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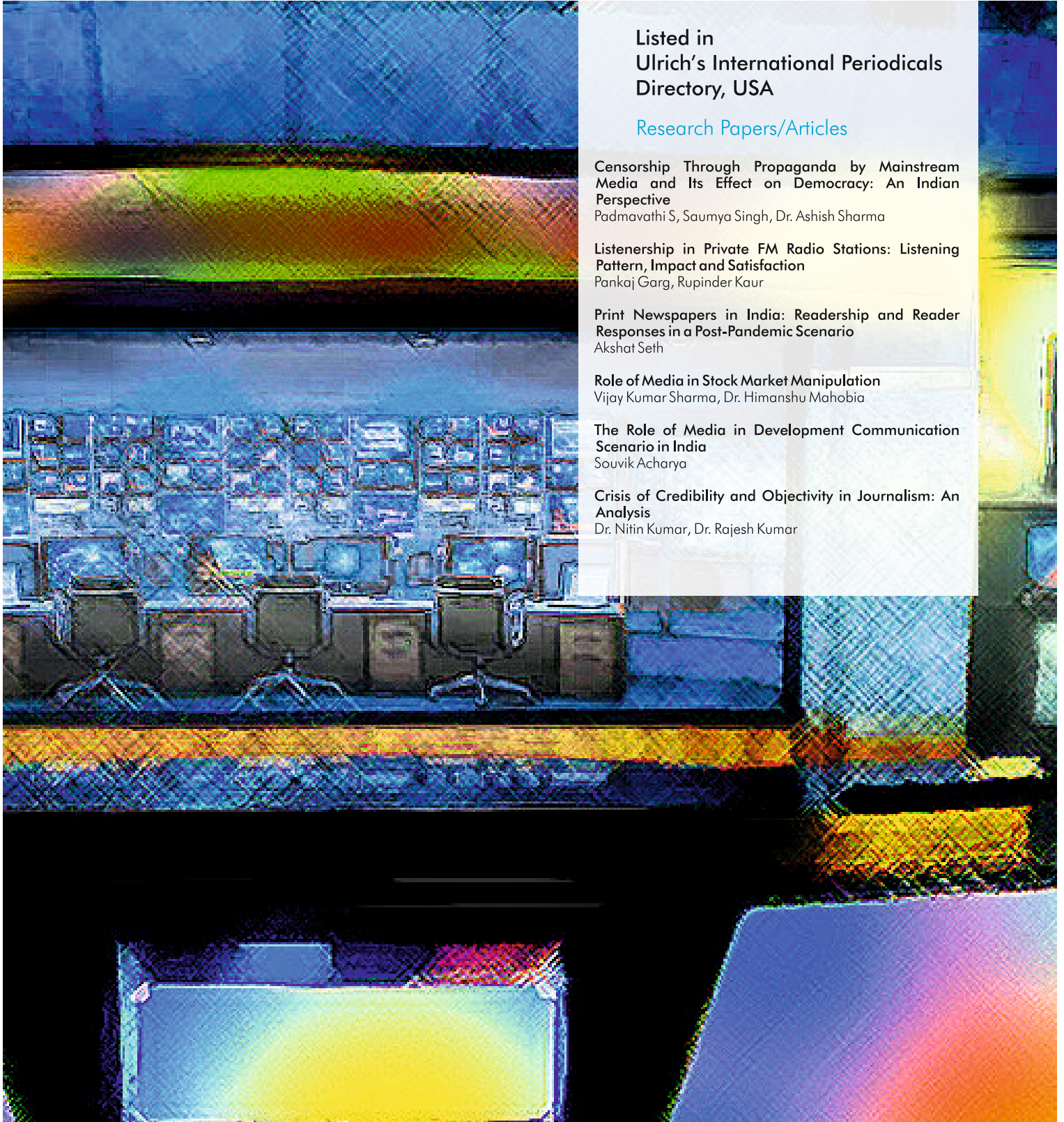
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**The Role of Media in Development Communication Scenario in India**

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**Crisis of Credibility and Objectivity in Journalism: An Analysis**

Dr. Nitin Kumar, Dr. Rajesh Kumar







# Pragyaan: Journal of Mass Communication

Volume 20, Issue 2, December 2022

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# From the Editor

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Mass Media is a significant force in modern culture and society. It has the power to mobilize mass movements. As Mass Media has become one of the most dynamic and fastest growing disciplines of our times, particularly in India, Pragyaa: Journalism of Mass Communication (Pragyaa: JOMC) holds the responsibility of exploring significant changes and developments while providing insightful research on new trends in the field of mass media and communication. Pragyaa: JOMC is a bi-annual, peer reviewed, open access Journal. The Journal welcomes high quality research papers/articles, review articles and case report describing original research in the fields of communication and mass media studies. This issue of Pragyaa: JOMC presents six research papers/articles covering diverse areas of Mass Communication.

In this issue, the first paper on “Censorship Through Propaganda by Mainstream Media and Its Effect on Democracy: An Indian Perspective” aims to unravel the profound effect of propaganda on curtailing the information or suppressing dissenting opinions that oppose the agenda propaganda. Second Paper “Listenership in Private FM Radio Stations: Listening Pattern, Impact and Satisfaction” endeavors to identify the elements that affect the listenership of private radio stations in Chandigarh. The comprehensive study also aims to evaluate the listening patterns of individuals and gauge the level of satisfaction experienced by the listeners of Private FM Radio'. A third study on “Print Newspapers in India: Readership and Reader Responses in a Post-Pandemic Scenario” delves into an in-depth analysis of the transformed landscape of newspaper circulation in India. The study also seeks to examine an indicative analysis of readers' perceptions of the place newspapers occupy when information is easily accessible at the mere click of a button. Fourth paper on “Role of Media in Stock Market Manipulation” identifies to study the role of business news in pump-and-dump and presence of noise traders in the stock market. It analyses the media and multiple news about the security market that effectively influences the manipulation of the stock market. Fifth paper entitled “The Role of Media in Development Communication Scenario in India” seeks to assess the role of media and communication narratives within projects for fostering development and bringing about social changes in Indian context. A sixth study on “Crisis of Credibility and Objectivity in Journalism: An Analysis” attempts to elicit the issues of media objectivity and credibility in its functioning and to find out the responsible factors for influencing objectivity and fairness in journalism.

We are thankful to the authors for their scholarly contributions to the Journal. We express our gratitude to our panel of referees for the time and thought invested by them into the papers and for giving us sufficient insights to ensure selection of quality papers.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the esteemed authors for their valuable and scholarly contributions to the Journal. Their dedication and expertise have greatly enriched our publication. Furthermore, we would like to express our heartfelt appreciation to our esteemed panel of referees for their invaluable time and thoughtful evaluations of the papers. Their insightful feedback and thorough reviews have been instrumental in ensuring the selection of high-quality papers for publication.

Lastly, we would like to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of Brigadier (Dr) M Srinivasan (Retired) (Vice Chancellor), Dr. Shah Alam (Associate Editor), Dr. Purnima Kumar Oraon (Associate Editor), and all the esteemed faculty members of the School of Media & Communication Design in preparing the reader-friendly manuscript for publication.

We are optimistic that the contents, findings, and suggestions presented in this issue of Pragyaa: JOMC will prove to be informative, thought-provoking, and of practical relevance to our esteemed readers. We eagerly welcome and encourage comments and suggestions from our readers, as their valuable feedback plays a vital role in continuously enhancing the quality of our Journal. With an unwavering commitment to excellence, we remain dedicated to delivering a Journal that caters to the evolving needs and interests of our readership.

Thanking You

With Best Wishes

**Dr. Sushil Kumar Rai**

# Pragyaan: Journal of Mass Communication

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# Censorship Through Propaganda by Mainstream Media and Its Effect on Democracy: An Indian Perspective

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\*Padmavathi S  
\*\* Saumya Singh  
\*\*\*Dr. Ashish Sharma

## ABSTRACT

Propaganda and Censorship are two sides of the same coin and have been used by governments to shape public opinion. Propaganda creates a hegemony and has been used to shape society and opinion promoting a certain idea and curbing other schools of thought censoring debate and unpopular opinion, the practice that in itself is very anti-democratic but protected by supposed laws. This paper will try to discover the effect of propaganda in the prohibition of information or suppression of opinion that opposes the agenda propaganda tries to create and spread thus creating a hidden but prevalent censorship without the use of censorship laws. Here we will try to find the relationship between propaganda and censorship and how the former becomes a cause of the latter. We will also discuss the pattern of presenting news by the television mainstream media and tried to answer these questions: Does propaganda cause a form of censorship? How does this censorship affect democracy? The research proves that to sell an agenda media filters news by self-censoring content; which is a modern form of censorship very different from traditional censorship and much more subversive.

**Keywords:** Censorship, Propaganda, Indian Mainstream Media, Democracy

### 1. Introduction

Over the years, the Indian Media Industry has grown exponentially and is considered one of the most dynamic media industries in the world; it has seen double-digit growth for the past two decades unlike any other developed or developing country's media that has now come to a saturation point. But this growth does not reflect in the quality, quite the opposite - the quality and credibility of Indian Media keep falling sharply. "In sharp contrast to the immense financial power and political clout of the Indian media stands its indifferent—and generally declining—quality, reliability and authenticity, loss of diversity and pluralism, shallowness in reporting and comment on serious issues, and systematic violation of elementary norms of responsible journalism" (Bidwai, 2011).

Their list of flaws is quite long from the lack of stories from the point of view of the underprivileged and the vulnerable to censorship of news critical of the ruling party and boycotting unconventional, non-mainstream movements, bodies and incidents. But the most jarring remains "the blatantly partisan support in large sections of the media for ultra-right-wing and religious-exclusivist political grouping like the Bhartiya Janata Party, marginalization of

readers' opinion columns, and a systematic refusal to admit, and correct, errors of fact" (Bidwai, 2011) and the self-censorship of content to promote the popular right winged propaganda. In this paper, we will analyze, censorship through propaganda and its effect on democracy as it is hidden behind legitimate laws.

Media often behaves as a maker of public opinion but in recent times, especially evident during the 2014 elections the media was responsible for replacing rational debates with campaigns, sponsored programming and propaganda all packaged in the rationale of news. The media has changed its "raison d'être of an informed and inclusive public sphere" to a 'manufacture of public opinion' (Ward, 2014, p. 53). The 2014 elections were "media epiphenomenon" with dis-

inclusion of equity, social inclusion and secularism. The media played a big role in coercing the voter with - political rhetoric, reduction of media to a PR campaign, passing sponsored

propaganda as news and ignoring the minority and open discussions – all consequences of a not

so free media. This practice by media lead to the obfuscation of some important debates and real issues which needed to be the pillar points of elections.

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\*Assistant Professor, School of Media Studies, Presidency University, Bangalore, Karnataka, India

\*\*Research Scholar, Department of Political Science, Pondicherry University, India

\*\*\*Assistant Professor Senior Scale, School of Media Studies, Presidency University, Bangalore, Karnataka, India

The 2014 elections show a new practice by the news channels of opaquing the real news by blasting the coverage of other items to such a propagandist extent that many news gets censored. There are billions of events happening everywhere in the world and it is impossible to report each and every one of them and thus the editor acts as the gatekeeper and decides which news to show and which one to drop based on the news worthiness, news value and ethics and values of the organization. But in recent times propaganda has been added as one of the filters in gate keeping and here self-censorship is born: the check on democracy has been pushed way back.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Propaganda

A consistent, enduring effort to create or shape events to influence the relations of the public to an enterprise, idea or group. (Bernays, 1928) mentioned that "Indian media has been accused of spreading right winged propaganda and blatant partisan rising due to popularity, increased viewership, monopolistic control of the media and the capitalistic behavior of media organizations". Numerous reportage stands witness to this phenomenon be it the coverage of the Bheema Koregaon case where the scholars claimed Maoist and Urban Naxals without proper evidence by the media, or how the driver in the Amritsar train accident on Dussehra was accused of Jihad, the shrewd reporting of Pulwama and Balakot Attacks to advertise "the great siege of Modi-led Government" that shifted the focus of 2019 elections from economic and social issues to nationalism and Anti- Pakistan agenda; it should also be noted that this reportage showed the stubborn pattern of mainstream media of refusing to correct facts or admit mistakes.

Propaganda, without debate, is very subversive for democracy as it is greatly responsible for forming public opinion and affecting public action. Pratik Sinha, Dr Sumiya Shaikh, and Arjun Sidharth (2019) in their book, *India Misinformed* highlighted that "In a democracy, the flow of information keeps a citizen alert and sensitive. If this information is manipulated, it can deceive him/her and she/he can become cruel" (A. Sidharth, 2019, p. 8)

### 2.2 Media and Propaganda

A propagandist uses certain tools to mobilize or influence opinions and attitudes. These are- "An important one is a suggestion. Another word for it is stimulation. The propagandist tries to stimulate others to accept without challenging his assertions or to act as he wants them to do" (Casey, 1994). Casey mentions "The idea of using suggestion or stimulation as a propaganda device is that it

will lead the public to accept a proposition even though there are no logical grounds for accepting it. The propagandist usually tries to sidestep critical reactions from his audience, and therefore suggestion is one of his most important tools" (Casey, 1944). Various channels of communication can be used to propagate propaganda like advertising, slogans, symbols and news (media). We will focus on how propaganda steps in media and how media promulgate it. Edward S. Herman, and Noam Chomsky (1988) in their book "Manufacturing consent; the political economy of the mass media" gives a propaganda model that "describes forces that shape what the media does". According to it, there is some institutional pressure that influences news, had the media been free and independent it would not be spreading the agenda but the media is not independent and is plagued by capitalism and certain other factors explained in their book as five filters. These are-

1. Size, concentrated ownership, owner wealth, and profit orientation of the dominant mass-media firms;
2. Advertising as the primary income source of the mass media;
3. The reliance of the media on information provided by the government, business, and "experts" funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power;
4. "Flak" as a means of disciplining the media; and
5. "Anticommunism" as a national religion and control mechanism." (Edward S. Herman, Noam Chomsky, 1988)

Every (cooperate media) news flows through these filters and they manufacture the consent of the elite policymaking and financially supporting individuals and organizations. This model helps us understand how pressures from these institutions affect media coverage and lets media promote certain agendas and self-censoring their content through these filters.

### 2.3 Propaganda and Censorship

Propaganda and censorship are two sides of the same coin and have been used by governments to shape public opinion. Propaganda is claimed as spreading a certain agenda and subsequent shunning of any idea, fact or opinion that opposes it and creating censorship of that conflicting content. This happens because the media as it should be the watch guard fails in its duties and instead becomes a spokesperson of the elite and ruling orthodox. This censorship through propaganda could either be self-thought or pressured by the original propagandist using media.



The above-mentioned definition of censorship which is control of expression is quite narrow and traditional. Project Censored, a media watchdog “defines modern censorship to include the subtle yet constant and sophisticated manipulation of reality by news media” (Censored, 2020). According to them, it includes not only “the exclusion of newsworthy stories and topics from coverage, but also the manipulation of coverage based on “political, pressure, and legal pressure” (Censored, 2020). Thus, “censorship is not limited to overt, intentional omission, but also includes anything that interferes with the free flow of information in a society that purports to have a free press system” (Censored, 2020). This type of modern censorship could also be born out of Propaganda, as a result of which to spread or support propaganda; the media manipulates reality or boycotts certain worthy stories.

