guerrilla journalists have documented and amplified the voices of activists, organizers and ordinary citizens striving for social justice and change.

Influencing Policy and Discourse Guerrilla journalism initiatives contribute to shaping public policy debates and influencing government decision-making processes in India.

Outcome

Guerrilla journalism in India has had a profound impact on shaping public discourse, challenging dominant narratives, and promoting social change across various spheres of society. Its influence extends beyond traditional media channels, empowering marginalized communities,

fostering civic engagement, and holding those in power accountable.

Technology plays a pivotal role in shaping the landscape of guerrilla journalism in India, enabling greater connectivity, collaboration, and dissemination of information (Dupén, 2018). From digital platforms to mobile devices, technological advancements have revolutionized the way guerrilla journalists gather, produce and distribute news, empowering them to challenge dominant narratives and amplify marginalized voices (Davis, 2020), evidently seen on social media.

Despite its significant contributions to media pluralism and social justice, guerrilla journalism in India continues to face numerous challenges. These challenges stem from a combination of structural, institutional, and socio-political factors (Crichton et al., n.d.). Pressures such as censorship, legal constraints, financial sustainability and questions regarding credibility often pose significant barriers to the effectiveness and viability of guerrilla journalism initiatives. The rise of misinformation, online harassment and algorithmic biases present new challenges for guerrilla journalists navigating the digital landscape.

6. Result and Discussion

Guerrilla journalism in India dates back to the history from Gandhian times and is characterized by its grassroots empowerment, independence, advocacy, innovative storytelling, citizen participation, community engagement, digital connectivity and resilience. Training in these aspects falls as a prerequisite (van der Kaa, 2013). By adopting these characteristics and practices, guerrilla journalists can contribute to the diversification of media representation, the amplification of marginalized voices and the advancement of social justice in Indian society.

Guerrilla journalism in India faces numerous challenges and limitations, including censorship and legal constraints, financial sustainability, security risks and harassment, credibility and ethical concerns, limited reach and influence, fragmentation and infighting and the digital divide. Addressing these challenges requires concerted efforts from journalists, media organizations, civil society groups and policymakers to safeguard freedom of expression, support independent media initiatives and promote a vibrant and pluralistic media landscape in India.

By leveraging digital platforms, mobile technology, open-source tools, data journalism techniques, collaborative networks, digital security measures and audience engagement strategies, guerrilla journalists can definitely

play a role in to democratize the media landscape and elevate social change in India.

7. Conclusion

In a country as big as India, there are several issues and matter which needs to be addressed, mainstream media is not just enough and capable to cover the entire region with smallest of the details. This is where citizen journalism and guerrilla journalism finds its place. Guerrilla journalism in India represents a wide and dynamic force for media pluralism, social justice and democratic engagement. Through grassroots empowerment, innovative storytelling and digital representation, guerrilla journalists try to present a contrast against dominant narratives, also present the voices of the marginalized and project civic participation across diverse communities and issues. As technology continues to evolve and certain societal challenges persist, the role of guerrilla journalism in India remains crucial than ever. Also there has to be a balance in the media ownership interest and public responsibility (Patricia, 2024).

Challenges and controversies around guerrilla journalism in India are definitely faced by the practitioners of guerrilla journalism. But the issues related to credibility, reliability, misinformation and ethical considerations cannot be ignored. Also regulations regarding the same is a challenge towards its misuse in terms of misleading content, fake news and propaganda. Assurance of fair practice and reception of guerrilla journalism needs to be addressed and there is a future scope for its study.

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Navigating Trolling: Public Opinion and Student Engagement in WhatsApp Groups

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ABSTRACT

This research analyzes the trolling phenomenon that a student uses to shape peer public opinion in official and unofficial WhatsApp groups. WhatsApp has become a major communication channel in educational contexts, and therefore group interaction dynamics can be important, especially trolling behavior. Based on the uses and gratifications theory (U&G), Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), and the social influence theory (SIT), this paper proposes an integrated research model to understand the instances of trolling and opinion-shaping of the public due to trolling. A pilot study refers to the event of trolling by the student with peers and is found to be immaculate enough to proceed with further research. Through both quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, this study employs a mixed-methods approach to assess the impact of trolling on discourse and opinion formation in these environments. Preliminary analysis indicates that trolling can act as a trigger event, both engaging and impeding discussion, leading to poor quality information diffusion. This study also investigates how these interactions affect identity and community development in academic contexts. By elucidating the complex role of trolling in fostering both connection and conflict, this research enhances the understanding of digital communication's impact and dynamics on contemporary education and student engagement.

Keywords: Trolling, Communication, Public, Opinion, Whatsapp Groups, Influence, Interaction

1. Introduction

The phenomenon of trolling has risen to become one of the commonly accepted wrongdoings, especially because most academic-related mobile phone use involves WhatsApp group communication. This research aims to establish the effects of trolling on the construction of peer public opinion among the faculty list and the student-only groups in the formal groups. First of all, one should determine what role rotational movement plays in the academic context, as nowadays more and more schools turn to 'new media forms' that involve daily interactions.

In other words, this is a change in communication patterns and it's now part of a social network that is vital in many sectors including education. Interaction has been crucial for students, especially for those, who live in different cities and countries, which underlines the importance of understanding how these platforms shape the opinions and communication of students. Trolling is a way in which one disrupts the subject in discussion, and participates in an online dialogue designed specifically to challenge the active manner of many communities (Paakki et al., 2021).

The consequences of trolling entail the destruction of communicating, conveying, and elaboration of frustration; as well as the development of polarization in the community (Keller & Askanius, 2020). There is a need for future studies of the influence of trolling on disclosure and opinion-building processes in learning settings using targets emotional experiences (Kluck, J. P., & Krämer, N. C. (2022). This study will delve into four key areas: From the previous chapter, key research areas include: (I) online communication and social media interaction patterns, (II) identity and community constructionism within education, (III) trolling impacts on the conversation and information sharing, and (IV) possible approaches to control/prevent trolling. The importance of perceived communication in the framework of online communication and social media is highlighted by the fact that this sort of communication is multifaceted (Grabner-Kräuter, S., & Bitter, S. (2013). Concerning social media, the application of social media in the field of education mainly for discussion forums, group conversations and sites, and networks has been studied a lot (Hung & Yuen, 2010). These platforms offer

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ways of sharing and exchanging knowledge that is unrepeatable but poses some threats as well: the problem of overabundance of information, the problem of false information, and the problem of trolling (Zukerfeld, 2021). It is for this reason that it is crucial to gain an understanding of the processes of communication that influence opinions within education systems.

The identity and community concept within educational environments is connected with the potential of social media to establish a coherent organism based on belonging, collaboration, and knowledge-sharing opportunities (Brown, 2021). Though students may form groups or specific channels in WhatsApp for academic and educational understanding, these social media platforms are spaces for individual and collective becoming, personality shaping, or personal-social identity development (Karakaya, 2020). More attention needs to be paid to the contribution of trolling to the overall formation of the notion of community and the quality of interaction within these spheres.

There is literature reviewing the effects of trolling on the interaction and sharing of information in online communities (Rainie, 2022). Such negative behaviors increase tensions and interfere with knowledge sharing, making the process result in a polarization of arguments, fake news, and an adverse atmosphere for learning and interactions (OSMUNDSEN et al., 2021). Furthermore, studies reveal that trolls use social media platforms particularly, popular within educational contexts, meaning a need to study these behaviors from an educational perspective. Corresponding to the negative nature of trolling, an increasing number of studies have addressed potential measures against these behaviors, including educational programs, moderation, as well as counter-trolling (Biddle et al., 2024). Whether these measures prove helpful remains uncertain, however, the findings can help shed some light on possibly efficient methods of reducing the effects of trolling in schools.

Therefore, the current study seeks to establish the relationship between the various patterns of trolling experienced in the current educational WhatsApp groups, the effect that it has on the opinion of the people, and the developmental effects that it has on the identity and community. Thus, the employment of quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments raises the prospect of providing a more comprehensive insight into the trajectory of trolling to configure student interaction and opinion-making processes in education.

2. Literature Review

Trolling in guiding public opinion has emerged as a

popular field of investigation because interaction and communication through the internet and social networks are part of everyday life now. Given the background of this study, the findings that involve the use of unofficial and official WhatsApp groups among students underlines the necessity to analyse the role that trolls play during the communication.

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The impacts of trolling in information sharing and discussions have been discussed in several research papers. Trolling contributes to the escalation of such conflict, polarization and spread of what Tucker et al., 2018 refer to as fake news. Additionally, such an impact can also hinder learning facilities which make it a captivating issue in educational institutions (Almaiah et al., 2020).

One of the focuses of social media research that has recently received rising attention is identity and community construction. In learning environment approaches, the affordance of social media can foster feeling of belonging; collaborative learning and knowledge construction (Rambe 2012). Such a process influences not only the self-identity and social identity in the process of their construction (Berzonsky, 2011). According to Golf Papez, M. (2018) the analysis of trolling in those contexts might help to better understand the effects of the non-face-to-face communication in educational settings.

Studies revealed in the course of this review suggest that trolls' actions in WhatsApp groups affect the nature of communication in the group as well as the community at large with likely adverse impact on public sentiment. Consequently, learning about how the tackling, specifically the detrimental consequences of these types of behaviours is relevant to complete understanding of how to handle and mitigate the negative consequences that result in the students and encourage healthier attitude towards learning.

As a result, there is the necessity to have the conceptual approaches for handling the behaviour, its recognition, regulation as well as its rebuttal (Cruz et al., 2017).

Although they have not shown their efficiency yet, these measures offer promising ideas about how to combat trolling in educational settings (Neumann, 2013).

3. Theoretical framework

Using Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) (Zhang, Y. B., & Giles, H. 2018), it is argued that people react to the trolls and the prevailing group dynamics in the WhatsApp groups either converging or diverging to the trolls. Therefore, CAT helps to reveal how people of these groups can navigate language use in ID formation and how communication might change because of trolls.

So, this study, as the merger of SIT, Uses and Gratifications Theory, and CAT will contribute to a systematic understanding of the impacts of the trolls on the students' actions, involvement, and identification within the groups of WhatsApp. This could also be useful for educators and administrators to address trolls or to teach your students good online communication practices.

Taking these three theories into account, the research interests are centered around the role of trolling on the changes occurring to the group dynamics and the development of in-group and out-group dynamics as well as the changes in the mode and method of using the WhatsApp platform. Finally, CAT is crucial for understanding the particular changes individuals make in their communication behavior in response to their conversation partners (Zhang, Y. B., & Giles, H. 2018). CAT offers an understanding of how students change their communication patterns when facing trolling, and the consequences of this phenomenon for developing group interaction and discussions.

Together, these theories give the solid groundwork to explain the complexity of the phenomenon of trolling in the context of the educational setting and each has its particular analysis. Using SIT, it is possible to determine the impact of trolling on the identity of the group; when employing the Uses and Gratifications Theory, the students are motivated and engaged in such interactions; and finally, with CAT, the insights into the communication adaptations of the group will be obtained. This convergence of theories is consistent with the research goals of exploring identity and community formation and the effect of trolling on opinion-making and interactions within a group (Pansanella, 2024).

4. Methodology:

This study employed a survey methodology to explore the instances and effects of Trolling in WhatsApp Groups. The primary data collection technique employed in the current study was the use of online questionnaires developed

through Google Forms consisting of a series of prestructured questions. Non-probability sampling was adopted since not all students from the university may be part of the WhatsApp groups or have equal chances of being included, the sampling technique is not random.

A five-point Likert scale was specifically selected to ensure a broader range of attitudes and level of effect on respondents could be represented, offering respondents ample options to convey their views accurately. Questions to ask covered demographic information, the frequency and varieties of trolling, and the individual psychological and behavioral effects it produced.

Moreover, the survey questioned the participants regarding the regularity and impact of trolling on individual/peer thinking and the possible benefits. To collect essential information, a questionnaire containing demographic information, how often one is trolled, and the kinds of trolls experienced was conducted among a population from academia, respondents were graduate, postgraduate and Ph.D. scholars from different disciplines and departments of a state university. A total of 143 responses were collected within a period of 15 days. To measure the variables of the study, participants reported their perceptions of trolling frequency, peers and self-opinion infiltration, and any beneficial effects. This methodological approach was designed with the intention of mapping interactions between trolls and their targets at the micro-level.

Ethical considerations would reasonably and respectfully allow research to be conducted to reduce the likelihood of any ethical problem occurring. Here are some of the key considerations taken before the survey, including Informed consent, Confidentiality, Data Protection, Minimization of harm, Transparency, and reporting. To fulfill these measures a description of the trolling was given before questions. A confidentiality notice and trigger warning were supplied before questions. Respondents were suggested to take rest or leave upon any kind of distress and seek help from trusted individuals. Contact info was given for any kind of query or suggestions regarding the warning.

5. Analysis and results:

5.1 Demographic Analysis:

This study aimed to explore the role of trolling in shaping public opinion: A Study of Official and Unofficial WhatsApp Groups Among Students. Data was analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics, employing a random sampling technique that collected data from 143 students. The demographic profile of the participants is as follows:

Among the respondents, 41.3% (n = 59) were male, while 58.7% (n = 84) were female. The majority of participants (63.8%, n = 90) fell within the age group of 18-24 years, followed by 28.4% (n = 40) in the 25-30 age group, and 9.1% (n = 13) aged 31 years and older.

In terms of educational qualifications, a significant portion of participants reported being undergraduate students (69.9%, n = 100), while 28.7% (n = 41) were postgraduate students, and a small percentage (1.4%, n = 2) were PhD students. Table no. 1 provides a detailed breakdown of the demographic profile.

Table 1. Respondent demographics (N=143)

Demographic Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age Group (18-24)	90	63.8
Age Group (25-30)	40	28.4
Age Group (31+)	13	9.1
Gender (Male)	59	41.3
Gender (Female)	84	58.7
Academic Background		
Undergraduate	100	69.9
Postgraduate	41	28.7
PhD Students	2	1.4

5.2 Descriptive Analysis:

The descriptive analysis summarises participants survey responses, highlighting major patterns and notable differences in their opinions. The dataset, comprising responses from 143 individuals, includes various questions covering demographic information, the frequency and varieties of trolling, content of trolling messages, and the individual psychological and behavioral effects it produced. A summary of the results for these questions is presented.

