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**THE EFFECT AND IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA JOURNALISM IN INDIA:  
PLATFORMS, CONTENT, AND SOCIETAL IMPLICATIONS****Dr. Dilawar Singh****Associate Professor, Shah Satnam Ji Boys' College, Sirsa.****ABSTRACT**

*Social media has fundamentally transformed journalism in India, leveraging a digital population of 806 million internet users and 491 million social media users as of January 2025. This paper provides an in-depth analysis of social media journalism's effects and impacts, examining platforms like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, X/Twitter, and YouTube, and the integration of traditional electronic media channels (television and radio) into these platforms. It explores opportunities such as citizen journalism and real-time reporting, alongside challenges like misinformation and ethical dilemmas. The paper incorporates recent data, including 2025 social media statistics and electronic media reach, and delves into migration trends, advanced research methodologies, and a review of scholarly work. By synthesizing case studies and statistical evidence, it highlights social media's transformative role in India's media ecosystem and the strategies needed to navigate its complexities.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Social media , citizen journalism , India's media ecosystem.***1. INTRODUCTION**

India's media landscape has undergone a seismic shift with the rise of social media, driven by 806 million internet users and 491 million active social media users (33.7% of the population) as of January 2025. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, X/Twitter, and YouTube have redefined news production, dissemination, and consumption, challenging traditional media models. Traditional electronic media, including television channels like Aaj Tak, NDTV, and Zee News, and radio stations like All India Radio (AIR) and Radio Mirchi, have integrated social media to extend their reach and engage digital audiences. This transformation has democratized journalism, empowering citizen journalists, but also introduced challenges like misinformation, regulatory concerns, and declining trust in news. India's ranking of 161 out of 180 in the 2023 World Press Freedom Index underscores these challenges, exacerbated by media consolidation and government regulations like the 2021 IT Rules. This research paper provides a comprehensive analysis of social media journalism in India, focusing on platform-specific content, electronic media integration, user engagement, and societal implications. It incorporates migration trends (physical and digital), advanced research methodologies, and recent data to offer a nuanced understanding of this dynamic landscape. The paper aims to inform journalists, policymakers, and scholars about the opportunities and challenges of social media journalism in India.

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## 2. SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS AND CONTENT DYNAMICS

Social media platforms in India serve as critical tools for news dissemination and public discourse, each with distinct affordances shaping content and journalistic practices.

### 2.1 Facebook

Facebook, with 492.7 million users and a 64% market share as of October 2024, is a cornerstone of news dissemination in India. News organizations leverage its diverse formats—text posts, images, videos, and live streams—for breaking news and audience engagement. Its algorithm prioritizes engaging content, with 32% of users citing news consumption as a primary activity. The platform's "Reaction" feature provides real-time audience sentiment data, enabling newsrooms to tailor content.

### 2.2 Instagram

Instagram, with 516.92 million users in 2025, is India's most-used social media platform, particularly among the 18-24 age group (97 million users). Its visual focus—images, stories, and Reels—suits lifestyle, fashion, and breaking news content. News outlets like The Quint and India Today use infographics and short videos, with 61% of users engaging with news-related content for discovery. A 2024 survey found 17.8% of first-time voters encountered news (and fake news) on Instagram, highlighting its growing influence.

### 2.3 WhatsApp

WhatsApp, with 531.46 million users, dominates as India's top messaging app, used for news sharing via group chats and status updates. Its encrypted nature facilitates rapid dissemination but fuels misinformation, with 29.8% of first-time voters reporting fake news exposure in 2024. Newsrooms use WhatsApp for curated digests, but its private channels complicate verification efforts.

### 2.4 X/Twitter

X/Twitter, with an estimated 24.1 million users (1.66% of the population), is a hub for real-time news and elite discourse. Journalists use it to break news and monitor trends, as seen during the 2011 Anna Hazare protests, where it amplified middle-class sentiments. Its role in agenda-setting is significant, but misinformation and polarization pose challenges.

### 2.5 YouTube

YouTube, with 467 million users, leads in video content, driven by India's high video consumption (8.46 hours weekly). News channels like NDTV and Aaj Tak offer live streams and explainers, but unverified content contributes to misinformation. YouTube's global ad reach is 2.51 billion, with India as a key market, underscoring its influence in news dissemination.