“If the articles are written in an assured and convincing style, are subject to no criticism or alternative interpretations in the mass media, and command support by authority figures, the propaganda themes quickly become established as true events without real evidence. This tends to close out dissenting views even more comprehensively, as they would now conflict with an already established popular belief” (Edward S. Herman, Noam Chomsky, 1988). This is another way how censorship of the contrasting or conflicting views occurs and the truth is masked because of propaganda. This practice is treasonous for democracy and the press as both of them stand as pillars of equality and truth and even more unconscionable is that censorship through propaganda hides in the umbrella of legitimate laws.

#### 2.4 Democracy

Democracy is a contested term and an integral part of political institutions. Democracy is a unique set of political institutions and practices, a particular body of rights, a social and economic order, a system that ensures desirable results, or a unique process of making collective and binding decisions. In simple terms, democracy is defined as the people's government. Freedom and democracy walk hand in hand, so Indian society is an accepted democracy where the media plays a pivotal role in the Indian democracy. Media (Press) was coined as the fourth pillar of democratic society after the executive, legislature, and judiciary. The free press is an essential element of a thriving democracy, as it is the nation's voice. Media is continually playing an indispensable role in shaping human minds.

Democratic government is a form of institutional arrangement in which the people directly elect people's

representatives by exercising their voting rights. In a democratic form of government, people are sovereign and supreme as they are free to elect a government of their own choice. Freedom of choice is considered the most important aspect of democracy. So, as per the privilege of the people, democratic government is called "Government" by the people, of the people, for the people.

### 3. Objectives of the Study

1. Critically analyze if propaganda spread by media causes a form of censorship.
2. Analyze the Effect of Censorship by media through Propaganda on Democracy.

### 4. Research Methodology

This is purely exploratory research. The analysis is done based on secondary data available on the Internet, books, websites and research papers. This paper used two methods to prove the assertion. The first one is through a review of literature in published papers, articles and books and the second one by analyzing how television media reported a particular incident- the propaganda spread by it and the crucial news that was censored because of it via a study of two cases-

**Case-I-** Indian Media Coverage on Corona Virus

**Case -II-** Indian Media Coverage on a protest held at Shaheen Bagh.

### 5. Data Analysis

#### 5.1 Case I: Indian Media coverage on Corona Virus

Primetime debates talked up 'corona bombs' and 'Muslim enemies of Modi', completely ignoring the role of the government apparatus. In an article by Ayush Tiwari, he discusses how the Indian Television Media was spreading communal hatred amid the coronavirus pandemic and it lead to shaping the crisis in an anti-Muslim direction and forming the public opinion that the cases in India increased solely because of a certain religion especially the “Tablighi Jamat”(a Muslim missionary movement) spread it in the whole of north India (Tiwari, 2020). The article mentions various reporting by popular TV channels and reporters broadcasted an inside story with the title/ headlines, “Corona Aaya...Maulana laya” (meaning maulana brings corona) talking about a maulana that supposedly spread the COVID-19 virus to the virus to Kashmir, Jammu, Delhi, Telangana, Saharanpur, Deoband, Meerut, and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Here we will discuss two examples to understand how Indian media portrayed the whole scenario through the news, Zee News anchor Sudhir Chaudhry in his show DNA even went in as far as to say that the Jamat was “lying and betraying the nation in the name



of Islam”, further he also admitted that “We know we'll be accused of being communal and bringing religion into the coronavirus discussion,”. Arnab Goswami anchor and Chief Editor, of Republic TV during his show said, “We have seen people die in traffic jams because of Shaheen Bagh and now Tablighi is spreading coronavirus deliberately in India”. No cases of deaths came up due to traffic jams because of Shaheen Bagh. The Tablighi Jamat was organizing a congression in Nizamuddin between March 13 and 15 with 2000 delegates and could not disperse after the congression was over due to lockdown from March 22. The Delhi police filed an FIR against Tablighi Jamat under the Epidemic Disease Act of 1897, several parts of Nizamuddin were sealed and around 1600 people were tracked and observed.

This extensive reporting shifted the focus of the people from pandemic to Islamophobia and quite successfully hid the government's lack of - rapid testing, equipment like PPE and ventilators for a substantial period and the effect of lockdown on the poor, people dependent on daily wages jobs and migrant workers, effective gears for sanitation and police workers – effectively self-censoring reporting on these issues. The large proportion of Tablighi positives is simply due to the large number of people who were tested from the event, even as overall testing remained low (Daniyal, 2020). In this article, the author explains the biasness of results saying that most of the cases in India of coronavirus resulted because of Tablighi. This is sampling bias: since people from this one cluster have been tested at very high rates, and overall testing is low, it is hardly surprising that a large proportion of overall positives is attributed to this cluster. While it is true that the Tablighi Jamat were wrong and were responsible for spreading the virus to a certain extent, the Television media also censored reporting other religious gatherings held in different states at the same time including the Ram Navmi event attended and organized by Uttar Pradesh's Chief Minister Yogi Addityanath. Ayush Tiwari states in this article, that major news channel Aaj Tak reported Antakshari at home by Sweta Tiwari and Anjana Om Kasyap effectively ignoring the plight of migrant workers and spraying disinfectant on migrants and poor by the police and its effect on the people- days of itching and irritation and the sheer inhumanity of such acts (Tiwari, 2020).

## **5.2 Case II- Indian Media coverage on a protest held at Shaheen Bagh**

It is undoubtful that Shaheen Bagh had a great impact on the Delhi elections of Feb 8, 2020, with AAP acquiring 62 seats, followed by BJP with 8 seats. Shaheen Bagh became

a major agenda in these elections as it affected the daily movements of the state with BJP candidates and politicians promising to clear off Shaheen Bagh if they are voted to power. Shaheen Bagh was a peaceful non-violent resistance movement by Muslim women against CAA (Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019) and the subsequent police violence on Jamia Milia Islamia Students. This protest lasts for almost 101 days until protesters leave the post (COVID-19). Even for a party known for its openly Hindu nationalist agenda, the campaign has been one of their most brazenly anti-Muslim.

Peterson quotes the BJP for spreading hatred against the protesters and using Shaheen Bagh to “wrench victory from the hands of the ruling anti-corruption Aam Aadmi Party” (Peterson, 2020). BJP's MP for West Delhi, Parvesh Verma said in a public address, “these people [at Shaheen Bagh] will enter your house, will abduct your sisters and mothers, rape them, kill them, that's why today is the moment.” Adding: “It is an election to decide the unity of a nation. If the BJP comes to power on 11 February, you will not find a single protester within an hour. And within a month, we will not spare a single mosque built on government land.” Making clear that Shaheen Bagh was their sole weapon in this election against Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). “Anchors across major news networks such as Zee News, Republic TV, India TV and ABP News have kept the focus on Shaheen Bagh over the past two weeks. Apart from shoddy stings on Times Now and Republic TV, most anchors have labelled the protest site as a “den” of pro-Pakistan, Jinnah-loving anti-nationals who are also anti-Hindu” (Pande, 2020). The reporter Manisha Pandey did a ground report of Shaheen Bagh the day when Bhim Army's Chandrashekhar was to address the crowd, and she found the labels of Arnab Goswamy “Shaheen Bagh is a useful epicenter of an anti-Hindu, anti-India, money-guzzling, opportunistic and entirely political movement,” to be far from the truth, how the women she interviewed knew what the media was doing to them and told her “Please don't cut what I say”.

Shaheen Bagh- a peaceful protest by a large minority of the nation (Muslim women) who wanted their voices to be heard was silenced by the media. “Three weeks after the video was plucked from BJP IT cell head's Twitter feed and broadcast on primetime news, the shop-owner feigns ignorance, calls claim unreliable” (Ayush Tiwari, Jignesh Patel, 2020). News Laundry and Alt News verified BJP's Amit Malviya's video that claimed that the protestors in Shaheen Bagh were paid by the congress to resist CAA. This video was run and broadcast on various media channels like TIMES NOW, India Today and The Republic

but when the video was claimed as false none of the channels covered it or admitted their mistake. In a video on India Today, the anchor opens the Delhi election results as the people of Delhi chose development over hatred and many channels changed their narrative after AAP's swooping victory (IndiaToday, 2020). Though it does not digress from the fact that Television Media used Shaheen Bagh to shift the agenda of the Delhi Elections along with BJP and missed crucial facts like promoting the Party's manifestoes, due coverage to all the parties- AAP CM hardly got any coverage but because of the town hall meetings, the media had to cover these. Neither did the media focus on the last term of the then CM nor did they properly sow the agenda of other parties BJP or Congress just that voting for BJP equals voting for nationalism. In propagating this agenda, the media threw Shaheen Bagh in the most hated light they could and did not give views of a big minority protesting.

## 6. Findings and Discussions

### 6.1 Impact of Censorship by Media through propaganda on democracy

Modern Censorship- where media act as a self-censor of certain news to support and mediate a particular opinion or agenda leading to various news that didn't cut. Any form of censorship be it government or otherwise undermines democracy, but this self-censorship of media is even more cataclysmal as it is hidden behind legitimate laws making this practice unaccountable. This censorship does not provide the public with open information but rather a biased and partial narrative favoring either the elite or the popular opinion. An informed public is imperative for a democracy to properly function. Without correct and factual news, the public cannot properly and fully participate in decision-making and government.

The fig 1 explains how this censorship works. In both the cases i) Coverage of Corona Virus and spreading Anti-Muslim agenda by Television Media and ii) Delhi Elections and Shaheen Baah, the media steered the narrative

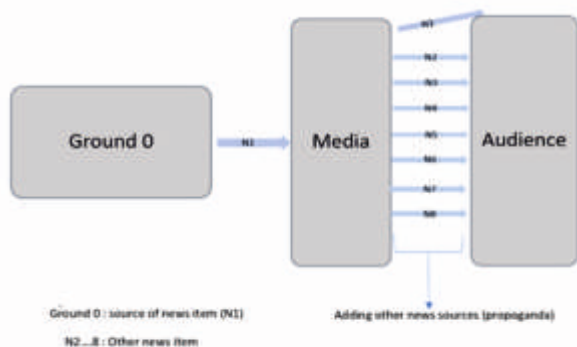


Fig 1

towards anti Muslim and shaheen bagh protests' respectively and the information about the lack of medical staff, equipment, vaccines and migration of labors was largely ignored, evidently this is modern censorship.

Propaganda is a centuries-old practice used by the powerful and elite to influence the public and one of its effects is blindsiding the masses to other ideas that threaten the 'established' agenda. This effect could either be accidental or achieved but it is undoubtedly desired by the propagandists or else how would the forced propaganda work if people doubt the propagated idea imposed on them which could very well happen if they are given free, balanced and true information? Media, as it stands today, has become a tool for spreading propaganda and factors like- profit, advertisement, TRP, ownership and government pressure drives the media to mobilize propaganda and manufacture consent in the public as theorized by Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky in their book Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media. But this phenomenon has given birth to a form of censorship that arises due to the propaganda that media spreads occurring in two forms- a) intentional self-censorship by Media and b) censorship that is the consequence of propaganda and happens on its own as the media and the people head to the populist opinion and ignores the counter idea.

In Case I: Coverage of Corona Virus and spreading Anti-Muslim agenda by Television Media, we saw how the Indian Television Media was spreading communal hatred amid the coronavirus pandemic and it lead to shaping the crisis into an Anti-muslim direction and forming the public opinion that the cases in India increased solely because of the "Tablighi Jamat" which was later proved quite baseless and the Indian media was criticized Internationally `minority cabinet asked the government to look into the matter. In the backlash of the case of "Tablighi Jamat", various news and incidents that were integral for the public to know as the status of testing, PPE and ventilators, the effect of lockdown on the poor and the economy, 20 million youths losing employment and migrant workers were not covered by major television channels only to be taken up much later. In Case II: Delhi Elections and Shaheen Bagh, the mainstream television media in a hoard of crediting CAA and throwing a bad light on shaheen bagh forgot to cover the plight of these women and what they had to say. In addition, Television Media used Shaheen Bagh to shift the agenda of the Delhi Elections along with BJP and missed crucial issue-based journalism resorting to instead making the elections all

about the CAA and Shaheen Bagh. There are billions of events happening everywhere in the world and it is impossible to report every one of them thus the editor acts as the gatekeeper and decides which news to show and which one to drop based on the newsworthiness, news value and ethics and values of the organization. But in recent times propaganda has been added as one of the filters in gatekeeping and here self-censorship is born: the check on democracy has been pushed way back.

## 7. Conclusion

Through the discussion and analysis, we find that media act as a self-censor of certain news to support and mediate a particular opinion or agenda. It does it in a way by bombarding other news items and exponentially giving it so much coverage that the original news item is ignored, and the public is drawn to the propaganda thus censoring the original news item.

Any form of censorship be it government or otherwise undermines democracy, but this self-censorship of media is even more cataclysmal as it is hidden behind legitimate laws making this practice unaccountable. This censorship does not provide the public with open information but rather a biased and partial narrative favoring either the elite or the popular opinion. The media is the fourth pillar of democracy and its foremost role is to hold the government accountable. The media is not the spokesperson of the government or the elite, and the research shows that media blatantly supports the government and censors any news questioning the government or shapes it in a way that favors the authority. If the media does not question the government or their policy then the bridge between the policymakers and those affected by that policy breaks shattering the very spirit of democracy. Another role of media is to get the voice of the public and the minority across. And if the media censors this news, it could be lethal for a democracy if the sufferer's voice is not heard, or problems get censored by the only source that has the potential to stand with them. Self-censorship through propaganda undoubtedly shatters the very spirit of democracy wherein media works for itself and the elites and not the people.

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# Listenership in Private FM Radio Stations: Listening Pattern, Impact and Satisfaction

\*Pankaj Garg  
\*\*Rupinder Kaur

## ABSTRACT

Radio continues to be the most pervasive media in terms of reach and maximum penetration. Since the early days of broadcasting, it has also been a successful enterprise. This study was conducted to identify the elements that affect the listenership of Chandigarh-based private radio stations. This paper applied the uses and gratifications theory to investigate the listening habits of people in terms of their preferred timings and choice of programming content. The broadcasting scenario has changed drastically with the introduction of private FM stations and their promise to revolutionize the broadcasting industry. This paper is based on an evaluation of the listening pattern and level of satisfaction of Private FM Radio's listeners. The primary data for the study was collected through the structured questionnaire using snowball sampling and purposive sampling methods. The study tried to evaluate the significance of content and measure its impact on listeners' insight. For gathering more pertinent data, formal observation and consultation has also been adopted. The researchers recommended that the choice of music and programming content may lead to the station's reputation and can enhance the listenership of any radio station.

**Keywords:** FM Radio listenership, Private FM, Radio broadcasting, Listening pattern, Radio Station

## 1. Introduction

The frequency modulation (FM) technology used in FM radio broadcasting is currently extremely popular among listeners. Transistor-based radio today comes in a variety of formats, including "Satellite radio," "Internet radio," "Commercial radio," and "Community radio." (Aggarwal, V. B. and Gupta V.S., 2001). Mark Tully, a well-known radio host, asserts that radio is a friendly and inclusive mass communication medium which has a broad audience. Your mind is captivated, and you are directly connected when you are listening to the radio. When personal FM radios started broadcasting, listeners were astonished by what they were hearing. They could now hear the cheerful, jovial voices of the RJs, interviews with famous people, live traffic updates, city updates, weather updates, music countdown shows, DJ shows, and the most well-liked phone-in programmes. Today, private FM radio stations regularly broadcast programmes based on song requests and it has become a regular feature. (Padmakumar, 2012). Private radio stations have reinvigorated radio and expanded their audience base. The radio and its listeners have mutual trust even when they don't know one another (Venkatalakshmi K. and Chandraleka R. (2013).