5.2.1 Prevalence of Trolling

The pie chart in figure 1., shows the responses to the statement, "In your opinion, is trolling more prevalent in academic or non-academic WhatsApp groups?" Among 143 participants, 79% of the respondents acknowledged the experiences of trolling in unofficial groups while 21% in official groups and everyone whom experienced trolling in official group has seen trolling in unofficial group too.

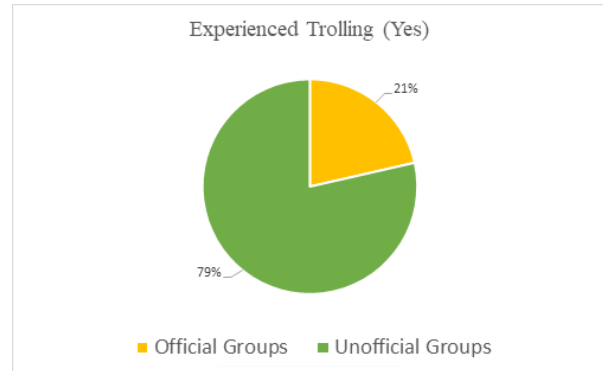


Figure 1. In your opinion, is trolling more prevalent in academic or non-academic WhatsApp groups?

5.2.2 Impact on Public Opinion

Correlation Analysis: Use correlation coefficients to show the relationship between trolling and opinion polarization. The correlation coefficient was a negative 0.65 at a significance level of $p < 0.01$.

This suggests that trolling experiences have a negative but moderate correlation with cohesive public opinion formation.

5.2.3 Emotional Impact Analysis

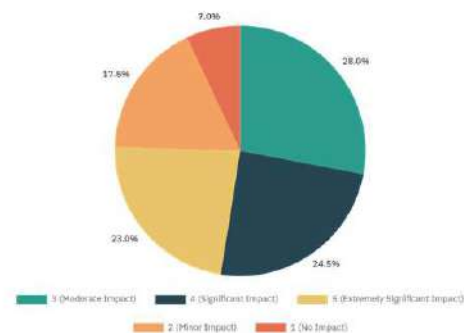


Figure 2. Overall, how would you rate the impact of trolling on your emotional well-being?

A total of 143 respondents participated in this question. The majority of participants rated the impact of trolling as either moderate (3), significant (4), or extremely significant (5), indicating that trolling has a noticeable effect on their emotional well-being: Combined, these ratings account for 75.5% of respondents. 28% of respondents had moderate impact on their emotional well-being, while 24.5% had significant impact and 23.0% extremely significant impact. Roughly 7.0% of the participant do not acknowledge any kind of impact.

5.2.4 Sentiment Analysis

Analysed responses regarding emotional impacts using a Likert scale on a scale of 1 to 5.

Table 2. What emotional impact did you experience as a result of trolling?

Emotional Response	Mean Score (SD)
Frustration	4.2 (0.8)
Disengagement	3.9 (1.0)
Awareness	3.5 (1.2)

Analysis reveals that the response of frustration received a mean of 4.2 and low SD count suggesting that respondents have agreed that trolling is frustrating. Participants moderately disengage due to trolling which can be confirmed from the mean score of 3.9 out of 5 on disengagement. Overall, responses indicate slightly more variation than for frustration with a standard deviation of 1%. Based on the analysis, mean awareness is 3.5. Awareness levels differ a great deal with a standard deviation of 1.2.

5.2.5 Information Dissemination Quality:

Content Analysis: It categorizes types of information experienced because of trolling.

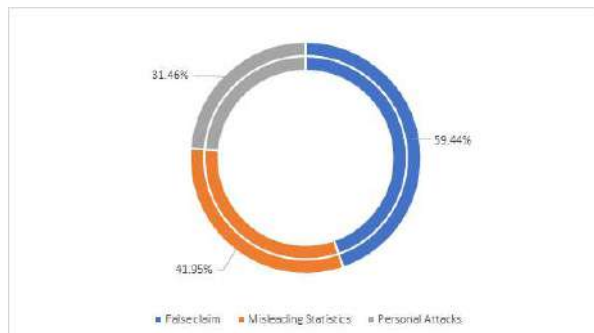


Figure 3. What type of trolling have you experienced or witnessed in academic and non-academic WhatsApp Group.

The analysis showed that, in the WhatsApp groups, 59.44% of the participants from 143, observed false information, 41.95% of the content includes misleading statistical data, and 31.46% of the content is an attempt of attack on individual's character/personality. The results stress the necessity of fighting against fake news and the more general necessity of developing healthy internet use programmes and campaigns.

5.2.6 Proportion of Participants Leaving Groups

To understand the impact of trolling on group retention, the respondent's data shows participants who left groups due to trolling:

Official Groups: 16 participants

Unofficial Groups: 88 participants

Proportion Leaving Official Groups:

Proportion^{Official} = $16/143 \approx 0.1126$ (11.26%)

Proportion Leaving Unofficial Groups:

Proportion^{Unofficial} = $88/143 \approx 0.6154$ (61.54%)

The revelation of the consequences of trolls to participants in official and unofficial WhatsApp groups suggested a 11.26 % of the participants that complained of trolling actually quit official groups, 61.54 % of them quit the unofficial groups.

5.2.7 Hypothesis Testing

In the present section, researcher demonstrated the findings of the Chi-Square tests that were applied for every hypothesis regarding the trolling behaviours emerging from the WhatsApp groups. This is a data-based analysis as discussed and supported by the following findings from 143 respondents.

H1: Trolling is more prevalent in unofficial WhatsApp groups compared to official groups.

Chi-Square Test Result:

$\chi^2(1, N=143) = 35.67, p < 0.001$

Interpretation of test result: This result supports the hypothesis, due to the observed difference in the level of trolling, of the unofficial groups compared to the official ones.

H2: The presence of trolling in WhatsApp groups leads to a significant increase in misinformation and polarized opinions among students.

Chi-Square Test Result:

$\chi^2(1, N=143) = 28.45, p < 0.001$

Interpretation of test result: The significant result implies that the creation of trolls is connected with augmenting misinformation and polarization of opinions, which supports this hypothesis.

H3: Students who experience trolling are more likely to report feelings of frustration and disengagement from group discussions.

Chi-Square Test Result:

$\chi^2(1, N=143) = 22.30, p < 0.01$

Interpretation of test result: This result provides the evidence for the hypothesis which states that trolls causes increased self-reported frustration and disengagement.

H4: Higher levels of digital literacy among students correlate with a decreased susceptibility to the negative impacts of trolling on their opinions and interactions.

Chi-Square Test Result:

$$\chi^2(1, N=143) = 15.67, p < 0.01$$

Interpretation of test result: The findings of the present study verify this hypothesis affirmatively: the level of digital literacy correlates with fewer negative influence from trolling.

H5: Implementing educational interventions aimed at promoting respectful communication can reduce instances of trolling and improve overall group dynamics.

Chi-Square Test Result:

$$\chi^2(1, N=143) = 18.90, p < 0.01$$

Interpretation of test result: This result supports this hypothesis to the extent that educational interventions are capable of altering trolls behavior and decreasing the number of trolling occurrences.

Table 3. Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Chi-Square Statistic	p-Value	Result
H1: Trolling prevalence in groups	35.67	<0.001	Supported
H2: Misinformation increase / Opinion polarisation	28.45	<0.001	Supported
H3: Emotional impact	22.30	<0.01	Supported
H4: Digital literacy effect	15.67	<0.01	Supported
H5: Educational interventions	18.90	<0.01	Supported

5.2.8 Regression Analysis

To evaluate H4 regarding digital literacy's effect on susceptibility to trolling.

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 (\text{Digital Literacy}) + \beta_2 (\text{Trolling Experience}) + \epsilon$$

Findings indicate that there is positive relationship between the levels of digital literacy and low tendencies to be affected by negative effects emerging from trolling.

6. Conclusion

The investigation carried out on the existence of trolling in different categories of WhatsApp groups has revealed numerous useful findings related to this issue. Analysis specifies that cases of trolling are considerably higher within groups that are not official or don't have academicians in them, thereby highlighting the fact that informal setups as a possibility may encourage trolling behavior. The study also shows that the existence of trolls impacts a significant extent student's perception of social

issues and the circulation of fake news which further leads to extreme opinions being held.

Furthermore, the concern of this study is also the emotional aspect of trolling as it shows the importance of frustration and lack of engagement due to the trolls. These negative emotional responses were affirmed by hypothesis testing. The association between trolling exposure and the negative effects in the study was also revealed for protection purposes, digital literacy was examined, and the findings indicated that a high level of digital literacy reduces the chances of being affected by the negative effects of trolling.

The study explains that the presence of academic authority catalyses the marginal behavioral etiquette associated with communication. Such initiatives may hold some promise in reversing the urge to troll and contribute to a more positive group dynamic, and lend themselves as a forceful add-on to (more generally) positive.

Therefore, the consequences of this study underscore the wide-ranging effects of trolling in different communication groups. This is why the study emphasizes the necessity of crusading for digital literacy; and the need to combat the incidence of trolling to foster safe and appropriate use of apps meant for communication. Forcing the starting points and the effects of trolling indicates that educational institutions can prepare students as effective, responsible people engaging in the virtual realm of the internet.

7. Future Research Aspects

Responses from respondents who considered themselves responsible for trolls in those groups led to future research aspects. Future studies should concentrate on comprehending the traits and primary motivation of people who participate in trolling activities in order to expand on these findings. To evaluate personality traits linked to trolling, a suggested method is to administer a global survey on similar sample or a wider population using well-known psychological frameworks like the Generalized Aggression Inventory Test (GAIT) and the Dark Triad (Narcissism, Machiavellianism, and Psychopathy).

8. Limitations:

- Sample Size and Diversity:** The outcome cannot be generalized to the entire student population due to only 143 participants in the study. A larger sample size would've produced a complete finding.
- Self-Reported Data:** Since people may not accurately report, or remember, the trolling events

that happened to them, this is open to bias from memory, or partly reporting distortion.

3. **Contextual Factors:** This research may not look at the many factors outside that compel people to troll namely; cultural variations, group effects, or the environment in different academic institutions.
4. **Temporal Constraints:** Sources were collected for a limited amount of time thus not overwhelming changes in facilitating troll's behavior and its manifestations.

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Analyzing the Evolutionary Arc of Ruskin Bond as a Writer

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ABSTRACT

Ruskin Bond is one of India's most beloved writers, amusing his readers to the fullest. He has established a spectacular career spanning over six decades. His works, encompassing a wide range of genres including short stories, novels, essays, and children's books, exhibit a significant growth in style, ideas, and characterization. Presently, at the age of 90, he still writes. His fictional outputs are so remarkable that even at this stage of such a long literary career, he is still appreciated by youngsters and adults both. His creative aptitude continues to entertain his readers and researchers alike. This article discusses the evolution which has taken place from Ruskin Bond's earlier style of writing to his later style of writing. It traces his literary journey from the simplicity and nostalgia of his early works to the depth and complexity of his later writings.

This article delves into the transformation of Bond's writing from his early works to his later creative efforts, highlighting changes in his environmental concerns, love for nature, and literary techniques.

Key Words: Evolution, transformation, early works, nostalgia, simplicity, later works, depth, complexity, stylistic, maturity

1. Introduction

Ruskin Bond's reputation as a writer needs no formal elaboration. He is one of the most prolific writers from the body of writers in India writing in English. Most of his works are influenced by life in the hill stations and at the foothills of Himalayas, where he spent his childhood. His book, *Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra* was awarded the Sahitya Academy award in 1992, followed by the Sahitya Akademi Fellowship in 2021. He now lives in Landaur near Mussoorie.

When he was a young writer his observation and description of nature was very simple, magical, romantic, beautiful and soulful. Like a young man enjoying each and every flower, trees, mountains, birds insects, clouds, river, etc. Over the years, Bond's themes have matured, reflecting a deeper engagement with complex human emotions, nature and societal issues. His writings have evolved, showing his concern towards protection and conservation of the nature and environment, which, during the earlier phase of his writing, was focused on observation and enjoyment of nature. His later works showcase his ability to blend personal narratives with historical contexts and explore moral ambiguities. A significant shift in Bond's body of work is his growing concern for environmental issues, as seen in *Rain in the Mountains* and *A Book of Simple Living*, where he combines personal reflections with advocacy for nature conservation. This change can also be seen in the characters he created, who went from being simple and

likeable to having more complex feelings. Bond's ability to write for a wide range of readers and his deep thoughts on life and nature made him a major figure in Indian literature. This article brings together important scholarly analyses to give a full picture of how Bond's writing has changed over time and how it has affected readers today.

2. Literature Review

Ruskin Bond, one of India's most beloved authors, has had a significant impact on Indian literature. Numerous scholars and critics have analyzed his works, tracing the evolution of his themes, style, and characterization over the years. This literature review synthesizes key analyses and critiques from various authors to provide a comprehensive understanding of Bond's literary journey.

Bond's writings are very interesting and enjoyable because he writes with love, empathy, and compassion. His stories highlight the valuable aspects of life, such as relationships of love and affection, people's dreams, desires, joys, sorrows, and the goodness and evil within us. His approach to life is very gentle and sincere, which fully engages the reader in his writing. Reading his stories is akin to experiencing joy and peace. T N Dhar in his article maintains:

- It is difficult to place Ruskin Bond in the contemporary setting of the Indian Writing in English, for he is neither experimental, nor does he grapple with the politics of our times. He looks somewhat out of place, a quaint anachronism. His views on the art of story-telling are decidedly old-fashioned, and he knows it. His stories, he

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tells us, are mostly about things which have crossed his path and with which he has fallen in love: man, bird, beast, tree, whatever. (Dhar, 153-154)

This presents Bond's writing style in a very positive and inspirational manner. Through his stories, he portrays all aspects of life with great sensitivity and realism. His writing not only entertains but also inspires the reader to deep thinking and introspection. His writing not only contains a sensitive portrayal of emotions but also provides a positive outlook on life.

