

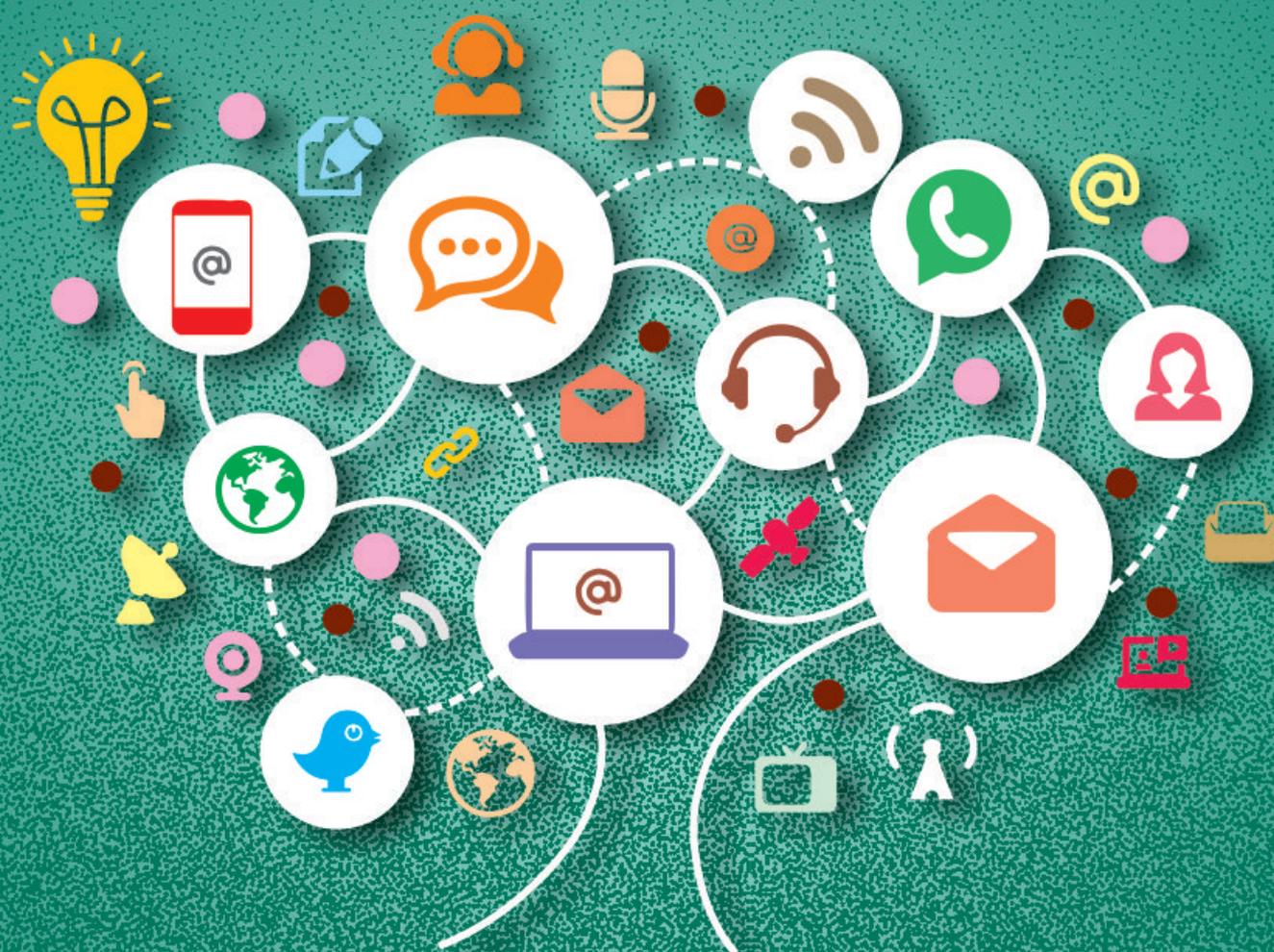
COMMUNICATOR

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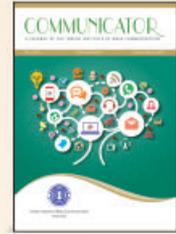
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Launched in 1965, Communicator is a peer reviewed journal of the Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC) that publishes original research on communications. The flagship journal of the IIMC endeavours to publish the best literature available in the field of communications and its related branches for the greater benefit of scholars, practitioners and policy-makers. The main aim of Communicator Journal is to focus on communication theory, research, policy and practice. This UGC-CARE listed Journal is published on quarterly basis. Communicator is now being indexed in the Indian Citation Index.

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From the Chief Editor's Desk



Anupama Bhatnagar
Director General
Indian Institute of Mass
Communication

We are undergoing a digital transformation which is impacting every sphere of our lives. In today's rapidly evolving media landscape, the role of communication studies is more critical than ever. Our academic journal *Communicator* seeks to explore the diverse and dynamic facets of this field, offering insights that not only reflect current trends but also push the boundaries of knowledge. The studies featured in this issue span a wide range of topics, from corporate communication among G20 countries to the nuanced interplay between sports and politics, reflecting the multifaceted nature of contemporary communication research.

The first paper examines the role of memes in political communication, particularly their impact on public perception of women politicians. By employing a mixed-method approach, this research examines how memes reflect and reinforce gender stereotypes. The study underscores the power of digital communication tools in shaping societal attitudes and the potential for using memes constructively to promote gender equality.

The impact of digital technology on Malayalam cinema is the focus of another study. This research explores how digitalization has influenced themes, narratives, and visual aesthetics. The study offers a critical perspective on how Malayalam cinema reflects societal values and modernization, raising important questions about the ethical and social dimensions of human-technology interaction in contemporary cinema.

The intricate relationship between sports and politics is examined in one of the paper, which looks at how nationalism, development, and diplomacy are intertwined. Through thematic analysis of sports journalists' opinions, this research reveals how sports serve as a vehicle for political expression and influence. The study provides a nuanced understanding of the political dimensions of sports, offering insights into how governments and stakeholders can leverage sports for positive development and diplomacy.

A paper on comprehensive scientometric analysis of corporate communication research productivity among G20 countries, highlights significant trends in publication output and impact, with the United States leading in the number of published documents and Russia receiving the most citations. The findings underscore the importance of strategic research initiatives and identify



emerging topics that could shape future studies in corporate communication.

Advancing gender equality and women's empowerment is essential for sustainable development, and community media plays a pivotal role in this endeavour. Study on how community media in rural Banswara area of the Vagad region in Rajasthan examines the fosters women's involvement and discussion. Through a mixed-method approach, this research demonstrates the potential of community media to break societal barriers and promote active participation among women. This study highlights the importance of localized media initiatives in driving social change and empowerment at the grassroots level.

The use of social media in regional political communication in India is explored in another study. It reveals how regional parties leverage platforms like Twitter (now X), WhatsApp, and Facebook to address local issues, often prioritizing them over national concerns. This research fills a gap in understanding the regional dynamics of political communication, offering significant implications for political strategies and engagement in regional contexts.

There has been a surge in the regional programming on television in the last decade. One study seeks to

ascertain and analyse the choices, preferences and response of viewers for news programs in Rajasthani language. It reveals a disconnect between the language of broadcast (predominantly Hindi) and the language spoken by a significant portion of the population (Rajasthani). This research emphasizes the need for media content that resonates with local linguistic and cultural contexts, highlighting the importance of regional language programming in fostering cultural identity.

A study on the growing trend of e-grocery shopping, particularly among rural consumers reveals that convenience, time-saving, and better deals drive the preference for online grocery shopping, despite challenges like product examination and security issues. This research highlights the evolving consumer behaviours in the digital marketplace and the need for addressing constraints to enhance the online shopping experience.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to our distinguished editorial team for their continuous efforts in curating a diverse array of contemporary topics for our esteemed readers. I am also grateful to our editorial board and all reviewers for their unwavering support. We welcome critical comments, suggestions, and topics for special issues from our readers.

Anupama Bhatnagar



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Public Perception of Memes: A Study based on the Depiction of Women Politicians

SHASHANK KUMAR DWIVEDI¹ & KATYAYANI SHUKLA²

ABSTRACT

Memes have this unique ability to narrow down things to their most basic forms, whether it is political or non-political. We all know about gender biasness which prevails in our society, culture, business, and academics to its utmost and by the time we abide by the gender equality, it gradually came in the politics too. With increasing digitalisation and ample screen time, memes are proving to be the biggest way of communication in terms of information, awareness and rumours. This study mainly focuses on 'public perception' which may be constructive or destructive regarding their conscience about women politicians. Derogatory portrayals of women politicians in memes reflect our gender stereotypes and, of course, our usual perception about them, which needs to be assessed and evaluated. Memes acts as a digital communication tool in different aspects of a being, notion or a thing, and so, the present study aims to establish its versatility in a constructive manner. The present study has adopted the mixed-method approach, including surveys and qualitative content analysis.

Keywords: Gender biases, Memes, Politics, Public perception, Women politicians

Introduction

Political discourse and public opinion formation landscape have been remarkably changed by the vast presence of social media in contemporary society. In the flood of various types of content in social media, memes have emerged as a powerful tool of expression and conveying messages through humour. According to Bauckhage (2011), memes are spread among people via email, instant messaging, forums, blogs and social networking sites. These memes could be pictures, emails with videos, or anything else. However, a picture of any human, animal, or cartoon with a caption is the most typical meme. It was seen that memes have the capability of shaping public opinion.

In India, women are frequently pushed into playing traditional gender roles and are discouraged from entering politics. Women are expected to prioritise their responsibilities as spouses and mothers, and politics is frequently seen as a man's realm, according to social norms and preconceptions. Women are frequently considered as inferior to men in India, which has a strong patriarchal culture. This firmly ingrained attitude influences the perception of women's leadership and political participation among

the general public. Marginalised representation of women in politics has long been a ubiquitous issue across the globe. However, in the last few decades, there has been a significant rise in the participation of women in politics. More and more women are rising to prominent positions and challenging traditional gender stereotypes. Despite these advancements, women politicians are still facing obstacles like a shortage of media representation, gender biases, etc.

Nowadays, a variety of social networking platforms encourage the rapid spread of memes. In the present scenario, memes are one of the popular mediums for conveying a political message because of their potential to engage the audience through humour and encourage their participatory behaviour to share them. Memes have the power to create a new point of view for the audience to understand and discuss the content and message. In the same way, the significant impact of memes can also challenge or reinforce gender stereotypes among social media users.

This research investigates deeply the impact of memes in shaping public opinion, the portrayal of women politicians and their influence in politics and gender dialogues. By exploring and understanding the

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effectiveness of memes on political communication and the portrayal of women in politics, the research aims to contribute to the goal of a justified and inclusive political scenario.

Review of literature

The role of memes in shaping public opinion

Memes have developed into a powerful communication tool in the digital age, greatly impacting public opinion. Politics and political practices may be impacted by memes. Memes are advantageous for disseminating messages and influencing public discourse, according to a study by Lim and Choi (2017), since they may condense complicated ideas into understandable and straightforward formats. Gbadegesin (2020) found that gender 'otherness' is expressed in amusing memes to either support or contradict pre-existing gender preconceptions. Humorous memes are also used to express current trends in gender ideologies in society and are not merely made to make people laugh.

According to Lyons (2017), people are less inclined to refute assertions made in meme form and are more likely to see messages as having less of an impact on them than on others. The decline in perceived control over oneself mediates this decline in remedial purpose. Flecha Ortiz, Santos Corrada, Lopez, and Dones (2021) discovered that during the various stages of collective coping, the socio-psychological aspects of the COVID-19 crisis are manifested through memes, as they aid people in critically reassessing a trying circumstance. Similarly to this, memes aid in demystifying the COVID-19 situation by displacing the information provided by traditional media with a logical solution that incorporates humour.

Gender stereotypes and biases in political communication

Gender biases and stereotypes have long permeated political communication. Women politicians often face unfair scrutiny and stereotypes that can impact public perception. Dittmar, Kamenica, and Tuki (2015) highlights how gender stereotypes influence voters' perceptions of women candidates' qualifications and leadership abilities. Memes can both reinforce and challenge these stereotypes, providing a lens to examine their portrayal and impact on public perception.

Politicians utilise humour sparingly and mostly in an aggressive manner, according to the investigation by Mendiburo-Seguel *et al.* (2022). Male and younger politicians who are in the opposition tend to use more aggressive humour. Dolan and Lynch

(2016) revealed that gender preconceptions have dominated society's discourse about women for as long as women have been running for office. This work should be interpreted as a call for more investigations into elections that actually occur in the real world and the potential impact of stereotypes on various areas of political life.

Media representation of women politicians

Bligh, Schlehofer, Casad, and Gaffney (2012) suggest that the media portrayals of women politicians are particularly influential on opinions of their likeability (the "competent but cold" effect), demonstrating the need of women politicians being watchful of how they are portrayed in the media.

The representation of women politicians in the media has been a subject of scholarly inquiry. Ross and Searles (2020) indicates that media portrayals of women politicians often focus on their personal lives, appearance, or emotional attributes rather than their political expertise or policy positions. Memes, as a form of online media, offer a unique lens to explore how women politicians are depicted and how these depictions influence public perception.

Memes and political discourse on social media

The rise of social media platforms has provided fertile ground for political discussions and the spread of memes. Wojcieszak, Kim, and Delli Carpini (2018) suggests that social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter serve as key arenas for political discourse, including sharing and circulation of memes. Understanding how memes are consumed, interpreted, and shared on these platforms can shed light on their influence on public perception. Leiser's research (2019), which considered political interest, found that memes use strongly predicted higher engagement in traditional and non-traditional political activities.

According to Wojcieszak, Baek, and Carpini (2010), earlier civic and political involvement had the biggest impact on strong ideologues' subsequent political engagement. Weak ideologues are therefore activated by cognitive responses to perceived diversity and are moderated by affective responses. Zhang and Gearhart (2022) stated that utilising political memes is a sophisticated action done strategically to meet demands for political entertainment and observation. Particularly, those with a high level of political trust, those who consider themselves to be funny, and those who frequently share or produce memes utilised them to see politics in action.

Intersectionality and memes depicting women politicians

The intersectionality framework highlights the importance of considering the multiple dimensions of identity and their interactions. Memes depicting women politicians should be examined through an intersectional lens to capture the diverse experiences of women in politics. In terms of rhetoric, the periodicals cover women politicians in a gender-blind and occasionally even feminist manner, according to Lachover's (2023) study. However, the visual representations of female politicians show a feminization and occasionally a sexual objectification of them. Fiig (2010) examines media representation from an intersectional perspective, which is defined as one that breaks down the category of woman by taking into account other social distinctions like class, ethnicity, gender, race, and sexual orientation. A perspective that emphasises intersectionality is useful in enlarging the discussion of the media's role as a potent political platform for various political parties of men and women.

Humour and satire in memes depicting women politicians

Political memes often employ humour and satire to convey messages and critique societal norms. Milner (2018) explores how humour and memes can be used strategically to engage audiences, increase participation, and deliver political messages. Analysing the use of humour in memes depicting female politicians can provide insight into their impact on social perception. Mendiburo-Seguel, Buie, Alenda and Navia (2023) stated that affiliative humour did not affect people's views of likability when applied, and self-deprecating humour was a somewhat successful communication technique. They also did not find evidence of differences in social perceptions based on the gender of the politician.

Research objectives

- To examine the public's perception of memes depicting women politicians.
- To analyse the impact of memes on public perception of women politicians.
- To assess the role of memes in influencing public discourse on gender and politics.
- Identify the factors motivating individuals to engage with memes depicting women politicians.
- To understand the potential of memes as a political communication tool for advancing gender equality in politics.