The distribution of various radio elements for one hour is as under: (Kumar, 2017)

▶ Music	:	67%
▶ Advertising	:	14%
▶ Jock Talk	:	5%
▶ Fillers and others	:	5%

More than 370 private FM radio stations are currently in operation, and this business has experienced fantastic growth in both listenership and revenue. Radio is one of the most widely used media which offers a variety of programmes to its listeners. (Kak, 2008).

Radio is a powerful tool for reaching audiences across all media. This is so that anyone, even those who are illiterate, may use it, especially in a developing nation like India. Young people between the ages of 18 and 35 are the target audience for commercial FM radio stations because they make up the majority of the population and have more free time to listen to the radio. Being a private radio station, their main objective is to entertain listeners. They breached every All India Radio guideline on presentation, programming, and content in order to make it dynamic, lively and interesting. It has developed into the most efficient marketing tool for small and local marketers as

\*Assistant Professor, Chitkara School of Mass Communication, Chitkara University, Punjab, India

\*\* Assistant Professor, Chitkara School of Mass Communication, Chitkara University, Punjab, India



well as a reliable source of getting information about that particular area. Private FM radio stations have an energetic, appealing and engaging approach. These radio stations' programming, which they create themselves, includes a variety of CSR (Common Social Responsibility) campaigns. These radio networks offer significantly more engaging programming. Private FM radio stations' programming is centred on their own format (interpersonal communication style), and each programme includes phone-in-based content (contests, viewpoints, dedications, etc.). RJs urge listeners to respond to them through social networking sites in addition to the phone-in programme, which increases contact with listeners. Such initiatives were crucial in getting local residents involved in radio programming at both commercial and public radio stations. (Stachyra, 2012). The programming on private radio stations varies and experiments in new ways through music, engagement, events, and OBs (Outdoor broadcast). Additionally, OB forges a connection between listeners and RJ. Now, on some special days, RJs leave the studio and broadcast the shows from a specific location while talking to listeners. For instance, there are programmes in the youth time band that are based on school and college campuses. They don't adhere to the previous programming culture (AIR style) (Tomar & Kaur, 2017). Radio uses personality projection to draw in listeners and keep them tuned in. Due to its ability to traverse all barriers—including those of time and place and illiteracy—it is an effective tool for communicating with many people at once. (Onabajo, 1999).

This study's primary goal is to examine the listening habits and attitudes of Chandigarh based city residents toward various programmes. In Chandigarh, 4 privately owned FM radio stations are now broadcasting, and these are Radio Mirchi, Red FM, Big FM, and MY FM.

In comparison to other media, listeners use and interact with radio in quite different ways. Radio is a medium that listeners use for a variety of purposes, among them is emotional support, psychological improvement through programmes, information, and entertainment. Radio serves as a voice for its listeners and the larger society at large, as well as an essential source of news, music, and other programmes. It is astonishing how radio can reach so many people while remaining so individualized for each person that listens. (Ajaegbu, O. O. et. al. 2015).

Radio can talk to millions of people at once, but it also speaks to each person individually. When the radio is addressing a topic that is so important, sensible, or intimate to him, the listener feels like he has a wonderful

companion. For those who adore it, radio may be more than just a buddy because the medium's vocabulary is frequently amiable, enticing, instructive, and convincing. This (radio's interactive aspect) connects listeners with one another and fosters a horizontal flow of conversation. (Kuewumi, 2009).

## 2. Review of Literature

Private FM radio channels have grown significantly in India over the course of three phases, and many more stations are still to come. Since private FM radio stations have entered the market, the broadcasting scenario has revolutionized. These are among the most widely used entertainment options. The researcher analysed the listening pattern, programme format, and content of the commercial radio stations operated in India and abroad after studying a variety of research papers, articles, blogs, books, and magazines.

According to the research paper of Weintraub N. T. (2009), teenagers in Chicago want radio hosts to talk on air more frequently. Less conversation and more music is not a format that is popular with listeners. They want to hear more programming that is news-based and about them. Teenagers have been shown to seek out content variety in the music and jock talk that radio stations play.

Venkatalakshmi K. and Chandraleka R. (2013) asserted that broadcasting programmes focusing on agriculture, health, education, and the environment is done exceptionally well by private FM radio channels. These programmes may partner with any institution, organisation, or non-governmental organisation. The audience for band events in the morning and at night is very large. Increased market penetration for urban radio listeners is the goal of private FM radio stations.

According to Santoki A.'s (2015) research, there are many factors, including entertainment-focused programming, music, and RJ's talks, that contribute to Surat's high listenership. The primary means of making money for radio stations is through advertising, yet people dislike hearing them. It is recommended that value-added programmes could find a different way to address this problem.

Activities on-air and off-air are carried out to grow and maintain the listening base. In order to attract listeners and enhance their brand image, private FM radio channels often organize a variety of on-air and off-air activities based on entertainment, CSR, and social campaign/awareness, day specials (Tomar & Kaur, 2017). Anurekha S. & Meenakshi M. N., 2020, contended that radio is excellent at generating interest and igniting action

in addition to informing the public about a variety of social issues and the need for social reform. Thus, the researcher investigates the effects of radio programme listening among young people in Chennai, paying particular attention to the female demographic. The peak time for radio listenership is between 7am and 6pm, when 40% of the general population tunes in.

Mehta, D., & Bist, S. S. (2011) indicated in their study that in order to draw in as many listeners as possible, private FM stations broadcast a variety of content throughout the day. This resulted in a uniform and undifferentiated sound across all radio stations. Experts noted that channels needed to discover methods to differentiate to win listener loyalty and that differentiation was essential for survival in fierce competition. FM channel marketers wanted to know how their channels were seen and what characteristics or variables influenced listener loyalty. By focusing on the necessary characteristics' aspects, this information can help marketers make better positioning decisions for FM channels in relation to their listeners. The things that affect listenership the most are the radio jockey, the music, the interaction with the listeners, and the content of the programmes.

Attri, R., 2013 aimed to conduct a study to compare the brand values of various FM radio channels with a focus on Indore. According to research, radio was one of the most widely used media in the 1980s and 1990s, but it lost its appeal as television and other forms of media, such as the Internet, came into being. Due to the availability of radio in cars and mobile devices, it is now backing in usage. Around 2000, radio started to have a comeback, and today it is extremely prevalent in major cities. There are four privately owned FM radio stations operating in Indore, and all of them have a sizable listenership attributable to the music, talk shows, and other programming they broadcast.

**2.1 Theoretical Framework**

The media sector today heavily contributes to people's entertainment needs. The entertainment outlets that fall

within the wide definition of the media sector include radio, television, print, periodicals, and social media. The radio industry has taken the entertainment component extremely seriously and has made excellent efforts to grow its listenership. People no longer wait for a song to come on one radio station. Contrarily, we now have a variety of radio stations and online radio broadcasting to broaden its reach. (Anurekha S. & Meenakshi M. N., 2020).

The Uses and Gratification theory was used by the researcher because it is based on four motives: information seeking, social connection, self-identity, and enjoyment. This research claimed that different sorts of content and medium would serve different requirements in a person's life. And hence gratification takes place.

**3. Research Methodology**

The survey research design approach was used in this study to collect the data. To fulfill the purpose of this study, information was gathered through a structured questionnaire from 150 respondents in the Chandigarh area. Starting with a broad demographic inquiry, the questionnaire continues to inquiries on listening habits and listeners' levels of satisfaction with radio programmes. For this survey, a snowball sampling technique was used. SPSS is used in this study to analyze the data that was gathered. Formal observation and consultation have also been implemented to gather more essential data.

**4. Objectives of the study**

1. To find out the factors that affect/attract the listeners to tune any particular radio station.
2. To gauge the listeners' satisfaction level from listening to private FM radio stations.
3. To understand the listening pattern of commercial radio listeners.

**5. Data Analysis**

The data analysis for the Chandigarh city answers is summarised in this section. A sample of 150 adults aged 18 and 5 older who participated in the study was used, of whom 98 were men and 52 were women.

**Table No. 1: Place of Listening**

		Where Do You Listen to Radio	Where Do You Listen to Radio	Where Do You Listen to Radio
		Home	Workplace/College	Travelling
		Count	Count	Count
Age	18-25	28	22	56
	26-35	20	17	35
	36-45	17	12	23
	46 and above	9	7	18
Total		74	58	132



Using a systematic questionnaire, the respondents' or listeners' comments were gathered. The information was entered into Ms. Excel and SPSS for additional analysis. By creating tabulations and charts using Microsoft Excel and SPSS, data analysis is carried out.

The preferred location for listening to the radio was asked of the respondents. The four options were home, work/college, travel, and others. The respondents were asked to select numerous answers. The responses are in Table No. 1 above, which shows the respondents' radio listening locations according to their age groups. The table clearly demonstrates that, across all age groups, the majority of respondents enjoy listening to the radio while

they are "traveling" (132). This is because when individuals are driving, they frequently listen to the radio in their vehicles. Respondents use the built-in radio on their cell phones while traveling by bus, train, or any other mode of transportation. This figure shows that the second favorite location for listening to the radio is "home" (74). Today, every home has a radio, which is a crucial communication tool. Because a big number of the respondents do not have the time to listen to the radio at work or school, the third place for listening to the radio is either "workplace or college" (58). No one filled out the fourth option, "others," in any way. Therefore, the greatest time to listen to the radio is while driving.

**Table No. 2: With whom do you listen to Radio?**

		With Whom You Listen to Radio	With Whom You Listen to Radio	With Whom You Listen to Radio	With Whom You Listen to Radio	With Whom You Listen to Radio
		Alone	Parents	Friends	Relatives/ Siblings	Fellow Workers
		Count	Count	Count	Count	Count
Age	18-25	53	17	14	8	9
	26-35	44	12	10	9	7
	36-45	18	6	6	2	3
	46 and above	15	2	4	6	2
Total		130	37	34	25	21

This Table shows the specific information about the responder from every age group that they listen to radio with. It was attempted to elicit the opinions of the listeners on the same subject. The respondents were asked to give their approval for a variety of options from the responses- alone, with their parents, friends, relatives, or siblings, and with other employees. According to data, a significant portion of respondents across all age groups listen to

radio stations alone (130). In the comparison of the first variable means alone variable, the other variables received very little feedback. Only 37 respondents listened to radio "with their parents" and 34 listened "with friends," according to Table No. 2. Only 25 respondents across all age groups listen to radio alongside their relatives or siblings, the data shows. Only 21 respondents share their radio listening habits with their co-workers. Overall, it can be said that respondents listen to radio on their own.

**Table No. 3: Duration of listening to Radio in a day**

		Duration of Listening to Radio in a Day			Total
		Less Than 1 Hour	1 To 2 Hour	2 To 3 Hour	
Age	18-25	17	32	10	59
	26-35	12	22	12	46
	36-45	8	12	5	25
	46 and above	5	11	4	20
Total		42	77	31	150
		(28%)	(51%)	(21%)	

The respondents who were asked to respond provided an estimate of how long they listened to the radio each day. Less than an hour, between one and two hours, and between two and three hours were the four choices presented to the responders. The replies in the table above show how much time the respondents spent listening to the radio each day. For one to two hours each week, 51% of respondents across all age groups listen to the radio. Only

28% of survey participants listen to the radio for less than an hour. The table strongly shows that just 21% of respondents listen to the radio for two to three hours each week. The majority of responders in this case also agreed on the point nowadays days they do not have time to listen to the radio nonstop. They claimed that the duration is cumulative throughout the day.

**Table No. 4: At what time you listen to the Radio?**

		At What Time You Listen	At What Time You Listen	At What Time You Listen	At What Time You Listen	At What Time You Listen
		Morning	Mid Morning	Afternoon	Evening	Night
		Count	Count	Count	Count	Count
Age	18-25	18	5	7	15	14
	26-35	15	4	3	13	11
	36-45	8	2	3	7	5
	46 and above	8	0	1	5	6
Total (%)		(32.66%)	(7.33%)	(9.33%)	(26.66%)	(24%)

The five responses-morning, midmorning, afternoon, evening, and night-were presented to the respondents for underwriting. The responses are in Table No. 4 above, which shows at what time respondents of all ages listen to the radio. Table unequivocally demonstrates that the peak time for radio listening for all ages was recorded in the morning between 7am and 11am, followed by evening band shows between 5pm and 9pm. The respondent claimed that because they don't have time to watch television in the mornings, they listen to the radio at home while also finishing their daily tasks. After coming home

from work, people typically like watching television in the evening. Because of this, the evening time band has fewer listeners than the morning show. Since listeners are commuting at these times, morning and evening band shows are also referred to as drive time shows. In addition to this, the night band, which starts playing at 9 p.m., also has a high listenership rate (24%). Only 7.33 % respondents, as shown by the diagram, listen to the radio between the hours of 11am and 2pm slot. Only 9.33% respondents listen to the radio during the afternoon time period from 2pm to 5pm, which has relatively low listenership.

**Table No. 5: Most preferred radio content (Give 1 for the highest preference and 5 for the least)**

Sl. No.	Type of radio content	Response (%)
a	Songs	77
b	RJ's talk	9
c	Advertisement	1
d	Prank Call	7
e	Cricket Update	6

The respondents were asked to rank their preferences from 1 for most preferred to 5 for least desired using the numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4. The responses, which show the respondents' favourite radio programming across all age groups, are in Table 5 above. It is very clear that 77% of respondents listen to the radio to hear music. Only 9% of respondents said they preferred listening to RJs' talk over

listening to music on the radio in the survey. Only 1% of respondents, according to the table, rank the content of advertisements as their first priority. Additionally, respondents talked about how they frequently change radio stations when an advertisement starts playing on one station. Therefore, a majority of respondents listen to the radio for music.

**Table No 6: Types of listeners created by radio programmes**

	Type of listeners these programmes are creating	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly disagree (1)
a	Individual listeners	24	80	28	17	7
b	Community listeners	20	70	40	14	6
c	Active Listeners	18	44	59	16	13
d	Passive Listeners	15	30	91	10	4
e	Urban listeners	30	95	18	7	0
f	Rural listeners	12	30	36	52	20

This table provides specific information on listener categories based on the content that commercial radio stations broadcast. Inquiries about listeners' opinions regarding the material broadcast by private radio stations were made. The respondents were asked to select from the options of strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and disagree strongly. According to the table No. 6 the majority of respondents strongly agree (30) and agree (95) that programmes are producing "urban listeners," as seen in the table. This opinion is primarily supported by the programme formats of private radio stations. 12 respondents strongly believe that programmes are producing "rural listeners," but very few people do so. According to the Table, respondents also strongly agree

(24) and agree (80) that "individual listeners" are creating. The cause of it is the language and content of a few radio programmes, particularly those broadcasts during nighttime band shows, which listeners have complained about as inappropriate for family listening. When it comes to the other factors, the respondent likewise claimed that programmes are producing community listeners who strongly agree (20) and agree (70). In a neutral response, more than 50% of respondents claimed that programmes are producing "passive listeners" (91). Thus, the majority of respondents firmly concur that programmes played on commercial FM radio stations attract both urban listeners and individual listeners.