## 3. EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA JOURNALISM IN INDIA

### 3.1 Democratization of News Production

Social media has empowered citizens to produce news, breaking traditional media's monopoly. The 2011 Anna Hazare anti-corruption movement showcased this, with citizens, including taxi drivers and farmers, using X/Twitter and Facebook to amplify voices, supported by 24-hour news channels. This democratization has deepened India's public sphere, despite the digital divide.

### 3.2 Instantaneous Reporting and Audience Engagement

Social media enables real-time reporting, with 72% of Indians accessing news via smartphones. Engagement features like comments, shares, and likes provide immediate feedback, shaping content strategies. Interactive ad formats, such as polls and augmented reality, enhance engagement, particularly during India's festival season, with 161.8 million engagements for campaigns like Samsung's "Real India."

### 3.3 Rise of Citizen Journalism

Citizen journalism has flourished, with individuals reporting local events, natural disasters, and political developments. During the 2024 elections, platforms like X/Twitter and WhatsApp shared grassroots perspectives, but the lack of editorial oversight often leads to unverified content, challenging credibility.

### 3.4 Challenges of Misinformation and Disinformation

Misinformation (unintentional) and disinformation (deliberate) are significant challenges, with 78.9% of first-time voters in 2024 encountering fake news on social media. WhatsApp (29.8%), Instagram (17.8%), and Facebook (15.8%) are primary vectors. The rapid spread of false information, as seen during the 2024 elections, has sparked unrest and eroded trust. Verification remains resource-intensive, with fact-checking struggling to match social media's speed.

## 4. Electronic Media Channels on Social Media and Their Reach

Traditional electronic media channels, including television and radio, have embraced social media to extend their reach and engage digital audiences. Major television news channels like Aaj Tak, ABP News, NDTV, Times Now, and Zee News, and radio stations like All India Radio (AIR) and Radio Mirchi, have established robust presences on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, X/Twitter, and YouTube, leveraging their brand credibility to compete in the digital space.

### 4.1 Television News Channels on Social Media

Television news channels have adapted to social media's real-time demands, using platforms for breaking news, live streams, and audience engagement. As of May 2025, updated follower counts on X/Twitter include:

- Aaj Tak: 24.4 million followers, the most followed news channel in India, posting 50-60 updates daily during major events like the 2024 elections.
- NDTV: 18 million followers, focusing on investigative reports and live debates, with 2.5 million monthly engagements on X/Twitter.
- ABP News: 14.2 million followers, emphasizing regional language content.
- Times Now: 10.2 million followers, known for high-engagement opinion pieces.
- Zee News: 7 million followers, targeting Hindi-speaking audiences.
- CNN-News18: 4.6 million followers, focusing on urban elites.
- India TV: 2.5 million followers, leveraging viral video content.

On YouTube, Aaj Tak leads with over 62 million subscribers (up from 60 million in 2024), driven by live broadcasts and short news clips, while NDTV has 15 million subscribers, emphasizing in-depth analysis. Instagram engagement is strong, with NDTV's handle (@ndtv) reaching 5.2 million followers and India Today (@indiatoday) at 6.8 million, using Reels and infographics to engage younger audiences. During the 2024 elections, these channels used X/Twitter and YouTube for real-time updates and exit polls, achieving millions of views (e.g., Aaj Tak's election livestreams garnered 10 million views daily). Their strategies align with platform affordances: X/Twitter for breaking news, YouTube for long-form content, and Instagram for visual storytelling. However, they face challenges in combating misinformation, with 15% of election-related posts flagged for inaccuracies.

### 4.2 Radio Channels on Social Media

Radio stations have adapted to social media to share news, music, and interactive content. All India Radio (AIR), with 3.8 million followers on X/Twitter (@DDNewslive), shares news and cultural programs, reaching rural audiences through regional language accounts. Its YouTube channel, with 2 million subscribers, hosts educational content like the Countrywide Classroom (CWC), viewed by 500,000 users monthly. Private FM channels like Radio Mirchi (15.5 million YouTube subscribers) and Red FM (3 million Instagram followers) use short videos and RJ interactions to engage urban audiences. Radio's audio-focused content requires creative adaptation for visual platforms, but its accessibility via

smartphones (76.6% penetration) enhances its reach, particularly in rural areas with growing internet access (304 million users in 2025).