Research questions

- How do memes depicting women politicians influence public perception and attitudes towards

women in politics?

- What are the prevalent themes and characteristics of memes depicting women politicians, and how do they contribute to public discourse on gender and politics?
- To what extent do memes reinforce or challenge gender stereotypes and biases in the context of women politicians?
- How do memes impact public engagement with women politicians and their political campaigns?

Research gaps

- The research gap identified is the limited exploration of how memes shape public perception of women politicians' political competence, policy positions, and leadership qualities when compared to media portrayals that emphasise appearance or personal attributes.
- As memes continue to influence public opinion and political discussions among policymakers, social media platforms, and society at large, there is no extensive research in the world of memes which analyses and provides valuable insights into the public's perception of gender in politics and the broader political landscape in India.

There are some pieces and reflections of research related to this topic but this research paper emphasizes the need for responsible and ethical meme creation, calling for greater awareness, which such visuals can have impact on public perception understanding the diverse interpretations and implications of political memes in fostering constructive political discourse regarding women politicians.

Research methodology

This study used a mixed-methods approach to its research, including surveys and qualitative content analysis. The content analysis offers a thorough analysis of memes featuring female politicians. Quantitative information on public perceptions and opinions of these memes are gathered through surveys. Additionally, it provides an in-depth insights into how memes are interpreted and how they affect the way people perceive things.

1. *Content analysis* - It is a technique for methodical, unbiased, and quantitatively measuring variables in communication studies and analyses. This strategy aids in evaluating political memes as content because it helped to keep the study's scope manageable. 10 memes of 5 women politicians are chosen based on their political statements and activities.

In this study, analysis is done on: Memes depicting women politicians.

- Memes portraying women politicians' activities.

- Memes describing women politicians' statements on different issues.
- How do netizens react to the memes?

The three broad themes for analysis are:

- What does the meme portray, and their patterns and characteristics?
 - What are the underlying meanings of the particular memes?
 - Impact of memes in audience and variations across different memes?
2. *Survey* - The survey technique was employed for the study to empirically assess the efficacy of social media. It was determined to be the most appropriate way to conduct a survey to explore what is the perception of netizens on memes depicting women politicians. A structured questionnaire was organised as a tool for data collection along with the survey approach. A convenience sampling method is used to obtain a diverse and representative sample of participants. A questionnaire was prepared on public perception on memes depicting women politicians. There were students, intellectuals, working class and academicians as well. Responses were collected through online mode. The questions were circulated among as many as 210 participants and 101 participants recorded their responses.

Content analysis

For content analysis, a group of five prominent women politicians, namely Nirmala Sitharaman, Mamata Banerjee, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Smriti Irani, and Sonia Gandhi, have been selected as subjects. The study focuses on two popular memes associated with each of these politicians, which are used for the analysis.

1. Nirmala Sitharaman

Meme 1: The meme 1 (Fig. 1.1) featuring Nirmala Sitharaman, the Finance Minister of India, uses satire to criticise her statement about the GST collection downfall being an "Act of God." It suggests that her assertion is an unrealistic and questionable attempt to avoid responsibility for the country's economic challenges. The meme becomes a subject of amusement and criticism among netizens, especially during the COVID pandemic, where they express their dissatisfaction with the government's handling of economic issues.

Meme 2: The meme 2 (Fig. 1.2) was created using the poster of the recently released movie "Oppenheimer," playfully presenting the finance minister as "Onionheimer." This meme was shared



Fig. 1.1: Meme 1



Fig. 1.2: Meme 2

Source:

Meme 1: <https://shorturl.at/dmP14> (Twitter)

Meme 2: <https://shorturl.at/zAGKV> (Twitter)

from the official Twitter handle of the Aam Aadmi Party in the context behind the meme stems from a previous incident when the finance minister made a remark about onion prices, stating that she does not consume much onion, hence the prices were not a concern for her. Now, with tomato prices also experiencing a hike, the Aam Aadmi Party seized the opportunity to mock the finance minister by portraying her as "Onionheimer."

The meme serves as a form of criticism against the finance minister, highlighting concerns about inflation and price hikes. By using the name "Onionheimer" and drawing a parallel to the movie-rating agency "Rotten Tomatoes," the meme playfully indicates her perceived failure in managing financial affairs. The "super flop movie" rating humorously reflects the party's stance on her performance. It's important to note that memes like these are commonly used in political discourse to express criticism, satire, or humour, and they can quickly gain traction and visibility through social media platforms. As with any political meme, interpretations may vary, and it's essential to consider the context and intent behind such images.

2. Mamata Banerjee

Meme 3: In this meme (Fig. 2.1) the comparison of Idi Amin, the infamous Ugandan dictator infamous for his autocratic reign and violations of human rights, to Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee offers a strongly negative depiction. This comparison intends to draw attention to the Bengal CM's alleged abuse of authority or perceived dictatorial tendencies. It is significant to remember that memes like this are a component of political discourse and frequently make use of humour, satire, and symbolism to make political points and influence public opinion.

The meme's reference to the I.N.D.I.A. film "Didi Amin" seems to be a sarcastic take on the

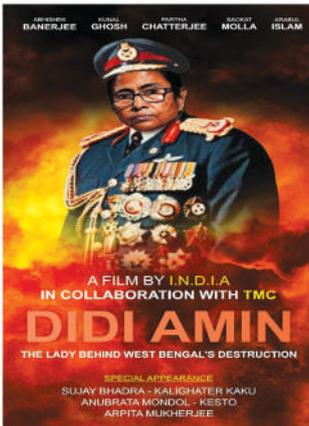


Fig. 2.1: Meme 3



Fig. 2.2: Meme 4

Source:

Meme 3: <https://shorturl.at/jFGI5> (Twitter)

Meme 4: <https://shorturl.at/jqMY7> (Instagram)

recently established opposition party alliance (the “Mahagathbandhan”) and their political goals. The pun with “Didi” (slang for Mamata Banerjee) and “Amin” (a nod to Idi Amin) suggests that the opposition alliance is being painted as having evil motives or dubious behaviour. The meme, by using the names of cabinet ministers as the “star cast”, further emphasises their role in the political drama. It may suggest that the actions or decisions of these ministers are being critiqued as part of the overall narrative presented in the meme. Phrases like “experience the cacophony of diversion,” “absentee protagonist,” and “inaction and abetment as her most potent weapon” convey a negative portrayal, suggesting inefficiency and indifference in her leadership.

Meme 4: The meme 4 (Fig. 2.2) portrays Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee’s face on the poster of “Money Heist,” renamed “Ballot Box Heist.” A video posted on Instagram shows the mishandling of sealed ballot boxes during the Panchayat election. The caption accuses Mamata Banerjee of “shamelessly murdering democracy” and raises concerns about the fairness of Bengal elections. The meme satirises Banerjee’s involvement in politics, implying manipulation of the electoral process. The meme and accompanying video serve as potent tools in the on-going political rivalry between BJP and TMC in West Bengal. The visual elements of the meme and video are likely to evoke emotional responses, driving discussions and debates among their supporters and detractors.

3. Priyanka Gandhi Vadra

Meme 5: The meme 5 (Fig. 3.1) focuses on Priyanka Gandhi Vadra’s speech mistake and how it gained attention on social media, leading to criticism and doubts about her leadership capabilities. During the 2019 Lok Sabha election campaign in Fatehpur Sikri, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, the party’s general

secretary for eastern Uttar Pradesh, faced a stumble while addressing a public rally. Her role involved conducting public rallies and outlining Congress’ promises if they were to come into power. While discussing the Congress manifesto’s commitments, she unintentionally mentioned “free health” for all, but quickly corrected herself with a light-hearted remark, saying “free health services.” Despite her attempt to rectify the slip-up, the incident had already left an impact. Social media users swiftly seized the opportunity to mock her in a humorous and creative manner.

Meme 6: Meme 6 (Fig. 3.2) was a response to Priyanka Gandhi Vadra’s promise to provide 1000 buses for evacuating migrant labourers from the Delhi–UP border during the COVID pandemic. Uttar Pradesh BJP has alleged that the list of buses submitted by Congress contains several vehicles that are unfit for the purpose. The BJP claims that the list includes not only buses but also tractors, scooters, autos, and even ambulances. The party took to its official Twitter handle to share a meme



Fig. 3.1: Meme 5



Fig. 3.2: Meme 6

Source:

Meme 5: <https://shorturl.at/ciqzJ> (RVCJ)

Meme 6: <https://shorturl.at/wzELO> (Twitter)

that humorously criticises Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra for their bus offer.

The meme 6 posted portrays a juxtaposition of Rahul Gandhi's infamous past speech mistake, where he mentioned transforming potatoes into gold, and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's recent offer of buses. It humorously suggests that just as Rahul's claim seemed unrealistic, Priyanka's bus offer includes vehicles that are far from suitable for transporting migrant labourers. The meme playfully mocks Priyanka for considering an auto rickshaw as a bus, implying that the offer may not be as genuine and well thought out as claimed. By juxtaposing the unrelated incidents of Rahul's speech gaffe and Priyanka's bus offer, the meme tries to undermine the credibility of the latter.

4. Smriti Irani

Meme 7: The meme (Fig. 4.1) is shared from Congress's official Twitter handle. The Congress party has strongly criticised Union Minister for Child and Women Development, Smriti Irani, for her silence on the distressing incident in Manipur. Congress questioned both the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government and its leaders about their response to the shocking incident. In response, the Congress party took to its official Twitter handle and shared a meme aimed at Smriti Irani, captioned "The questions are loud and clear, Mrs. Smriti Irani." The meme depicted Irani covering her ears, seemingly trying to avoid questions regarding the shameful incident in Manipur. Additionally, the meme raised a crucial question, asking if the National Women Commission was not under her Ministry's jurisdiction.

Meme 8: In the meme (Fig. 4.2) Union Minister Smriti Irani is shown with a gas cylinder. Twitter users trolled Smriti Irani on her birthday by flooding the platform with cylinder and petrol-related memes,



Fig. 4.1: Meme 7



Fig. 4.2: Meme 8

Source:

Meme 4.1: <https://shorturl.at/aghqU>(Twitter)

Meme 4.2: <https://shorturl.at/uBI35>(Twitter)

poking fun at her previous protest and her current position as a minister. The meme targeting Smriti Irani on her birthday uses a clever play on words and imagery to mock her protest against price hikes during the Congress government and her current position as a Union Minister in the BJP-led government. The meme humorously portrays her as "Cylinderella," a pun on the fairytale character Cinderella, holding a gas cylinder instead of a glass slipper. The poster humorously attributes the production to BJP, implying that the party might be responsible for the on-going LPG and petrol price hike issues. By depicting her as "Cylinderella" and referencing the past protest over LPG rates, the meme aims to ridicule her silence on the current price hike concerns.

5. Sonia Gandhi

Meme 9: The meme 9 (Fig. 5.1) portrays Sonia Gandhi, the leader of the Congress party, shouting at Congress leader and MP Shashi Tharoor for having a different opinion and not aligning with the party's demands. The context of the meme involves Congress demanding the resignation of several BJP leaders involved in scandals, including Sushma Swaraj, Vasundhara Raje, and Shivraj Singh Chouhan. However, Shashi Tharoor disagreed with the idea of disrupting parliament over this issue, which led to Sonia Gandhi yelling at him. She is depicted as saying, "You always do this, it's become a habit with you." Sonia Gandhi's animated depiction, shouting at Tharoor, may signify the strong leadership and assertive approach she is assumed to have within the party. The meme highlights internal discord within the Congress party, with Shashi Tharoor expressing a different opinion from the party's stance on the resignation of BJP leaders. The meme, along with the netizen response, hints at the possibility of underlying internal struggles or differing viewpoints within the Congress, potentially impacting the party's decision-making and strategy.

Meme 10: The meme (Fig. 5.2) humorously depicts Sonia Gandhi appointing herself as the Congress party president. The Congress Working



Fig. 5.1: Meme 9

Fig. 5.2: Meme 10

Source:

Meme 9: <https://shorturl.at/guKXZ> (ScoopWhoop)

Meme 10: <https://shorturl.at/jlBOR> (Navbharattimes.com)

Committee has chosen Sonia Gandhi, the UPA chairperson, as the party's interim president until the AICC elects a new president to succeed Rahul Gandhi. However, various other political parties have been accusing Congress of being dominated by the Gandhi family, suggesting that they will retain control over the party regardless of external circumstances. The meme satirically implies that Sonia Gandhi's eagerness to retain the party's leadership within the family suggests a preference for maintaining power within the Gandhi family. Netizens view this decision as an example of "familism" within the Congress party and express criticism through memes.

Survey analysis

Findings and interpretations

- In this research study, a diverse group of 102 respondents provided valuable insights into public perceptions of memes and their depiction of women politicians. The findings reveal an intriguing gender distribution, with 64.7% of the respondents being male and 35.3% female. Age-wise, the study captured a wide spectrum of perspectives. The largest group of participants, 52%, were aged between 25 and 34 years, reflecting the engagement of young adults on the topic. Close behind, 46% of respondents fell within the 18–24 age range, showing that the younger generation also actively participated in the study. A smaller portion of just 2% belonged to the 35–44 age group.
- Geographically, the research reached respondents from various regions. Urban respondents constituted 43.1%, while 23.5% hailed from suburban areas, and 33.3% represented rural communities. In terms of education, the study provides valuable insights from diverse academic backgrounds. A significant proportion, 41.2%, were postgraduates, showcasing a well-educated pool of respondents. Undergraduates represented 27.5%, followed by doctorate holders at 19.6%. Additionally, 10.8% of respondents held higher secondary qualifications, while one respondent had completed high school.
- Considering economic diversity, 72 respondents reported an annual family income below 5 lakhs, underscoring the financial challenges faced by many participants. On the other hand, 30 respondents demonstrated higher income levels, surpassing the 5-lakh mark.
- Analysing the social media consumption patterns and its influence on respondents, it was observed that 45.1% of participants use social media for below 2 hours, 32.4% engage with it between 2 to 4 hours, and 22.5% spend more than 4 hours on these platforms. Regarding the impact of social media on political communication, a significant majority of respondents, 50%, strongly agreed that social media holds significant sway in this realm. Additionally, 33.3% of participants agreed with this notion. A smaller proportion, 12 respondents, expressed a neutral stance, while only 4 respondents disagreed, and merely 1 respondent strongly disagreed with the idea that social media is a powerful tool for political communication.
- Among the 102 respondents, a significant majority of 85 (83.3%) expressed a total agreement that social media memes wield influence on public perception. A smaller fraction, 15 respondents, were somewhat uncertain, stating that maybe memes have an impact. Only 2 respondents outrightly denied this fact.
- When it comes to the prevalence of political memes on social media platforms, Instagram emerged as the top choice, with 59.8% of respondents reporting frequent encounters with such content. Following closely behind, Facebook and Twitter were also popular platforms, with 49% and 47.1% of respondents, respectively, finding political memes there. YouTube and WhatsApp secured the fourth and fifth positions, being cited by 39.2% and 27.5% of respondents, respectively. The remaining respondents reported discovering political memes on platforms such as Pinterest, Reddit, and Vlogs.
- All the respondents shared diverse views on memes depicting women politicians. 47.1% perceived such memes as empowering, recognising their potential to inspire and uplift women in politics. Meanwhile, 42.2% found these memes both humorous and offensive, acknowledging the fine line between humour and perpetuating stereotypes or disrespecting women politicians. Additionally, 26.5% viewed these memes as informative, appreciating their ability to convey political information and generate discussions about women's roles in politics. In contrast, a smaller percentage of 18.6% considered these memes irrelevant, implying minimal impact on their perceptions of women politicians. A mere 2% of respondents had unique viewpoints classified as "Others," suggesting diverse interpretations beyond the given options.
- The survey with 102 respondents unveiled diverse opinions on the impact of memes featuring women politicians. Approximately 50% believed these memes break gender stereotypes, challenging traditional perceptions. However, 28.4% felt these memes reinforce gender norms.