**Table No. 7: Does it make any impact on your listening choice to any particular radio station (Give 1 for the highest preference and 5 for the least)**

	Elements of attraction for listening to any particular radio station	Number of listeners' preference (%)
a	Language and style of Radio Jockey	10
b	Selection of the program content	9
c	Selection of the songs	74
d	Quality of signal	2
e	Selection of phone-in-based segment	5

This inquiry was made in an effort to learn what draws people to listen to their favourite or preferred Radio Station. The majority of respondents (74%), as shown in Table No. 7, listen to a particular radio station because of the song selection. 10% of the respondents said they preferred to listen to a particular radio station because of the RJ's style and language. Since content is a major factor

in establishing a relationship between listeners and radio hosts, they develop their content with their target audience in mind. This table shows that the selection of the programme content is the respondent's third inclination. Only 5% of respondents, according to the statistics, said they preferred to listen to any particular radio due to their phone-in segment.

**Table No. 8: Satisfaction with the content of radio at present**

		Are you satisfied with the content of radio at present					Total
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	
Age	18-25	3	5	17	24	10	59
	26-35	4	3	14	18	7	46
	36-45	0	4	8	11	2	25
	46 and above	0	2	10	6	2	20
Total (%)		(4.66%)	(9.33%)	(32.66%)	(39.33%)	(14%)	

To ascertain the degree of satisfaction with the radio's content, the five options—always, frequently, occasionally, rarely, and never—were put to the respondents, who were asked to support one of them. The responses in the aforementioned table show the satisfaction data from various age groups among the respondents. When asked how often they are satisfied with the radio's content, 39.33% of respondents responded, 'often', while 32.66% said, 'sometimes.' 'Always' happy respondents make up just 14% of the sample. In accordance with the table, 9.33% of respondents across all age groups said they are 'rarely' and 'never' satisfied. Overall, then, the majority of respondents/listeners are happy with the programming provided by commercial FM radio stations at present.

## 6. Conclusion

Research revealed that many people only listen to the radio when they are travelling, so the drive time shows have a high listenership in compared to others shows. However, radio was only successful in attracting and keeping listeners' attention for about 30 minutes. For listening to music and for getting news updates, radio is preferred by many listeners. Radio only draws listeners' attention if the programmes are entertaining and fascinating. The majority of the time, listeners dislike advertisements. Despite advances in technology, people still enjoy listening to radio, and marketers need to do a better job of persuading consumers that radio is still one of the greatest methods to reach them. This survey was able to pinpoint some crucial details about Chandigarh City's radio listening habits. The results indicate that the majority of the respondents listened to the radio frequently and for a variety of reasons, including their favourite music, various entertainment programmes, etc. Despite frequent technological advancements, FM continues to hold a special position in the hearts of the public. The FM is popular because of the way it is programmed. Majority of the listeners typically listen to radio alone on their cell phone emerged. Travelling alone in a personal vehicle is an additional factor. The majority of respondents firmly agree that the FM radio stations draw both urban listeners and individual listeners when it comes to the content played by private FM stations. Radio hosts create their programming with their target audience in mind and the findings revealed that the majority of respondent's choose the radio station due of the types of songs they play. The majority of the listeners are pleased with the programming offered by commercial FM radio stations, which can be used to gauge listeners' level of satisfaction with the radio's content.

The study's scope was constrained to Chandigarh City alone, but it might be expanded to a larger geographic area.

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# Print Newspapers in India: Readership and Reader Responses in a Post-Pandemic Scenario

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\*Akshat Seth

## ABSTRACT

The future of print has been talked about since the mid-1980s by scholars. This is some time before the effects of digital reading and modes of entertainment such as online streaming platforms started penetrating. Over the past three centuries, newspapers became a dominant mode of cultural production-disseminating information, opinion and entertainment. It also has been the first mode of creating audiences. In the advanced industrial societies of the west, namely- Europe and the US, newspapers have seen a long-term decline of readership, circulation and advertisement revenues since the 1990s, and the trend has accelerated since the start of the new millennium. Since ad revenues have been diverted towards online versions of newspapers, print has suffered. However, till the pandemic, newspaper readership had been rising continuously in India- part of the broader trends in developing countries with large population pools which haven't yet achieved full literacy. India has a sophisticated network of newspaper circulation based on house-to-house distribution and uses of freebies and lottery prizes to consolidate and retain readership. In addition, there are niche audiences for smaller publications. Hence, the COVID-19 pandemic, while accelerating an already visible trend in the West, disrupted newspaper distribution in India. As a result of stringent lockdown rules and residents' aversion to meet newspaper vendors, newspaper production was virtually a full stop. The post-pandemic period has seen the bigger publications, part of larger corporations recovers, but many smaller publications closed down under the weight of financial losses. The aim of the paper is to look at the changed scenario of newspaper circulation in India, and an indicative analysis of readers' perceptions of the place newspapers occupy when information is readily available through a click.

**Keywords:** Print, Newspaper, Readership, Pandemic, Covid-19

### 1. Introduction

Newspapers have occupied an important place in the organization and distribution of knowledge, especially since the past two or three centuries. They not only provide information, but entertainment. The increasing reliance on audio visual medium and online news reading has anyway raised questions on the long-term viability of newspapers. The COVID-19 pandemic hit all aspects of our lives including the production and distribution of newspapers. My larger research area is currently the issue of readership and changes in the habits of reading post liberalization. Therefore, I found it intriguing to combine the issues of the future of newspapers with what the readers actually think.

Since emerging as a mode of mass communication, print has shaped the political, economic, social and cultural life of the world in many ways. None more so perhaps than in shaping the development of the idea of nation states that we find so obvious nowadays. Benedict Anderson, in his seminal work *Imagined Communities* has highlighted the role of printed books and pamphlets in shaping national consciousness (Anderson, 2006). In his observations, Anderson, succinctly notes that the transformation of oral

languages into a form written and widely disseminated only came about after their conversion into "print languages". Hence, "print-languages laid the bases for national consciousness" (Ibid, p. 44). Hence, in the modern world of digitization of information and entertainment, the decline of print and its genres, most notably, the newspaper marks an important historical epoch. The Coronavirus Pandemic of 2020-22 only speeded up the process. As a matter of fact, for the world of print and publishing, the COVID-19 Pandemic could be construed as an accelerator of long emergent trends.

The newspaper as one of the most consistent and penetrative form of print-based mass communication has in the past three decades seen a decline in circulation, particularly in the West which had popularized the genre in its modern form in the rest of the world as a result of the globalization of print technology abetted by colonialism. Figures from 2007 in the United States pointed to a 10% drop in the number of newspapers, a 14.5% drop in readership and a narrowing of diversity such as the near total collapse of afternoon and evening papers compared to 1990 (Berkow, 2007, p. 71). Classified advertisements

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\* PhD Research Scholar, Centre for Media Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi



have been key to covering year-by-year rising costs for newspapers and their withdrawal has had a marked effect on survival. Many popular and large print news ventures are rapidly adapting to the increase in digital penetration by diverting resources and advertisements to digital versions of the newspaper. Many times, e-newspapers are given precedence. As media use has increasingly veered towards being digital, the pandemic only aggravated the situation. In the United States, for instance, ad revenue declined 30% between 2019 and 2020 for print newspapers, even as the revenue for digital newspapers rose (Adgate, 2021).

The pandemic while naturally accelerating the long-term decline of print, as more and more people turned to digital media for information, was particularly devastating to small and local newspapers which did not have the resources of media conglomerates to weather such a storm. In Australia, for instance, two hundred local newspapers shut down or suspended publication including, "Yarram Standard in Victoria which first rolled off the press nearly 140 years ago, survived the Spanish flu of 1918-19 and flourished for decades afterwards." (Hess & Walker, 2021, p. 22).

While newspaper readership stagnation or decline has been a long-term trend in advanced industrial societies, many countries in Asia, Latin America and Africa have been outliers, with year-on-year growth in newspaper circulation and readership. Robin Jeffery in his study of the steadily burgeoning market of newspapers in India has called it "India's Newspaper Revolution". This represented not just a rise in numbers but in terms of India's regional and linguistic pluralism, a fascinatingly diverse form of cultural production. Daily newspaper circulation in India rose from 9.3 million in 1976 to 40.3 million in 1996 (Jeffrey, 2000, p. 1). A quarterly analysis of the Indian Readership Survey in 2019 put the overall newspaper readership of India at 425 million people (Malvania, 2019). This was still not a majority of the Indian population, signifying a substantial untapped market still. The steady penetration of internet and digital media use has not substantially eroded print news readership.

The COVID-19 pandemic was, hence, an abrupt interruption of a complex network of newspaper circulation in India. Apart from circulation through newsstands, the distribution network relies on the delivery of the paper to readers individually in their homes. The central government announced a nationwide lockdown on 24th March 2020 resulting in heavy restrictions on movement. Although, newspapers were classified under 'essential services', the paranoia of the virus led to housing societies and individual homes prohibiting the entry of vendors (Maitreyi, 2020); in many instances, the police restricted movement for newspaper delivery (Staff, 2020). Prominent news publishers assured readers the virus wouldn't be contracted by reading newspapers (Beureau,

2020). This did not remedy the situation as "circulation plummeted and advertising disappeared" (Ninan, 2021). While the more established companies closed down editions or subsidiaries (Dutta, 2020), several smaller periodicals folded up (NBT, 2020) (Upadhyay, 2020).

As pointed out, there has been a difference in responses of newspapers according to the resources at their disposal. While a lot of small publications could simply not sustain themselves, Dainik Bhaskar a Hindi language newspaper with the fourth largest daily circulation in the world (second largest behind Dainik Jagran) is looking to surpass its advertisement revenues from 2019 (before the pandemic) in the festive season of 2022 (Bureau, 2022). Many newspaper publications also collaborated with each other to sustain in terms of distribution and supply. The response however may be slightly different across languages. For instance, an executive from a leading English daily said- "It is impossible that all (the) readers who moved to digital versions are back to physical copies. 100% readership will never be back..." (Verma, 2021). There is a widespread belief that newspaper companies may continue to fund printing through advertisements on their respective online portals and digital subscription using 'paywalls'. India is a country which anyway relies on recycled newsprint and government subsidies, which make newspapers far more affordable than their western counterparts.

## 2. Literature Review

The debate regarding the viability of print as a sustainable form of mass communication is not new by any means, and certainly not contingent solely on the dramatically increased penetration of the internet and related digital media. Scholars have been debating about the future of the print medium since at least the mid-eighties [see Neuman (1984), Provenzo (1986), Birkerts (1994), Eisenstein (1995), Meadow (1998)]. It is important to underscore that it is not about literally when or if the last piece of book or newspaper would be published, but rather in Jay David Bolter's terms, that "print will no longer define the organization and presentation of knowledge as it has for the past five centuries" (1991, p. 2). Irrespective of the pandemic occurrence, we would still be living in what David Gunkel calls, 'the late age of print' (2003, p. 278).

The first thing to keep in mind in our discussion of readership is that when readers interact with mass communication media such as print, they become audiences. Readers as audience, a collective, are distinct from readers as a class of privileged people surrounded by a sea of illiterate masses (Griswold, Lenaghan, & Naffziger, 2011, p. 20). The discussions we have so far talk about circulation or readership figures- a quantitative method to evaluate the place of the newspaper in our society. However, while figures may be easily acquired

through such quantitative methods, social attitudes to newspapers, observations about their place and a lot of other factors may not come through. Hence qualitative methodology is required, which can tell us about the subjective reader responses and its connection with larger sociological and cultural issues. This is particularly important now, in the context of the pandemic and the penetration of digital media.

In terms of the quantitative method, the Survey of Readership is the most prevalent method to determine readership figures (circulation may be slightly different, calculated from sales figures while many newspapers are shared by two or more individuals). These surveys are conducted often using pointed questionnaires to gather objective data about print media use. Surveys are most often driven by the need to establish which newspaper is the most popular, and hence often conducted by marketing agencies on the demand of the clients concerned, i.e., those who are involved with the running of newspapers. Examples of this include the National Readership Survey or NRS, conducted by the National Readership Studies Council, consisting of members from the Indian Newspaper Society, Advertising Association of India and the Audit Bureau of Circulation (Chand, 2007). The survey is often outsourced to agencies such as MARG (Marketing and Research Group) and the comparatively newer Nielsen. The Indian Readership Survey has lately emerged as the more prominent source of readership figures and is conducted by the Media Research Users Council (MRUC). The latest figures of the IRS suggest a slow decline of readership of newspapers, incomparable in intensity to what is happening in the West (MRUC, 2019).

While primarily concerned with the sales figures, readership surveys can nevertheless show certain aspects concerning social attitudes and highlight cultural issues, such as language use, urban-rural demography etc. The IRS uses separate categories of 'Urban' and 'Rural' audiences apart from overall figures. Perhaps the best example of a survey focussing on social attitudes is the 2010 Indian Youth Readership Survey (Shukla, 2010) conducted by the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) and the National Book Trust (NBT) which also asked youth about their preferred genre of books and whether they read for pleasure or not (Gupta, 2015, p. 34). Such inquiries on attitudes of readers started in the early 20th century with the famous sociologist Max Weber's study of attitudes, beliefs and opinions of newspaper readers coupled with content analysis of major newspapers (Hansen & Machin, 2013, p. 204).

Weber's methodology of bringing non-quantitative aspects into play highlights the limitations of quantitative means such as surveys. Zepetnek and Kreisel note that "the objective of this type of readership research is to

determine the consumer's likes and dislikes for particular newspapers and/or magazines and their selected features. The question of reading itself is not defined in relation to a concept of literature." (Zepetnek & Kreisel, 1992, p. 212). Therefore, qualitative methods come into play. Francis Cody's examination of the newspaper reading sphere at a teashop in Tamil Nadu, as part of a wider field work, structures his observations under "ethnography of reading" and looking at the newspaper from an anthropological point of view (Cody, 2009). Such studies like Cody's could help underline the importance of the newspaper in a fast-changing media terrain, and especially why people still stick with them.

### 3. Objectives of the Study

- To understand Readers' Perspective on the Future of Print and Newspapers in a post-pandemic digital age.
- To Gauge the impact of the pandemic on print newspapers in India.
- To Contextualize the impact of the pandemic on newspapers through the lens of digitization and long-term decline.

### 4. Research Methodology

In order to gauge the readers' perspective on the future of print and newspapers in their lives, a combination of focused group interviews and unstructured interviews have been used. To talk about the theoretical aspect of the future of print and the impact of pandemic on newspapers in India, secondary data has been analyzed.

### 5. Analysis

India with its diversity of regional and cultural geographies, languages and uneven socioeconomic development is not a homogenous 'public sphere' as imagined by Jurgen Habermas with respect to Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries when print was becoming popular (Habermas, 1989). Most importantly, there is a generational difference with older people presumably more inclined towards the newspaper as their source of news. Hence, any observation on readers' views of the efficacy of the newspaper in the present would be provisional and at best indicative.