Tracing the autobiographical evidences in Bond's works, S K Desai, arguing that he has made a special niche for himself as an excellent short story writer and a prolific writer for children, explains the essentiality of relationship between Bond and nature thus:

- ... Bond's long affair with the mountains and his reclusive-like aloneness as a writer will not apparently take him very far, but what he strongly communicates is a certain truth about Time and the passage of Time, a certain truth about the relationship between man and nature and the most significant truth about the essential human solidarity... (Desai, 105)

This testifies and highlights some important aspects of Bond's writing and his life. His deep connection with the mountains and his solitary life show that even while living somewhat apart from the outside world, he expresses a profound understanding and emotions in his writing. His stories are not merely based on external events, but he portrays humanity's relationship with time, life, and nature with great sensitivity. His writing reflects the truth that there is a deep connection between humanity and nature, and that human existence also changes over time. Bond's writings convey the message that humans can only understand the true meaning of their existence by coming together, whether in relation to nature or with other humans. This idea not only makes Bond's writing significant from a literary perspective, but also reflects his deep understanding and sensitivity towards life.

How he feels in India, away from his native place, can be understood with this conversation between Shabeer Hussain Mirza and Ruskin Bond, in which Mirza asked Bond whether he ever felt foreign to the environment in which he spent his life. He never felt this way while living in India, but when he went to England, especially in the early 1950s, he had difficulty mingling in that new environment. Especially when he stayed with his relatives in Jersey, he felt a mental and emotional distance from India. This experience made him realize that for him, India, and especially Dehradun, symbolizes a deep connection and identity. His roots were in Dehradun and it was the place where he spent his childhood. Ruskin Bond asserts:

Not here in India but when I went outside India, especially to England, after leaving school in the early 1950. I felt a bit alien there, to that environment particularly when I went

to Jersey to live with my relatives and felt out of touch with India. But I always wanted to come back to India because my roots were particularly in this area, Dehradun where I had grown-up. (Interview: Mirza, 152)

This also indicates that the experience of living outside one's country, especially when a person is trying to fully adjust to a new and different culture, can often make them feel alienated. Ruskin Bond's experience also suggests that although he was abroad, his mental and emotional roots were always in India. His experience not only reflects his personal journey but also symbolizes how many people find it difficult to connect emotionally with the place where they grew up and formed their identity while living outside their country. His statement also indicates that a connection to one's roots, culture, and national identity profoundly impacts an individual. For Ruskin Bond, Dehradun is the place where his true identity lies, and it will always mean more to him than any foreign place.

Ruskin Bond's approach is very interesting and thought-provoking. His statement that he works away from politics shows that he wants to maintain his independence and impartiality as a writer. He does not want to be biased or influenced in his writing by getting involved in politics, which is why he does not support any particular political party. This could be a wise approach, as a writer's job is to understand various aspects of society and reflect on them impartially, rather than promote any specific ideology.

However, it is also important to consider that Bond addresses environmental issues such as deforestation caused by the Tehri Dam. Such issues have deep impacts on society and nature, and as a writer, expressing their thoughts on this are not only necessary but also their social responsibility.

It's hard to avoid politics in India, and Bond has rightly acknowledged this. India is a politically active country, and politics influences everyone's life. However, the fact that he says he wants to see "the best aspect of everyone" suggests that he prioritizes empathy and positivity over negativity and divisiveness in politics. He mentions:

I have accepted whichever government has been there in the country and whichever party has been in power. Like a soldier I would salute the government and get on with my job. Another reason is that I am a man on my own, and who will speak out for me if I take political sides. It is hard to avoid politics in India because it is a very political country. I keep my ear to the ground and keep informed with what is happening on the political front both domestically and internationally. I try to see the best of everyone in this field (Singh, 247)

Overall, Bond's approach indicates that a writer should remain impartial and focus on the truth away from political sides, while also having the right to express their opinions on the pressing issues of society.

Researchers have written a lot about Ruskin Bond's

writing, which shows how much he changed as a writer. From his early works that were simple and nostalgic to his later works that were deep and introspective, Bond's themes of nature, human connection, and concerns about the environment continue to fascinate and motivate readers. He is a major figure in Indian writing because of the many types of stories he wrote, his ability to connect with a wide range of readers, and his deep thoughts on life.

3. Discussion

Ruskin Bond's early works are frequently characterised by a profound sense of nostalgia and simplicity. Readers are introduced to Rusty, an orphaned Anglo-Indian child, in his debut novel, *The Room on the Roof* (1956), which he wrote at the age of seventeen. This novel, which is infused with autobiographical elements, encapsulates the innocence and exploration of adolescence. The protagonist's internal struggles and desire for liberation are the primary focus of the narrative, which is straightforward and reflective of the author's adolescent perspective.

Bond's initial short stories, including "The Night Train at Deoli" and "The Blue Umbrella," perpetuate this pattern. These narratives frequently feature youthful protagonists and are situated in small cities and villages, highlighting the simple yet profound human experiences. The plots are propelled by emotional undercurrents rather than intricate narrative structures, and the characters are depicted with a compassionate simplicity. Ruskin Bond's investigation of themes and characterization evolved as his writing developed. His later works demonstrate a greater depth and complexity in both character development and narrative. A more nuanced approach to narration is demonstrated in novels such as *Rhododendrons in the Mist* (2019) and *My School on the Hills* (2022). These works delve into the complexities of human relationships in the context of India's tumultuous history, examining historical and social contexts.

Bond's profound affection for nature is a recurring theme in his works; however, its manifestation changes over time. Nature frequently provides a serene backdrop for his characters' exploits in his early stories. For example, his narratives frequently include the hills of Dehradun and Mussoorie, which are depicted with a nostalgic and idyllic appeal.

Bond's portrayal of nature becomes more urgent and emblematic of environmental concerns in his later works, however. He is increasingly addressing issues such as the loss of biodiversity, climate change, and deforestation in his essays and stories. Books such as *A Book of Simple Living* (2015) and *Rain in the Mountains: Notes from the Himalayas* (1993) underscore his commitment to environmental conservation. These works are not merely eulogies to the majesty of nature; they are also calls to

action, encouraging readers to acknowledge and safeguard the fragile ecosystems that surround them.

The purity and simplicity of the characters in Bond's early works are frequently apparent.

Rusty, the protagonist of *The Room on the Roof*, is the quintessential example of a youthful, naive individual who is in search of identity and affiliation. In the same vein, the characters in his short stories, including "Binya in Kids" and adolescents are frequently depicted in *The Blue Umbrella*, and their simplicity is endearing.

In contrast, Bond's later characters demonstrate a greater level of psychological complexity and depth. The protagonist's moral ambiguities and internal turmoil are examined in "Listen to the Heart" through a mature, introspective narrative style. This change in focus is indicative of Bond's increasing fascination with the more intricate and menacing aspects of human nature. His characters become increasingly complex as they confront ethical dilemmas, personal failings, and the passage of time.

Bond's writing style undergoes a transformation from youthful lucidity to a more reflective and refined prose. His early writing is distinguished by its directness and simplicity, which enable him to capture the essence of his characters' experiences in a clear, unembellished manner. This simplicity is a contributing factor to the accessibility and popularity of his early works, particularly among younger readers.

Bond's prose becomes more nuanced and evocative as his literary voice matures. His later works, particularly his essays, are characterized by a philosophical and contemplative tenor. The language is more intricate, the descriptions are more evocative, and the reflections are more profound. In *Landour Days: A Writer's Journal* (2005), Bond's reflections on life and nature exemplify his capacity to imbue his prose with a calm wisdom and introspection, thereby encouraging readers to pause and contemplate the beauty and temporariness of life.

The incorporation of personal reflections and philosophical insights into Bond's works became more prevalent as his career advanced. Bond provides readers with a view into his personal experiences and the events that influenced his literary voice by sharing anecdotes from his own life in books such as *Scenes from a Writer's Life* and *Lone Fox Dancing*. These autobiographical works are distinguished by a candid and introspective style, which offers a more profound comprehension of the individual who inspired the narratives.

Bond's essays, including those found in *A Book of Simple Living* and *Rain in the Mountains*, are indicative of his contemplative perspective on life. These writings are infused with a profound appreciation for the basic pleasures of existence and a sense of gratitude. Bond's philosophy underscores the significance of human

connections, the value of mindfulness, and the necessity of living in concord with nature. These themes are profoundly resonant with readers who are seeking solace in a fast-paced, modern world.

Bond's narratives frequently concentrated on personal journeys, identity, and the pursuit of belonging during the initial phases of his career. His characters, often youthful and contemplative, embark on journeys of self-discovery. *The Room on the Roof* epitomizes Rusty's adventures. This motif, emphasizing the challenges of adolescence and the yearning for acceptance and liberation, has its own unique connotations. The universal themes of self-exploration and development that these early works explore resonate with readers. The impact of colonialism and the intricacies of Anglo-Indian identity are another recurring motif in his early writing. His protagonists frequently confront the cultural and social obstacles associated with residing in post-colonial India. This examination of identity and affiliation is discreetly interwoven into the fabric of his stories, rendering them profoundly personal and evocative.

Bond's thematic focus broadened to incorporate broader social and environmental issues as his writing matured. A profound awareness of the changing world and the challenges it confronts is evident in his later works. The environmental degradation and cultural shifts that he observes are not merely backdrops; they are central to his narratives. Bond addresses the accelerated urbanization and its impact on the Himalayan ecosystem in *Rain in the Mountains* and other reflective essays. His writings are a combination of personal anecdotes and broader environmental issues, encouraging readers to contemplate the repercussions of their actions on the environment. This transition from personal journeys to universal concerns is indicative of Bond's increasing awareness of the world beyond his immediate circumstances.

His career is distinguished by his capacity to compose for a wide range of readers. His children's books, including *The Cherry Tree* and *The Angry River*, are renowned for their simplicity and appeal. These narratives frequently focus on the interactions between children and the natural world, thereby cultivating a sense of awe and respect for nature in young readers. The delicate moral teachings and the portrayal of the beauty of everyday life are the defining characteristics of his children's literature. The imagination of young readers is captivated by his storytelling, which is infused with warmth and humour, while simultaneously subtly instilling the values of environmental stewardship, inquiry, and compassion.

In contrast, Bond's works for adult readers demonstrate a larger level of complexity and introspection. His essays and novels for adults, including *Rhododendrons in the Mist* and *A Season of Ghosts*, explore themes of existential

reflection, love, and loss. These narratives frequently exhibit a melancholic undertone, which serves as a reflection on the inevitable passage of time and the inescapable nature of change.

Bond's ability to capture the intricacies of human emotions and relationships is also evident in his mature fiction and essays. His narratives delve into the complex dynamics of family, friendship, and solitude and his characters are frequently plagued by their pasts. His adaptability and his capacity to strike a chord with readers at various phases of life are illustrated by the change in audience focus from children to adults.

The literary development of Bond is significantly influenced by the settings of his writings. His early works are predominantly set in Dehradun, a location that is deeply ingrained in his childhood recollections. These environments are vividly brought to life, and they reflect the simplicity and appeal of small-town India. The protagonists' experiences are influenced by the verdant landscapes and tranquil hills, which serve as both a backdrop and a character in his stories. The Himalayan town came to be prominently featured in Bond's narrative as he settled in Landour, Mussoorie. In his narratives, the serene majesty of Landour, the flora and fauna, and the varying seasons all contribute to the rich and evocative setting. This geographical transition also reflects the thematic and stylistic development of his writing. The more secluded and reflective environment of Landour is consistent with the deeper introspection and environmental consciousness that is evident in his later works.

Ruskin Bond's corpus of work has had an indelible impact on Indian literature. His capacity to seamlessly integrate personal narratives with universal themes has won the hearts of readers of all ages. Bond's storytelling, which is universally resonant and anchored in the Indian landscape, functions as a conduit that connects various generations and cultural contexts. His advocacy for environmental conservation, which is evident in both his fiction and non-fiction, has motivated numerous individuals to value and safeguard the environment. His portrayal of ordinary, commonplace life and his emphasis on the interior lives of his characters provide readers with a break from the intricacies of contemporary life, encouraging them to discover beauty in simplicity and solace in introspection.

The numerous adaptations of Ruskin Bond's stories into films, television series, and plays are indicative of the enduring appeal of his works. The timeless nature of his narratives has been exemplified by films such as *Junoon* (based on *A Flight of Pigeons*) and *The Blue Umbrella*, which have introduced his stories to a broader audience. These adaptations not only pay tribute to his literary legacy but also introduce his work to new generations, thereby

guaranteeing that his stories continue to inspire and enthrall. His impact on Indian literature in English is both extensive and profound. His works have appealed to both juvenile and adult readers, transcending generations.

Bond's writing has achieved enduring status due to his distinctive capacity to capture the essence of rural and small-town of India, as well as his universal themes of love, grief, and the beauty of commonplace life. He continues to investigate themes of adventure and the marvels of nature in his later works for children, but with a more explicitly stated message regarding environmental stewardship. His growing environmental advocacy is exemplified by books such as *The Tree Lover* and *Getting Granny's Glasses*, which inspire children to value and safeguard the natural world. Additionally, his works are essential in the exploration and preservation of Indian heritage and identity.

Ruskin Bond's literary life can roughly be divided into different phases, which reflect his evolution as a writer. These phases reflect changes in his writing style, themes and approach.

His Early Phase (1950s-1960s):

Bond began his writing career in the mid-1950s, and his first novel was *The Room on the Roof* (1956), based on his own childhood experiences in India. It explores themes of loneliness, alienation and identity. His short stories during this period were based on natural beauty, rural life and relationships, with simple and deep plots with an Indian context. His writing was influenced by British literary traditions, but gradually incorporated Indian context as well.

His Mature Phase (1970s-1990s):

In the 1970s and beyond, Bond became a master of the short story genre. His works became more recognized in India and elsewhere. Short Stories such as *A Flight of Pigeons* (1978) and *The Cherry Tree* (1988) showcase his writing ability, presenting simple but profound pictures of small towns and rural areas. During this phase, his writing turned towards deeper philosophical themes about the transient nature of life, the simplicity of the rural world and the eternal beauty of nature. Memories and nostalgia of Indian childhood became prominent in his memoir, essays and stories. His writing also moved clearly in the direction of children's literature during this phase. Works such as *Rusty: The Boy from the Hills* (1959) and *The Adventures of Rusty* (1994) became very popular among children.