About 33.3% viewed them as promoting healthy political discussions, yet 35.3% expressed concerns about diminishing women’s political achievements. Additionally, 6.9% held unique perspectives beyond the given options. These findings highlight the complexity of how memes influence the portrayal and perception of women politicians in politics.

- Respondents’ views on whether memes depicting women politicians contribute to increasing gender equality in politics were diverse. Approximately 23.5% strongly agreed with the idea, expressing a strong belief in the positive impact of these memes on promoting gender equality in politics. Another significant proportion, 35.3%, agreed with the notion, indicating a consensus among a considerable number of participants regarding the potential for memes to contribute to greater gender equality in the political domain. A sizable group of 27.5% took a neutral stance and 10.8% disagreed, signalling differing opinions on the effectiveness of memes in driving gender equality in the political arena. A smaller percentage, only 2.9%, strongly disagreed with this statement regarding gender equality.
- As shown in the Table 1, a significant proportion, 21.6%, strongly agreed that memes accurately represent the qualifications and capabilities of women politicians as leaders. Additionally, 32.4% agreed, demonstrating general agreement on this notion. However, 28.4% remained neutral, indicating uncertainty. Conversely, 13.7% disagreed, and 3.9% strongly disagreed, reflecting scepticism towards the accuracy of memes in portraying women politicians’ qualifications and leadership abilities.

Table 1: Memes depicting qualifications and capabilities of women politicians

S. No.	Memes accurately depicting women politicians’ qualifications and capabilities as political leaders	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Strongly Agree	22	21.6%
2	Agree	33	32.4%
3	Neutral	29	28.4%
4	Disagree	14	13.7%
5	Strongly Disagree	4	3.9%
	Total	102	100

- The perception of memes depicting women politicians is diverse. A notable 17.6% strongly

agree that such memes frequently rely on stereotypes or demeaning portrayals. An additional 27.5% agree, indicating general alignment with this view. A significant portion, 42.2%, remains neutral, reflecting uncertainty. Conversely, 11.8% disagree, while only 1% strongly disagree, indicating a minority who hold opposing beliefs about the use of stereotypes or demeaning depictions in memes about women politicians.

- The impact of memes depicting women politicians on respondents’ perception of women’s political leadership abilities varied. 18.6% strongly agreed that memes influence their perception. Additionally, 39.2% agreed, indicating a significant alignment with this notion. A substantial proportion, 24.5%, remained neutral, reflecting uncertainty. Conversely, 12.7% disagreed, while 4.9% strongly disagreed, representing a minority who feel that such memes have minimal impact on their perception of women’s political leadership abilities.
- As shown in the Table 2, memes featuring women politicians significantly influence public opinion about women in politics. A substantial 25.5% strongly agree that these memes play a crucial role in shaping perceptions. Moreover, 48% agree, showing widespread acknowledgement of their impact. While 17.6% remained neutral, suggesting some uncertainty, a smaller percentage of 7.8% disagreed. Only 1% strongly disagreed, indicating a minority who believe that such memes have minimal influence on public opinion about women in politics.

Table 2: Depiction of women politicians in shaping public opinion through memes

S. No.	Memes depicting women politicians play a role in shaping public opinion about women in politics	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Strongly Agree	26	25.5%
2	Agree	49	48%
3	Neutral	18	17.6%
4	Disagree	8	7.8%
5	Strongly Disagree	1	1%
	Total	102	100

- According to the Table 3, the majority of respondents (53.9%) firmly believe that memes have a significant impact on the public’s perception of women politicians. An additional 40.2% agree that memes somewhat influence

public perception. A small minority (2.9%) hold the view that memes do not impact public perception, while an equal percentage are unsure about their impact. These findings indicate a substantial acknowledgement of the potential influence of memes on shaping public views of women politicians.

Table 3: Impact on public perception of women politicians through memes

S. No.	Memos have an impact on public perception of women politicians.	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Yes, they significantly impact public perception	55	53.9%
2	Yes, they somewhat impact public perception	41	40.2%
3	No, they do not impact public perception	3	2.9%
4	Unsure	3	2.9%
	Total	102	100

- 54.9% believe that memes featuring women politicians are an effective tool for engaging the public in political discussions, while 14.7% disagree, and 30.4% are unsure. 68.6% of respondents recalled specific impactful memes depicting women politicians, while 31.4% did not have any specific recall.
- 52.9% of respondents have shared or engaged with memes depicting women politicians, while 47.1% have not. In the context of memes shared on social media, as shown in the Table 4, 51% of respondents believe that women politicians receive more criticism compared to male politicians. On the other hand, 35.3% feel that both genders face similar levels of criticism in memes. A smaller proportion, 13.7%, are unsure or do not know about the extent of criticism directed at women politicians through memes.

Table 4: Gender-based criticism of politicians in the context of memes

S. No.	Women politicians receive more criticism than male politicians in the context of memes shared on social media	No. of respondents	Percentage
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1	Yes, women politicians are more criticised in memes	52	51%
2	No, both women and male politicians receive similar levels of criticism in memes	36	35.3%
3	I am not sure / I do not know	14	13.7%
	Total	102	100

Discussion

The study’s findings reveal a nuanced interaction between humour, satire, and political commentary within digital spaces, which aligns with and extends existing literature on media representation of gender in politics. Memes can simplify complex political issues (e.g., GST discussions or inflation) into digestible content, which can amplify public scrutiny of political figures’ decisions and statements. This observation corroborates Lim and Choi’s (2017) findings on the capacity of memes to simplify complex ideas and influence public discourse. The comparison of Mamata Banerjee to Idi Amin employs humour and satire to critique perceived autocratic tendencies, but can also perpetuate negative stereotypes about women’s leadership capabilities. This aligns with Bligh *et al.* (2012) who discusses how media representations can affect perceptions of women’s competence and warmth.

Memos create engagement through humour and satire, as seen in Figures 4.1 and 5.1, where political figures are depicted in scenarios that critique their actions or political stance humorously. This supports Milner’s (2018) assertion that humour in memes can drive engagement and participation in political discourse.

The survey data reveal significant insights, notably in how different demographics perceive and interact with these memes, which can be interpreted through the lens of existing research. The results indicated that majority of the respondents believe that memes break gender stereotypes, challenging traditional perceptions. This dichotomy aligns with the literature on gender biases in political communication, such as the work by Dittmar, Kamenica, and Tuki (2015) that political communication has always been tainted by gender biases and preconceptions. Stereotypes and unjustified scrutiny directed against female politicians might affect public opinion.

A significant proportion agreed that memes accurately represent the qualifications and capabilities of women politicians as leaders. The study’s findings demonstrate that the situation has evolved and does

not align with the research by Ross and Searles (2020), which suggests that media representations of female politicians frequently place more emphasis on their personal lives, looks, or emotional qualities than on their knowledge of politics or positions on policy.

The outcomes of the study also depict that majority of the respondents think that memes depicting women politicians are empowering, humorous and offensive, while a small proportion of respondents find it informative and irrelevant. This finding supports evidence from Zhang and Gearhart (2022) that suggests using political memes is a calculated, smart tactic used to satisfy the public's desire for political observation and entertainment.

The survey highlighted that 51% of respondents believe women politicians receive more criticism than their male counterparts in memes do. This supports Bligh *et al.*'s (2012) discussion on the 'competent but cold' stereotype and further emphasises the challenge of overcoming gender biases within political discourse.

Above 80% of the respondents acknowledged the impact of memes on public perception (Table 3), this reflects the findings of the Lim and Choi's study (2017) that memes can convey complex political messages and ideas in a way which was easy to understand. These findings show that meme is an impactful tool for engaging and influencing public perception regarding women politicians.

Implications of the present study

- The present study has many positive implications in terms of theory and practice, as this study expands our understanding of memes as a modern weapon of political communication within the larger context of media studies. It combines ideas of humour, digital communication, and political discourse to demonstrate how memes can reinforce and challenge current society's norms and prejudices.
- By concentrating on female politicians, the study adds to gender studies and political science by demonstrating how gender prejudices and preconceptions are reinforced or challenged via digital media. This deepens theoretical discussions concerning the nexus of gender, media representation, and political power.
- The findings can be used to inform educational activities aimed at increasing media literacy, particularly in terms of comprehending and critically analysing meme content and impact. This is critical in an era where disinformation spreads quickly online.
- The study emphasises the significance of

responsible meme development and can motivate activists and social movements to use memes more effectively to promote gender equality and challenge sexist depictions in politics.

- This research enriches theoretical frameworks within media and communication studies and offers practical guidelines for various stakeholders engaged in political communication, digital content regulation, and gender advocacy.

Conclusion

The study on memes depicting women politicians has revealed the powerful role these visuals play in shaping public discourse and opinions on political figures in India. Through a comprehensive content analysis of political memes, the research showcased how netizens creatively critique and mock women politicians from various parties, emphasising both their strengths and weaknesses.

The findings indicate that memes have become a significant battleground for political narratives, reflecting the polarisation of public opinion based on political affiliations. While some memes receive support from one faction, they may be viewed as biased and politically motivated by others. This highlights the importance of understanding the diverse interpretations and implications of political memes in fostering constructive political discourse. Furthermore, the research brought attention to the impact of sexist or derogatory portrayals of women politicians in memes, perpetuating harmful gender stereotypes. It emphasises the need for responsible and ethical meme creation, calling for greater awareness of the huge impact, which such visuals can have on public perceptions.

Overall, the study underscores the emergence of memes as a potent tool for political expression, criticism, and engagement. By analysing the depiction of women politicians, the research provides valuable insights into the public's perception of gender in politics and the broader political landscape in India. As memes continue to influence public opinion and political discussions, policymakers, social media platforms, and society at large must promote responsible and inclusive meme practices. By doing so, people can foster a fair and balanced representation of women politicians, facilitate constructive political dialogue, and uphold the principles of gender equality in the digital age.

Limitations

- The study may be limited to the availability and accessibility of memes depicting women politicians, and the representativeness of the sampled memes.

- Generalizability may be limited due to the specific sample characteristics and the context of the study.

Recommendations

This study aims to contribute to a better understanding of the role of memes in shaping public perception, particularly regarding women politicians. The findings can inform efforts to promote more inclusive and gender-equal political discourse and provide insights for media practitioners, policymakers, and activists working in the field of political communication and gender equality.

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The Impact of Digital Technology and Changing Media Ecology on Malayalam Cinema

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ABSTRACT

The study explores the impact of digital technology and changing media ecology on Malayalam cinema, revealing how it influences the themes, narrative styles, and visual aesthetics. It sheds light on how societal values, norms, and modernization are portrayed in the films, between 2011 and 2021. This decade is carefully chosen because it is the decade that witnessed the switch of the entire industry to digital and themes related to a new and expanding media ecology started to appear in films. The study provides a deeper understanding of how Malayalam cinema mirrors Kerala's society within the contemporary media ecology, fuelled by the digital. Along with raising the questions of ethical and social implications, the films chosen also focus on the emotional dimensions of human–technology interaction. To make possible a comprehensive study, qualitative methodology is employed, critically analysing the content of the films, *Chappa Kurishu* (Sameer Thahir, 2011), *Thalsamayam Oru Penkutty* (T.K. Rajeev Kumar, 2012), *Android Kunjappan Version 5.25* (Ratheesh Balakrishnan Poduval, 2019) and *C U Soon* (Mahesh Narayanan, 2020).

Keywords: Digital technology, Malayalam cinema, Media ecology, Narrative, Visual

Introduction

The arrival of the digital has brought about a permanent shift in every aspect of media and communication. It has resulted in the formation of a new kind of media ecology within which all sorts of media forms have undergone massive changes. This transformation makes us ponder over the impact of digital technology on our day-to-day lives and our perception of reality. This paper aims to delve into the implications of digital revolution on the Malayalam film industry—an industry known for its realism, situational humour, poignant themes, and distinctive cinematic language. Malayalam cinema, hailing from the South Indian state of Kerala, has gained critical acclaim both nationally and globally. Its journey through the celluloid has been fascinating, with auteurs crafting tales deeply rooted in societal fabric, culture, and human emotions. It now beckons to explore how the technological disruption brought about by the digital has influenced the themes, storytelling, and visual aesthetics within the realm of Malayalam films. In this pursuit, the paper aims to address crucial research questions. How has the embrace of digital technology affected our media

ecology? How does Malayalam cinema form and represent these new changes brought about by the digitally fuelled contemporary media ecology? What transformations have taken place in the storytelling techniques and thematic explorations unique to Malayalam cinema due to this digital wave?

Malayalam cinema, throughout its history, has witnessed technological ruptures which confused and amused the audiences, each time preparing them towards a change in their viewing sensibility and perspective of the world itself. The digital is the most recent and one of the major shifts as it completely altered the media ecology, of which cinema is a part. Before jumping into Malayalam cinema's response to the altered media ecology brought about by the digital, a brief introduction of technological innovations in its evolutionary past need to be discussed.

Early years (1928-1950s): The dawn of Malayalam cinema

The first Malayalam film, *Vigathakumaran*, was produced and directed by J.C. Daniel in 1928. Despite the financial and socio-cultural challenges that the film faced, it laid the foundation for a flourishing film

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industry. The early years, like any other film industry in India, were characterised by adaptations of literary works and historical/mythological themes. However, Malayalam films were also keen about themes of socio-political concerns. In 1938, the first “talkie”, *Balan*, was produced by T. R. Sundaram’s Modern Theatre and directed by S. Nottani incorporating sound and dialogue.

1940s-1950s: Transition and growth

The first film studio K&K Productions was established in 1948, which was later named as Udaya Studios. K&K Productions’ *Jeevitha Nauka* (K. Vembu, 1951) was the first-ever commercial hit in Malayalam cinema. *Newspaper Boy*, the first neorealist movie in Malayalam was directed by P. Ramadas and released in 1955 (E. K., 2021). The 1940s and 1950s saw notable productions such as *Nirmala* (P. V. Krishna Iyer, 1948) that introduced playback singing to the industry and *Neelakuyil* (Ramu Kariat & P. Bhaskaran, 1954)¹. In addition to bringing National Award (President’s Silver Medal) for the best Malayalam feature film, *Neelakuyil* established the tradition of realistic melodrama. The movie included playback singers and was a musical hit (Vijayakumar, 2009, 2008). During this period, the industry started finding its foothold, introducing talented directors, actors, and musicians who later became stalwarts of Malayalam cinema.

1960s-1970s: The blossoming of creativity and dissent

The first colour film *Kandam Bacha Coat* was released in 1961. *Chemmeen* (Ramu Kariat, 1965) and *Avalude Ravukal* (I.V. Sashi, 1978) are benchmark films of the era, known for their bold narratives. *Bhargavi Nilayam* (1964) was directed by A. Vincent, based on Vaikom Muhammad Basheer’s short story *Neelavelicham*, which became a trendsetter for ghost films in Malayalam. The ghost films followed imitated costumes, BGM and lighting from *Bhargavi Nilayam* (E. K., 2021). During this period, the emergence of talented actors like Prem Nazir, Madhu, and Sheela propelled Malayalam cinema onto the national stage.