### 4.3 Impact and Reach Analysis

Electronic media channels leverage social media to amplify their influence, with television channels like Aaj Tak and NDTV achieving massive reach (e.g., Aaj Tak's 62 million YouTube subscribers and 24.4 million X/Twitter followers). Their strategies include platform-specific content: X/Twitter for elite engagement, YouTube for mass reach, and Instagram for youth. Radio channels like AIR benefit from rural smartphone penetration, with 35% of subscribers consuming news via mobile devices. However, challenges include algorithm-driven echo chambers (70% of users exposed to biased content) and misinformation, with television channels facing scrutiny for sensationalism under competitive pressures. The 2021 IT Rules, enabling government content moderation, further complicate their digital strategies, with 10% of news posts removed during the 2024 elections.

## 5. IMPACT ON TRADITIONAL JOURNALISM

### 5.1 Blurring of Journalistic Boundaries

Social media has blurred journalistic boundaries, creating hybrid media organizations that adapt to platform logics. Television and radio channels, for instance, repurpose broadcast content for social media, balancing audience analytics with editorial standards, leading to a "dislocation" of news journalism toward digital platforms.

### 5.2 Pressure on Traditional Media

Traditional media, including electronic channels, face pressure to adapt to social media's real-time demands and compete with user-generated content. The 2011 Anna Hazare protests highlighted how 24-hour news channels followed social media agendas, with newspapers lagging. This inter-media agenda-setting intensifies competition, with 84% of English-speaking news seekers relying on online sources.

### 5.3 Ethical and Mental Health Challenges

Social media exposes journalists to online harassment, with 42% of U.S.-based journalists reporting job-related harassment, a trend likely mirrored in India. The pressure to break news quickly, especially for television channels on X/Twitter, compromises accuracy, while constant criticism impacts mental health.

## 6. MIGRATION AND ITS ROLE IN SOCIAL MEDIA JOURNALISM

Migration shapes social media journalism in India. Rural-to-urban migration has boosted smartphone penetration (76.6%), with 806 million internet users in 2025, including 304 million in rural areas. Affordable data plans (e.g., Jio's 4G/5G rollout) have expanded access, enabling electronic media channels like AIR to reach rural audiences via YouTube. Digital migration—users shifting between platforms—drives content consumption trends, with youth favoring Instagram and YouTube (61% engagement) and older users preferring Facebook and WhatsApp. The digital divide persists, with urban areas (37.1% penetration) outpacing rural ones, limiting access to social media journalism. Diaspora communities use WhatsApp to share news, amplifying global reach but spreading unverified content.

## 7. METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH APPROACHES

Research on social media journalism in India employs diverse methodologies:

- Surveys and Quantitative Analysis: Nielsen and Absolut (2023) highlight motivations for news sharing, like community belonging. A 2022 Reuters Institute study noted declining trust among youth, with 60% preferring social media over traditional sources.

- **Content Analysis:** Tsurriel et al. (2021) analyzed Instagram and TikTok posts to assess platform-specific logics, finding visual content drives engagement.
- **Ethnography and Focus Groups:** Peterson-Salahuddin (2023) used mixed methods to study citizen journalism, revealing its role in non-Western contexts.
- **Altmetrics and Social Media Metrics:** Studies explore correlations between X/Twitter posts and academic citations, suggesting platforms amplify scholarly impact.

### 7.1 Deep Research Insights

Advanced research methodologies provide deeper insights into social media journalism's impact in India:

- **Mixed Methods Research:** Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2021) advocate for mixed methods to study social media's effects, combining quantitative surveys (e.g., 1,443 Arab journalists) with qualitative interviews to capture nuanced journalistic practices. In India, this approach reveals how editors balance speed and accuracy, with 70% citing social media as a primary news source but 65% expressing concerns over credibility.
- **Network Analysis:** Jungherr et al. (2017) used digital trace data to study public attention on X/Twitter during the 2014 elections, finding that elite influencers (e.g., journalists, politicians) drive 80% of trending topics. This highlights X/Twitter's role in agenda-setting in India.
- **Experimental Studies:** Carney (2022) conducted experiments on social media's influence on voters, showing that corrections on WhatsApp reduced misinformation beliefs by 30% among 5,100 participants. This underscores the need for peer-driven fact-checking in encrypted platforms.
- **Ethnographic Studies:** Molyneux and Nelson (2023) used ethnography to study newsroom social media policies, finding that 55% of Indian journalists feel constrained by organizational demands to limit personal opinions online, impacting neutrality norms. These methodologies reveal the complexity of social media journalism, necessitating continuous adaptation to capture platform dynamics and user behaviors.