The observations made here are on the basis of my earlier field work in Bhopal as part of my PhD thesis, as well as some conversations I had recently:

- There seems to be a generational shift with regards to the attitude to newspapers presently. Older readers tend to vouch for the credibility of newspapers as against newer forms of gathering news such as mobile phones. They seem to relate, sometimes nostalgically to the idea of sitting down with a newspaper in the morning. Hence statements like *khbar ki apni pehchan hai* (newspapers have their own unique place) and *local ki khabarein akhbar se hi achhi milti hain* (we get



better local news in the newspaper).

- The younger generation of people that I spoke to may not be a homogenous category considering the segmentation of positions according to literacy and socioeconomic status. They are university students, a subset of younger generations which has an academically analytical outlook to issues. Many of them, especially in Bhopal, being students of journalism did in fact not only read newspapers but wrote articles for them, had internships and were aware of how print works. However, applications like "INSHORTS" a form of digital news that requires the most minimum attention spans considering its shorter lengths of presenting news is getting really popular among youngsters.
- However, cities with a prominent print culture, such as Bhopal, have newspapers like a Dainik Bhaskar which because of its resources as a media-turned-general conglomerate, can invest in distribution, print readership remains strong, and newspapers are a part of general conversations.
- It seems that the COVID-19 Pandemic has exacerbated some trends- such as the use of internet for gathering news, information and leisure, particularly among youngsters. It has also led to the decline of niche print readerships as magazines and small newspapers close. However, the larger dailies still maintain their presence. Moreover, the newspaper retains its social functions- to be used as envelopes, impromptu table covers, and scrap.

## 6. Conclusion

From the observations of the reader responses and analyzing figures of newspaper readership in India, one could say that newspapers have not lost their relevance and quite a substantial number of people still regard them as trustworthy. However, coupled with the long term technological and generational shift, the effect of pandemic means that even in a vast country like India, with yet more market to tap into, newspapers may be in danger of losing relevance. A lot depends on whether applications like INSHORTS can really catch on as a viable news gathering medium. This research could be further enhanced by ethnographic and focussed group studies on the impact of newspapers in our lives.

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# Role of Media in Stock Market Manipulation

\*Vijay Kumar Sharma  
\*\*Dr. Himanshu Mahobia

## ABSTRACT

Electronics and print media such as business newspapers, TV news channels are the major sources of information on corporate changes to the investors. Investors takes investment decisions on a particular stock based on information they gathered from daily news coming from various sources of media. Social media, at the same time, gives opportunities for fraudsters to disseminate false or misleading information to the market. By analysis of multiple news about the security market, it is found that media has an important role in the manipulation of the stock market through fake news. The result of this study is a line with the pump and dump technique in which fraudsters temporary use the print and electronic media to inflate the stock price. This study employed network theory to study the role of business news in pump-and-dump and presence of noise traders in the stock market.

**Keywords:** Stock price, market Manipulation, Social media; Business news

### 1. Introduction

Stock market manipulation is a common practice in the stock market by spreading false news using various modes of electronics or print media such as TV News, YouTube channels, Twitter, WhatsApp, or business newspapers. Today, in the financial market false information is a major issue, and understanding of this manipulation is still incomplete among common investors. In the past, theoretical-based models have been developed the researchers to address the issue of trade-based manipulation through media, but empirical studies are few on this topic. This paper contributes to the emerging works of literature on illegal market manipulation, and pump-and-dump practices.

Pump-and-dump practices in financial market consist of touting stock prices through fake and misleading information to inflate the stock prices (pump). When the stock price reaches high, manipulators stop hyping and sell their shares (dump), then the price typically falls. These pump and dump practices existed for many years, the emergence of social media and internet has created a new ground for stock manipulation.

Figure 1. Phases of pumping and dumping in stock price



Spreading false or misleading information to many potential investors can now be done with minimum effort, anonymously and at a relatively low cost. According to the Security and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), investors who learn of investing opportunities from social media should always be on the lookout for fraud." The market operators through pump and dump practices mainly target small capitalization stocks with low liquidity such as "small caps" companies. Regarding tools used by fraudsters, pump-and-dump schemes often combine a false or misleading press release with a touting of the stock on spam e-mails, Facebook, twitter websites or bulletin boards.

Figure 2. Price manipulation cycle in equity market



To investigate the connection between a spike in YouTube posting activity and stock returns, we undertake a small event study. We discover that unusually high social media message activity about a company listed on the National Stock Exchange (NSE) is linked to a significant price gain

\* Assistant Professor, IMS Unison University, Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India

\*\*Assistant Professor, IMS Unison University, Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India.

on the event day and a dramatic price decline the following week. Although the manipulation theory suggests that this price reversal pattern is the result of a pump-and-dump plan, it is also possible that overconfident noise traders are to blame (behavioural hypothesis). While legal investigations would be required to determine precisely if a significant spike or decline in stock prices was brought on by fraudsters or by irrational, inexperienced traders, we analyse user social interactions using network theory to spot shady online behaviour. We uncover a small number of user groups exhibiting behaviour that could be linked to frauds (multi-account posting, automatic posting, scheduled posting activity), favouring the manipulation hypothesis above the behavioural hypothesis by grouping individuals based on Twitter mentions and retweets. Overall, our finding shed light on the need for a higher control of the information published on social media and a higher education for investors looking for trading opportunities on the Internet.

Our paper is structured as follows. Section 2 briefly presents the theoretical literature on stock market manipulation, Section 3 describes the civil actions on manipulations by SEBI, Section 4 presents the event study on YouTube messages using Corrado (1989) rank test and Tamarkin and Whitelaw (2011) and Leung and Ton (2015) approach. Section 5 conclusion of the study.

## 2. Literature Review

Manipulation of stock market reduces economic efficiency by reducing liquidity for risk transmission and making price less reliable for effective resource allocation (Kyle and Viswanathan, 2008). However, little is known about the prevalence and effects of market manipulation, despite the significance of guaranteeing fair and transparent markets (Putnins, 2012). Theoretical studies have shown that traders, whether knowledgeable or not, can profit through trade-based manipulation (Allen and Gale, 1992). Market manipulation is not readily observable, however, as with any illicit activity, and empirical studies are still extremely rare.

Aggarwal and Wu (2006) give a thorough analysis of stock market manipulation in India based on their examination of all cases pursued by the SEBI from January 2008 to October 2020. They find that around 50% of the stocks manipulated are penny stocks with low trading volume and market capitalization. The techniques used by fraudsters, more than 65% of cases involves the spread of rumours or false information. Additionally, manipulators typically employ nominee accounts and wash trades to generate fictitious trading activity, however, only a small fraction of manipulation is detected and prosecuted (Comerton-Forde and Putnins, 2014). Furthermore, focusing on reported cases tend to create a selection bias towards poor manipulation and is affected by regulators

agenda (Bonner et al., 1998). Consequently, a different area of this research focuses on indirect evidence by examining unusual market activities (for trade-based manipulation) or by attempting to identify suspicious behaviours outside of the market (for information-based manipulation). Böhm and Holz (2006), Frieder and Zittrain (2007), Hanke and Hauser (2008) and Nelson et al. (2013) all discover a substantial positive short-run price impact, after a stock spam boasting, which is followed by a price reversal the following days. Sabharwal et al. (2011), who utilise Internet message activity to identify pump-and-dump schemes on tiny stocks without fundamentals.

## 3. Objectives of the Study

The present study is focused on the following two objectives.

- To study the pumping-dumping cases in Indian equity market in the past twenty years.
- To investigate the role of media in stock price manipulation in Indian equity market.

## 4. Research Methodology

The study is based on secondary data to investigate the role of media in stock price manipulation in the Indian equity market. The study uses sample messages and quotes on YouTube for spreading fake news related to stock price prediction. The study used the Tamarkin and Whitelaw (2011) and Leung and Ton (2015) approaches for the event study on abnormal returns. This study defined an event as the number of YouTube comments made about Nifty 50 firms during a given day exceeding the average number of comments made during the seven days prior plus two standard deviations. The study only considered communications sent before the market closed on day  $t$ , after considering all messages delivered on day  $t-1$  and day of trading ( $t$ ). The study considered at most 10 messages from each participant. If an event is discovered on a non-trading day, the following trading day is considered as the event day. The study evaluated historical Nifty 50 data for 2021-2022 to include an event in the event-analysis. According to Bloomberg News on the Nifty 50 index, the study suggests six event days that will have the maximum number of messages: October 14th, 2021; November 11th; January 16th; April 3rd; July 13th; and August 9th, 2021.

## 5. Data Analysis

### 5.1. Civil actions by SEBI in the past twenty years

Table 1 indicates an updated database of SEBI actions on pump-and-dump practices in stock market for twenty years (Sources: Security & Exchange Board of India website, 2021).

Table 1. Number of SEBI civil actions by category and by year

Year	Stock dealers	Insider Trading	Security Offering	Market manipulation	Other frauds	Total
2000	23	29	76	4	81	213
2001	19	36	66	11	72	204
2002	20	38	82	18	71	229
2003	15	51	67	26	78	237
2004	20	36	70	34	99	259
2005	13	47	56	17	104	237
2006	16	52	80	26	143	317
2007	32	37	70	18	156	313
2008	17	32	59	17	139	264
2009	20	42	34	30	138	264
2010	6	37	45	22	107	217
2011	59	31	44	27	101	262
2012	67	37	67	39	75	285
2013	26	42	106	34	104	312
2014	7	34	73	24	117	255
2015	21	48	82	29	86	266
2016	16	52	73	34	95	270
2017	7	43	76	23	58	207
2018	7	40	52	11	35	145
2019	4	26	58	28	46	162
Total	415	790	1,336	472	1,905	4,918

Since 2000, the SEBI has assigned each enforcement action to a distinct category; the classification is available in the "SEBI annual reports." There are 4,918 civil actions in the SEBI database of litigation releases from 2000 to 2019, of which 977 are related to market manipulation. Market manipulations made up 20.60% of all civil cases the SEBI brought between 2000 and 2019. The SEBI has often shown during our sample period that it is committed to prosecuting market manipulation that takes place online. 33 businesses and people who used the Internet to

mislead investors are the targets of enforcement actions.

Table 2 provides an annual summary of the types of equities that fraudsters target, the types of individuals involved in the scam, and the methods employed to spread false or misleading information to the market. According to the survey, 86% of pump-and-dump strategies target equities that are listed on the NSE. Press releases (73.3%) are the most popular medium through which con artists spread false or misleading information to



the public, followed by spam emails / newsletters (34%), websites (32%), fax blasts (12.6%), and YouTube discussion boards (10.6%). The majority of those

participating in frauds are traders and corporate insiders (CEO, CFO) who are paid in cash or shares to boost stock prices.

Table 2: Distribution of pump-and-dump manipulation cases by SEBI

Year	Stock Targeted		People							
	NSE	OTC	Insider	Promoters	Trader	Press Release	Email	Website	TV News	Social Media
2006	12	4	8	9	5	11	8	10	1	0
2007	8	1	6	4	3	6	4	4	2	0
2008	2	3	3	2	2	4	2	0	2	0
2009	11	7	12	8	4	12	5	5	1	0
2010	10	1	8	7	2	7	3	5	1	0
2011	7	2	6	3	4	8	3	2	2	0
2012	16	0	14	3	4	15	2	2	1	0
2003	12	0	6	7	5	8	3	3	0	0
2014	11	2	9	5	5	11	4	6	1	2
2015	7	0	3	5	4	5	4	3	0	0
2016	11	0	7	7	4	7	3	2	2	0
2017	3	0	2	3	0	3	3	0	1	1
2018	6	1	2	4	6	5	3	3	1	1
2019	13	0	5	7	8	8	4	3	1	0
Total	129	21	91	74	56	110	51	48	16	4
Total (%)	86.00%	14.00%	60.67%	49.33%	37.33%	73.33%	34.00%	32.00%	10.67%	2.67%

(Source: Compiled by the author from bloomberg.com)

### 5.2 Result of the event Study on YouTube messages.

During our sample period, a total of 15,188 messages were posted on YouTube related to any of the NSE Nifty 50 company. We identify that a positive attitude is associated with 26.41% of event days. Investors are typically bullish when disseminating stock market information on the internet, as previously reported by Kim and Kim (2014) and Avery et al. (2016), among others. Individual investors do not engage in short sales, maintain modest portfolios, and net purchase attention-grabbing equities (Barber and Odeon, 2008). Thus, when individual investors talk about a stock on the Internet, they tend to post messages mainly about stock they hold or stock they want to buy in a bullish expectation. Furthermore, the bullishness bias can also be related to fraudsters trying to pump the price of a stock by sharing false information about a given company on YouTube. Applying the previous methodology to Nifty index listed on NSE and focusing our attention on the six event-day with a positive sentiment, we end up with a total of 167 events.

The NSE 50 Index is used as the benchmark for normal return in our simple market return model since one must first develop a model for expected returns before one can calculate abnormal returns. Without assuming that the

underlying data are normal, we use a non-parametric Corrado (1989) rank test to determine the importance of aberrant returns during the event window. We report our findings using a 6-day event and a 12-month estimating timeframe. For each event detected previously, the study computed return for the estimation (L1 = 120 days) and event (L2 = 21 trading days) to check the abnormal return. We transform each abnormal return  $ARI_{i,t}$  to a rank variable  $K_{i,t}$ , by assessing to the day with the highest return over the complete estimation of rank of +141, to the day with the second highest return a rank of +120, and so on until assigning to day with the lowest return a rank of 1. To allow for missing returns, ranks are standardized by dividing by one plus the number of non-missing returns in each firm's excess returns time series.

$$K_{i,t} = \text{Rank}(ARI_{i,t}) / (1 + M_i)$$

where  $M_i$  is the number of non-missing values for Nifty\_50 index in L1 and L2. This order statistics for the uniform distribution with an expected value of one-half. The rank test statistic for day t ( $T_t$ ) is equal to:

$$T_t = \frac{1}{\sqrt{N}} (U_{i,t} - 0.5) / S(U)$$

where N is equal to the number of events. The estimated standard deviation  $S(U)$  is defined on the estimation (L1) and event (L2) window as

$$S(U) = \sqrt{\left\{ \frac{1}{L1+L2} \sum \frac{1}{\sqrt{N}} (U_{i,t} - 0.5) \right\}}$$

Depending on the stock price, market size, and the percentage of non-trading days, we conducted event studies using different thresholds to include or exclude a stock. In figure 01, the abnormal return (AR) and cumulative abnormal return (CAR) during the event window are shown, with day 0 being the day with the

highest unusually high activity on YouTube. Figure 5 displays the result of converting anomalous returns to ranks on both the estimation and the event window. We observe a high contemporaneous association between YouTube activity and stock index on the event day, like Kim and Kim (2014), and an abnormal return of +6.49%.