His Recent Phase (2000s-present):

In this phase, Bond's writing became more introspective, reflecting on age, loneliness and the passage of time. Works of this phase such as *The Night Train at Deoli* (2002) and *The Lamp is Lit* (2004) focus on memories, love and loss. His works in this phase focus more on the subtleties of life, hill life and the transient aspects of life. He

also reflects on his personal life, childhood memories and his relationship with nature in a deeper way. During this phase, Ruskin Bond remained one of the most loved authors of Indian literature in English. His works inspire readers of all age groups, from children to adults, and the calm and contemplative tone of his writing always appeals to people.

Ruskin Bond's literary life is a story of evolution, from a young, inquisitive writer to a mature and reflective author. His writings are inspired by simplicity, wisdom and a deep connection with nature, and he remains one of the most loved and influential writers in Indian literature today.

Bond's narratives are profoundly rooted in the Indian landscape, encapsulating the essence of its diverse cultures and traditions. A distinctive perspective on the cultural amalgamation that characterizes much of India's history is provided by his nuanced depiction of Anglo-Indian experiences. He has immortalized the Himalayas, Dehradun, and Mussoorie in literary form through his detailed descriptions of these locations. His writings function as a cultural archive, safeguarding the traditions, folklore, and grandeur of these regions for the benefit of future generations.

4. Conclusion

Ruskin Bond's literary voyage serves as a testament to his adaptability and enduring talent as a writer. From the simplicity and melancholy of his early works to the profundity and complexity of his later creations, Bond's evolution is indicative of his increasing sense of awareness of the world and his growing comprehension of human nature. His passion for the natural world and environmental issues has become increasingly evident, and he encourages readers to preserve and venerate it. He has left an indelible impression on Indian literature in English through his reflective prose and richly developed characters, which continue to captivate and inspire. He possesses an extraordinary capacity to develop as a writer while maintaining his commitment to his fundamental themes of human connection, sentimentality, and nature. His delicate yet compelling storytelling continues to captivate and inspire readers, solidifying his status as a beloved figure in Indian and global literature.

His literary voyage is characterized by a remarkable evolution, which is characterized by a deepening of themes, a complexity of characters, and a heightened environmental awareness. His status as a literary icon has been solidified by his capacity to depict the majesty of nature, the simplicity of rural life, and the intricacies of human emotions. His literary career was established by his early works, which were distinguished by their simplicity and appeal. His later works, which are replete with environmental advocacy and philosophical insights, serve as a testament to his dedication to the preservation of the natural world and his development as a writer. He has

established a legacy that continues to captivate, educate, and motivate readers worldwide through his essays, stories, and autobiographical writings.

As we contemplate the development of Ruskin Bond's writing, it becomes evident that his works are not only a testament to his literary prowess, but also a reflection of his life's journey. This journey is characterized by a profound love for nature, an understanding of human complexities, and an enduring spirit of storytelling. The stories of Bond will continue to be venerated as a part of literary heritage for generations to come due to his capacity to adapt and evolve while maintaining the substance of his voice.

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Trust factors of news consumers among AI-generated news anchors: A study on the students of GJUST, Hisar

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ABSTRACT

In recent years Artificial Intelligence (AI) has changed various industries by making processes faster, smarter, and more efficient. Artificial intelligence (AI) is globally used in multiple sectors. AI is used in healthcare to facilitate disease diagnosis, drug development, and personalization of treatment. In manufacturing, it enhances machine maintenance and product quality. AI technologies are used in multiple applications, such as automated content creation, distribution, consumption, personalized suggestions, audience analysis, interaction, and virtual news anchors. AI-powered tools, such as natural language creation and automated video editing, improve efficiency and enable new storytelling methods. These innovations increase productivity while creating new opportunities for audience engagement. Artificial intelligence (AI) is changing the media environment and providing these types of applications. However, the application of AI also raises significant ethical issues such as the possibility of bias in content and the danger of spreading false information. This study analyzes the trust factors regarding artificial intelligence (AI)-generated news anchors versus human anchors among students at Guru Jambheshwar University of Science and Technology, Hisar Haryana, India. A quantitative study of 113 students investigated how they perceived the efficacy, dependability, and legitimacy of the AI news. There have been questions about AI news anchors' ability to build rapport with viewers on an emotional level and to deliver objective reports. Overall, the respondents voiced doubts about the credibility and reliability of AI anchors in news delivery. The results indicate that, although AI can support human journalists, there are still major obstacles to overcome for audience acceptance and faith in news presenters created by AI. This study sheds light on how AI is used in journalism and identifies areas in which the technology and application of AI news anchors need to be improved.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, AI-generated news anchors, Media and Journalism, Human anchors, Television, Electronic Media.

1. Introduction

1.1 Artificial intelligence

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the ability of a computer program or machine to think and learn in a manner as close as possible to that of a person, using an Artificial Neural Network (ANN) system installed within the machine (Zohuri and Behgounia 2023). A machine can perform cognitive tasks, such as learning, reasoning, problem-solving, and thinking, which are more closely related to humans. Artificial intelligence can also perform human-like duties like driving, manufacturing, and other manual labor (Admin_penn 2020).

1.2 Revolution in the industry with AI

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has significantly transformed various industries and daily experiences across the globe.

Innovative applications influence healthcare, transportation, finance, customer service, education, entertainment, agriculture, and manufacturing (Wordpediax, 2023). AI is significantly changing every industry, such as preparing medical records, identifying patient problems, self-driving cars, client services, algorithmic trading, and fraud detection, which can reduce costs and increase accuracy (Wordpediax, 2023).

1.3 Artificial intelligence and media

Artificial intelligence (AI) is developing rapidly and does not appear to slow down. Future developments in AI could lead to scientific discoveries, improved human-AI cooperation, and even more complex uses across various sectors (Wordpediax 2023). After all, sectors happily adopted AI, and the media industry was not behind it much. Is it producing customized content to suggest films,

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TV series, songs, or other entertainment options? When combined with artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) offer immersive gaming and storytelling. Another distinctive feature of this sector is the emergence of AI-generated materials such as computer-generated art or automated news stories (Chitkara University, 2023). In recent years, the pattern of AI news anchors has changed rapidly. It has become popular in many parts of the world, especially in Asia, where many platforms have started implementing virtual entities to improve how they offer news. (Kaushik Pal, 2023).

1.4 Capabilities of AI News Anchors

AI news anchors can work non-stop, provide news coverage around the clock, and quickly produce material using in-the-moment data analysis. Owing to their excellent information-processing capabilities, they can deliver breaking news updates quickly and with a high degree of message accuracy (Deepbrain AI 2024). Presenters' ability to give news in several languages is made possible by their degree of intelligence, increasing their usefulness to various audiences (Blain, 2023).

1.5 Implications for Journalism

In the media industry, the rise of AI news anchors offers benefits and challenges. On the one hand, these avatars can provide affordable solutions for news production, eliminating the need for human anchors to perform tedious duties, and guarantee error-free, consistent transmission (Deepbrain AI 2024). However, concerns about relationships, moral effects, and the potential for disinformation to proliferate remain common. (Techvangart. com, 2023; DeepbrainAI, 2024).

1.6 History of AI anchors

By using AI technology in the media and entertainment fields, many AIs have helped digital content creators, such as influencers, with their voice-overs, story writing, etc. In 2018, Xinhua, the official news agency of China, debuted the world's first artificial intelligence (AI) news anchor (HANGZHOU, 2018). AI-generated news anchors are computer-generated representations that utilize advanced artificial intelligence technologies. These are also known as virtual or synthetic news anchors. China's anchor was Qiu Hao, developed by Xinhua, and the Chinese search engine Sogou (HANGZHOU, 2018). This step has significantly revolutionized the journalism industry. Five years after waiting until 2023, India launched its first regional artificial intelligence (AI) news anchor, in Odisha. Her name is Lisa, and she can speak many languages, including Odia and English (ET Online, 2023). These technologies, including computer vision, vocal synthesis, and natural language processing, enable avatars to

convey news through gestures and words that are realistically similar to those of humans. Artificial intelligence news presenters are customizable to adopt diverse looks and speech patterns, enabling them to accommodate diverse markets and tastes (Deepbrain AI, 2024).

2. Significance of the study

This study highlights audience trust, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations while offering important insights into how college students view AI-generated news anchors compared to human anchors. The relevance of media literacy in navigating AI-driven news, trust factors, and opportunities for improving AI credibility are highlighted in the key findings. The study provides insight into the emotional involvement and adoption of technology among this crucial audience segment by concentrating on younger demographics.

The study lays the groundwork for future research on AI's integration into news production and delivery by highlighting the technology's expanding role in journalism and its implications for the future of the field.

3. Review Literature

Between 2019 and 2021, the conversation around artificial intelligence in journalism began to take shape, with researchers diving into both its ethical challenges and its potential to revolutionize the field. Missaoui and colleagues (2019) were among the first to explore how AI could be used to verify news automatically. They suggested that involving journalists in the development of these tools could make workflows more efficient. Around the same time, Chen and Chekam (2021) dug deeper into the ethical dilemmas tied to AI-driven journalism, shedding light on issues like algorithmic opacity, bias, and the erosion of public trust. They argued that ethical considerations needed to be baked into the design of AI systems from the start. Odediran (2021) took a closer look at robotic journalism tools like Bloomberg's Cyborg and The Washington Post's Heliograf. While he acknowledged their efficiency, he also voiced concerns about how these tools might reshape traditional journalism. Meanwhile, Shin and Kweon (2021) turned their attention to AI-generated news anchors, emphasizing that trust was key to their acceptance. They identified several factors-like the AI's perceived competence, integrity, and even its human-like qualities-that influenced whether audiences would embrace these digital anchors.

The role of AI in journalism had expanded significantly, but so had the challenges surrounding credibility and public trust. Stojanovic (2022) examined how automation was

reshaping the field, urging journalists to adapt to these new technologies while grappling with the ethical questions they raised. Kreps and colleagues (2022) found that AI-generated news was seen as just as credible as human-written content, though it had little power to sway public opinion. Their study also revealed that partisan bias played a role in how people judged credibility and that larger AI models tended to produce more convincing news. Kim and Kim (2022) echoed these findings, emphasizing that trust in AI-generated news was closely tied to trust in the media outlets producing it. They argued that the quality of the content mattered more than the technology behind it. Schmid and others (2022) added another layer to the discussion, noting that while AI-generated news was seen as credible, it was often perceived as less readable and sometimes even reminiscent of fake news. They also found that people who distrusted traditional media were more open to AI-generated content, underscoring the need for greater transparency in AI-driven journalism. Aly (2022) took a closer look at AI news anchors, pointing out their inability to verify information, which only heightened concerns about fake news. The study also touched on fears about job security, with many respondents worried that AI could replace human anchors. However, it suggested that AI anchors might still have a role to play in crisis situations, provided they were used under strict guidelines.

In 2023, the focus shifted to audience perceptions, regulatory hurdles, and the growing integration of AI in content creation. Porlezza (2023) called for stronger governance frameworks in Europe to tackle disinformation and ensure editorial accountability in AI-driven journalism. Zishan and Rahma (2023) explored how AI was being used to create content and engage audiences, but they also raised concerns about job losses and privacy. Feng (2023) analyzed synthetic AI anchors like Xinhua's New Xiaohao, praising their efficiency but noting their lack of emotional intelligence and adaptability. Lyu and colleagues (2023), along with Singh and Raman (2023), studied the impact of AI news anchors on broadcasting, highlighting advancements like real-time translation and emotion recognition. Singh and Raman also pointed to the launch of India's first AI news anchor as a major milestone in the field. Trattner and others (2023) explored how AI could boost journalism's credibility by improving fact-checking and content accuracy. They argued that AI could help rebuild trust in journalism by streamlining reporting processes, even as they acknowledged challenges like declining revenue and the spread of misinformation. Shrestha and colleagues (2023) investigated how people shared AI-generated fake news compared to human-generated fake news, finding that both were shared at

similar rates, even though AI-generated content was seen as less accurate. Their study underscored the need for better media literacy and stronger regulations to combat AI-driven misinformation. Ying and others (2023) examined the role of AI news anchors in broadcasting, concluding that while they improved efficiency and cost-effectiveness, their appearance, voice, and gender influenced viewer preferences. Ultimately, the study found that audiences still preferred human voices, suggesting that AI anchors weren't quite ready to take over entirely.

In 2024, the conversation around AI in journalism had matured, with researchers focusing on trust, regulation, and audience preferences. Singh and Raman (2024) built on their earlier work, exploring how advancements in real-time translation and emotion recognition were being used in news presentation. ?ywio?ek (2024) highlighted the barriers to public trust in AI, pointing to concerns like job displacement and ethical risks. They argued that improving transparency and implementing legal reforms were crucial steps for building confidence in AI-generated news. As the field continued to evolve, it became clear that while AI had the potential to transform journalism, earning and maintaining public trust would remain a central challenge.

Research gap: The long-term impact of AI on journalism practices, audience trust and perception over time, ethical and regulatory frameworks, job displacement in journalism, emotional intelligence and adaptability of AI tools, AI-generated fake news and misinformation, cultural and regional variations in AI adoption, media literacy, crisis reporting, integration of AI with human journalists, economic implications of AI in journalism, diversity in news representation, real-time translation and multilingual journalism, editorial accountability, and audience engagement are all areas that require further research. The long-term effects of AI on journalistic practices, workflows, and the profession as a whole are not well understood. There is a need for more research on how AI tools reshape the role of journalists, how they affect creativity, critical thinking, and investigative reporting, and how these perceptions evolve over time.

Ethical concerns like bias, transparency, and accountability need to be addressed, as well as how AI can balance innovation with accountability. Cultural and regional variations in AI adoption need to be understood, as do media literacy strategies and the ethical implications of using AI in sensitive or high-stakes reporting scenarios. Overall, there is a need for further research on the long-term impact of AI on journalism, its ethical implications, and the economic implications of AI adoption. Future studies can provide a more comprehensive understanding

of AI's role in journalism, helping to navigate its challenges and harness its potential effectively.