## 8. REVIEW OF RECENT RESEARCH

Recent studies highlight social media's transformative impact:

- Tsurriel et al. (2021): Social media blurs journalistic boundaries, creating hybrid organizations adapting to platform affordances.
- Yin, Zheng, and Fu (2023): Social media is a digital infrastructure for diverse actors, including electronic media, to produce news, but lacks normative legitimacy in regulated contexts.
- Lamot, Cools, and Gevers (2024): Emoji sentiment analysis on Facebook shows complex user responses, requiring advanced tools for engagement mapping.
- Edgerly et al. (2023): Identified seven negative themes, including information quality and echo chambers, impacting journalism.
- Schroeder et al. (2024): The 2024 elections highlighted social media's role in amplifying Modi-centric narratives, with 70% of election-related content on YouTube linked to BJP campaigns, raising concerns about media ownership and bias.

These studies emphasize social media's dual role as an opportunity and challenge, necessitating robust verification and ethical frameworks.

## 9. FACTS AND FIGURES (UPDATED FOR 2025)

- **Internet and Social Media Penetration:** India has 806 million internet users and 491 million social media users (33.7% of the population) as of January 2025, a 7% increase from 2024. Urban penetration is 37.1%, while rural areas have 304 million users.
- **Smartphone Usage:** 76.6% of Indians access news via smartphones, with 35% consuming content on mobile devices. News aggregators like Google News (53%) and Daily Hunt (25%) are popular.



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**• Platform Usage:**

- Instagram: 516.92 million users, with 97 million aged 18-24, 61% engaging with news content.
- Facebook: 492.7 million users, 64% market share, 32% using it for news.
- WhatsApp: 531.46 million users, 29.8% exposed to fake news in 2024.
- YouTube: 467 million users, 8.46 hours weekly video consumption.
- X/Twitter: 24.1 million users, 1.66% of the population, key for elite discourse.

**• Electronic Media Reach:**

- Aaj Tak: 24.4 million X/Twitter followers, 62 million YouTube subscribers, 10 million daily election livestream views in 2024.
- NDTV: 18 million X/Twitter followers, 15 million YouTube subscribers, 5.2 million Instagram followers.
- AIR: 3.8 million X/Twitter followers, 2 million YouTube subscribers.
- Radio Mirchi: 15.5 million YouTube subscribers, 3 million Instagram followers.
- **Fake News Prevalence:** 78.9% of first-time voters encountered fake news in 2024, with WhatsApp (29.8%), Instagram (17.8%), and Facebook (15.8%) as key vectors.
- **Trust in News:** A 2022 Reuters Institute study found 60% of youth prefer social media over traditional sources, with trust declining to 40% due to misinformation.
- **Regulatory Impact:** The 2021 IT Rules led to 10% of news posts being removed during the 2024 elections, raising concerns about content moderation.

**10. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES****Challenges:**

- Misinformation and Disinformation: Fake news spreads rapidly, with 78.9% of voters exposed in 2024, undermining trust.
- Verification Burden: Fact-checking is resource-intensive, with 65% of editors citing credibility concerns.
- Digital Divide: Rural areas lag with 304 million internet users vs. urban dominance (37.1%), limiting access.
- Ethical Dilemmas: Sensationalism and media ownership (e.g., Reliance Industries' control of 70+ outlets) challenge editorial independence.

**Opportunities:**

- Cost-Effective Content Creation: Social media enables low-cost news production for electronic media and startups.
- Increased Media Literacy: Growing digital engagement fosters critical consumption skills, with 50% of youth trained in fact-checking via BAJMC programs.
- Entrepreneurial Ventures: Digital news outlets and influencer marketing thrive, with 20% of news startups launched in 2024.
- Extended Reach: Electronic media channels leverage social media to reach global and youth audiences, with YouTube driving 70% of news video views.

**11. CONCLUSION**

Social media journalism in India is a dynamic force, driven by 806 million internet users and 491 million social media users in 2025. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, X/Twitter, and YouTube, alongside electronic media channels like Aaj Tak (62 million YouTube subscribers) and AIR (3.8 million X/Twitter followers), have reshaped news consumption. The integration of television and radio into social media has amplified their reach, particularly among youth and rural audiences, but challenges like misinformation (78.9% voter exposure) and regulatory pressures (2021 IT Rules) persist. Migration trends and smartphone penetration (76.6%) enhance access, though the digital divide remains. Advanced research methodologies, including mixed methods and network analysis,

reveal the complexity of this landscape. Indian newsrooms must balance speed, accuracy, and ethics to maintain trust and leverage social media's transformative potential.

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