Figure 03: One-day abnormal return and the cumulative abnormal 6-days event-window around an abnormally high posting activity on social media. (Figure 03)

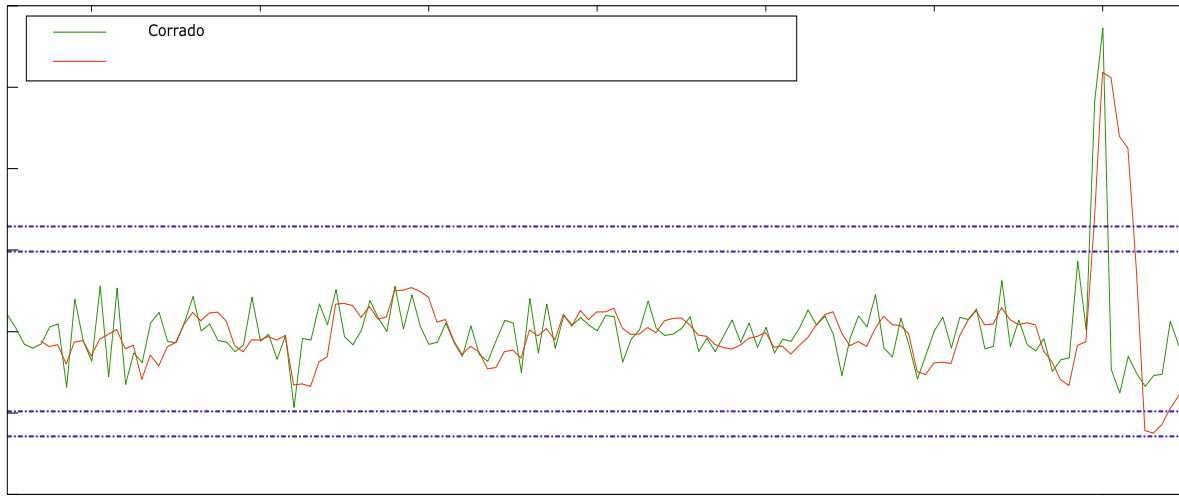


Table03: Abnormal Returns and Cumulative Abnormal Returns (6-days) (computed using E-views 12)

		1		2		3		4	
		AR	CAR	AR	CAR	AR	CAR	AR	CAR
t-10	t-10	0.0025	**	0.0039	**	0.007	**	-0.0029	**
t-9	t-9	0.0015	**	-0.0007	**	-0.0006	**	0.0051	**
t-8	t-8	-0.0006	**	-0.0021	**	0.0007	**	-0.0029	**
t-7	t-7	-0.0015	**	0.0012	**	-0.0016	**	0.0049	**
t-6	t-6	-0.0034	**	-0.0056	**	-0.0026	**	0.0007	**
t-5	t-5	-0.0041	-0.0081	-0.0061	-0.0134	-0.0038	-0.0079	0.0007	0.0085
t-4	t-4	-0.0051	-0.0147	-0.0027	-0.0154	-0.006	-0.0133	-0.0013	0.0021
t-3	t-3	-0.0001	-0.0142	0.0054*	-0.0079	0.003	-0.011	0.0047	0.0097
t-2	t-2	-0.0004	-0.013	-0.0015	-0.0106	-0.0038	-0.0131	0.0062	0.011
t-1	t-1	0.0330***	0.0233**	0.0406***	0.0356***	0.0215***	0.011	0.0580***	0.0683
t0	t0	0.0649***	0.0923***	0.0822***	0.1239***	0.0553***	0.0700***	0.2268***	0.2944***
t1	t1	-0.006	0.0914***	-0.0045	0.1221***	0.003	0.0791***	-0.0105	0.2851***
t2	t2	-0.0031	0.0884***	-0.0037	0.1130***	-0.0083	0.0678***	-0.0076	0.2728***
t3	t3	-0.0074	0.0814***	-0.0073	0.1073***	-0.0031	0.0685***	-0.0144	0.2523***
t4	t4	-0.0064	0.0421	-0.0044	0.0624	-0.0029	0.0441**	-0.0007	0.1936
t5	t5	-0.0001	-0.0229**	-0.005	-0.0248**	-0.007	-0.0182	0.0093	-0.0239**
t6	t6	-0.0128	-0.0297**	-0.0083	-0.0286**	-0.0064	-0.0277*	-0.0167**	-0.0301**
t7	t7	0.0002	-0.0264**	-0.0065	-0.0315**	-0.0044	-0.0238**	-0.0003	-0.0228*
t8	t8	0.0027	-0.0163**	0.001	-0.0232*	-0.003	-0.0237**	-0.0081	-0.0165
t9	t9	-0.0064	-0.0164	0.001	-0.0178	-0.0002	-0.0210**	0.0083	-0.0076
t10	t10	-0.0048	-0.0211	-0.0036	-0.0164	0.0008	-0.0131	0.0086	-0.0083
	Event	567	929		929		260		892



What's more intriguing is that we observe a sizeable post-event price reversal. A cumulative post-event decline in stock price between 2.5% and 3% is associated with the cumulative abnormal return, which is statistically significant and negative on a six-day window. Once more, this conclusion is in line with that of Sabherwal et al. (2011), who notes a large post-event decline in the stock price of -5.4% during the next 6 trading days. The general investor sentiment is what led to the price reversal seen in the Nifty 50 historical data. Another hypothesis is that fraudsters or stock promoters pumped up the price of the targeted stocks on the day of the event before selling them off the next day after making unauthorised profits.

## 6. Conclusions

Investors generally gather knowledge and share information on the stock market with the aid of electronics and print media. But media also provides an opportunity to the market manipulators to manipulate stock prices by spreading false news in the market to make profits. For stocks listed on the stock markets. The study finds that information-based stock market manipulation mainly targets small capitalization stocks listed on the NSE. Fraudsters use various modes of media to send misleading information to the marketplace, such as TV News, press releases, e-mails, and websites. In that regard, and even if the number of reported cases involving directly false information released on social media is for now relatively low, electronic media represents a very common mode for manipulators or stock promoters as it allows them to target a wide unsophisticated audience more prone to being scammed than sophisticated investor.

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# The Role of Media in Development Communication Scenario in India

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\*Souvik Acharya

## ABSTRACT

Communication for development has been one of the most important parts of the development and growth story in a developing country like India and especially in the rural parts. Media is indeed the fourth pillar of our democracy; likewise, it has a huge role to play in the development scenario of the nation. The media can be divided into its different segments which are Print media, electronic media, and New Media which is the most important component in today's twenty first century. The role of media in implementation of the development communication projects in India at different points of time, be it Kheda development communication project, Jhabua development communication project, SITE program and many other rural and urban development communication projects has been very crucial. Newspapers, Radio, Satellite TV, Internet and Computer technologies and even smartphone technologies today are used in the implementation of development communication projects in different parts of the country. This research paper tries to cover the different development communication projects undertaken in India at different points of time. It also tries to find out the importance of those projects in the national development scenario. The paper tries to assess the role of media in these communication projects for development. The researcher will use analysis of data from different secondary sources like books, records, computer resources, and archival materials and try to find out the importance of the development communication initiatives for today and tomorrow. This research is aimed at finding out the media and development communication narrative in a developing nation like India and finding out the road to the future as well.

**Keywords:** Development Communication, Media, Internet, New Media, Print Media, Projects, Media Scenario, India, National Development

## 1. Introduction

Development Communication is a different part of the communication scenario which focuses on the ground level. Communication for development as the name suggests itself focuses on ground-level growth and development opportunities. The different development communication initiatives, projects and programs undertaken in India at different points of time have been very crucial. These projects mostly have been undertaken in the rural areas of the country, where the poor, marginalized, tribal, voiceless population exists more but also in semi-urban and urban areas, some important ones have been surely initiated. Communication is one of the important facets among humans, for the progress, growth and development of the race. The communication factor in development communication is very important and how this communication reaches to the target audience is also a very important factor. The connecting factor between the development reaching to the people at the ground level and the necessary communication is the media. Media is responsible to be the change agent which brings communication to the audiences and connects them for

the development to take place. For development communication to take place proper communication and for that proper media channel is required. Proper media will ensure that the message is correctly delivered to the end user or receiver of the development. To reach the goals of development communication media is the indispensable factor without which the message itself would not reach the receiver from the source. There remain also many problems or noise in the communication scenario in case of development communication due to various reasons. Since the development communication projects are generally undertaken in rural areas, areas of lesser development, many social, economic, and cultural problems may arouse which results in barriers to communication. To remove the barriers in communication for development the appropriate selection of media is very necessary. In different projects, different media channels or even a set of media channels are required to be selected. The media planning for the development of communication projects in India is a critical task in itself. There are different socio-cultural factors that needed to be estimated in advance regarding the areas where the projects are to be

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\*PhD Research Scholar in Mass Communication, Mahatma Gandhi Central University, Motihari, Bihar.

implemented. After proper gauging of the ground conditions, proper media needs to be selected for the implementation of the projects. As we know there are different kinds of media which are Print media including newspapers, magazines, and other printed materials, radio, television, film, advertisements, New Media and traditional media like puppetry, oral media among others. So we can see that there are different forms of media channels that can facilitate the development communication projects, programs and initiatives at different levels of communication. If the population is literate then print media like newspapers or magazines or printed advertisements can be selected as media but only print media will possibly not deliver better end results. Print Media's effectiveness will be up to those literate people who are able to read those newspapers or printed forms. Audio-visual media like radio, television, and nowadays' digital media like smartphones powered by internet can produce important content and those messages can reach the audience more effectively. For development programs, many projects have been initiated where television or radio has been used. In the case of radio, the audio message can have a good effect on the target population. Also using television and films as a medium for the masses for reaching the development communication messages is very much viable as it uses both audio and visual media. Also, traditional forms of media like oral messages, printed materials, nukkad, road drama, puppetry etc. can have a strong impact on the audiences as they are very local in nature, and they are having a strong effect on the people. Finally coming to the New Media, which is the ultimate superior form of media in today's society. New Media includes film projectors, computers, laptops, smartphones, and other devices, and also the internet medium through which entire communication takes place. As mentioned all these forms of media can play a pivotal role in development communication in different parts of the country both rural and urban.

## 2. Literature Review

According to Choudhury (2011), "The two terms development and communication are two different terms. Communication refers to the use of different media outlets like print media including newspapers and other forms, audio-visual media including television, films, radio, and of course New Media tools and dissemination of the proper information through them. Communication is the sharing of information and awareness through these tools to accelerate and bring forward development in society. The word development in DevCom means the change that is brought about in society. In this way, the process of development communication takes place for the overall betterment of the society." According to Prasad (2009), "The nature of the Development Communication scenario changes according to different country, people and its societies. The large-scale national projects have been

designed in such a way that the communication policies for these projects also indirectly impact the development communication in those places." The detailed way of study of the development communication approach where development communication is being taken as independent variable is being looked in a fresh way overall. As the nearby development indicators and intervening variables, the policy model and its communication trends are considered. The political system in a country, its ministries, its political ideologies, government among others emanates the communication policies of the country. According to Prasad (2002), "The use of media including radio, newspapers, television ensures the widespread spread of awareness and development communication in the grassroots for everyone in the society. In the newer trends and approaches of development scenario the communication should try to ensure the cultural identity of a particular community and act as the self-expression of the society and its people." The process of Development communication includes bettering the lives of the people in different communities through providing them proper information. In the process the communication for development takes places through different public programs, schemes and sustainable policies for future goals. According to Bofo (1985), "The conscious and systematized approach to communication strategies and processes for informational and attitudinal problems and to form a sustainable process or change for development is termed as development communication." According to Prasad (2009), "The concept of Development Communication has not been of serious academic interest in the areas of developed nations whereas they are considered as interest academic wise in the developing nations." According to Daniel Lerner (1958), "In the process of Development Communication, there exists a correlation between expansion of the economic activities and the set of modernizing variables like urbanization, rate of literacy, use of mass media tools, and democratic participation among others." It must be asserted that factors like education and mass media are totally responsible for the mobilization of human resources in a nation. The continuous modernization of agricultural and industrial sectors in the developing nations has followed the mobilization of human resources. In the economic development process, it is the role of the mass media to fasten the otherwise slow process of social transformation. Indeed, the process of development communication is seen as practice for informing, awareness spreading, and educating for the development of a nation overall. According to Schramm (1964), "Development communication is the process of social transformation and enlightenment of the people of a nation to develop standard of living in every aspect." In the development of developing nations there are certain factors causing



common hindrances like poverty, literacy, unemployment, insufficiency of clean water, sanitation problems, among others. All these social and attitudinal barriers are maintained by the communication approaches so that the developing countries can reach the ultimate goal of reaching the sustainable goals by development communication. In this way it can be ascertained that communication is the tool through which the society or nation can reach the goal of development.

### 3. Research Questions

1. What is the Development Communication scenario in India?
2. What is the role of Media in the development communication scenario in India?
3. What is the impact of development communication on the society and its people in India?

### 4. Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the Development Communication scenario in India.
2. To find out the role of Media in the Development Communication scenario in India.
3. To find out the importance and role of communication for the development of society and its people.

### 5. Research Methodology

This research paper aims to bring the overall development communication scenario in India. The researcher tries to find out the role played by media and its components in the development communication process. Also, this paper aims to find out the different roles played by communication for development in society for its people. The researcher performs in this research qualitative research and analysis of the data collected. The researcher uses data collection from secondary resources like books, research papers, and archival materials. The data collected is analyzed and written for this research work. The development communication projects taken as part of the analysis were taken on the basis of the random sampling method. These are qualitatively analyzed as part of the research work. Research methodology is indeed one of the important parts of the entire research work, and similarly, the researcher in this research work too gives much importance to the methodology part.

### 6. Analysis and Discussion

The two words development and communication are heavily filled terms that have different conceptions and also different meanings with the shaping of different theoretical works. The richness in the meanings often leads to ambiguity which affects the ultimate meaning and impact of development communication. Development Communication helps society and its people to change for

betterment and futuristic development goals. For this reason, the goals of development communication are very important for the audiences. The communication in development process is very much important and the media through which the message delivery takes place is also of similar importance in the process. The different media which are used in the communication process varies from print media, television, and new media among others. The role of media becomes very important, as through the media the communication for development takes place and the people can access and be a part of the social change. In India, at different points of time, different development communication projects are undertaken for the betterment of society. Some of those initiatives are discussed here in detail.

**6.1. SITE (Satellite Instructional Television Experiment)** was launched in India in 1975 as an experimental satellite communications project. It was jointly designed by NASA and ISRO (Indian Space Research Organization). In rural parts of India informational television sets were made available according to the project. The main target of the project was to educate the financially backward and academically illiterate sections of the Indian population on various issues and also to gain expertise in satellite broadcasting, and also India gain technical experience in satellite communications. The length of experiment lasted for 1 year from 1975 August 1 to 1976 July 31 and covered more than 2400 villages in more than 20 districts of six Indian states and territories including Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and Rajasthan. All the programs were produced by All India Radio –AIR and were broadcasted by the ATS-6 satellite of NASA which was stationed above India during the duration of the project. Different international agencies like UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, ITU all supported experiment. It played a major role in helping develop INSAT. This major development communication project showed India could use advanced technology for satisfying its socio-economic needs. SITE was very successful and afterward similar experiments were done in many other countries which showed the importance of satellite television in providing education.

**6.2. Jhabua Development Communication Project (JDCP)** uses satellite communication in order to address the different needs of the illiterate population from the rural areas and provide support in the communication for development efforts. The location of the project is in Jhabua, a predominantly rural area with a large tribal population in central India in Madhya Pradesh. The communication strategies include 150 Direct Reception Systems in selected rural villages, 12 talk-back terminals installed at the block headquarters and also one studio and earth station at the ISRO campus in Ahmedabad. TV sets are installed in the buildings for people to the majority



of them. The development issues covered are health, education, political development, and economic development among others. The project continuously keeps broadcasting developmental programs to reach viewers each evening and also conducts training sessions for village development functionaries and participants including teachers, Anganwadi workers, government centers, hand pump mechanics, and panchayat members. Talkback systems are there to receive feedback and give support to the development activities. The issues covered include health, education, watershed management, agriculture, forestry, Panchayati raj, and cultural heritage. The partner in this is the Development Education Communication Unit (DECU) of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).