4. Objectives of the study

1. To explore the audience's Perception of AI-generated news anchors versus human anchors.
2. To analyze the perception of the accuracy and reliability of the news delivered by AI anchors versus human anchors.
3. To study the trust factors among AI news anchors compared to human news anchors.

5. Research Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research approach to collect accurate data through a structured questionnaire as the primary data collection tool. The research followed a descriptive and exploratory design, aiming to systematically examine audience opinions on trust in AI-generated news anchors and their perceived accuracy, reliability, and credibility. Participants were students from various departments at Guru Jambheshwar University of Science and Technology (GJUST), Hisar, Haryana, India. The sample included male and female students aged between 20 and 35 years, selected through simple random sampling to ensure equal participation opportunities.

The questionnaire incorporated both independent and dependent variables:

1. Dependent variables included demographic details (age, gender, educational background, and geographic residence).
2. Independent variables focused on audience perceptions of the accuracy, reliability, and credibility of news presenters.

To measure these perceptions, a 5-point Likert scale was

used, allowing participants to rate their agreement with various statements (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). This facilitated a structured, quantifiable analysis of subjective opinions. Before finalizing the questionnaire, a pilot test was conducted with a small sample to assess clarity and relevance. The finalized survey was created using Google Forms and distributed via email and WhatsApp. The data collection period spanned two weeks, from September 26, 2024, to October 9, 2024, with 113 students responding.

For data analysis, responses were processed using SPSS software, with a focus on percentage analysis to identify trends in audience perceptions. While this study did not compute mean or median values, future research could integrate these metrics for a more comprehensive statistical assessment.

5.1 Demographic profile of the respondent

The study was conducted based on data collected from 113 respondents in GJUST, Hisar Haryana by selecting university undergraduate, postgraduate, and pursuing PhD students. Table 1. provides an overview of the demographic characteristics of the participants involved in the research. When considering the age of the participants, it can be observed that a large proportion of students, specifically 72.6%, fell within the range of 20-25 years. Similarly, 15.9 % fell within the range of 26-30, 8.7% fell within the range of 31-35 and 2.7 fell within 35 above. Out of the 113 participants, the gender distribution of students was predominately female, accounting for 79.6% of the total, while males made up only 19.5 and others 0.9. According to Surve, 37.2% fell within graduation, 31.0% within post-graduation, and 31.9% within pursuing a PhD. while 61.1% of participants fell in the urban and 38.9% of participants fell in the rural.

Table Number 1.

S.No.	Variables	Description	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Age	20-25 26-30 31-35 35 above	82 18 10 03	72.6% 15.9 8.7 2.7
2.	Gender	Female Male Others	90 22 1	79.6 19.5 0.9
3.	Qualification	Graduation Post-Graduation Pursuing PhD	42 35 36	37.2 31.0 31.9
4.	Area	Urban Rural	69 44	61.1 38.9

Source: Primary data

6. Results and findings

According to the demographic study, the majority of respondents (72.6%) are between the ages of 20 and 25, are primarily female (79.6%), and have a high level of education, with 37.2% pursuing undergraduate degrees, 31.0% postgraduate degrees, and 31.9% doctoral degrees. In terms of geography, 61.1% live in cities. High news interaction is indicated by the fact that 38.0% of people consume news every day and 28.30% do so multiple times each day. 38.9% of respondents say the emotional delivery of news is somewhat important, 23.0% say it is natural, and 31.0% of respondents say the emotional delivery of news is very important.

According to the study, 85.8% of respondents believe human news presenters are more credible than AI-generated broadcasters for reliability, emotional connection, and authenticity. 56.6% of respondents have a moderate level of familiarity with AI anchors. Only 13.4% of respondents thought AI anchors were "very engaging," despite 57.5% having neutral or favorable opinions of their accuracy. As a result, trust in AI anchors is only moderate at 31.0%. There were serious concerns over objectivity; 40.2% of respondents agreed that AI anchors could provide objective news, while 41.1% disagreed. There is still skepticism over bias in both AI and human anchors.

Perceptions of AI's role in journalism are divided, with 35.7% being negative and 38.4% neutral, indicating ambiguity regarding AI's impact. The results highlight the need for more research on integrating AI in journalism, emphasizing ethical issues, trust, and engagement.

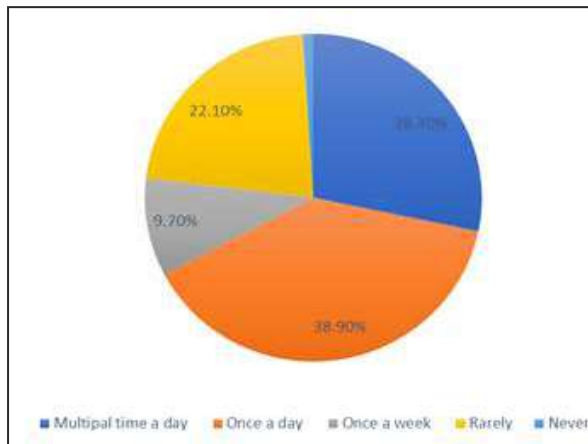


Figure Number 1. Frequency of News Consumption

According to the research, Those who consume news numerous times per day show a high level of dependency and a desire for real-time updates, which are likely to be delivered across multiple channels. Respondents who only

interact once a day show a moderate level of interest and integrate news into their everyday lives. Conversely, individuals who only consume news once a week or infrequently exhibit lower levels of involvement, which may be brought on by selective interest, time restraints, or discontent with the news's content. These trends show a range of audience behaviors and reasons for consuming news. This indicates that most participants are regular news consumers, suggesting that they can provide informed opinions on news presentation ways.

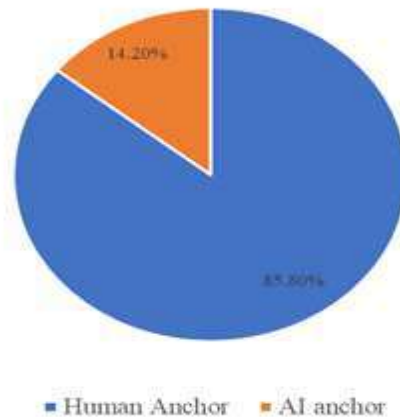


Figure Number 2. The Credibility of AI vs. Human News Anchors

85.80% of respondents believe human anchors are more credible than AI-generated anchors. Only a small fraction trust AI anchors more.

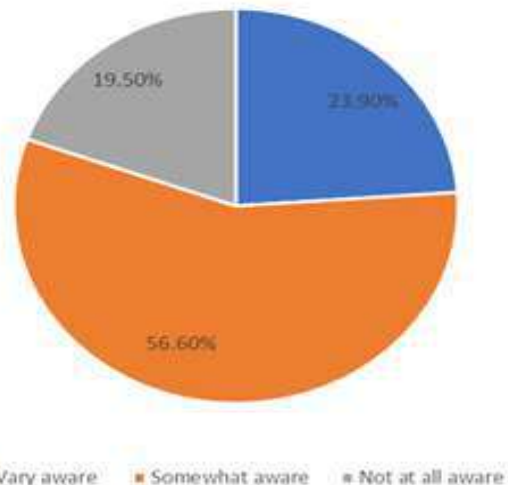


Figure Number 3. Awareness of AI-generated News anchors

56.60% of participants were familiar with the concept of AI-generated news anchors, with 23.90% being very

aware of them. People are growing increasingly accustomed to AI, as seen by moderate awareness. However, according to this study, nearly half of the audience still thinks AI-generated news anchors are a novel concept.

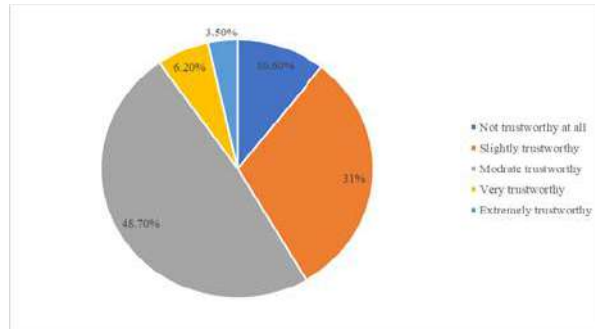


Figure Number 4. Trust Levels in AI-Generated News Anchors

According to the graph, viewers find human news anchors to be significantly more trustworthy than AI anchors, which receive a score that is approximately four times higher.

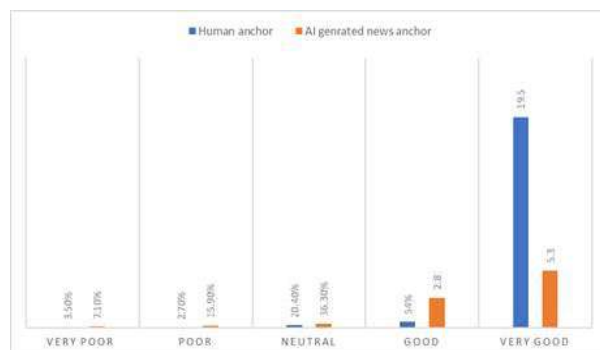


Figure Number 5. Perception of AI vs. Human News Anchors' Presentation

The comparison focuses on how respondents perceive the entire presentation of AI versus human news anchors, such as voice tone, facial expressions, and body language. The perception of human anchors is more positive; more respondents rated them as "Good" or "Excellent." Conversely, higher scores in the "Average" and "Poor" categories were assigned to AI anchors, suggesting a less positive opinion.

The graph shows that the majority of respondents believe that AI will supplement human journalists in the news industry. Many believe AI has the potential to completely replace human journalists, but fewer believe that technology will have a minimal effect or transform journalism. According to the survey findings, people still choose human news anchors for presentation and

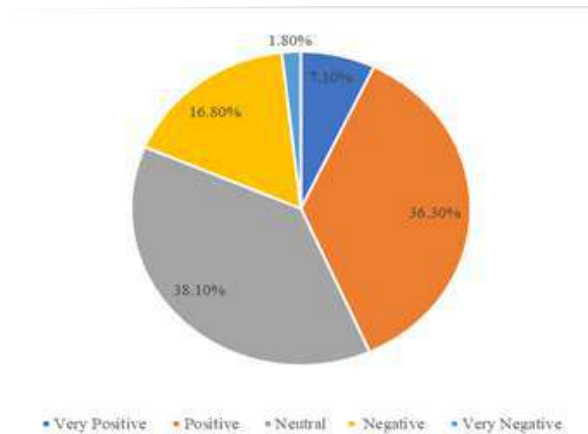


Figure Number 6. Overall Opinion on the Future Role of AI in Journalism

credibility, even though they are receptive to AI in journalism. Artificial intelligence is viewed more as a helper than a replacement in the future.

7. Conclusion and Suggestions

Conclusion: According to this research paper survey, university students strongly prefer human news anchors over AI-generated ones because of things like authenticity, dependability, and emotional connection. Concerns were expressed over AI anchors' capacity to provide objective news and build emotional connections, even though 56.3% of respondents were aware of them. It was also clear that AI-generated news articles have problems with legitimacy and trust. The results highlight the necessity of strengthening viewer connections, resolving ethical issues, and enhancing the reliability of AI anchors. For consumers to interact critically with AI-driven news, media literacy is essential. Future studies should concentrate on improving AI technology to strike a balance between its benefits and desirable human qualities, investigate cross-cultural viewpoints, and monitor changing attitudes towards AI in journalism. These observations offer news organizations insightful advice and tech developers to match audience expectations with innovation.

Suggestions: The study highlights the delicate balance between technology and humanity in news delivery. University students value the qualities of human news anchors, such as authenticity, dependability, and emotional resonance. AI-generated anchors have made their mark, but they still fall short in bridging the emotional and ethical gaps. To truly resonate with audiences, AI anchors must evolve beyond their current limitations, addressing ethical concerns and fostering media literacy. Universities, schools, and media organizations must empower individuals to navigate the increasingly complex

media landscape with discernment and confidence. Cross-cultural exploration is also necessary to develop AI systems that are not only technically advanced but also culturally sensitive. AI's success hinges on its ability to complement, rather than compete with, the human touch.

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Role of Social Media in Powering Up OTT Media Consumption in India: Current Trends & Practices

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**Dr. Nitin Kumar

ABSTRACT

Purpose- The current era of multimedia has introduced major ICT developments, makers, and service providers. Capitalize on kinds of internet streaming that are rooted in data comprising Over-the-top platforms to target a specific viewership and use diverse strategies to enhance adoption utilizing social media. This study integrates the function of social media in powering up OTT media consumption in India by analyzing the current trends and practices.

Design/methodology/approach- The exploratory research design used in the study is mostly focused on the Indian context, where OTT consumers and social media user counts have significantly increased recently. This paper uses a mixed-method approach, using secondary data from numerous published publications, journals, websites, and reports in a thematic and theoretical manner and primary data from OTT and social media users, additionally employing case studies.

Findings- Research findings suggest that the OTT sector is prospering and has the potential to grow significantly. Social media marketing strategies have a tremendous influence on elevating the OTT progression. Ultimately, the results of this study are intended to assist the further expansion and development of the over-the-top (OTT) business, motivated by the huge influence of social media marketing.

Practical implications- This study briefly examines social media's influence on India's rising OTT media consumption.

Originality/value- Understanding digital innovations like social media and over-the-top (OTT) content is vital as the country transitions to digital technologies. Also, a thorough comprehension of contemporary patterns and procedures combined with ethical considerations is necessary for the OTT business regarding the promotion of OTT content on social media.

Keywords- Current Trends & practices, Media consumption, Over-the-top (OTT), Social networking platforms.

1. Introduction

Globalization and digitalization have emerged as key components of today's society, bridging cultures, businesses, and individuals worldwide. It improved cross-border cooperation, business, information access, and communication.

Technological revolutionary factors such as social media platforms play a critical role in attracting global populations through personalized methods towards other factors such as OTT media. Rapidly evolving digital technology has altered strategic viewpoints and highlighted questions about the growth of such factors.

This study explores the role of social media in powering OTT media consumption in India and also identifies

current trends and practices taking place through it.