The 1970s also witnessed the rise of the “Parallel Cinema Movement” in Malayalam, advocating artistic and politically charged films. Directors like G. Aravindan and Adoor Gopalakrishnan epitomised this movement with films such as *Swayamvaram* (Adoor Gopalakrishnan, 1972), *Kanchana Sita* (G. Aravindan, 1978), *Kummatty* (G. Aravindan, 1979), and *Elippathayam* (Adoor Gopalakrishnan, 1981). They were “iconoclasts”² who showed their creativity and dissent through the medium of cinema.

The Golden Age (1980s-1990s): Experimentation and realism

The 1980s is known as the golden age of Malayalam cinema. It marked a period of experimentation and exploration of social issues as well as fantasy. It was also the age of “middle cinema” that traversed path between commercial and parallel cinema. Directors like Bharathan, Padmarajan, and K. G. George were at the forefront of this movement. Their films focused on diverse themes, including societal norms, human relationships, and the human psyche. This was also the time when India’s first film *My Dear Kuttichathan* (1984) was released in Malayalam.

Other important names of this era include Fazil, Sibi Malayil and Hariharan. Notable films from this era include *Adaminte Variyellu* (K. G. George, 1983), *Thoovanathumbikal* (Padmarajan, 1987), *Thazhvaram* (Bharathan, 1990), *Mathilukal* (Adoor Gopala Krishnan, 1990), and *Manichitrathazhu* (Fazil, 1993) among many others.

In 1984, the ‘Odessa Collective’ was founded under director John Abraham and a group of cinema lovers. The collective debuted with a street play called *Naaykali* (The game of dogs) in Fort Kochi. ‘Odessa Collective’ was launched in an attempt to transform the history of film distribution and production by including the public in film through crowdfunding and free projection.

Additionally, the 1980s witnessed the emergence of a new generation of superstars such as Mammooty, Mohanlal, and Suresh Gopi, who went on to become iconic figures in Malayalam cinema. Their talent, coupled with strong storytelling, redefined the industry and attracted a broader audience.

The Digital Era (2010 Onwards): Diversity and global recognition

The 2010s saw the digital rupture in Malayalam cinema, with a huge number of films being released each year. They were films of moderate budget and were highly influenced by global trends, although their thematics were very much “Malayali” (Venkiteswaran, 2013). A new wave of filmmakers including Rajesh Pillai, Samir Thahir, Amal Neerad, Lijo Jose Pellissery, Arun Kumar Arvind, Anwar Rasheed and Aashiq Abu started exploring unconventional themes and experimental storytelling within affordable budgets and mastery over technology. Films like *Traffic* (Rajesh Pillai, 2011), *Salt and Pepper* (Aashiq Abu, 2011), *Chappa Kurishu* (Sameer Thahir, 2011), *Ee Adutha Kalath* (Arun Kumar Arvind, 2012), *Ustad Hotel* (Anwar Rasheed, 2012), *Maheshinte Prathikaram* (Dileesh Pothan, 2016), *Angamaly Diaries* (Lijo Jose Pellissery, 2017) and *Kumbalangi Nights* (Madhu

C. Narayanan, 2019) exemplify this trend, earning critical acclaim and expanding the global audience for Malayalam cinema.

Variouly referred to as ‘new wave,’ ‘newgen,’ or ‘multiplex’ films, there are aspects of this movement that are sometimes applauded, including eschewing superstars, employing emerging talent, sticking to tight budgets, and experimenting with nonlinear narratives (Venkiteswaran, 2013).

The 2010s also witnessed a remarkable rise in female-centric films and the amplification of women’s voices in the industry. Director Anjali Menon emerged as a prominent figure in the industry with multiple superhits. Films like *Uyare* (2019) and *Moothon* (2019) showcased the nuanced portrayal of women and LGBTQ+ characters, challenging traditional narratives.

Apart from marking the digital era of Malayalam cinema, it is important to address the questions of what is digital and how it affects cinema, in general.

Coming of the digital and its impact on cinema

With the advent of digital technologies, the materiality of film has been transformed. Instead of physical film reels, films are now stored and distributed in digital formats, consisting of binary code and pixels. Digital technologies have expanded the possibilities for visual effects, editing techniques, and image manipulation. This has enabled filmmakers to create seamless and realistic CGI (computer-generated imagery) (e.g., *Bahubali Series*, *Rajamouli, 2015, 2017*, alter colour and texture (e.g., *K.G.F. Series*, *Prashanth Neel, 2018, 2022*), and experiment with non-linear storytelling (e.g., *Super Deluxe*, *Thiagarajan Kumararaja, 2019*). This has challenged traditional notions of realism and representation in cinema, as digital technologies allow for greater control and manipulation of the image.

Digital technologies have revolutionized the filmmaking process, allowing independent filmmakers and amateurs to create and distribute their own films. This has led to a proliferation of new narrative styles and perspectives, challenging the dominance of traditional filmmaking process as well as established industries. Many short films, documentaries, and web series are produced daily on platforms like YouTube and Vimeo by aspiring feature filmmakers. The rise of streaming platforms and online distribution has made films more accessible to a global audience, breaking down geographical barriers, and transforming audience behaviour and viewing habits. This has also led to new forms of film criticisms and analysis in social media and other communities.

Digital cinema, a comprehensive system that

combines animation, printed texts, and live action footage (Manovich, 2002, p. xxi), gained importance in the 1990s in America and spread to most of the western world. However, it gained significance in India only in the 2000s. The process begins with capturing footage using digital camera and other digital recording systems, editing it using digital software, and distributing it digitally. Digital copies of the film were then stored on hard disk drives or servers and transmitted to theatres via satellite or the internet, reducing distribution costs and allowing faster delivery. The process eliminates the need for printed copies, as in the age of analogue.

Digital cinema projectors use advanced colour and contrast technologies in order to reproduce spectacular images on the screen and ensure a more immersive viewing experience. The experiences are further diversified and intensified in multiplexes, IMAX theatres, and OTT platforms according to the scope of the platforms on enhancing the format and aesthetic of respective films. Also, it ensures a superior sound experience using Dolby Atmos and other technologies.

Before the complete switch of films to digital became possible, most films employed ‘digital intermediation.’ It is a process by which a film is scanned and converted into digital format for editing, colour grading, colour correction and other post-production processes. The digital file will then be manipulated using software in order to create various visual effects as well as adjust the colours and contrast of individual frames. Once this process is complete, the final digital version of the film can be printed back onto celluloid or transferred to a digital projection format for distribution (Purse, 2013, p. 2).

New digital technologies have made production, editing, distribution, sampling, and remixing of audio-visual material easier and more widespread than it has ever been before and this material is now accessible in a wider range of contexts all over the globe and in all kinds of screens from as small as a that of a smartphone screen to that of a gigantic IMAX screen (Shaviro, 2010). Multiplexes, equipped with multiple screens and modern amenities, cater to a wide audience base, and create a social and immersive atmosphere for moviegoers. IMAX theatres, known for their advanced projection technology and large screens, enhance the cinematic experience by providing exceptional visual and audio quality, often for high profile and visually spectacular films. On the other hand, OTT platforms, accessible through the internet, bring movies directly to viewers’ homes. They offer convenience, diverse content choices, and the flexibility to watch anytime, anywhere. Each platform contributes to the film industry’s reach and

engagement, allowing filmmakers to connect with a broad spectrum of audiences.

One of the major debates to be addressed here is the criticisms that arouse about the loss of indexicality when digital films came in. While celluloid films are considered indexical, that is, they are a direct trace of the object or scene that they represent, digital video formats are less directly indexical because there is a process of conversion between the profilmic image and the digital image, which introduces an in-between process of transformation (Purse, 2013). However, digital video formats can also make use of profilmic materials that are captured through the camera, and so there can still be a degree of indexicality, albeit mediated by digital technology. Moreover, filmmaking shouldn't only be read in reference to capturing the visual through a camera. It is more than camera-capture and it extends to all sorts of pre- and post-production techniques involved. Therefore, this study argues that it is not a question of one medium being indexical and another not, but of the ways in which each medium captures and reproduces reality differently.

Significance of the study

The study delves into the very essence of how cinema as an art form and cultural medium evolves in response to technological advancements. By investigating the impact of digital technology and contemporary media ecology on narrative styles, visual aesthetics, and storytelling techniques, this research sheds light on the cinematic transformation that mirrors broader societal changes. In a world where technology and media acts as an extension of human faculties, this paper explores the connection between cinema and human society. It aims to reflect on the pulse of the society through the cinematic eyes. This gives researchers, academics, and moviegoers a deeper comprehension of the subtleties of cinematic expression and offers a priceless window into the dynamic interaction between media and society. Moreover, this study explores the ethical and social dimensions of this digital transformation. It raises essential questions about the ethical responsibilities that come with technological advancements in cinema and the broader media landscape. Additionally, it delves into the emotional facets of human–technology interaction, which are increasingly becoming central to our lives. By doing so, the research contributes to a comprehensive and nuanced perspective on the multifaceted impact of digital technology on Malayalam cinema and, by extension, on our evolving cultural landscape. The study encourages innovative filmmaking by showcasing how filmmakers incorporate technology, motivating

them to explore new storytelling techniques. It also helps future-proof the Malayalam cinema industry by providing a roadmap for adapting and investing in relevant technologies.

Review of literature

Cinema studies in South India is facilitated by a wide array of academic approaches. Cinematic form, narrative, social relevance, politics, censorship, morality, ethics, and fan movement among many others became crucial to the scholarship of Indian cinema. Vasudevan (2014), for example, analyses melodrama as a narrative design or an expressive structure that interfaces the public and the private, in ways that bring the Indian audiences into complexities of historical change. The works of Prasad (2014) and Pandian (1992) trace the route of *fan bhakti* and its socio-political implications, especially in South Indian context. The works of Srinivas (2012) maps out the socio-political history of Telugu cinema and the works of Baskaran (1996) examines the Tamil entertainment media in relation to nationalist politics. However, as Prabhu and Govind (2020) observe, most of the Indian film scholarship clusters the film samples thematically, historically or through spectatorship. Films have very less been discussed from the perspectives of technology and aesthetics, which transcends the foundations of 'representational and political' in the prevailing frameworks of film studies in India (Prabhu & Govind, 2020). Rajadhyaksha (1993) is a pioneer in analysing Indian cinema in terms of technology and aesthetics. Rajadhyaksha, on observing Dadasaheb Phalke's mythologies, notes that there was no definition of time in Phalke's films, continuity was obtained only through the visual interaction between the viewers and the objects viewed. The entirety of the imaginary universe is condensed into this object and our seeing is reciprocated by this object—the whole of it which Rajadhyaksha calls "cosmos of the gaze." Therefore, most of the shots are along the perpendicular axis of the gaze, catering to the beginning of aesthetics of frontality in Indian cinema. However, in contemporary context, aesthetics of frontality and cosmos of gaze is raptured by the emergence of immersive, high-resolution digital visuals. Apart from that, Prabhu and Govind (2020) devised a different approach to film studies that involved aesthetic examination of film text, in terms of sound, light and composition in construction of meaning in black and white Hindi films.

Coming to Malayalam, there is very less scholarship on digitality, digital cinema and contemporary media ecology. Abdulla's *Reverse Clap* published in 2014 roughly locates Malayalam

cinema in the spectrum of digital media practices, briefly touching on television reality competition shows and the multiplex revolution. Kathiravan's *Malayala Cinema: Aashayavum Akhyanavum* (2022) maps the changing Malayalam cinema, exploring the philosophy of posthumanism, Malayalam cinema's development during the pandemic, changing themes and representations, etc. Venkiteswaran, in two of his articles published in *The Hindu* (2013) and weekly magazine *Mathrubhumi* (2022), discusses about the digital era of Malayalam cinema commonly known as "new generation movies" and the second wave of it that saw the new experimental digital films released recently. This study is indebted to Venkiteswaran's findings, but analyses a new set of films in the context of digital technology and changing media ecology. These films simultaneously represent as well as participate in the changing media ecology, revealing how it influences the themes, narrative styles, and visual aesthetics of Malayalam cinema.

Research objectives

- To analyse the impact of digital technology and changing media ecology on changing thematic and aesthetic of Malayalam cinema.
- To examine the socio-cultural implications of digital technology and changing media ecology on Malayalam cinema
- To analyse the ethical and emotional dimensions of human–technology interaction with examples from Malayalam cinema.

Research methodology

The content analysis of four Malayalam feature films within a span of 2011 to 2021 is conducted to provide a comprehensive analysis of the evolving landscape of Malayalam cinema in the digital age. This decade is carefully chosen because it was the decade that witnessed the switch of the entire industry to digital. Purposive sampling is administered in order to select the sample of movies which are either thematically or aesthetically or in both ways capable of providing an insight into both Malayalam cinema's interaction and its interpretation of the contemporary media ecology, fuelled by the digital. Each film mentioned here is analysed separately on separate frames of reference, all pertaining to adoption of contemporary media ecology in films:

1. Chappa Kurishu, Sameer Thahir, 2011
2. Thalsamayam Oru Penkutty, T.K. Rajeev Kumar, 2012
3. Android Kunjappan Version 5.25, Ratheesh Balakrishnan Poduval, 2019
4. CU Soon, Mahesh Narayanan, 2020

The comprehensive methodology utilised in the

study also includes an extensive literature review, and insightful interviews with industry experts, academicians and cinephiles apart from case studies of specific Malayalam films selected. Through this blend of research tools, the paper endeavours to fulfil the objectives listed down in the study. In the subsequent sections of this paper, the realms of digital technology and its impact on storytelling is analysed, delving deeper into the changing contours of Malayalam cinema.

Analysis and interpretation

This section explores the changing landscapes of Malayalam cinema, highlighting the representation and expression of contemporary media ecology in its aesthetic and thematic. The paper deals with the portrayal of smartphones within the narrative and handheld camera in the making of the film *Chappa Kurishu* (2011), reality TV and media saturation in *Thalsamayam Oru Penkutty* (2012), the robotic character in *Android Kunjappan Version 5.25* (2019) and computer-screen filmmaking in *C U Soon* (2021). These films exemplify how Malayalam cinema has embraced technology and innovation to both reflect and comment on the contemporary realities of a rapidly evolving media ecology, brought about by digitality. At the same time, it also uses the contemporariness of the emerging media technology in crafting new stories and aesthetic, demanding new kinds of viewing sensibility. The integration of digital screens, social media platforms, smartphones, surveillance camera, handheld cameras, reality TV, and advanced robotics in the aesthetics and narratives of these movies elucidate the shifting dynamics of storytelling, allowing the audience to engage with narratives in new and profound ways. As Malayalam cinema continues to evolve and adapt to the digital age, these examples serve as markers of the industry's willingness to experiment and innovate, ensuring a captivating cinematic experience for global audience.

Chappa Kurishu: Unveiling smartphone as the extended self

Sameer Thahir's highly regarded Malayalam film *Chappa Kurishu* (2011) examines contemporary problems and relationships via the perspective of technological integration, particularly a smartphone. The movie demonstrates how new media devices have ingrained themselves into our daily lives, impacting human interactions and changing the way tales are told. Through this modern prism, the spectator is privy to unedited emotions and unfettered reality.

The film explores the gap between the 'haves' and 'have nots' by following the lives of two young individuals from opposing socio-economic

extremes. Rich construction worker Arjun lives an opulent lifestyle, utilising cutting-edge phones and making out with telemarketing ladies. He is driven by achievements. Though he is engaged to Ann, he has a full-fledged romantic relationship with his subordinate, Sonia.