**6.3. The Kheda Communication Project (KCP)** aimed at the development and local communication in the Kheda district of Gujarat. The Development and Education Council (DEC) Unit managed and produced developmental programmes and educational programmes which mainly involved local audiences. This project was mainly tested for the production of research-based participatory development programs receiving worldwide recognition and acceptance. KCP was another milestone project which uses television for the development of communication initiatives in India. The Kheda Communications project had some special features which made it special. The hardware of the project consisted of one low-power transmitter located in Pij village about 50 km from Ahmedabad. Thus it could broadcast either local television programs or national satellite television programs. Almost around 650 television community sets were given or provided to 400 villages and installed in local public places like schools, where the village audiences gathered in the evenings to view the broadcasts. The technicians also periodically visited and toured the villages to get service and repair television sets. This was one of the most important development communication projects in India.

**6.4. Newspapers as a medium for Development Communication** is very important. The ability of press in the minds of the people is capable of moving their hearts. In order to correct the media imbalances the press has to work more vividly. In the rural development programs proper perspective development, several steps need to be taken. The Ministry always interacts with the Press mainly through Press Information Bureau. In order to create awareness among the rural audience rural development programs needs to be implemented and organized by the press. Advertisements through the DAVP need to be more thoroughly implemented in development programs in rural areas. A booklet called the Gram Vikas is brought out on a regular basis in the regional languages in order to be aware and informs the rural public about the development communication initiatives.

**6.5. Radio as a means of Development Communication** is also very important and the role it plays in these programs is indeed very immense. Universities, agricultural institutes, and international organizations under the United Nations all work for Radio as a development communication tool to reach a large number of audiences. Community radio is another important medium through which different development programs can reach rural audiences and aware and inform them on different educational and civic topics. NGOs, and educational institutions are given licenses to open community radio stations for the development of the areas in which they work. Participation of the local community is mentioned in these areas in community radio networks.

**6.6. Radio Rural Forum** was started by All India Radio in 1956 in implementing communication strategies. It started with 156 villages and 30-minute duration programs two days a week on different issues like agriculture and different subjects related to public issues which could promote rural development.

**6.7 Local Service of AIR:** According to the Verghese Committee Report 1978, it recommended a system of promoting local radio stations for education and development. Like Chetana of Kolkata records the different programs on adult education in the field using local talents. Programs for schools are also broadcast on metros and other AIR stations.

**6.8. Educational TV (ETV):** Education is always one of the most important tool of social transformation. The Indian National Satellite (INSAT) is being used in providing Educational TV- ETV, services in primary school education in six states. University Grants Commission- UGC is using this countrywide classroom programme in the college sector and higher education also. INSAT is also in collaborative use by Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) for their distance education programs and also for the Doordarshan Science Channel programmes. To meet the standards and development of education, ISRO has launched EDUSAT, a satellite designed for strengthening India's education system. These networks are capable of lectures and PowerPoint presentations, data/video broadcasts, video conferencing, digital library, online lectures, and even online admission, examinations among other facilities.

## 7. Findings and Conclusion

### 7.1. Findings Related to Objective 1

The development communication scenario in India is quite in good shape. Many organizations both government and private have undertaken many initiatives in the different grassroots development programs in India. Communication for development has been initiated in different languages, cultures and traditions according to

their respective needs. The development communication for the development of a particular group or society is aimed in each of the programs and they are tried to be executed as much as possible. In different rural parts of the country, different development communication projects have been undertaken for the betterment of society. Development Communication is a powerful tool and if it's properly executed at the grassroots level in rural areas and other backward areas then surely the social change in our society can be visible.

### 7.2. Findings Related to Objective 2

The role of media in the execution of the development of communication programs, projects and initiatives is indeed very important. The media brings the message from the source to the receiver. In communication for development, the role of media in carrying the message is very important and also critical of the surrounding barriers. The different forms of media like print media including newspapers, magazines, and printed advertisements among others are a sort of tool. Audiovisual media includes television, radio, films in bringing different social messages in the development communication program which become very easy also for the illiterate masses to grasp the message. New Media in today's society is indeed playing one of the best roles in the execution of the development communication programs and projects in different backward, rural areas in our society. The role of media is immense in bringing growth and development in society. For this reason, also in development communication, the role played by media is immense and it has a huge impact on the audience too which cannot be ignored.

### 7.3. Findings Related to Objective 3

The impact of development communication on society and its people is huge. The potential in which the development communication can change society through its positive impact is surely huge. The communication done in development communication is for the people and the message needs to be understood properly by the people. The message and communication styles in development communication are very important as they are the most important component of the entire process. The message needs to be delivered properly to the end audiences as without proper message delivery the process remains incomplete. The different development communication projects at different parts of the country are indeed having a positive influence on society. The communication process is causing tremendous social change in the social sphere, and this is leading to growth and development in society.

## 8. Conclusion

The different development communication initiatives in different parts of the country are undertaken for the

betterment of the society and its people. Communication for development is undertaken at the grassroots level so that the effect reaches a maximum number of populations. Development and communication are deeply interlinked terms where without one the other is also unfinished. The tools of development are very important as the message is taken to the audiences for the development. In the communication process to take place the role of the media becomes very important and the message reaches the final audience. In India, many development communication projects have been undertaken in the past and also in the present too. The main question remains how successful these development communication initiatives are. In the future too the focus should be given on proper communication for the development process and also the medium or tool through which the communication takes place. Different development communication initiatives surely need to be implemented in the future too for proper grassroots development in our Indian society at all levels.

## 9. Recommendations

The development communication scenario as discussed in this paper addresses the issues of growth and development in the society. There are certain recommendations related to this topic of research that can be of further help to the researchers in this field of communication, media and development. In today's scenario, the different media in use are there, but for the present and future as well for the communication for development, the focus must be given to the use of new media tools and technologies as new media is the future and with its help lot of work can be done for the future. Also, the areas should be properly identified where development has not been reached yet properly and the people where development needs to be reached. The type of message reaching the audience for the development communication to take place should also be given stress. The communication and the way it will be delivered to the people also have to take care of the barriers, surroundings, and noise in the process. The communicator must be aware of the surroundings, culture, society, and traditions of the place in which the communication is taking place. The choice of media according to the conditions should also be focused on so that proper media and communication take place for the required development to take place. In this way, the researcher must keep in mind these recommendations so that hassle-free futuristic research work can take place for proper development communication to take place in the future as well.

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# Crisis of Credibility and Objectivity in Journalism: An Analysis

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\*Dr. Nitin Kumar

\*\*Dr. Rajesh Kumar

## ABSTRACT

The core values of journalism, objectivity and fairness, have been continuously threatened by various factors present in today's media, whether it be print or electronic. As the Fourth Estate, the media plays the important role of a watchdog in a democracy. Therefore, credibility and objectivity among the people are significant parameters for the smooth functioning of a vibrant democratic country. However, the question that has been troubling the intelligentsia for a long time is: Is the Indian media objective in its functioning and holding credibility among the masses? This study aims to answer such questions by discussing some of the factors responsible for influencing objectivity and fairness in journalism. The discussion will refer to studies, reports, literature, etc., in relation to the functioning of newspapers and television news channels in India.

**Keywords:** Credibility of news, Objectivity, Commercialization of media, Corporatization

### 1. Introduction

Objectivity and fairness, which are the core values of journalism, have constantly been threatened by different factors that have arisen in today's media, be it print or electronic. The media is considered the Fourth Estate and plays the role of a watchdog in a democracy. Hence, its credibility and objectivity among the people hold significant parameters in regard to the smooth functioning of a vibrant democratic country. However, the question that has been plaguing the minds of the intelligentsia for a long time is: Is Indian media objective in its functioning and does it hold credibility among the masses? This study endeavours to find an answer to such questions by discussing some of the factors that influence objectivity and fairness in journalism, referring to studies, reports, literature, etc. in relation to the functioning of newspapers and television news channels in India.

### 2. Factors Influencing Objectivity and Fairness in Journalism

#### 2.1. Commercialization and Corporatization of Media

The commercialization of media and concomitant deviation from its role as a watchdog has been witnessed worldwide. Many communication scholars and social scientists including Herman & Chomsky (1988), and McChesney (2008) have dealt with this phenomenon at length in their seminal works. These works provide details of the chain of events and factors, which make 'objectivity' fall victim to commercialization and the corporate houses

exercising control over media and its content. In our country India, private media seem to borrow heavily from the commercial model of the West, bringing along with it all the incumbent issues and concerns including the phenomenon of 'paid news'. In India, the increasing corporatization of media is a consequence of the inclusion of representatives of big corporate entities that are advertisers on boards of directors (Thakurta 2012). Thakurta says:

"Jagran Publications has headed the managing director (MD) of Pantaloon Retail, Kishore Biyani, McDonald India's MD Vikram Bakshi, and leather-maker Mirza International's MD Rashid Mirza; besides the CEO of media consulting firm Lodestar Universal India, Shashidhar Singha, and the chairman of the real estate firm JLL Meghraj, Anuj Puri. The board of directions of HT Media, publishers of Hindustan Times and Hindustan, has included the former chairman of Ernst & Young K. N. Memani and the chairman of ITC Ltd Y. C. Deveshwar. Joint MD of Bharti Enterprise Rajan Bharti and MD of Anika International Anil Vig are a part of the TV Today's Board of Directors. The directors of DB Corp (that publishes Dainik Bhaskar) include the head of Piramal Enterprises Group, Ajay Piramal, the MD of Warburg Pincus, Nitin Malhan, and the executive chairman of advertising firm Ogilvy & Mather, & CEO of the country's biggest BPO company GenPact as a member of its board of directors. (Thakurta, 2012)."

On one hand corporatization of media has changed the priorities of news media and on the other, it has also changed the way in which corporate entities use media for

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Assistant Professor, School of Media & Communication Studies, Doon University, Dehradun 248012, Uttarakhand, India  
Associate Professor and Head, School of Media & Communication Studies, Doon University, Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India



their own interests. Much of the recent coverage of news events has strong links to an eagerness of news media to attract and cater to commercial interests. In our country, there is also the issue of surrogate ownership where media companies are front organizations for corporate bodies (Ninan, 2003; Thakurta, 2013). There were reports that inspectors of the Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO) of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs who unearthed media-related investments by a news media company floated by Peter Mukherjee and Indrani Mukherjee in 2006, which launched 9X and NewsX, has actually been hugely financed in the beginning by RIL or its subsidiaries (Thakurta 2013). It is said that in Chhattisgarh, a conflict zone between govt. types of machinery & Naxalites, various media houses own mining licenses, thus, blurring further the roles of media and business interests (Ullekh, 2013). Commercial motives have completely overshadowed the role of media as a watchdog for the people, directly impacting our democratic values and institutions.

## 2.2 Sensationalisation and Trivialization of News: Challenges to Media as a Fourth Estate

Media as a 'watchdog' enables a 'public sphere' that allows for an enlightened discourse and debate over issues and concerns which may affect the masses. The media is supposed to give credible and objective news and information; but because of the commercialization of the whole media operations including its editorial decisions, it has become a subject of discussion. Golding & Philiip (1999) while saying that 'objectivity' and impartiality' remain 'the aims of most day-to-day journalism', define 'objectivity' in journalism as subscribing to and observing a set of rules, which in turn are a result of the assumed audiences and the pressures exerted on the newsroom (1999:640).

The ownership and management of public and private media, particularly television in India have particularly cast a cloud on 'impartiality'. There are many instances of pressure on 24\*7 television news channels, which have actually affected the objectivity of news. This shift in the basic role of media has been well described by Robert E. Park, who wrote in 1940 that 'news, as reported in American newspapers, has tended to assume the character of literature more so a fiction – and it is not confined to television alone. It is the preponderance of the 'narrative' in the construction of news that has led to the 'accuracy of facts and their correspondence to an outside reality' being treated as little more than elements 'in a human ordering of elements' (Bird & Robert, 1997: 336).

The sensationalization and trivialization of news have their genesis in the Western liberal model where media in pursuit of commercial gains have developed processes and procedures of news gathering and reporting that have created an elusive environment and ecology that

Lippmann theorized way back in 1921. Television has been particularly responsible for blurring the boundaries between the genres of 'news' and 'entertainment' (Turner, 2005: 71-93), the 'political' and 'private' (Lumby, 1997: 135), the public and private behaviours of each sex (Meyrowitz, 1985) and the dividing lines between private and public space (Wark, 1994). Such blurring is even more relevant today in the context of the evolution of myriad communication forms that have changed the conception of the masses.

In today's scenario, it's possible to overcome governmental pressures over media functioning but it's really difficult for media to free themselves from the corporate sector's pulls and pressures because of large-scale corporatization of media business. Herman & Chomsky's (1988), elaboration of the 'five filters' that operate in the selection and dissemination of news, and also issues relating to the political economy of media in the context of globalization by McChesney (2008), has necessitated a rethinking of 'news' and the role of media in postmodern society. These factors have led to fears of the erosion of media's capability of creating a 'public sphere' and a space for open and rational communication (Buckingham, 2002: 21). Notwithstanding the critique of Habermas's conceptualization of 'public sphere' (Calhoun 1992; Dahlgren 1995; Peters 1993), the role of media as 'fourth estate' depends on media being able to function as a critical commentator, a role that Habermas (1989) argued that the commercialization of media did not allow. In India, the changes that have marked the three constitutive dimensions of the 'public sphere', i.e., structures, representation, and interaction, constrain and add complexities to the many different spaces that have eventuated (Dahlgren, 1995).

This is further compounded by the symbolic and non-constitutional forms of politics, preoccupations with the 'local' by the mushrooming regional media and the processes that govern news-making practices at the national, regional and local levels (Rajagopal, 2009). Even if the complexities of the Indian public sphere do not correlate to models in the West, the commercialization of the Indian media and its impact upon democracy can be related to the path in the West, which has been grappling for years with the transformation of media from 'watchdog' to 'lapdog'. The unfairly discriminating control that large corporations exert on Indian media outlets can be gauged in emergence of corporate sporting events or other forms of 'partnership' witnessed from time to time (Sainath, 2013).

## 2.3 Paid News Phenomenon

Paid news is a practice where those who are able to pay media houses feature the news in a positive manner and that too in a sustained manner on different media platforms. Media outlets thus earn profit both in monetary



terms and also in circulation and viewership. Paid news may take many forms and is more subtle and brazenly discriminating than advertising so much so that even an alert reader or viewer fails to ascertain whether a particular news in a newspaper or on television news channels is a product of genuine journalistic exercise or is driven by some commercial or political interests and linkages.

In India, the issue of 'paid news' may be considered in the context of the historical role of media in nation-building and in the context of politics post-Independence, particularly post-liberalization. Leaving aside the role of English newspapers in the freedom movement and of regional newspapers in post-Independence India, which are well documented (Iyengar, 2001; Jeffrey, 2000; Kundra, 2011), it would be better to focus more on recent developments, particularly post economic liberalization. While it has been noted that political developments of the time had an effect on newspaper circulation (Jeffrey, 2000), the most significant development has been 'nation-building' on state-controlled radio and television giving way to 'entertainment' in private television (Athique, 2012: 32-71; Mehta, 2008:1-11).