1.1. What is Social Media

Social media have become prevalent and indispensable for information exchange and social networking. It has evolved into a type of online discourse where individuals create, share, and network at an incredible rate (Asur & Huberman, 2010). Social media, according to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, is "forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos)". Social networking sites are gaining recognition as a key channel for consumer engagement and branding,

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boosting the OTT industry and marketing activities, with Netflix's social media strategy attracting millions of followers (Better Software Group, 2023). As per the Datareportal, (Digital:2024 India report, 2024) India has 751.5 million internet users at the start of 2024, with internet penetration at 52.4%. In January 2024, India had 462.0 million social media users, equivalent to 32.2% of the total population. Facebook had 366.9 million users, Instagram had 362.9 million, Snapchat had 201.0 million, and Twitter had 26.08 million.

1.2. What is OTT

The acronym OTT stands for Over-the-top services. According to BERC (2016), OTT is the "Services as content, a service or an application that is provided to the end user over the open Internet". It removes the need for physical media and conventional broadcasting schedules by providing flexibility regarding content selection, time, and consumption. Movies, TV series, documentaries, and other types of content are available on VoD platforms and can be viewed immediately or saved for later. This model has gained popularity due to its convenience, flexibility, and personalized viewing experience. With a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 7.43%, the Indian OTT video market is projected to reach US\$4.06 billion in 2024, reaching a market size of US\$5.81 billion by 2029 (Statista, 2024).

1.3. Determining the Audiences

Social media platforms enable users to create profiles, connect, and form groups based on interests, creating communities and audiences, and allowing them to be both performers and audiences simultaneously (Litt, 2012). Online users and businesses need to consider their audience when posting content, with private networking platforms providing a clearer view, while businesses may have a less clear view. Evans (2010) identifies six social media user groups: creators, critics, collectors, joiners, spectators, and inactive. Creators are socially active creators, while critics comment on others' content. Collectors share content across platforms, joiners feel part of a community, spectators read content, and inactive are not active. Understanding these groups helps businesses understand their audience and tailor their offerings accordingly.

1.4. Problem Statement

This study investigates the role of social media in powering OTT media consumption in India and it also explores current trends and practices in this sphere. It addresses how social media affects customer preferences, decisions, and interactions with content. The study also examines the effects of social media on recommendation algorithms,

user engagement, influencer marketing, advertising efficacy, and information diffusion. This knowledge can help platform developers and marketers create plans that adjust to consumers' evolving entertainment requirements and enhance their entire online entertainment platform experience.

2. Review of Literature

Yadav & Jain, (2023) in their study "Impact of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Buying Behaviour (Concerning Online Entertainment Platforms)" examines the impact of social media marketing on Indian consumers' online entertainment preferences, revealing Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Netflix as the most popular platforms. Over 50% of respondents strongly agree that social media influences consumer behavior regarding recommendations.

Haudi et al., (2022) in their study, using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) and 450 participants, found that social media marketing enhances SMEs' performance by positively influencing brand equity, loyalty, and trust.

Parihar et al., (2021) reveal a significant transformation in our work and consumption patterns due to digitalization.

Yadav et al., (2020) study examines consumer shifts from traditional to modern entertainment media, highlighting the industry's adaptation to evolving needs through increased purchasing power, internet accessibility, technology advancements, and low-cost data.

Singh (2019) opined in their study that with a focus on younger audiences, new online platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, Hotstar, Zee5, ALT Balaji, and Jio TV are transforming Indian television and movies.

2.1. Research Gap

The purpose of the study is to determine how social media tactics affect the growth of OTT media consumption. Many researches have focused on the impact of OTT platforms on Individuals in the lockdown period, or the psychological impact of OTT on Individuals keeping in mind the mental health or the factors for OTT media growth. Regrettably, there hasn't been any systematic empirical study on how social media contributed to the proliferation of over-the-top content on the Internet and its entanglement with the prevailing social discourse. In this research, the researchers studied the influence of social media platforms and their current trends and practices in powering up OTT media consumption in India.

3. Research Objectives

RO1 - To examine the role and impact of social networking sites in promoting OTT media consumption in India.

RO2- To identify existing trends and practices for increasing OTT media consumption through social media additionally incorporating the case study method.

4. Methodology

The study's exploratory research design focuses particularly on the Indian context, where the number of OTT and social media users has recently expanded dramatically. This paper implemented a mixed-method approach, utilizing secondary data from numerous sources in a thematic and theoretical manner & primary data from OTT and social media users. The study furthermore includes case studies for greater understanding. Primary data was subsequently examined employing the chi-square statistic using SPSS and a thematic approach.

4.1 Research Hypotheses

For each relationship tested in the Chi-Square Analysis, there is a Null Hypothesis (H_0) and an Alternative Hypothesis (H_1):

1. Awareness of OTT Content Through Social Media & Perception of Social Media as an Information Source-
 H_0 : There is no significant relationship between knowing about OTT content through social media and considering social media as a satisfactory information source.
 H_1 : There is a significant relationship between knowing about OTT content through social media and considering social media as a satisfactory information source.
2. Exploring More OTT Content After Seeing it on social media & Considering OTT Content Through social media-
 H_0 : There is no significant relationship between exploring OTT content after seeing it on social media and considering watching OTT content through social media.
 H_1 : There is a significant relationship between exploring OTT content after seeing it on social media and considering watching OTT content through social media.
3. Exploring More OTT Content After Seeing it on Social Media & Perceived Worth of Watching OTT Content-
 H_0 : There is no significant relationship between exploring OTT content on social media and perceiving it as worth watching.
 H_1 : There is a significant relationship between exploring OTT content on social media and perceiving it as worth watching.

4. Social Media Platform Used & OTT Platform Chosen After Social Media Exposure-

H_0 : The choice of social media platform has no significant impact on which OTT platform the user selects.

H_1 : The choice of social media platform significantly impacts which OTT platform the user selects.

5. Social Media as a Marketing tool for OTT Content

Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are increasingly playing a crucial role in building audiences and driving conversations for major media brands and content owners (Jha et al., 2016). Social media significantly impacts communication between companies and consumers, serving as a platform for socializing, discussing interests, and learning new things, while also serving as a marketing tool (Kelly-Holmes, 2016; Frick et al, 2015). Companies are leveraging social media and its communities to promote their services, products, and company policies (Frick et al, 2015).

5.1. Social Media and Audience Engagement

"Audience engagement (also, user engagement) refers to the cognitive, emotional, or affective experiences that users have with media content or brands. Contrary to passive exposure to news content, engagement denotes an active and intentional orientation toward what users read, view, or hear". These platforms provide an excellent testing ground for identifying what content resonates most with the audience, and once they find what resonates best on the organic platforms, they explore paid promotions on these channels (Jha et al., 2016). Some of the tools for Audience engagement on social media to promote OTT content are as follows:

- **Reach and visibility:** Brands target their audience by gathering customer data, employing linguistic strategies to understand their interests and content preferences, and understanding content-specific algorithms on social media platforms (Mahoney & Tang, 2017).
- **Content promotion:** Paid social media advertising allows businesses to pay for audience clicks or views, but brands should approach communities as genuine, fostering commitment through constant communication and dedication (Evans, 2010; Kelly-Holmes, 2016).
- **User interaction:** Seeing as online audiences can actively interact with media, online material can be co-created or even reinvented (Walmsley, 2016).

Engaging users in the business community enhances products and services, while social media platforms' algorithms constantly determine which content to display to users (Kelly-Holmes, 2016).

- **Real-time feedback:** OTT platforms can get real-time user input via social media platforms, which helps them quickly handle issues, answer questions, and modify their content plans in response to audience feedback.
- **Influencer Marketing:** Influencers often understand the value of social media engagement, benefiting businesses by minimizing justifications (Belew, 2014). Proper influencer engagement can generate a return on investment, facilitate relationships, and foster customer and audience loyalty. Influencer engagement can be achieved through celebrity endorsements (Frick et al., 2015). Celebrities' endorsements can enhance audience engagement by promoting their content, as users often share content from celebrities, they follow online.
- **User-generated Content:** Social media content, including comments and shared content, is a crucial aspect of the 'working consumer', who can co-create value for a business (Kelly-Holmes, 2016; Evans, 2010).

Audience engagement can be categorized into various sub-categories, such as engagement features, reader-inclusive pronouns, questions, and directives, and key dimensions like enthusiasm, enjoyment, attention, absorption, sharing of content, learning, and endorsing (Fu, 2012). Understanding communities and audiences is crucial for content providers like OTT platforms to create effective engagement forms, including comments, entertaining content, and social actions, based on their audience's needs and wants (Frick et al, 2015).

5.2. OTT Platforms' Social Media Marketing Strategies

Social media is gaining prominence in various aspects of our lives, leading to increased behavioral and perceptual engagement among customers on major platforms like Facebook, Google+, Snapchat, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter. Offering a new platform for commercial, social, political, and educational interactions, and enabling people, organizations, and even governments to exchange information, thoughts, products, and services (Alalwan et al., 2017; Dwivedi et al., 2017). Over-the-top (OTT) content producers and promotional teams collaborate with influencers to track audience engagement on social media. They use UGC content,

appropriate hashtags, and content teasers to generate anticipation and excitement. Social media platforms allow for targeted advertising, engagement, and customer service. OTT platforms also provide exclusive content and cross-promotions with other entertainment products to reach a wider audience. Analytics and optimization help identify content that resonates with their target audience, allowing for better campaigns. Content discovery is achieved through social media following, influencers, sponsored posts, and recommendations. Overall, OTT content promotion strategies aim to increase audience engagement.

6. Current trends and Practices on Social Media to Promote OTT Media Content

- **Content Created by Users:** Social media platforms like YouTube and Instagram can effectively market OTT content, including legendary titles, by sharing short videos, fanbases, and creative marketing activities.
- **Multichannel live streaming:** Multichannel live streaming allows content creators to reach a wider audience, create interactive viewing experiences, and foster community. It also helps creators build a loyal following, leads to more monetization opportunities, and provides viewers with a sense of belonging.
- **Promotional Content:**
 - **Blog:** Bloggers create a blog calendar with relevant themes, use Google AdWords-discovered keywords, publish high-quality content, and include a call to action for user engagement, boosting natural traffic.
 - **Critique Reviews & Ratings:** The media and entertainment industry are rapidly evolving, relying heavily on public opinion and social media platforms like IMDb and Rotten Tomatoes for audience retention (Sing et al., 2024).
- **The power of Viral content :** Viral videos on OTT platforms significantly impact content consumption, raising awareness and increasing consumption among Indian users through shared trailers, memes, and challenges.
- **Short-form video clips, such as YouTube shots and Instagram reels :** Reels on Instagram and YouTube shots are frequently utilized for showcasing OTT content by creating interesting video clips, such as teaser trailers, reels of highlights, or compacted scenes, that capture user attention.

- **Interactive storytelling:** Storytelling is a persuasive communication tool that engages audiences by piquing interest through interesting stories. It's essential in online social content, allowing businesses to share stories across platforms, attracting more attention, and fostering curiosity. Engaging withholding information or referring to something without defining its nature can foster curiosity and expectation, as people often make decisions based on their senses.
- **Livestream Events and Q&A Sessions:** To engage fans and build enthusiasm, promotional teams host live Q&A sessions, watch parties, and virtual events with cast members or OTT content creators on social media platforms.
- **Interactive Campaigns & User-Generated Content Challenges:** Social media buzz and virality can be produced via challenges or contests that inspire people to produce and distribute content about OTT series or films. They run interactive campaigns with polls, challenges, and quizzes to increase user participation and engagement with their content.
- **Augmented Reality Filters :** Custom augmented reality filters and lenses on social media platforms like Instagram and Snapchat allow users to engage with OTT content in entertaining and engaging ways.
- **Community Building:** Providers create social media groups for OTT content enthusiasts, like Instagram and Telegram channels, to connect, share, and debate their favorite content and celebrities.

7. Case Studies of Successful OTT Content Campaigns Via Social Media: Social media platforms have become an integral part of digital marketing strategy, allowing brands to connect with their audience in real-time and establish brand image. Netflix has leveraged social media optimization services to achieve billions in revenue. According to The Marcom Revenue (2024), Facebook has gained over 61 million followers through creative strategies, with nearly 90% of videos and images posted on the platform. Instagram has 19 million followers, with most posts featuring images, TV show scenes, engaging captions, and behind-the-scenes clips.

7.1. International OTT Content Campaigns on Social Media

- i. **Stranger Things:** Netflix effectively promoted "Stranger Things" on social media through influencer collaborations, interactive experiences, and teaser trailers, boosting the show's popularity through mystery, nostalgia, and word-of-mouth advertising.
- ii. **The Mandalorian:** Disney+ Hotstar boosted Star Wars "The Mandalorian" on social media, generating excitement through teaser trailers, behind-the-scenes videos, and viral GIFs featuring the iconic character Baby Yoda.

7.2. Indian OTT Content Campaigns on Social Media

- i. **Sacred Games:** Netflix's Sacred Games, a successful Indian series, gained popularity through social media promotion, featuring teaser trailers, character posters, and collaborations with Indian influencers, showcasing the effectiveness of targeted marketing.
- ii. **Mirzapur:** Amazon Prime's Mirzapur web series gained popularity through social media promotion, using Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube to engage followers. Teaser trailers, character posters, behind-the-scenes footage, and interactive Q&A sessions were used. Prime Video India launched a micro campaign to announce Season 2's release, demonstrating the value of a thorough social media approach in boosting OTT content interest in India.
- iii. **Family Man:** Amazon Prime Video, India's leading OTT service, has launched its second season of The Family Man, targeting fans aged 18-45. The campaign, which includes a virtual job hunt for Srikant Tiwari, interviews with corporate leaders, and a meme-making UGC contest, effectively uses photoshopped creatives. IVR technology, Zoom interviews, and hashtags #ExcitedForFamilyMan2 and #WantFamilyManNow to generate conversations beyond the Indian entrepreneurial and entertainment circles.