Ansari is a menial labourer hailing from a slum who performs tasks like sweeping floors and cleaning toilets in the supermarket he works as an attendant. He has a soft corner for Nafeesa, his co-worker, who shares his sentiments. When Arjun misplaces one of his phones and it ends up in Ansari's hands, then the tension begins. Arjun is in a desperate attempt to retrieve it since he has a video clip on his phone of him making out with Sonia. Due to communication problems between the two, Ansari first declines to return it. However, as soon as he learns how desperate Arjun is, he feels a weird kind of power and commands him to do things he would never have dared to do.

Smartphones, in particular, are a sort of cellular technology that is revolutionising many aspects of our daily lives. By establishing a new, intricate interaction between acting, navigating, and being in a world dominated by digital technology, it shatters the typical passive visual spectatorship of displays. Smartphones are equipped with a multitude of characteristics that are intrinsically linked to digital technology, such as apps, internet access, digital communication, and other digital features. Digital technology provides the foundation for many of the features that make a smartphone unique, including touchscreen interfaces, internet surfing, digital apps, digital cameras, and more. The movie demonstrates how our smartphones have evolved into an extension of our unique selves, serving as a hub for both our personal and social lives. For example, as Google accounts, social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, and so on) and instant messenger services (like BBM or WhatsApp) get accessed more and more via the cell phone, the phone becomes a crucial factor in thinking of contemporary individual memory. Decades after Marshal McLuhan has professed technology as an extension of human beings, movies like *Chappa Kurishu* (2011) proves it through the analogy of its plotline.

The movie is entirely captured on a 7D DSLR handheld camera, instead of a sophisticated one as was usual in the times before the digital. Offering a voyeuristic peek into the lives of the characters, the narrative's raw immediacy and intimacy are magnified by the use of the handheld camera. It also highlights the ease of using technology in the digital era, opening opportunities for new filmmakers to produce something as good as those before them

could establish.

Thalsamayam Oru Penkutty: mediation, framing and fame in reality TV

Thalsamayam Oru Penkutty (2012) narrates the story of Manjula (performed by Nithya Menon), also known as Manju, a rural girl who is chosen to be the first contestant in a reality show that will document her daily activities for a month.

Manju lacks any sort of prior exposure to reality television, and her life is adversely affected by being the centre of attention suddenly. The plot revolves around the difficulties Manju faces, navigating the intricate world of reality television. Her relationships and private life are greatly impacted by the cameras surrounding her and the pressure to perform, that comes along. The movie discusses the psychological and emotional toll that reality TV has on its participants, as well as ethical dilemmas and exploitation they must deal with. Throughout the story, Manju fights to uphold her morality and beliefs in the face of severe manipulation and sensationalism. She fights the consequences of being in the spotlight as well. The story looks at concerns about media slanting, cultural norms, privacy, and the blurring of entertainment and reality in today's media ecosystem, which is made possible by the widespread use of cellphones and portable digital cameras.

The film explores the realm of reality television and how it has a huge impact on society. The movie explores how reality TV affects people and their desire for fame, highlighting the contemporary preoccupation with exposure and sensationalism. It emphasises how reality television has become a powerful force in influencing public opinion, erasing distinctions between real life and drama on screen, and offering a window to the altered social dynamics of the digital era.

Android Kunjappan: Humanising technology through the robotic lens

Android Kunjappan Version 5.25 (2019), directed by Ratheesh Balakrishnan Poduval, explores the theme of companionship and familial bonds through the lens of a human-robot interaction. This touching tale humanises technology, reflecting on how advanced robotics can evoke genuine emotions and challenge preconceived notions about artificial intelligence.

The story revolves around Bhaskara Poduval, an elderly man played by veteran actor Suraj Venjaranmoodu, who lives in a remote village in Kerala. He is a grumpy old man in need of support and assistance. He receives a phone call from his son

Subramanian (Soubin Shahir), who works in Russia, offering to send him an android robot (later named by the neighbours as Kunjappan). Although initially Bhaskaran opposes the idea and shows great dislike for the robot, gradually they become close.

The film explores human-robot relationships, generational conflicts, and the impact of technology on traditional ways of life. It strikes a balance between humour and emotion, depicting the challenges and complexities of their relationship. As the story progresses, Bhaskaran and Kunjappan learn a lot from each other, and their relationship becomes the heart of the film. The film embodies the idea that technology can become an integral part of the family fabric, raising ethical questions, and showcasing the potential societal transformation due to human-robot interactions. It is a direct commentary on the media ecology within which we are situated.

C U Soon: Navigating relationships in the virtual world

The story of *C U Soon* (2020), directed by Mahesh Narayanan, unfolds entirely on a computer and smartphone screen, reflecting the pervasive role of technology in our lives. The film, shot during the COVID-19 lockdown, captures the reliance on digital communication and online relationships. It emphasises how technology has become an indispensable part of human interaction, narrating a gripping tale solely through the digital prism, demonstrating the convergence of cinema and the digital realm.

As Walter Benjamin (1986) observe, our mode of sense perceptions changes according to the entire mode of our existence within historical circumstances. In the contemporary era, affectively manipulated by the new media, and digital screens, our mediated image is what defines us. We are engaged in a continuous process of making and distributing our own images. Technology has resulted in us dwelling in multiple world realities, with the help of biotechnical osmosis. These mediated images, the “born digital objects,” as Nishant Shah puts it, are the essence of the digital era, and are produced for circulation over digital computational networks (Shah, 2015).

Circulation according to Shah is not any function that the digital computational networks do, but circulation is what produces and sustains them, with potentials of altering our perceptions of human beings and their connections. These images come into being not only because they are captured using digital devices, but also because they are stored, replicated, and circulated across networks (Shah, 2015), contributing to an overall participation of us, in a different world that is as real as our tangible

physical world. In other words, these digital images are neither a representation of our reality, nor a digitally fuelled ‘mechanical reproduction’ (Benjamin, 1936) of earlier known forms, objects or art, but a new reality acting within new modes of production, distribution and consumption. Various media forms that constitute the contemporary media ecology organises our sense perceptions in ways that accept our multiplicity. People no more must exist in flesh and blood. Information is as real.

Conclusion

The Malayalam film industry has proven time and again its remarkable ability to evolve and adapt to the changing media ecology. This is exemplified in the series of films chosen for the study in this paper. While *Chappa Kurishu* (2011) delves into the intricate role of smartphones in Kerala’s contemporary society, *Thalsamayam Oru Penkutty* (2012) explores the captivating realm of reality television, blurring the boundaries between televisual fiction and reality. This exploration reveals the extent to which media saturation has become an integral part of our existence, prompting us to question the authenticity of what we witness on screen.

Chappa Kurishu, skilfully uses smartphones as a major tool impacting plot events and character arcs. It successfully demonstrates how technology penetrates our daily life. *Android Kunjappan Version 5.25* (2019) takes one step more, in this regard. It uses a robot to weave a fascinating narrative foreseeing a when technology will play a bigger role in our intimate and social relationships. The film is an insightful examination of the interaction between people and technology that has changed throughout time. *C U Soon* (2020) boldly breaks up with all the conventional concepts of filmmaking, by introducing computer screen filmmaking into the cinematic scene. In doing so, it not only sets new benchmarks in filmmaking but also enlightens its audience about the world of media convergence and hypermediacy that we are absorbed into.

All these films are reflections and direct commentary on the influence of the digital and the resultant changes in media ecology that we are witnessing since the last three decades of the 21st century.

Notes:

¹Referred from the articles, “Nirmala 1948,” and “Neelakuyil 1954,” written by B. Vijayakumar and archived by The Hindu newspaper.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20111001132716/http://www.hindu.com/mp/2009/09/21/stories/2009092150570400.htm>

<https://web.archive.org/web/20161016055336/>

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-features/tp-metroplus/neelakuyil-1954/article1427604.ece>

²V. K. Cherian, in his article titled, “Remembering Govindan Aravindan: The Iconoclast Filmmaker,” uses the term “iconoclast” to refer to G. Aravindan, who questioned the established notions and norms operating in the society as well as film field. In this light, I consider Adoor Gopalakrishnan as an “iconoclast” as well.

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The Role of Nationalism, Diplomacy and Development in the Coming Together of Sports and Politics

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ABSTRACT

It is often argued whether sports should be mixed with politics. While the common answer to this question may steer towards the negative, academic studies in the last few years have shown the heavy tilt of sports towards politics. This paper looks at the specific acts through which sports and politics are held at the joint. An integrative literature review leads to the three major aspects of nationalism, development and diplomacy that contribute towards the politics of sports. This paper investigates how politics have become inseparable part of sports using the three phenomena of reforms and development measures, nationalism and diplomacy. The study validates the findings of the literature review with the thematic analysis of the opinions of sports journalists who are a major stakeholder as gatekeepers that portray sports and politics through nationalism, public diplomacy, and development and reforms. The analysis throws light on a few major aspects that could be used by governments and other stakeholders for positive development. The study finds that instances like India–Pakistan cricket series and role of sports in gender are good examples that show light on the role of sports in politics.

Keywords: Development, Globalisation, Nationalism, Sports, Sports diplomacy

Introduction

Do sports and politics mix? A common answer to such a question is that sports and politics should not mix and sports should be free of politics. However, there is an uneasy confluence of politics and sports. In the modern world, sport and politics are strongly entwined and understanding this relationship helps to throw light not only on sport and politics but also on culture (Bairner, 2001). There are many critics crying foul that politics has prevailed over sport and that the two should not be mixed. But is this really possible? Can sport and politics be separated from each other? What is the nature of political economy of sport?

Human beings are not only homosapiens but also Homo Ludens (Huizinga, 2016). This means humans have a natural propensity to play games. But, the nature of games and participation in games have changed drastically since the onset of mass media like radio, TV and digital. While before print and radio, participation in sports meant going out and playing the game, its meaning changed to watching the game and supporting your team. The games also started to get broadcast across national boundaries

and thus the globalised, mediatised, televised sports changed in nature. Games also became corporatised with huge money put in for sponsorships, etc.

It is said that sports is war minus the shooting (Orwell, 1945). This has two implications—the negative one compares it with war while the positive one talks of sports as safety valve against war.

Sports and nationalism

In the current time, the visual display of flags in sports arenas and the performance of national anthems by the participating teams have become as prominent and widely recognised features of international sporting events. An arena filled with flags and the deafening sound of the national anthem are something to behold, whether it be an Asian Games, the Olympics, a bilateral cricket match between India and Pakistan, or any other event involving two nations. The sight of the entire Indian squad standing in a single queue, with enormous pride, as they salute the national flag and sing national song before the commencement of a cricket match, is truly remarkable. The aforementioned statement

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remains applicable to other national teams as well. Eager spectators fill the stands, while millions of individuals captivated by televised broadcasts exhibit nationalistic fervour and behave as if the reputation of their respective regions is on the line. The playing of the national anthem not only signals the imminent commencement of events on the field, court or track, but also symbolises a sense of national cohesion. The likelihood exists that our familiarity with the ritual leads us to overlook it, perceiving it solely as an essential element of the athletic competition.

Bairner (2001) argues that the act of showcasing national flags and singing national anthems is more commonly observed in the realm of sporting events as compared to other social contexts. The author asserts that in the 21st century, sport surpasses all other forms of social activity in its ability to promote flag waving and the playing of the national anthem, both in formal and informal settings, through fan engagement.

In this scenario, what is the nature of the intersection between sports and nationalism? Sport has had a significant impact on the formation of various nationalisms. According to the argument that nations are “imagined communities” (Anderson, 1983), sport has often acted as a means through which this collective identity is fostered. Undoubtedly, nationalism consistently involves the consolidation of heterogeneous groupings of persons through the utilisation of tales, contrived national myths, and contrived rituals. Pope (1997) has provided evidence of the impact of sports on the formation of American national identity. This phenomenon involved the construction of a myth surrounding the origins of baseball. Andrews (1991) had undertaken an analysis that explores the importance of rugby in the formation of mythologies that coincided with the emergence of Welsh nationalism. According to Hargreaves (1986), the hosting of the Barcelona Olympics in 1992 intensified the existing tensions between Spanish and Catalan nationalism. In contrast, Beckles (1995) has conducted an analysis on the impact of cricket in the development of West Indian nationalism, a phenomenon that has endured despite the lack of an official nation-state. Undoubtedly, sport has consistently played a significant role in upholding nationalist sentiment, particularly in times when armed conflict is absent. As noted by esteemed British historian Eric Hobsbawm, the symbolic representation of a group of 11 individuals can effectively embody the collective identity of millions within an imagined community (Hobsbawm, 1990). This concept can be used to countries that have undergone historical divisions, as well as those that today exhibit a certain level of political and ethnic cohesion, such as the case

of Brazilian football. During the era of apartheid in South Africa, rugby had preferential treatment from Afrikaner nationalists, whilst association football was predominantly identified with disenfranchised black South Africans. In this particular setting, it is possible to establish a distinction between ethnic nationalism and civic nationalism. In spite of the demise of apartheid and subsequent efforts to develop a renewed civic nationalism based on universal suffrage and the notion of a multicultural society known as the “rainbow nation” (Nauright, 1997), ethnic nationalism persists in South Africa.

The phenomenon of globalisation has had a significant impact on the concept of national identity, particularly in the realm of sport. The concept of “globalisation” has garnered considerable attention within intellectual and political circles. Nevertheless, there have been pre-existing globalising impulses predating the onset of the modern age. The origins of these empires can be traced back to the 15th century (Miller *et al.*, 2001). Sport has emerged as a widespread and influential occurrence during the latter part of the 19th century, marked by significant milestones such as the inception of test cricket matches and the establishment of the contemporary Olympic movement. Globalisation raises two inquiries regarding the sporting cultures of nation-states. In consideration of the proliferation of transnational and multinational corporations, as well as the emergence of supranational entities like the United Nations and the World Bank, a pertinent question arises: do nation states retain their significance in the contemporary global landscape? Furthermore, is the destruction of national sports cultures transpiring in the middle of the popularity of global sports?

Undoubtedly, multinational and transnational firms currently engage in competition with nation states in terms of annual revenue generation. Based on the research conducted by Miller *et al.* (2001), it has been observed that the yearly earnings of American Express, Hewlett-Packard, and Microsoft at that time matched the Gross Domestic Product of a moderately affluent nation-state, such as Spain, Greece, or New Zealand. Despite the fact that a significant number of these firms are based in the United States, the country has not experienced notable success in exporting its favoured sports to other nations. Undoubtedly, this phenomenon may be attributed, at least partially, to the contentious nature of its national sporting identity and the concomitant sense of ‘American exceptionalism’ that has been closely linked to it. Moreover, it can be observed that even highly globalised sports, such as association football, demonstrate evidence that well-established ethnic communities possess the ability to adjust and integrate with transformations. To provide

an example, when Japanese footballer Shunsuke Nakamura was recruited by Glasgow Celtic Football Club, a team historically associated with Irish expatriate nationalism, the club's fans embraced Nakamura by including a light-hearted, bi-cultural chant: "He consumes chowmein."

Contemporary studies also look at the assertiveness and 'pseudo nationalism' associated with sports. In the article titled, *Thermometer of Sporting Nationalism*, Trivino (2019) raises the question of whether assertive and aggressive nationalism is promoted by sporting events. His study concludes on the contrary and says that after looking at the pros and cons of sporting nationalism in terms of foreign policy, there are not sufficient reasons to establish a causal link or to claim that it contributes to violence. Trivino thus also concluded there exists no moral or ethical grounds to stop international sporting events because they contribute to violence (Trivino, 2019).