The traditional role of the press as a watchdog of public interest was replaced by a self-serving role with profit-making becoming the foremost objective, post-liberalization (Batabyal, 2012: 33-46). Developments in the media industry correlate with developments in the political and socio-economic environment. The growth of the Hindi press was in part politics-driven (Ram, 2000). The emergence of 'paid news' can also be traced to increasing incidents of corruption, particularly during elections and for using the media for political goals (Sainath, 2010a).

Moreover, corporate houses and even governments use their advertising budgets to dictate editorial policy, overtly or covertly; and this is not a recent or new phenomenon (Times of India, 2013). The large public sector, which was a result of the mixed economic model followed in early post-Independence India, made the state and central governments the largest employers and largest advertisers as well. Calls for tender bids and announcements for vacancies in government establishments and the public sector were a common feature in most newspapers until the 1980s. In 2012, the BBC named Indian Railways, with 1.4 million employees, the largest employer in India and the ninth largest in the world (Alexander, 2012).

In the post-liberalization era, the government continues to be a major advertiser. One of the means by which state governments seek to bring media outlets to their favour is by withdrawing or reducing government advertisements. Here, 'paid news' is mounted to disguise advertisement as 'news' and to place it in the news space, not flagging the distinction between objective news and information; and

all this happens with active collaborations and the complicity of the media organization.

The Press Council of India has based its report on 'paid news' in the background of large-scale corruption in society, which has extended to the media. Of particular significance, also referred to in the report, is the series of articles by the then the Hindu rural affairs editor P. Sainath on irregularities relating to the electoral campaign of chief ministerial candidate Ashok Chavan in the state of Maharashtra in October 2009. Chavan's re-election was preceded by some choice coverage, an investigation into which revealed identical stories, word by word in the three Marathi dailies, Pundhari, Lokmat and Maharashtra Times, besides 47 'full pages of news' in more than one daily, but predominantly in the multiple editions of Lokmat, none of which was termed 'advertisement' or 'advertorial' (Sainath, 2009a). It was later revealed that his accounted expenditure on advertisements was a mere Rs. 11,379 million of which six were in print publications amounting to Rs. 5,379 million and the rest in cable television. As advertisements in these dailies would have run to millions of rupees, and in the light of the nature of the articles, it could only be concluded that the coverage was a result of some special deals struck between the advertiser and the newspaper (Sainath, 2009b).

A few relevant instances may be recounted here so as to understand the nexus between media and politics in which each seems to have become a part of the other, so much woven together that they no longer work as partners but as one, and also to underscore the challenges that the development poses to democracy. On 17 March 2011, The Hindu published in partnership with Wikileaks a cable sent by the US embassy in New Delhi to the state department on 17 July 2008, in which Charge D' Affaires Steven White conveyed that five days before the UPA government of Manmohan Singh was to face a crucial vote on the Indo-nuclear deal, Nachiketa Kapur, an aide to Congress leader Satish Sharma, had shown him two chests of cash, reportedly containing Rs. 500-600 million, to purchase the support of MPs, and also told him that four MPs belonging to Ajit Singh's Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) had been paid Rs. 100 million each for the same (Varadarajan, 2011).

While White's version could have been based on conjecture considering some of the inaccuracies, the revelation was in consonance with charges of horse-trading made by opposition leaders in the run-up to the nuclear deal vote in 2008, particularly those made on 22 July, the day of the vote, when three BJP MPs displayed wads of cash that they claimed had been paid by Congress ally and Samajwadi Party veteran Amar Singh to buy their votes (Khetan 2011). The satellite channel CNN-IBN had, in fact, mounted a sting operation ahead of the vote (CNN-IBN), and had whipped up a storm (Ramanujan,

2008; Ray, 2011a, 2011b). A Section of the media alleged that it was not the Congress but the BJP that had used its own MPs to 'entrap the Congress or the Samajwadi Party' (Khetan, 2011).

Adding credence to the assertion are the ways in which media, business, and politics have also come together to project their common interest. A good example was the public discourse in alternative and social media in December 2013 on the alleged involvement of a powerful industrialist's son in a car crash in Mumbai, which did not make it to the media (Mahabal, 2013). What is worse is that media are becoming predatory, for 'those who did not pay were simply blanked out of newspaper columns and the airwaves (Sainath, 2010b).

There is also the practice of forcing advertisers to buy thousands of copies, thus, increasing circulation, or, as Sainath (2009a) sums it up, 'if your rival has paid up, you might even cop a lot of nasty flak in those media'. Thus, 'Paid news' allows for the exploitation of commercially driven media by political actors enmeshing media, business and politics.

#### 2.4 Mediascape: Changing Priorities

The era of entertainment television as against the educational format of DD influenced the mediascape in general. For instance, it led to the growth of 'frothy (Print) supplements.... Devoted to non-issues' (Ninan, 2003). The trend catapulted 'food' and 'fashion' to the forefront of media, which jettisoned serious issues such as agriculture education, employment and health to make room for matters of public interest (Thomas, 2010:82).

Liberalization changed businesses, spurring growth in advertising, public relations, and marketing sectors and led to the setting up of media outlets solely devoted to making money. The hitherto family-owned media enterprises became major business enterprises. This transformed news into a 'commodity' and brought industrial and corporate production and management processes into media enterprises. The change was also reflected in the content of news media, particularly television, constructing an 'elite discourse, a conversation limited to affluent news consumers, while the less privileged are wished away' (Batabyal, 2012:46).

This is confounded by the fact that a few players dominate all media segments, indirectly contributing to homogeneous representations. According to Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), Sun TV and Essel Group have interests in Print, TV, FM as well as distribution platforms like Direct-To-Home (DTH) and MSOs. The Anil Dhirubhai Ambani Group is present in all media segments as well as distribution platforms. Ushodaya (Eenadu), India Today, Times Group, ABP Group, Bhaskar Group, Jagran Prakashan, Malayala Manorama Group have

interests in all three media segments – print, TV and FM radio (Jha, 2013). Such cross-ownership is of particular concern in a developing country like India where the media market 'remains highly fragmented, due to the large number of languages and the sheer size of the country' (Thakurta, 2012). Such dominance has led to media indifference to issues of poverty and economic ills in the country.

The reportage of agriculture has been woeful, contributing a mere 0.9 percent to news content. The neglect of the issues plaguing the Vidarbha region, the cotton economy in Maharashtra, by the media which at the same time covered the Lakme fashion week in Mumbai with added enthusiasm, has been cited as a prime example of this indifference to issues and concerns of common people (Sainath, 2011).

Here an argument could well be made that media's deflection of attention from more fundamental issues is simply in consonance with the generally skewed priorities in the economy and polity, as media are so enmeshed in it. The 'nationalistic rhetoric' has been internalized to become the commonsensical view (Sutherland, 2005: 193). 'Locked as it is into the power structure', media seem to be acting largely 'in tandem with the dominant institutions in society', producing a perspective that is far from natural (Curran, et al. 1982:21).

Given the historic role of media in India, where the print medium played a stellar role in the freedom movement (Ray, 2009) and the broadcast media in post-Independence India was considered a prop of the state, the hegemonizing role of media is not a surprise at all (Batabyal, 2012). A critical Marxist perspective leads one to the conclusion that the nation state's ideology is reflected by mainstream media which, functioning as they do as a tool of hegemony, obfuscate failures, lulling audiences into a state of complacency.

The argument is further strengthened by the fact that in the absence of a healthy 'market-place of ideas', media 'serve to bring about and to maintain ruling class domination and exploitation' (Mullen & Jeffrey 2010: 216). And, Indian media's deviation from its defined roles also reflects that our polity lacks concern for fundamental issues plaguing the country and its people (Ranganathan & Rodrigues, 2010). Another aspect of 'paid news' in the context of the media's role as 'fourth estate' is that while some are able to pay to make it to the 'news', while the socially and economically disadvantaged and the growing instances of inequality since the 1990s are not finding a place in media (Sainath, 2000: 152 – 171).

An investigation by The Hindu into the coverage relating to Ashok Chavan and similar electoral coverage revealed a huge amount involved in such exercises (Sainath, 2013).

While there is no doubt that the clandestine publication of news that does not identify the source is unethical, this does not answer the question of whether such news has indeed impacted on electoral processes or results. The role of media in electoral politics in India is complex. Even as studies are yet to conclusively establish the link between television propaganda and election outcomes, the effects of other media, especially the print medium, on voters' minds also remain unclear.

The growing skepticism of mainstream media's aims and their role as objective observers of events has resulted in less and less trust in media, with alternative media finding greater favour, both owing to ease of access and the content purveyed. The myth of the 'fourth estate' 'with its head in politics and feet in commerce' is perhaps evident largely now (George Boyce, cited in Schultz, 1998: 23).

The growth in Indian media, both in terms of readership and viewership has caused unbridled competition with scant regard for guidelines (Lloyd, 2012). Advertisers have increasingly made content decisions with the issue figuring in Parliament in 2003 (Muralidharan, 2006). This could be related to the quest for a 'viable revenue and business model' for both print and digital journalism (Ram, 2011). The preponderance of advertisements has helped such newspapers as the Times of India to price the newspaper below cost, leading to a price war in most of the cities where it is circulated (Muralidharan, 2006). The following words of N. Ram, a member of the board of the Hindu group of publication summarize the media scenario today and how it has a telling effect on the objectivity and fairness of news:

"Increasing concentration of ownership in some sectors; higher levels of manipulation of news, analysis, and comment to suit the owners' financial and political interests; the downgrading and devaluing of editorial functions and content in some leading newspaper organizations; systematic dumbing down, led by the nose by certain types of market research; the growing willingness within newspapers to tailor the editorial product to subserve advertising and marketing goals set by owners and senior management personal; hyper-commercialization; price wars and aggressive practices in the home bases of other newspapers to overwhelm and skill competition, raising fears about media monopoly; private treaties with corporate houses that undermine the independence and value of news; rogue practices (Ram, 2011)."

### 3. Conclusion

The Credibility and Objectivity of media are being compromised because of 'agenda-setting' and also because of the changing pattern of 'gatekeeping'. Media persons set the order of importance of news items not on the basis of newsworthiness but by virtue of the power of

agenda-setting and gatekeeping. In broadcasting, the agenda is more assertive than in newspapers where a reader can ignore the pre-set position of stories and move straight to another piece of news. Thus, the same news story may be allotted different positions on the scale of significance in different newspapers or broadcast media by different editorial teams. This clearly makes the concept of objectivity a utopia.

Ideological considerations dominate the way people in the media world think. The most common tactic of ideology is to show how the interests of the group are 'really' the same as the interests of the whole society or of humanity in general. The broad and vast effects of gatekeeping and agenda-setting applied not just to information, but also to the visible public opinion of such disseminated information. Since the gatekeepers of society are in complete control of all information received by the public, they are therefore also in control of how the public perceives the rest of society's reaction to news stories. Due to the unidirectional flow of information, the sole producers of all public knowledge are the gatekeepers of the traditional mass media institutions, where the public audience is not able to freely create information. It is relevant here to quote Former President Late K.R. Narayanan, which aptly summarizes today's journalistic practices: "The old pre-eminence of the editor has become extinct. The proprietor and not the editor formulates policy, and the editors execute the policies. In this context, it is the proprietor who really enjoys the freedom of the press" (Narayanan, 1997). This is exactly what we are witnessing and it is gathering a strong foot day by day.

Audiences are also being treated as 'Market'. Journalistic success is equated to financial success; and, journalistic independence is derived from financial independence. Financially weak newspapers or television stations become easy prey for different pressure groups that distort the news process. The good health of a newspaper is seen in its financial strength, assuring it freedom from both the need for subsidy and the fear of take-over or closure. Newspapers and television media houses behave like an industry and a corporate entity, perceptibly dancing to the tune of their owners or masters thereby compromising objectivity in news dissemination. The result is a fast decline in the credibility of journalism and journalistic practices as whole in India. The need of the hour is to address this phenomenon so that credibility of news media and audience's faith in traditional news media platforms like newspapers and television are restored.

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# Our Contributors

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**Padmavathi S**

Assistant Professor, School of Media Studies, Presidency University, Bangalore, Karnataka, India

**Saumya Singh**

Research Scholar, Department of Political Science, Pondicherry University, India

**Dr. Ashish Sharma**

Assistant Professor Senior Scale, School of Media Studies, Presidency University, Bangalore, Karnataka India

**Pankaj Garg**

Assistant Professor, Chitkara School of Mass Communication, Chitkara University, Punjab, India

**Rupinder Kaur**

Assistant Professor, Chitkara School of Mass Communication, Chitkara University, Punjab, India

**Akshat Seth**

PhD Research Scholar, Centre for Media Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi

**Vijay Kumar Sharma**

Assistant Professor, IMS Unison University, Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India

**Dr. Himanshu Mahobia**

Assistant Professor, IMS Unison University, Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India.

**Souvik Acharya**

PhD Research Scholar in Mass Communication, Mahatma Gandhi Central University, Motihari, Bihar.

**Dr. Nitin Kumar**

Assistant Professor, School of Media & Communication Studies, Doon University, Dehradun Uttarakhand, India

**Dr. Rajesh Kumar**

Associate Professor and Head, School of Media & Communication Studies, Doon University, Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India

# PRAGYAAN: JOURNAL OF MASS COMMUNICATION

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Pragyaan: Journal of Mass Communication is a bi-annual peer-reviewed research Journal of IMS Unison University, Dehradun and is published in the months of June and December.

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**Phone: 0135-7155000, 7155350/1**

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Please send the amount by DD/Local Cheque favouring IMS Unison University, Dehradun, for timely receipt of the journal. Please cut out the above and mail along with your cheque /DD to: The Registrar, IMS Unison University, Makkawala Greens, Mussoorie Diversion Road, Dehradun 248009. Uttarakhand, India, Phone No. -0135-7155000, 7155350/1





## IMS Unison University at a glance

IMS Unison University, a constituent of Unison Group, is a premier educational and research University nestled amidst beautiful and serene surroundings offering an environment that fosters learning and stimulates creativity.

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.

IMS Unison University aspires to become a world-renowned center for creation and dissemination of knowledge. It aims to provide a holistic career-oriented education that develops intellectual, moral and physical capabilities of the students.

University presently offers under-graduate, post-graduate and doctorate programs in several streams of Management, Law, Mass Communication, Hotel Management and Liberal Arts under the following five schools:

1. School of Management
2. School of Law
3. School of Media & Communication Design
4. School of Hospitality Management
5. School of Liberal Arts

The University is committed towards delivering quality education, developing strong industry interface and providing placement opportunities to its students.

The University brings out the following three Journals, one each in the three disciplines of Management, Mass Communication and Law, in an effort to fulfill our objective of facilitating and promoting quality research work. These are:

- Pragmaan: Journal of Mass Communication
- Pragmaan: Journal of Management
- Pragmaan: Journal of Law

Makkawala Greens, Mussoorie Diversion Road, Dehradun- 248009,  
Uttarakhand, INDIA  
E: [info@iuu.ac](mailto:info@iuu.ac), W: [www.iuu.ac](http://www.iuu.ac)  
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