8. Analysis of Primary Data & Major Findings : An online survey was used in the study to gather primary data from 120 viewers aged 18 years & above. The questionnaire was constructed based on literature analysis, case studies, and expert opinions, created in Google Forms, and further disseminated via WhatsApp to reach the majority of responses. It was broken down into two sections: demographics and OTT consuming behavior, which included questions regarding

usage, habits, and perspectives. Respondents were selected using convenience sampling. A total of 117 responses were recorded. The Results indicated that most respondents are aware of OTT content from social media and seek additional information before watching. Respondents believe that the information shared on social media platforms is reasonable and valuable. Instagram and YouTube are regarded as more effective than other platforms for increasing interest in OTT content. They hold a neutral opinion of social media applications that provide adequate

information concerning OTT material, from planning to finalizing the show, social media promotion influences respondents to view OTT content.

8.1 Results of the Chi-Square Test & Hypothesis Testing

The Chi-Square Test was used to ascertain if significant relationships exist between key survey questions. The Chi-Square Test checks whether two survey questions are statistically related. There is a significant association between the two variables if the p-value is less than 0.05.

Table. 01 Chi-Square Test Results
Source- Author's contribution

Survey Question 1	Survey Question 2	Chi-Square Value (χ^2)	p-value	Result
Did you know about OTT content through social media?	Do social media apps provide enough information about OTT?	36.008	0.0029	Significant (Yes, they are related)
Did you try to explore more OTT content after seeing it on social media?	Have you considered OTT content through social media?	42.189	0.00085	Significant (Yes, exploration leads to OTT consideration)
Did you try to explore more OTT content after seeing it on social media?	Do you feel it worth watching OTT content after seeing it on social media	48.015	0.00018	Significant (Yes, people who explore find it valuable)
Which social media platform do you use most for OTT recommendations?	Which OTT platforms have you chosen after seeing them on social media?	3090.574	<0.0001	Highly Significant (Different platforms lead to different OTT choices).

Hypothesis Testing the Direct Relationships -

- 1) For Awareness of OTT Content Through social media & Perception of social media as an Information Source, the Chi-Square Value (χ^2): 36.008 and p-value: 0.0029 (Significant)

Result: Since $p < 0.05$, we reject H_0 .

Conclusion: Individuals are more inclined to believe that social media is a reliable source of OTT information if they find OTT content there.

- 2) For Exploring More OTT Content After Seeing it on social media & Considering OTT Content Through social media, Chi-Square Value (χ^2): 42.189 and p-value: 0.00085 (Significant)

Result: Since $p < 0.05$, we reject H_0 .

Conclusion: The impact of social media on decision-making is confirmed by the fact that people who look into additional OTT content after seeing it on social media are more inclined to think about watching it.

- 3) For Exploring More OTT Content After Seeing it on social media & Perceived Worth of Watching OTT Content, Chi-Square Value (χ^2): 48.015 and p-value: 0.00018 (Significant)

Result: Since $p < 0.05$, we reject H_0 .

Conclusion: After viewing OTT videos on social media, users are more inclined to think it's worthwhile and worthwhile to watch.

- 4) Social Media Platform Used & OTT Platform Chosen After Social Media Exposure, Chi-Square Value (χ^2): 3090.574 and p-value: < 0.0001 (Highly Significant)

Result: Since $p < 0.05$, we reject H_0 .

Conclusion: The social media platform a person uses strongly influences which OTT platform they choose, suggesting that marketing efforts should focus on platform-specific audience preferences.

All hypotheses showed statistically significant relationships ($p < 0.05$), indicating that social media significantly impacts OTT content awareness, exploration, perceived value, and platform selection. For analyzing the open-ended question common themes were identified in responses. The key insights were summarized based on patterns.

8.2. Interpretation of Open-Ended Responses

The open-ended questions offer qualitative information about how social media affects the consumption of OTT material. For analyzing the open-ended question common

themes were identified in responses. The key insights were summarized based on patterns.

Q9: Mention the OTT Content You Considered Through Social Media.

Key Insights:

- Social media has an impact on OTT content selection, particularly for well-liked series.
- Some users use social media to discover platforms rather than specific content.
- A minority of users remain unaffected by social media promotions.

Q12: Have You Experienced Any Social Media Practices for Promoting OTT Content?

Key Themes in Responses: Respondents identified various social media marketing methods, including promotional content, video content, audience engagement, viral content, user-generated content, live streaming, and interactive storytelling.

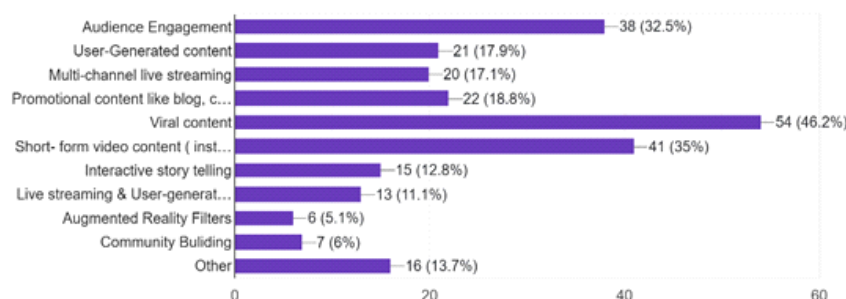
Key Insights:

- OTT content promotion is highly diverse across social media.
- Short videos & user-generated content seem to be the most effective promotional tools.
- Engagement-based marketing (polls, discussions) also plays a role in OTT content promotion.

Figure. 01 social media Trends and Practices experienced by users for promoting OTT content.

Source- Author's contribution

Q.12. Have you ever experienced any social media practice for promoting OTT content, mentioned below ?
117 responses



Respondents believe it is worthwhile to view content after gaining knowledge or information from social media platforms since they are intrigued by varied trends and behaviors as shown in Figure 01. Social media influences what OTT content users consider watching. Users experience a variety of promotional strategies, with short videos and engagement tactics being the most effective.

9. Potential challenges and ethical considerations of ott content promoted through social media

OTT platforms should ensure content moderation, privacy, algorithmic bias, inappropriate targeting, brand safety, transparency, regulatory compliance, and cultural

sensitivity when promoting content on social media. They should adhere to community guidelines, avoid targeting sensitive topics, and disclose sponsorship or payment information. Additionally, they should avoid algorithmic bias, push mature content to younger users, and maintain transparency to prevent misleading audiences. Adherence to advertising and consumer protection standards is crucial to avoid legal consequences.

10. Conclusion

Social media has significantly impacted communication, enabling people to connect through various channels and devices, and enabling marketers to reach their targeted audiences more precisely. The current environment enhances customer value and businesses must explore various communication methods to gather valuable information and personalize their brand and products. With billions of monthly active users, social media sites like Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and Telegram have become essential for the expansion and promotion of the over-the-top (OTT) sector. When it comes to online entertainment platforms, social media apps like Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube significantly influence consumer behavior and decision-making. About the study's objectives, the research demonstrated everything that has been requested, including how social media is promoting OTT consumption in India through contemporary practices and trends like social media marketing. Additionally, content producers are producing both organic and sponsored material, which may be seen as promotional or advertisement content. From one-way to two-way interactive communication, the vocabulary of advertising has changed, with the main parts being persuasion, amusement, and discussion. Social media has enabled users to profit from other individuals by utilizing content created by other users, which can assist them in creating additional value for their company. To engage with online audiences, OTT content brands use different forms of audience engagement, such as reason and tickle, which involve asking questions, enlightening people about anything, offering acceptable deals, or appealing to the audience's emotional side, from the insights it is clear that the over-the-top (OTT) industry is driven by social media. The study's conclusions are intended to promote the industry's continuous growth and development, with a beneficial influence on the video sector that is projected to continue in the future. Furthermore, marketers should focus on personalizing OTT advertising depending on user behaviour across various social media channels.

11. Suggestions

OTT platforms can improve content regulation using age verification technologies and moderation strategies, hence fortifying safety precautions. The study also recommends encouraging companies and legislators to work together to create social media marketing plans. In addition to educating themselves about online content, parents can talk openly with their kids about appropriate online conduct.

12. Future scope and limitation

- Further research could explore the relationship between using means of audience participation on social media and how the audience interacts with such forms.
- Lack of existing literature and limited secondary data.

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Trust in Social Media Credibility and Cybersecurity Incidents: A study about user's perceptions

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the association among users' opinions of cybersecurity issues and their trust in social media trustworthiness. Social media platforms, which have more than five billion users globally, have transformed how we connect with each other, but they have also raised significant privacy and security concerns. It noted how consumers make themselves more vulnerable to risks of online threats, including identity theft and data breaches, the more personal information they post on social media. It examines factors that influence consumers' trust in information on these platforms, particularly in light of recent cyber breaches that have eroded trust in social media platforms. A mixed-methods approach was used with an online survey to collect demographic, social media usage, trust in reliability, and cybersecurity event experience data from 80 respondents. The results demonstrate a correlation between users' preventive behaviors such as creating strong passwords and enrolling in two-factor authentication, and their knowledge of cybersecurity challenges. Highlighting the need for enhanced security protocols and educational efforts for users, the study aims to build trust and protect individual data on social media platforms. Finally, it encourages further exploration regarding the potential influence of cybersecurity awareness on user behavior and perceptions of credibility in the digital world.

Keywords: cybersecurity, social media, behaviour and users.

1. Introduction

In recent years, social media has become an indispensable aspect of daily life for billions of people worldwide. As of early 2024, there were more than five billion active social media user identities worldwide (Kemp, 2024b). This significant event emphasises the pervasiveness of social media platforms in people's lives across a range of global regions and demographics. Furthermore, according to recent GWI research, the typical social media user now spends roughly two hours and twenty-three minutes a day on different social media platforms (Kemp, 2024c). This substantial time commitment highlights how important social media is to millions of people's daily routines and leisure activities globally (Durrani, 2024; Kemp, 2024b). Put differently, social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok have completely changed how people engage with one another, communicate, and share information (Feldkamp, 2021). Social media's widespread use has made the world a global village by facilitating instantaneous communication and connections across borders. It has given people the confidence to voice their thoughts, express themselves, and engage in public

debate on a variety of topics.

public discussion on a variety of topics. But in addition to its advantages, social media has brought about a number of difficulties and urgent issues. The privacy issue is one of them. People are sharing increasingly personal information online since the emergence of social media platforms, frequently without fully comprehending the possible repercussions "(Ayaburi and Treku, 2020; Jain et al., 2021)". People are now more susceptible to identity theft, data breaches, and online surveillance due to the extensive sharing of personal information "(Al-Daraiseh et al., 2014; Ali et al., 2018; Alotaibi et al., 2021; Ilzan et al., 2023)". Furthermore, the way social media companies oversee user data and privacy policies has drawn criticism (Lapowsky, 2018). Facebook's unlawful user data harvesting was made public in 2014 by the Cambridge Analytica scandal, which raised serious privacy concerns (Confessore, 2018). Millions of Facebook users' personal information was unethically gathered and commercialised without their consent (Hsu, 2018). Given Facebook's connection to the data breach, many users blamed the social media company for the compromise of their data after it happened (Brown, 2020;

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Lapowsky, 2018). Facebook's apologies did not improve user confidence, underscoring larger concerns about social media privacy (Confessore, 2018). Recent studies have examined a variety of privacy-related subjects, including user attitudes, behaviour, and perceptions on social media platforms. Studies have examined a wide range of factors that affect people's willingness to divulge personal information online, such as trust (Faqih, 2016), personality traits (Skrinjaric et al., 2018), risk perception (Maseeh et al., 2021; Zhou, 2011), benefit perception (Ozturk et al., 2017), demographic factors (Li, 2011; Zhong et al., 2024), and knowledge and experience in privacy settings (Debatin et al., 2009; Taddei and Contena, 2013). Gahagan et al. (2016) found a positive correlation between young people's self-disclosure and cyberbullying. However, when information is shared, used, or even accessed without a person's consent, that constitutes a privacy violation (Aivazpour and Rao, 2020). Information posted on these platforms makes users more vulnerable and presents them with cyberthreats, according to Gharibi and Shaabi (2012). According to Loiacono (2015) and Robinson (2017), cybercriminals can obtain information on social networking sites and steal people's identities to perpetrate fraud or harm their reputation. "The extent to which users comprehend the significance of information security and their roles and actions to implement adequate levels of information security control to safeguard the organization's data and networks" is the definition of cybersecurity awareness" (Shaw et al., 2009). Given the multifaceted nature of privacy and the shortcomings of social media privacy controls, more research is necessary, taking into account cybersecurity awareness independently of privacy behaviour and its impact on users' self-disclosure. Cybersecurity has only lately been examined as a means of explaining information disclosure. Thus, the purpose of this study is to comprehend how users' trust in social media credibility and cybersecurity incidents.

2. Review of Literature

Social media use is widespread in society at large. A new set of problems and issues facing the 21st century have been brought to light by the growing popularity of social media sites.

Since social media is their primary means of communication, the current generation is far more vulnerable than previous generations to financial loss or damage to their reputation.

"Users' comprehension of risks and how to protect themselves from cyber-attacks is therefore fundamental in modern life," claims Moallem (2018) (p. 80). A 2019 Pew

Research Centre study found that 73% of US adults use YouTube and 69% use Facebook. Instagram, Pinterest, Snapchat, LinkedIn, Twitter, Reddit, and WhatsApp have significantly lower user percentages. Eighty percent of people in the 18–24 age range use social media. More precisely, 45% use Twitter, 78% use Snapchat, 71% use Instagram, 94% use YouTube, and 80% use Facebook. In her research, Richardson (2017) found that 70% of participants used Instagram and 90% used Facebook and Snapchat. According to Pew Research Centre (2019), the majority of users check their accounts several times throughout the day. Jiliang, et al., (2015). The study examines how consumers may find it difficult to locate reliable information due to the proliferation of user-generated material on social media, which can be made worse by cybersecurity events that erode confidence in the platforms and the information they provide. W. Adam (2018). This study focus on algorithms for identifying fake news, the study examines how credibility is evaluated on social media platforms like Wikipedia and Twitter. The research highlights the need to determine the reliability of information in these contexts, drawing an implicit connection between incidents of cyber trust and these compromise issues. Ranieri, et al., (2013), The study focuses upon how identity, trust and credibility are related issues in social networking sites. It stresses the fact that information security issues may lower trust and credibility, personal and informational risk that users themselves are required to mitigate. Skopik et al., (July 2013), This paper describes the mistrust models formulated in this study as vital for the control of information disclosure and verification of the incident accuracy in social cyber defense coalitions. They help mitigate the challenges associated with revealing sensitive details about cyber security participants and searching for ones who are willing to cooperate in a meaningful way. Papadopoulos and colleagues (2016), This study seeks to understand the issue of trust placed on social media information and the trust of such information in the first place. The paper however notes the proliferation of false information, and its implications for trust. It underlines the quest for means to identify such suspicious information as a pressing dimension of cybersecurity issues, alongside the circumvention of vulnerable information.