While looking at reports on teams that represent India, it is often seen that for example the cricket or football team is called Team India or Indian team. This phenomenon is true in other countries too. Strum *et al.*, (2021) term this as 'pseudo-nationalism' which according to them is a phenomenon where sports bodies, syndicates, and franchises identify themselves as national team and they depend on the symbolism and identity of nationalism to profit. They also invoke Silk, Andrews and Cole (2005) on corporate nationalism and argue that the link between sport, nationalism and corporate are not so strong and bound to fail.

Sports journalism and nationalism

Journalists are essentially individuals who engage in the art of storytelling. As Shafer (2010, August 30) posits, journalists are responsible for crafting the initial rendition of historical events, thereby embodying the essence of history itself. Moreover, the functional processes of the political economics of journalism require that the sustainability of print or television journalism enterprises depends on the size of their respective audiences or television rating points. Academic scholars specialising in media studies have extensively discussed the strategic approaches employed by the news industry to enhance its sales figures. The utilisation of sports coverage is often employed as a strategy to enhance readership, given its status as one of the most widely sought-after news categories. The news media strategically promote and consolidate nationalism as a means to enhance their commercial profitability, hence leading to a net rise in revenue.

How are the concepts of nationalism and nationhood conceptualised? The concept of an

imagined community is denoted by Anderson (1983) as the nation. The author's research thoroughly explores the ways in which the media strategically use nationalism to engage with individuals' personal sense of identity. Further research provides support for a further approach that involves the utilisation of inclusive pronouns such as "we" or "us," as opposed to exclusive pronouns like "they." The implementation of this method has a twin objective: to attract new readers and to maintain existing ones (Billig, 1995; O'Donnell, 1994).

The media use the approach of employing "we or us versus them" words as a means to attract and maintain viewership. Billig (1995) posits that the media consistently reinforces a phenomenon known as "banal nationalism," which engenders a pervasive sense of patriotism among consumers. Billig (1995) suggests that the use of national colours and flags in media coverage, especially sports reporting, has had a significant role in promoting nationalistic discourse. A small number of further research have revealed nationalism as a strong motivator for individuals to engage in sports coverage. In their comprehensive analysis of the topic, Billings and Hundley (2010) identified nationalism as a prominent factor motivating individuals to engage in sports spectatorship. Media companies utilise the concept of "patriotism" as an extra approach to promote athletes from their respective "home" countries and generate public interest in an event that goes beyond their typical viewing patterns (Billings & Hundley, 2010).

Sports and development

History of sports and development

While a formal study and policy of sports and development is usually traced to the 1960s when governments across the world started having sports as an important component in the education policies, and global sports organisations like International Olympic Committee (IOC), and others started partnering with organisations like United Nations for development through sports.

However, a look at the beginning of the modern-day spectator sport, industrialisation played a major part in shaping sports. Medieval sports of fox hunting or fishing were no longer sufficient or downright outdated as industrial revolution also brought about mass immigration, urbanisation and the breakdown of rural agrarian economies.

The notion of "sport for development" is extensively utilised and embraced by various stakeholders in the sector, including sports federations, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organisations, and scholars engaged in the study of

this domain. In the light of the expansive and flexible nature of the notion (Kidd, 2008), researchers have employed other terminology.

‘Sport for development’ refers to the use of sports as a means to foster positive social change and promote holistic development. This concept encompasses other terms, including “sport development” and “development through sport.”

The terms “sport-in-development” and “sport and development” are frequently used in academic discourse to refer to the intersection between sport and development initiatives. According to Kidd (2008), it is suggested that there exist three overarching and interrelated approaches within the realm of the sport for development movement.

The conventional approach to sports development involves the facilitation of fundamental sports coaching and the provision of necessary equipment. Infrastructure is a primary focal point, whereas humanitarian assistance involves the act of fundraising in order to provide aid.

Sport is utilised as a means of offering many sorts of aid and assistance, as seen by the initial efforts of Olympic aid.

According to Burgess (2010), the foundations of sport for development can be traced back to international development theory and the patterns observed in the global political economy. The evolution of international development from the early 20th century to the late 20th century witnessed a notable shift towards prioritising the social and economic advancement of Third World nations. This shift can be attributed to various factors, including changes in the global system such as the decolonisation process, the conclusion of the Cold War, and the emergence of Third World countries striving for development (O’Brien & Williams, 2007). Furthermore, during the late 20th century, a fresh perspective on development emerged, characterised by the adoption of neoliberalism and its emphasis on international organisations, institutions, and the private sector. According to neoliberal ideology, the expansion of private sector liberties was believed to facilitate the redistribution of wealth to the broader population, resulting in simultaneous economic and social progress (Martinez & Garcia, 2000 as cited in Edensor & Millington, 2010: 14).

According to O’Brien and Williams (2007), the Human Development Index (HDI) was introduced by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and was founded on a conceptualisation of development that incorporated social elements. They posited that the true measure of a nation’s prosperity lies in its population. According to the United Nations Development Programme (O’Brien & Williams,

2007), the objective of development is to establish a conducive setting that allows individuals to have prosperous, healthy, and productive lives. As per Coalter’s (2010) findings, a previous paper issued by the United Nations emphasised the fundamental role of volunteerism in the realm of sports. It asserted that volunteerism not only contributes to the betterment of social welfare and community engagement, but also fosters the development of trust and reciprocity among individuals. Furthermore, it facilitates the expansion of social interaction by establishing new networks. As stated by Coalter (2010), there arose a necessity to foster collaborations that facilitate the mobilisation of resources “both for and through sport” due to the fact that “well-designed sports programmes serve as a valuable mechanism for initiating social development and enhancing social cohesion.”

The focus on the potential impact of sports in civil society, particularly in terms of partnerships, social development, and social cohesion, aligns with a larger change in the approach to aid. This shift is exemplified by the World Bank’s recognition of the potential of social capital to contribute to different forms of social development and economic growth (Coalter, 2010). During the 1990s, development organisations and institutions experienced a shift in their priorities, with an increased emphasis on social development and the concept of social capital. Consequently, the need for novel techniques and approaches arose in order to facilitate progress, leading to the emergence of the sport for development sector as a viable solution. Another study showed how the profile of a city or a country could be raised by using the strategies associated with sports diplomacy. Murray and Price (2020) found out how by using sports diplomacy strategies, the international profile of a nation’s cities and regions is raised.

The above studies show how sport was seen related to development and politics of development.

Sports and development in Indian context

Khelo India: The Khelo India scheme consists of 12 verticals out of which “Sports for Peace and Development” is one of them. At the time of conceptualizing the scheme, it was felt that sports can play a major role to wean away the youth from the extremism and to bring them to the mainstream. Therefore, it has been decided that sports activities/sports competitions will be organized at village/block/district level in the state of Jammu & Kashmir, LWE areas and in North Eastern states and funds for the same may be provided under this scheme. Further, under the Special Package for J&K, Central Government is providing funds to the tune of Rs. 200

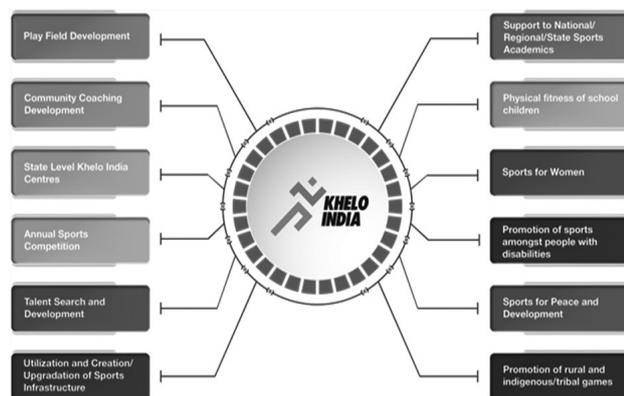


Fig. 1: Khelo India Games

crore for enhancement of sports facilities in the State. To ensure optimal utilization of these infrastructures, soft support in terms of coaches, equipment, consumables, technical support, competition, etc. are required to be provided. Further, efforts are to be made to organise village-level competitions in respect of sports disciplines popular in the state of J&K for positive engagement of youth. Similar efforts will also be made in case of other extremism and terrorism affected and other disturbed areas.

Sports and diplomacy

Diplomacy is the professional practise, activity, or skill of managing international relations, usually carried out by a country's representatives in foreign countries. Diplomacy has the capacity to foster the establishment of resilient institutions and advance democracy. Sports diplomacy refers to the unique ability of sports to promote unity among individuals, nations, and communities by fostering a shared appreciation for physical activities. Sports diplomacy, similar to sport for development, has the capacity to cultivate essential abilities and imbue principles related to community involvement, gender parity, leadership, and nonviolence. Diplomacy primarily functions at the international or governmental level, while development mainly takes place at the community level.

In sports diplomacy, early scholarly works, such as Peppard and Riordan (1993) and Soares (2007), examine the utilisation of ice hockey in international athletic events during the Cold War as a representation of ongoing diplomatic tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union. In initial scholarly research, sport diplomacy is conceptualised as a means for governmental actors to implement a broader political agenda. Sport diplomacy is an integral component of a nation's wider diplomatic efforts. Notable instances include the acclaimed Ping-Pong diplomacy between the United States and China in the 1970s, which played a pivotal role in

establishing official diplomatic relations (Hong & Sun, 2000). Additionally, the global relations and boycotts of sporting events played a significant role in isolating Apartheid South Africa (Macintosh *et al.*, 1994; Cornelissen, 2008).

According to a work by Donos (2012), public diplomacy provides three features to a country—reputation, credibility and legitimacy.

Reputation judgements have a significant impact on trust in social interactions (Eisenegger, 2009). Reputational judgements are transmitted through direct or indirect communication, shaping attitudes about an individual in society and ultimately influencing behaviours towards that individual. According to Yang *et al.* (2010), the soft power of a country can be strengthened through the implementation of effective country reputation management. The notion of a country's reputation is based on enduring perceptions of the country formed via various corporate representations and behaviours (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990). The reputation of a country is formed by its distinctive characteristics and the practises it adopts to shape its identity. These practises are consistently maintained over time and result in stakeholders perceiving the country as having varying degrees of credibility, reliability, trustworthiness, and responsibility (Fombrun, 1996).

Credibility is regarded as a collection of beliefs that recipients of communication have towards a sender (Newell & Goldsmith, 2001), and is defined by the overall openness of the public to listen to and believe information based on their perception of the sender as credible and dependable (Rudderham, 2008). Ohanian (1990) and Newell and Goldsmith (2001) highlight two key aspects of credibility, namely expertise and trustworthiness, which are particularly relevant when it comes to how people perceive the credibility of a country. The credibility of messages is influenced by expertise and trustworthiness (Goldberg and Hartwick, 1990), which in turn affects the response to the messages (LaBarbera, 1982). Nye (2004) regards country credibility as a vital asset and significant origin of soft power, capable of converting cultural resources utilised through public diplomacy tools into the attractive force of soft power.

Legitimacy is an inconspicuous aspect of political existence, desired by political actors, actively pursued by them, and acknowledged and reacted to by others (subjects, citizens, peers). The notion of legitimacy encompasses moral and epistemic right, legality, custom, tradition, and popular approval (Mulligan, 2005). However, it is commonly framed as a matter of whether a practise or institution aligns with a specific set of criteria by which it, or its legitimacy, will be evaluated (Hurd, 1999; Buchanan, 2011; Mulligan,

2005). In political contexts, legitimacy typically refers to the justification of an agent: a legitimate institution is one that is justified in exercising political authority. Furthermore, legitimacy implies a sense of authority: the regulations of a legitimate organisation are considered as impartial justifications for doing action. Furthermore, the evaluation of legitimacy might have consequences for the practical actions to be made towards the institution, not only for those who are subject to the institution's regulations, but also for others who hold the institution in high regard (Buchanan, 2011).

In their analysis of sport's efficacy as a medium for diplomatic relations, Trunkos and Heere (2017) categorize the prevailing strategic objectives: The reasons for hosting international sporting events include: (a) serving as an unofficial venue for international leaders to meet and initiate discussions; (b) offering insights into the host country and educating others about it; (c) bridging cultural and linguistic gaps between nations and seeking common ground through sports; (d) establishing a platform for new trade agreements or legislation; (e) raising awareness of international relationships through sports ambassadors; (f) enhancing the host country's global image and leaving a lasting impact; and (g) utilising sports to confer legitimacy on a newly formed nation.

Javadipour and Rasekh (2019) looked at the role of sports in international diplomacy in Iran and found that there was a lack of policy and knowledge among the stakeholders in Iran about the potential of sports in soft power and cultural diplomacy. The authors also recommended few measures like taking part in international events, hosting big international events, exchange of coaches, etc. as some steps to realise sports diplomacy goals. Researches by Dousti *et al.* (2019) confirmed the role of sports diplomacy as soft power in Iran after the sanctions imposed on the country due to nuclear activities. Meanwhile, Bakhshi *et al.* (2020) concluded that Iran could take lead from other countries and properly utilise sports diplomacy as a facilitator in international diplomacy.

Garamvolgyi *et al.* (2020) also state that today many states use sports as a tool to further diplomacy. However, they look beyond the role of hosting big-ticket tournaments for soft diplomacy and argue that even smaller grassroot-level local tournaments and other interventions could also bear successful results. They argue that grassroot-level interventions strengthen people-to-people relations and are a good example of sport for development and peace.

Scholars (Deschamps, 2020; Kobierecki, 2017) have discussed how smaller sport intervention like meetings for sports could be used as stepping stone for international diplomatic meets. The authors have

explained how countries could establish bilateral contacts by fixing meetings among coaches and athletes, or sending teams to bilateral events could lead to international diplomacy.

Meanwhile Dichter (2021) has argued that this sports history is witnessing a diplomatic turn as more research is now getting focused in the issue, researchers say that as a number of old documents and files have been declassified, they throw light on how sports was used as a diplomatic tool even during the World Wars and the Cold war.

Research objectives

Previous studies have shown that sports and politics are often mixed; but what are the prominent areas in sports that feature as a political tool? While doing a detailed review of literature regarding sports and its effects on various aspects of politics, a few areas have emerged as prominent factors. This research seeks to collate these important factors that establish the role of sports in politics. Previous studies have focussed on sports and its effects on any one of the three prominent aspects that qualify as political activities like role of sport in portraying nationalism (Bairner, 2001); role of sports in diplomacy and the role of sports in reforms and development. This study combines the three prominent aspects and looks them as a whole in determining the role of sports in politics. This research seeks to establish what role do they play in politics. This study limits its objective within the Indian context and examines how the three factors of nationalism, diplomacy and development play out here. A major stakeholder in the field of sports are the journalists themselves as they play the role of gatekeeper in portraying politics via diplomacy, nationalism or development. The study seeks to understand the opinion and sentiments of experienced sports journalists towards the mixing of sports and politics through the aspects of nationalism, diplomacy and development.

Research questions

Keeping the research objectives in mind, the following research questions were framed:

RQ1: What role nationalism plays in sports and politics?

RQ2: What role diplomacy plays in sports and politics?

RQ3: What role development plays in sports and politics?

Rationale behind choosing this topic

Study on sports and its role in society has seen a monumental increase over the past few years, however only in the last few decades role of sports in politics

has been examined. There has been some extensive work on sports and nationalism, however, the other aspects of diplomacy and development, etc. have been relatively less studied upon. This study would strive to bring together these three aspects of sports and politics and closely examine their respective roles. Also, the positive aspects of politics in sports could be used by stakeholders like governments, NGOs, and the civil society towards advancement of development and diplomacy. Sports could also be used to cement ties within different communities of a nation. This study could throw light on how these objectives could be met by the stakeholders in society, particularly in the Indian context. Another important reason to carry out this study is to contribute towards this aspect of knowledge in the Indian context as not much study and literature exists about India.

Research methodology

The research design employs two tools—(1) Integrative literature review and this is followed by (2) Thematic analysis. Literature review is an accepted type of research methodology (Baumeister & Leary, 1997). Some of the common types of literature reviews include systemic literature review, semi-systemic literature review, integrative literature review, etc. For this study, integrative literature review is employed as one of the methods. The reason to include integrative research review over others is that this research inquiry does not necessarily looks to study all the literature available on the issue but it necessitates a more creative gathering of data. In such instances, employing an integrative review methodology can prove beneficial (Snyder, 2019). This strategy is not intended to encompass all articles ever written on the subject, but rather to amalgamate viewpoints in order to generate novel theoretical frameworks. Once the integrative literature review is complete, the second step in the research design is employed that takes recourse to thematic analysis of the interviews given by subject experts.

Sampling and data collection

Sampling is done using purposive random sampling method. In this method, a list of 30 sports editors of various news and sports media platforms are arranged in random order and every third name is picked from that list. Thus, a list of ten respondents is acquired and they are asked a set of questions whose main objective is tied to the research objectives of the research paper. For thematic analysis of the interviews, NVivo 14 software is used. The interviews are collated in a project on NVivo and a code set is created that aligns to the research questions. The code set basically investigates the three aspects of

nationalism, diplomacy and development as depicted in sports and politics.

The codes generated are attached as appendix.

Findings and discussion

Sports and development

The hierarchy chart of sports and development throws crucial light on the issue. The sunburst image/pie-chart of the codes is reproduced below as Figure 2.

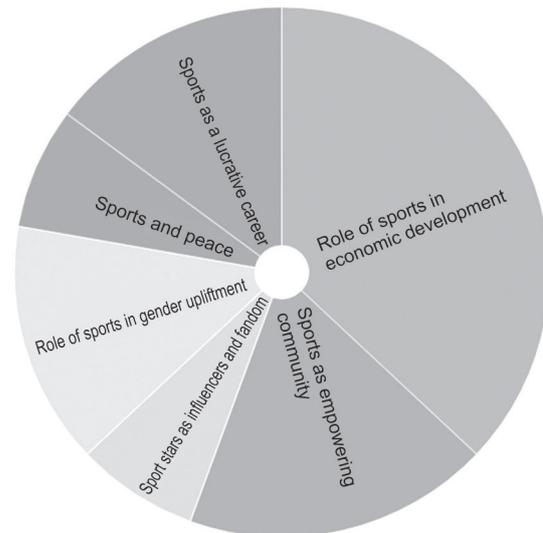


Fig. 2: Sunburst image of the hierarchy chart of sports and development

Source: Author's own elaboration

The hierarchy chart clearly shows the major codes that come into play in the field of sports and politics through development. The most important aspect within the development sector is the role of sports in economic development of a country. All the respondents agreed that sports play an important role in economic development too as sports are commercialised and nations also benefit through a number of aspects including sports promotions, infrastructure development and tourism. One respondent marked the whole gamut of economic corridors touched by the sports industry, thus:

"In recent years, the Indian sports sector has attracted significant investments in different segments that include the acquisition of sports teams, league partnerships, media agreements and other areas of the sports industry, such as manufacturing, advertisement, TV rights, fitness equipment, online betting apps and technologies from within and outside the country."

Another respondent was very optimistic on the future growth of sports industry and recommended that India should tap into the global investments that

filter into this sector. He said,

“In a few decade’s time, sports will be the most growing business in the world. You have seen lots of Western markets as they see India as a huge sporting market and they want to invest in India directly or indirectly. That’s why we see a lot of mega sporting events getting organised in India. The idea is not to market the sports well for their commercial benefits. Indian business houses should try to understand that sports is a huge market and invest, cricket is perceptible, in other sports too the opportunity is huge. It can be done through PPP model as well.”

The other big aspects that came out were the role of sports in empowering the community and in gender upliftment in particular. Respondents mentioned parts in India like the states of Haryana and Manipur where palpable results were seen towards respecting females and their growth in decision making. One respondent said,

“Sports is a great leveller. One wonderful example is of the changing perception of women all over India, especially in Haryana. A strong patriarchal society of Haryana has eased and warmed up to its women playing a total male-dominated game of boxing. Nobody could have even imagined something like this just a couple of decades ago. Sports has totally transformed the perception of women in Haryana”.

Another respondent quoted a personal anecdote that underlined the importance of sports in gender equality. He said,

“In my 10 years of sports broadcast career, there is probably one story which I will never forget. We did a story on a girl’s football team from Bettiah in Bihar. Film star Manoj Bajpayee was supporting this team from his hometown. Girls were of 10-15 years of age group. One of the girls said something in interview which shows the power of sport, and teamwork. She said, ‘The boys used to tease us before when we come to the ground. Once we made a team, they dared not to indulge in such things. In fact, everyone now supports us.’ It was a statement of transformation brought about by power of sport.”

Sports and diplomacy

The hierarchy chart of sports and diplomacy highlights some of the important issues discussed. The sunburst image/pie-chart of the codes is reproduced in Figure 3.

The hierarchy chart of sports and diplomacy

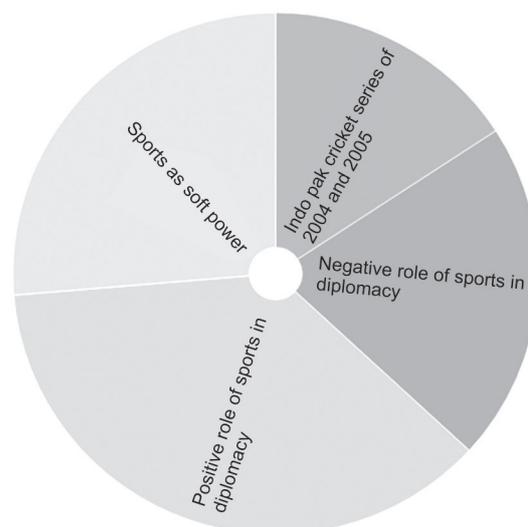


Fig. 3: Sunburst image of the hierarchy chart of sports and diplomacy

Source: Author’s own elaboration

outlines the positive role of sports in diplomacy as a major recollection among the Indian respondents. Role of soft power of sports in propagating nation-specific diplomacy is also outlined in the interviews.

Countries such as Pakistan, Afghanistan, China, and Australia were most prominently mentioned as far as sports and diplomacy was concerned.

One respondent said,

“Sport can help in establishing strong positive diplomacy, like India and Australia today have started a major bond at political level and masses level through sports. I speak to many journalist friends in Australia who say that they cheer for the Australian team when they win and Indians also cheer Australia team when they are not playing India. But if politicians want to manoeuvre, it can be manipulated too.”

This is a significant finding in the Indian context that can establish India as using soft diplomacy of sports towards international diplomacy. Earlier researches in Iran found that the country was not able to properly use sports diplomacy as a facilitator for international diplomacy (Dousti *et al.*, 2019).

Another respondent supplemented the positive role of sports and soft power of sports in diplomacy, thus:

“snapped between India and Pakistan due to bilateral tensions between the two countries”.

Another interesting thing to note here was the positive recollection of the 2004-2005 India and Pakistan cricket series.

Some excerpts that mentioned the sporting event are mentioned below:

“Sports definitely play a positive role in maintaining healthy diplomatic relationship.”

Sports may be a part of soft diplomacy but it definitely augments the cultural diplomacy. My visit to Pakistan in 2004 as a BBC journalist is a good example. This tour of India to Pakistan took place after a long gap. Cricket ties were temporarily.”

Another respondent said,

“We have seen several instances of diplomatic ice being broken between India and Pakistan through cricket. Remember when Prime Minister AB Vajpayee initiated softening of stance towards Pakistan some 5 years after Kargil, it was a cricket series which preceded Delhi- Lahore bus service and Agra Summit. 2011 World Cup Semi-final in Mohali was yet another attempt of clearing diplomatic logjam when Pakistan PM was invited to watch the match from the ground.”

Yet another respondent mentioned the leverage sports has in diplomacy, quoting Indo–Pak cricket relations. She said,

“We should have used sports to connect. We should have promoted South Asian Games as an aspirational festival. Pakistan wants to play cricket with India. So, we have some leverage here. We can use our domination of cricket to address a constituency in Pakistan that they need to engage with their neighbour. But, in most other sports, we hardly ever play together. We need to do more of it.”

While talking about sports and its role in public diplomacy, a respondent looked at the Khelo India Games (Fig. 1) and discussed how grassroots-level participation is increasing in these games and leading to more economic and social opportunities to the local sports’ participants on the one hand and working as a kind of outreach of public diplomacy by the government and sports agencies, saying,

“With Khelo India Games publicised extensively, players in the remotest villages of the country are getting a chance to directly participate at the national level. Performers at this level are facilitated well by society and it is even helping them getting jobs, etc. So, one can say sport diplomacy is working at the grassroots level.”

Sports and nationalism

The final major code to be analysed is sports and nationalism—what role does sport play in portrayal of nationalism. Figure 4 shows the hierarchy chart in a sunburst image.

Figure 4 shows the two most important aspects of sports and nationalism. Sports and its portrayal of identity, including the ‘us’ and ‘them’ feeling take



Fig. 4: Sports and nationalism

Source: Author’s own elaboration

the most prominent place in sports and nationalism. As Anderson has mentioned, nations are imagined communities, the collective identity is emboldened through relics like sports. Feeling of identity and identifying with national fame and loss form a major point of discussion in the interviews.

One respondent replies in first person and underlines the importance of sports in identity. He says:

“When a team plays with one or a dozen-odd players, they come from anywhere in the country. Players who participate come after breaking all sorts of barriers—from caste, gender and religion to poverty, access and support from the system. And, in the end, they play hard, win matches, and get draped in the national tricolour to win awards in the name of country. What else would be a better way to propagate an inclusive and positive nationalism which binds us all?”

Another respondent talks of identity and also mentions the importance of avoiding jingoism while supporting national teams. He says,

“When you country plays at any level, it portrays nationalism. It is good to cheer your team but it is not right to hoot or roar when the other side is losing. Sports generate true emotions rather than jingoistic emotions.”

Another respondent states in details the marriage of identity and nationalism via sports. He says,

“Sports achievements have brought international recognition and enhance India’s global standing. At the same time, it has spiked up the feeling of nationalism in the country. It’s not just cultural integration but also the success of Indian sportspersons which has instilled

the spirit. Successful athletes have become ambassadors for the country, contributing to positive perceptions and attracting attention to India's capabilities beyond the sporting arena. Cricket is a symbol of national identity but successes in recent years in other sporting disciplines have brought in supplementary tonic in the Indian hearts. Events like the Indian Premier League (IPL) in cricket have become a source of national unity, bringing people from diverse backgrounds together. Patriotic symbolism abounds in Indian hearts."

Limitations and future scope

The study looked at integrative literature review that was limited; a wider study on all the three aspects of diplomacy, nationalism and development could be explored. Further, the sample for interviews was limited to India; an international study on the same could be undertaken for the global views.

Conclusion

The review of literature as well as the thematic analysis bring home the role played by diplomacy,

development and nationalism in sports. While the review sets the field of diplomacy, nationalism and development in sports, the analysis of interviews put forward specific instances that strengthen the claim of the above three phenomena in sports and politics. All the respondents have agreed to a basic question that sports and politics mix, so there is an acceptance of the phenomena. The respondents also overwhelmingly favour the mixing of sports and politics, either as unavoidable or as a positive role player in the political arena. The respondents underline the huge role played by sports in the economic development of the communities and the nation as a whole. They stress the importance of soft power in diplomacy and how sports mega events seek to promote soft power of the hosting nations. Talking specifically about India, the respondents also highlight the necessity of the Indian government to tap into the economic potential of sports and attract huge foreign investments for the same. At the community level, often individual players from the far corners of the country establish themselves as saleable commercial brands and also earn respectable money through sports as a career. Within the field

APPENDIX

Code Book

Codes

Primary codes – Sports and development, sports and nationalism, sports and diplomacy

Name	Description
<i>Development</i>	<i>Role of sports in development</i>
Role of sports in economic development	Economic development like employment, GDP, etc.
Role of sports in gender upliftment	Gender equality
Sports and peace	Peace
Sports as a lucrative career	Good paying career to have
Sports as empowering community	Empowerment
Sport stars as influencers and fandom	Athletes as idols for the general public and fans
<i>Diplomacy</i>	<i>Role of diplomacy in sports</i>
Indo-Pakistan cricket series of 2004 and 2005	Remembering the series as a diplomatic opener
Negative role of sports in diplomacy	Negative role played by sports in diplomacy
Positive role of sports in diplomacy	Sports play a positive role in diplomacy
Sports as soft power	Soft power
<i>Nationalism</i>	<i>Role of sports in nationalism</i>
Feeling of us and them	Through sports
Jingoism in sports	Jingoism, us and them
Spike in nationalistic feeling	Sports lead to a rise in nationalism
Sports and identity	Sports play a role in fostering identity, often nationalistic
Sports and patriotism	Patriotic feelings aroused via sports
Sports branding the nation	Country gets a brand via sports
<i>Sports and Politics</i>	<i>Do sports play a part in politics? Do sports and politics mix?</i>
Acceptance	Acceptance that sports and politics mix

of international or public diplomacy, the India and Pakistan cricket series stands out as a major event that saw the true power of sports in international diplomacy. The two countries were at a frigid point in their mutual relationship but that was melted by the event of the Indian team touring Pakistan in 2004 and Pakistan doing a repeat tour in 2005. One respondent also reminded that the same sports diplomacy can be used to leverage India's relations with its neighbour Pakistan. The respondents also negatively mentioned China when talking about sports and diplomacy. Another important aspect that came towards development was the role of sports in gender balance and equity. Respondents agreed that there was a spike in nationalism during major sporting events and they also cautioned against jingoism, underlying the fine line that divides patriotism and nationalism. Role of sports in fostering national identity was also a major theme in the discussions. Further, the study also attempts to take small step towards filling the gap in theory and practice of sports diplomacy vis-à-vis top-down approach and bottom-up participatory approach. In a previous study, it was observed that while considering sports diplomacy, much attention is given towards hosting mega events while grassroots-level sport was usually ignored (Garamvoglyi, 2020). In the current study, a relationship between grassroots sports and economic development plus public diplomacy was established as a sentiment from the respondents. While answering about Khelo India Games, the themes of local participation in sports and its crucial role in upliftment of society was underlined as a theme. Finally, a research in the Indian context itself is vital as scholars have impressed upon the need to research on sports contribution to society outside the frame of Western countries (Postethwaite *et al.*, 2020). The findings of this research will add to the small body of work on Indian sports and its relations with development, diplomacy and politics in general.

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Scientometric Study of Corporate Communication Research in G20 Countries

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluates the research productivity in Corporate Communication among G20 countries. The dataset utilized spans from 1999 to 2022, sourced from the Scopus database. Employing scientometric techniques, the research investigates various aspects of research productivity, including impact, collaboration levels, and keywords, offering a comprehensive overview of publications in this field since the inception of G20 countries' collaboration. The highest Annual Growth Rate (AGR) was observed in 2004 (130.77), followed by 2000 (84.62) and 2008 (80). Despite a dip in 2020 (-15.38), there was a positive AGR in publications during the pandemic. This study holds particular significance and timeliness as India assumes the presidency for G20, marking a quarter century of G20 collaboration. The study's findings suggest a positive correlation between authors' and journals' h and g indexes, indicating a linear relationship. While the United States boasts the highest number of published documents (n=323), Russia received the most citations (n=2297), highlighting disparities in publication output and impact. The research also outlines future projections, study limitations, and implications. Analyzing trends, impact, collaboration, and emerging topics informs strategic decision-making, policy formulation, and resource allocation, pushing the boundaries of current knowledge and revealing potential avenues for exploration.