Singhal et al., June 2023. The research calls for more confidence on the part of social media users on the reliability of some information especially concerning the authenticity of cybersecurity incident reports and moves a step further to show the extent to which the abuse of social media through providing incorrect information in relation

to cybersecurity can negatively impact user experiences and businesses brand images. Jethava et al., (2024). The research states that trust of users in social online networks is crucial due to the rising number of cybersecurity incidents that attack specific user data and even the site itself, like having a profile being cloned or the site being Sybil attacked. Shusas et al., (May 2024). The research reported that there was a general faith among the youth that social media organizations are best placed to manage the content of labelling and this is an issue of trust. But the author does not investigate further into the relationship that this trust has with the occurrence of such events as cyber security attacks. Middleton, S., (2015). The study examines and evaluates issues of trust and confidence in social media communication, especially on matters dealing with the authentication of reports involving photographs and video recordings. A. Hussien (2022). The study points out the fact that the problem of trust worthiness of social media is on the rise more so because of security threats. It points to the necessity of performing fundamental security evaluations and providing measures in order to increase social networks and applications credibility. Herath et al., (2022). The paper outlines the relationship between trust and cyber safety cognizance in social media focusing on the manner there is cyber awareness among users' behavior which lowers their reactions to incidents such as identity theft and data breaches. Z. Zhang (2015). The work deals with trust concern while substantiating multimedia social networks and emphasizes on counter measures and risk management to mitigate risk in the area of information security. It raises the level of security threats inherent in social media by emphasizing the use of sound measures to improve user confidence. Carminati et al. (2022). Trust management is very important in online social networks because it replaces users' security judgement of the level of risks and reward the network offers. Trust can also be eroded through cyber-attacks, hence the urgent need to take measures that restore trust and safeguard users' data. Wierzbicki, A. (2018). It illustrates the issue of trust, the searching through fake news algorithms on social networks such as Wikipedia and Twitter and assessing the trustworthiness of information on social networks in relation to the fake news and its verification on such platforms. This is curtailed however held together through trust and cyber security breach incidents. Pendyala, V. (2020). The study highlights the issue with credibility in the context of cybersecurity incidents, while at the same time considering the issue of trust within online social networks to be contentious. It investigates modern techniques such as machine learning to enhance the precision of the data

provided on such platforms. Gruzdt et al., (2023). The conduct of the research undertakes the evaluation of antisocial and misinformation behaviors in social media, considering these issues as the sources of danger to users, and users' credibility and trust which are crucial for effective management of give security incident on the life cycle of the platform. Patnayakuni et al., (2017). The social media characteristics, its features, and its effects on cyber security awareness are evaluated; especially on the aspect of users' social media trust factors which determines their ability to search for and share cyber security information of even how to evade technology threats. AlHadid et al., (2023). User perception of security and privacy have an influence on their trust towards social media platforms, according to the questionnaire. The trust has a bearing on the amount of information information is shared, this clearly points out that addressing cybersecurity issues is fundamental to the preservation of trust and credibility. Ozkaya, E. (2018). Social networking sites put users at risk for privacy problems and social engineering, which can lead to major cybersecurity risks. The fact that users are often unaware of these risks highlights the need for enhanced security procedures, user privacy control, and regulatory involvement to protect sensitive data about people and companies. Albulayhi et al. (2022). Security and privacy are crucial because people regularly share private and sensitive business information on social media. The study highlights the need for improved social media architecture and user education to reduce privacy risks and identifies barriers to data protection.

3. Objectives of the study

1. To find out the main elements that affect users' trust in posts on social media.
2. To examine the techniques and steps are the most successful for protecting people's social media accounts from cyber threats and illegal access.

4. Methodology

The relationship between users' views of cybersecurity issues and their belief in social media credibility is examined in this study. A sample of 80 respondents' data was analysed using a mixed-methods technique. This section on methodology describes the study's research design, participant recruitment, data gathering, and analysis methods.

To find out how respondents felt about cybersecurity risk and privacy issues related to social media use, researcher conducted the survey. In total, 80 respondents were included in the study, they were conveniently sampled via online channels or through email and social media

groups. The participants reported a wide range of age, gender, and occupation, providing a representative cross section of active social media users.

An online survey with five essential sections was used to collect data:

1. Data on Demographics: Age, gender, educational attainment, and occupation.
2. Social media uses: Likert-scale questions measuring social media platform uses (e.g., how often use social media, platforms, and primary purpose).
3. Trust in social media credibility:

Trust the information shared, factors increase trust in a post and authenticity of contents.

4. Incidents involving cybersecurity: Enquiries concerning knowledge and encounters with cybersecurity incidents (such as hacking and phishing).

5. General perception.

To make sure the questions were valid, dependable and clear, a small sample of participants (n=10) pre-tested the

questionnaire. Changes were made in response to the comments received.

Individuals shared the survey online through multiple channels, including messaging apps, social media and email. To encourage honest engagement, responses were kept anonymous and confidential. Informed consent was obtained from every participant before attempting the survey. Participants were provided information about the goals of the study, the right to withdraw from the study at any point, and details about how their data would be utilized, all in line with ethical research practices.

5. Analysis of Data and Findings.

Among 80 participants, the study examines important demographic and behavioural patterns pertaining to account security procedures and trust in social media posts. The results, which are based on strong quantitative measures, provide light on the interactions between online trust-building behaviours and security procedures and demographic factors.

Table:1. Educational qualifications distributed among different job categories influenced by age and gender groups?

Age Group	Gender (Female)	Gender (Male)	Total by Age Group	Occupation	Count of Educational Qualification
18-24	16	20	36	Student	41
25-34	16	25	41	Research scholar	21
35-44	1	2	3	Working Professional	8
Grand Total	33	47	80	Self-employed	8
				Housewife	1
				Police	1
Total	33	47	80		80

The dataset consists of 80 participants who have been sorted by age, gender, occupation, and level of education. There are more men (47 participants) than women (33 participants), according to the gender distribution. Most responders are between the ages of 18 and 34, with 36 participants being between the ages of 18 and 24 and 41 being between the ages of 25 and 34. Three participants, or a tiny portion, are between the ages of 35 and 44. Occupational analysis shows that "Students" (41

participants) are the largest category, followed by "Research Scholars" (21 individuals). Other occupations, such as "Working Professionals" and "Self-employed," each have eight participants, while "Housewives" and "Police personnel" are under-represented. The majority of people who are interested in education and research are highlighted by this distribution, which is likely due to rising internet usage and a greater awareness of digital issues.

Table:2. The main elements that affect users' trust in posts on social media.

Factors	response	percentage
Verified source	42	52.5%
Known individual's organization	21	26.2%
Popularity likes, shares	12	15%
Others	5	6.3%

Participants were asked about the factors that boost their confidence in social media messages. The results are shocking: 42 participants, or 52.50%, selected "Verified sources" as the most crucial component. This study highlights the importance of objective validation in fostering confidence. "Known individuals or organisations" rank second (26.25%) (21) demonstrating how user

perceptions are influenced by institutional or personal familiarity. In contrast, 12 participants, or 15.00%, are influenced by "Popularity (likes and shares)," suggesting a minor but noteworthy reliance on social validation. "Other" factors, which account for 6.25% (05) of the total, suggest the presence of specialised or individual preferences that necessitate further qualitative research.

Table:3. Techniques and steps are the most successful for protecting people's social media accounts from cyber threats and illegal access.

Techniques and Steps	Participants	percentage
Two Factors Authentication	26	32.5%
Strong Password	23	28.7%
Avoiding Unknown Links	28	35%
None	03	3.7%

Asked about account security measures, participants showed a proactive commitment to internet safety. "Avoiding unknown links" accounted for 35.00% of all actions, with "Strong passwords" (28.75%) and "Two-factor authentication" (32.50%) following shortly behind. The group's relatively high level of cybersecurity expertise is demonstrated by the fact that only 3.75% of respondents said they had not implemented any security measures.

6. Conclusion

The study on "Trust in Media Credibility and Cybersecurity Incidents" highlights the relationship between social media operation, stoner trust, and cybersecurity mindfulness. As social media platforms continue to dominate communication, understanding how druggies perceive credibility and security is pivotal. The findings indicate that druggies are decreasingly vulnerable to cybersecurity pitfalls due to their amenability to partake information online without acceptable understanding of the pitfalls involved.

This exploration underscores the significance of fostering cybersecurity mindfulness among druggies, particularly in light of high-profile incidents that have eroded trust in

social media platforms. The data collected from 80 actors reveals significant correlations between druggies' trust in information sources and their cybersecurity practices, similar as the relinquishment of strong watchwords and two-factor authentication.

also, the study emphasizes the necessity for social media companies to enhance their sequestration programs and security measures to rebuild stoner confidence. As misinformation proliferates, druggies must develop critical evaluation chops to discern believable information from unreliable sources. unborn exploration should explore deeper into the cerebral factors impacting stoner geste regarding information sharing and cybersecurity practices.

In conclusion, addressing these challenges requires a cooperative trouble from druggies, social media companies, and policymakers to produce a safer online terrain that prioritizes stoner trust and security. By enhancing stoner education on cybersecurity issues, we can alleviate pitfalls and foster a more secure digital geography.

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Authorship should be limited to those who have made a significant contribution to the conception, design, execution, or interpretation of the reported study. All those who have made significant contributions should be listed as co-authors. Where others have participated in certain substantive aspects of the research project, they should be acknowledged or listed as contributors. The corresponding author should ensure that all appropriate co-authors are included in the paper and that all co-authors have seen and approved the final version of the paper and have agreed to its submission for publication. The corresponding author must maintain communication with all the co-authors.

7. Disclosure and Conflicts of Interest:

All authors should disclose in their manuscript any financial or another substantive conflict of interest that might be construed to influence the results or interpretation of their manuscript. All sources of financial support for the project should be disclosed.

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The authors are not permitted to post published articles on their personal or institutional websites. However, they should post the published article information with a clear indication that the paper was published in the journal of Pragyaa: Journal of Mass Communication with a link to the journal's website.

9. Fundamental Errors in Published Works:

When an author discovers a significant error or inaccuracy in his or her own published work, it is the author's obligation to promptly notify the journal editor or publisher and cooperate with the editor to retract or correct the paper.

PRAGYAAN: JOURNAL OF MASS COMMUNICATION

(UGC-Care Journal)

Peer Review Policy

Peer review is an integral part of our research journal. All the research papers will be sent to the Reviewer after concealing the name of the author and any other identification mark in this regard. We ensure that Peer review will be fair, honest and maintain confidentiality.

The practice of peer review is to ensure that only good research papers are published. It is an objective process at the heart of good scholarly publishing and is carried out by all reputable scientific journals. Our referees play a vital role in maintaining high standards and all manuscripts are peer-reviewed following the procedure outlined below.

Initial manuscript evaluation: The Editor first evaluates all manuscripts. It is rare, but it is possible for an exceptional manuscript to be accepted at this stage. Manuscripts rejected at this stage are insufficiently original, have serious scientific flaws, have poor grammar or English language, or are outside the aims and scope of the journal. Those that meet the minimum criteria are normally passed on to at least 2 experts for review.

Type of Peer Review: Our Policy employs blind reviewing, where both the referee and author remain anonymous throughout the process.

How the referee is selected: Whenever possible, referees are matched to the paper according to their expertise and our database is constantly being updated.

Referee reports: Referees are asked to evaluate whether the manuscript. Follows appropriate ethical guidelines - Has results that are clearly presented and support the conclusions - Correctly references previous relevant work.

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How long does the review process take: The time required for the review process is dependent on the response of the referees. In rare cases for which it is extremely difficult to find a second referee to review the manuscript, or when the one referee's report has thoroughly convinced the Editor. Decisions at this stage to accept, reject or ask the author for a revision are made on the basis of only one referee's report. The Editor's decision will be sent to the author with recommendations made by the referees, which usually includes verbatim comments by the referees. This process takes one month. Revised manuscripts may be returned to the initial referees who may then request another revision of a manuscript or in case, the second referee the entire process takes 2-3 months.

Final report: A final decision to accept or reject the manuscript will be sent to the author along with any recommendations made by the referees and may include verbatim comments by the referees.

Editor's Decision will be final: Referees are to advise the editor, who is responsible for the final decision to accept or reject the research paper for publication.

Guidelines for Reviewers

The peer reviewers are responsible for critically reading and evaluating a manuscript in their specialty field, and then providing respectful, constructive, and honest feedback to authors about their submission. It is appropriate for the Peer Reviewers to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the article, ways to improve the strength and quality of the work, and evaluate the relevance and originality of the manuscript.

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- **Relevance:** Is this paper relevant as per the objective of the journal?
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- **Support:** Are the claims supported by experimental/theoretical results?
- **Originality:** Is the article original and interesting to warrant publication? Are the ideas/results novel and previously unknown?
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- **Language:** Is the paper written in correct English and style?

Of these, the main factors taken into account are significance and originality.

Therefore, Peer review assists Editor-in-Chief/Editor and the Editorial Board in making editorial decisions and through the editorial communications with the author may also assist the author in improving the paper.

IMS Unison University

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IMS Unison University at a glance

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The Journey started in 1996 as IMS Dehradun, a non-profit organization set by a group of visionaries dedicated to the cause of changing the face of professional education in Northern India.

The University today provides a platform for excellence in teaching, learning, and administration. Its State-of-the-art Infrastructure facilitates in developing well trained graduate, post-graduate and doctorate professionals to meet the ever-changing needs of the corporate world.

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Uttarakhand, INDIA
E: info@iuu.ac, W: www.iuu.ac
Established under Uttarakhand Act No. 13 of 2013,
Recognized by UGC under section 2(f) of UGC Act, 1956