Keywords: Corporate Communication, G20 countries, Scopus, Time Series Analysis, VOSViewer

Introduction

The Group of 20 Nations is a platform for global-level cooperation for economic growth and has a pertinent role in enabling governance mechanisms and structures for a forward-looking economic role, held in India from 1st December 2022 to 30th November 2023. Its inception can be traced to 1999, after the Asian financial crisis. It initially emphasised macro-economic aspects but has evolved to encompass issues that impact the lives of people in the countries. Currently, the “G20 group includes 19 countries and 1 European Union-Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Republic of Korea, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Türkiye, United Kingdom, United States of America” (Agarwal & Whalley, 2020). Collectively this behemoth “represent 85% of the global GDP; 75% of global trade and two-thirds of the world population” (National Portal of India, 2022). The EU countries are, “Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Republic of

Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden” (Mathur & Agarwal, 2021).

Scientometric research is a multidisciplinary field that focuses on the quantitative analysis of research publications, their authors, institutions, or countries involved. By utilizing scientometric techniques, researchers explore in order to enhance their insights into the knowledge structures and dynamics of scientific fields, identifying research trends and advancements, and assessing institutional productivity. Furthermore, scientometric research plays a pertinent role in evaluating the impact and influence of scientific work. By examining publication output, citation analysis, collaboration networks, and other bibliometric indicators, scientometric research provides valuable insights into the community's productivity and influence. This information can be used to assess the growth

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and evolution of research fields, identify emerging trends, and evaluate the impact created by researchers or institutions.

Research publications focused on the G20 countries provide valuable insights into their performance, initiatives, and impacts on global markets. The research publications from the G20 countries are important resources for policymakers, economists, and business leaders who seek to understand the trends and implications of research by G20 countries.

The outcomes of the study will be valuable points for information gathering for organisations, library professionals, academicians, and research institutions, as the study delves into mapping networks, gauging trends, and predicting research output. The research community of Corporate Communication, Public Relations, G20 countries, and Management Sciences will be able to find information about productivity and the impact of research in this field. The assessment will also set grounds for monitoring research through metrics that examine the impact and analyse performance through the g-index, h-index and their relationship.

Literature review

Cornelissen (2023) looks at the field of Corporate Communication as an enabler of integrating “internal and external communication with the overall purpose of establishing and maintaining favourable reputations” amongst organisations. The concept has been researched from different perspectives based on its aspects and utilities (Belasen & Belasen, 2018; Bharthur, 2021; Kolahgar *et al.*, 2021). However, there is a paucity of literature on scientometric assessment of corporate communication publications, especially for a specified set of countries.

The field of scientometrics contributes to the advancement of scientific knowledge as an information-driven process. It encompasses various methods to assess research quality, impact, citation patterns, scientific field mapping, and utilise metrics in research-oriented policy and management. It offers several benefits, providing a comprehensive understanding of the subject (Garg *et al.*, 2020; Gaggero *et al.*, 2020; Pasko *et al.*, 2022).

Katz *et al.* (2006) examined how a desktop scientometric environment can be utilised to provide convenient public access to bibliometric information and charted the possibilities for research assessment. However, during the process of investigation, it does not take into account the dynamic nature of the ever-changing interdisciplinary interactions. Verk *et al.* (2019) tries to fill in the void by discussing the evolving aspects of corporate communication

literature. The highly competitive environment and the total use of bibliometric approaches and assessment of science have led to the adoption of assessment methods for publication trends and practices. Taking a leaf from previous research and acknowledging the knowledge networks, Ji *et al.* (2020) looked at the authorship patterns and citation networks emerging in the communication landscape. This gives a comprehensive outlook towards approaching the research questions and aims. With the use of mapping techniques for research, the ecosystem of literature can be investigated and visualised.

Al-Khoury *et al.* (2022) analysed intellectual capital from the Scopus database, exploring a 64-year sample of publications that would throw light on future possibilities. Lim *et al.* (2023) conducted a scientometric and bibliometric analysis of the literature on developmental disabilities in Africa. Sun *et al.* (2023) used metrics to gauge scientific output from various countries in the field of cancer research and investigated the status and future trends. Scientometric and bibliometric analysis of any field presents fertile ground for further research and policy-making (Murugan *et al.*, 2022; Rejeb *et al.*, 2022; Zhang & Lin, 2022; Zhu *et al.*, 2022).

This approach allows researchers to create visual representations of the connections between different publications, reducing the challenges of analyzing vast datasets (Vijayakumar & Choi, 2022). It enables researchers to quantitatively interpret the historical and current state of specific areas of study.

Scope of the study

This systematic study encompassed formulating research design and objectives that become the basis for answering the research question. Data was mined from Scopus, a widely recognized abstract and citation database. It provides a comprehensive platform for accessing scientific literature and analyzing research trends. Past studies have not explored into the scientometric assessment of corporate communication research, that too in G20 countries and for the period beginning from G20's inception year, 1999. The present study looks at 1063 publications to gauge the scholarship of research. Amongst the G20 countries, Estonia and Luxembourg were excluded because there weren't any publications indexed from these countries. The temporal distribution of the study is 1999-2022, and only research articles published in the English language have been included for the study, owing to its universality and high number of publications.

Objectives

1. To highlight top journals of G20 countries

publishing in the field of Corporate Communication during 1999-2022.

2. To find out documents cited by authors and identify the top authors in G20 countries in the field of Corporate Communication during 1999-2022.
3. To analyse trends of growth of publications of Corporate Communication during 1999-2022 for G20 countries.
4. To calculate Annual Growth Rate, Annual Ratio of Growth, Relative Growth Rate, and Doubling Time of Corporate Communication publications during 1999-2022 for G20 countries.
5. To evaluate the degree of collaboration of authors of Corporate Communication during 1999-2022 for G20 countries.
6. To analyse G20 countries publishing research and their scientific production index in the field of Corporate Communication during 1999-2022.
7. To predict future production levels of Corporate Communication publications by G20 countries.

Hypothesis (H)

- H-I H_{a0} - There is no significant correlation between the h and g indexes of authors
 HH_{a1} - There is a significant correlation between the h and g indexes of authors
- H-II H_{b0} - There is no significant correlation between the h and g indexes of journals
 H_{b1} - There is a significant correlation between the h and g indexes of journals

Methodology

During the examination of Corporate Communication publications, we inserted the research string “(TITLE-ABS-KEY (“corporate communication”*) AND PUBYEAR > 1998 AND PUBYEAR <2023) AND (LIMIT-TO (AFFILCOUNTRY , “United States”) OR LIMIT-TO (AFFILCOUNTRY, “United Kingdom”) OR.....LIMIT-TO (AFFILCOUNTRY, “Latvia”)) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, “ar”)) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, “English”))”. The initial query resulted in 2062 documents, which were then restricted to G20 countries, resulting in 1700 publications that were suitable for the study. Results were refined further, to include only English language articles, enabling a corpus of 1063 documents. This commenced the procedure for analysing journals, authors, trends, collaborations, AGR, ARoG, Relative Growth Rate and Doubling Time of publications, Scientific Production Index, and predicting global research output levels. The information was exported as a CSV file. The procedure for collection, elimination and analysis of the data is condensed in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Research Inquiry Steps Matrix

The visualisation for understanding the scientific landscapes of 1063 publications was accomplished through VOSViewer. The VOSViewer creates a platform for network, density, cluster, and occurrence visualisation for analysing bibliometric and scientometric networks. It provides techniques to analyse structures and relationships within the data (Van Eck & Waltman, 2009). Figure 2 displays the upward trajectory and expansion of publications over the temporal distribution, providing insights into the output of publications and research interest trends.

Data analysis

Publication trends

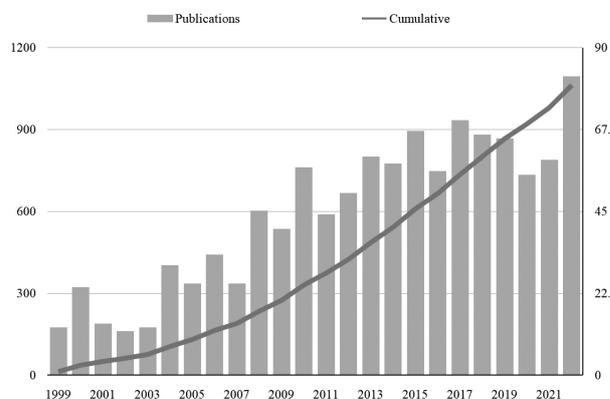


Figure 2. Publication frequency and cumulative index in Corporate Communication research in G20 countries (1999-2022)

It can be fathomed from Figure 2 that the frequency of publication during 2001-2003 was not so much as during other periods. Post the initial dip, the subsequent years witnessed a gradual rise in the number of publications. The production reached its acme in 2022, positing an increasing trend for research in the field of corporate communication from 2020 onwards. The number of publications during the period of the COVID pandemic dipped from previous years, exhibiting a shift in research interests during the affected period and resumption as the pandemic waned. Years 2018 and 2019 had almost similar levels of production, while years

2005 and 2007 had matching levels of publications. This enabled them to track research and arrive at a quantitative measure for performance evaluation and benchmarking. This also showcased the reduced output years that may be influenced by fluctuations like funding availability, collaborations, or shifts in research priorities. The cumulative accruing plot also provides a dynamic view of the research landscape, signaling the ebb and flow of research activity.

Price's theory (Price, 2011) also postulated that a rise in publication facilitates growth of knowledge, where growth refers to enhancement in actual size, a change of state, and development of literature. It can be applied to trace the evolution of science and present the patterns that hold true with a high degree of accuracy over time. These results can be helpful in future planning and resource allocation.

Countries publishing research

The 1063 documents have originated from the G20 countries, and 34 countries have published three or more documents, while the remaining 12 countries have fewer publications. The research output is led by the United States and the United

Kingdom contributing 46% of global research publication output, highlighting the critical efforts in the development and furtherance of corporate communication studies. Out of these, 13 countries could encourage only a single digit number of publications over the span of two decades. It can also be deduced that countries having nominal GDP rank 48 or lesser make a place in the top 10 countries (Table 1). The country ranked tenth in the list has maintained an average citation score of 61.06, the highest in the top 10 countries with maximum research production output. Barring this outlier, it can be reasoned that economically developed countries with higher GDP ranks, have fared better in research on corporate communication. USA acquires the maximum percentage share of G20 countries' output. It tops the chart of the Scientific Production Index (Number of documents per country/total number of records of G20 countries*100) with a score of 30.39, followed by the UK at 16.09 and Spain at 7.06. The host G20 country for 2023, India makes its place in the Top 10 countries with 35 documents, 105 citations, and a 3.29 scientific production index.

Table 1. This is the list of G20 countries that published three or more documents in the field of Corporate Communication. *Source - As per World Economic Outlook Database April 2023

S. No.	Countries	Quantity	Citation	Avg. Citation per document	Nominal GDP Rank	Scientific Production Index
1	United States	323	484	1.50	1	30.39
2	United Kingdom	171	30	0.18	6	16.09
3	Spain	75	444	5.92	15	7.06
4	Germany	63	908	14.41	4	5.93
5	Italy	63	204	3.24	8	5.93
6	Australia	59	2308	39.12	13	5.55
7	Denmark	58	12	0.21	38	5.46
8	Canada	37	527	14.24	9	3.48
9	India	35	105	3.00	5	3.29
10	Finland	34	2076	61.06	48	3.20
11	Sweden	34	34	1.00	25	3.20
12	South Africa	32	269	8.41	39	3.01
13	France	27	1173	43.44	7	2.54
14	China	24	304	12.67	2	2.26
15	Belgium	16	374	23.38	24	1.51
16	South Korea	16	38	2.38	12	1.51
17	Brazil	13	204	15.69	10	1.22
18	Indonesia	13	12	0.92	16	1.22
19	Portugal	13	54	4.15	51	1.22

S. No.	Countries	Quantity	Citation	Avg. Citation per document	Nominal GDP Rank	Scientific Production Index
20	Austria	11	171	15.55	31	1.03
21	Slovenia	11	42	3.82	88	1.03
22	Türkiye	9	221	24.56	19	0.85
23	Poland	6	18	3.00	22	0.56
24	Russian Federation	6	2297	382.83	11	0.56
25	Romania	5	191	38.20	45	0.47
26	Czech Republic	4	31	7.75	47	0.38
27	Hungary	4	24	6.00	57	0.38
28	Ireland	4	298	74.50	26	0.38
29	Japan	4	51	12.75	3	0.38
30	Slovakia	4	582	145.50	62	0.38
31	Taiwan	4	27	6.75	21	0.38
32	Cyprus	3	148	49.33	108	0.28
33	Greece	3	1438	479.33	54	0.28
34	Malta	3	934	311.33	129	0.28

Top Authors

Authors publishing three or more documents are mentioned in Table 2. It is interesting to note that Dolphin R.R. has a maximum number of documents yet has an average citation score of 19.67, while Arvidsson S. with only three documents has an average citation score of 71.67 (highest) in the field of Corporate Communication. It is also evident that out of the top 10 authors, 9 have published an equal number of documents each, yet they differ significantly in terms of the citations, signaling towards their research quality levels.

Gupta S. has an overall g-index of 33, followed by Capriotti P. and Meng J. with a g-index of 22. Few authors, despite high frequencies of citations, have

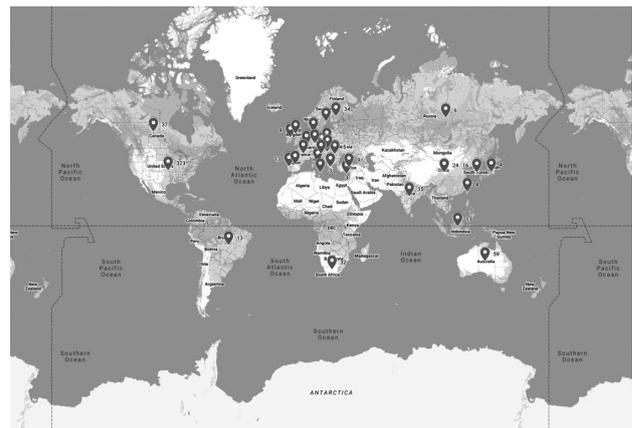


Figure 3. G20 countries that published three or more documents in field of Corporate Communication

Table 2. Top 10 authors publishing three or more documents

S. No.	Author	Author ID	Documents (1999-2022)	Citations (1999-2022)	Avg. Citations	H-index (Overall)	G-Index (Overall)
1	Dolphin R.R.	7004678464	6	118	19.67	7	8
2	Arvidsson S.	35758579700	3	215	71.67	5	11
3	Blombäck A.	22033248800	3	170	56.67	7	7
4	Brunninge O.	19638696400	3	170	56.67	5	8
5	Goodman M.B.	8653622800	3	67	22.33	8	9
6	Macnamara J.	36053138900	3	61	20.33	18	23
7	Capriotti P.	18433333100	3	38	12.67	11	22
8	Meng J.	55179310800	3	30	10.00	10	22
9	Gupta S.	55495191500	3	25	8.33	18	33
10	Hutt R.W.	36023765300	3	16	5.33	3	6

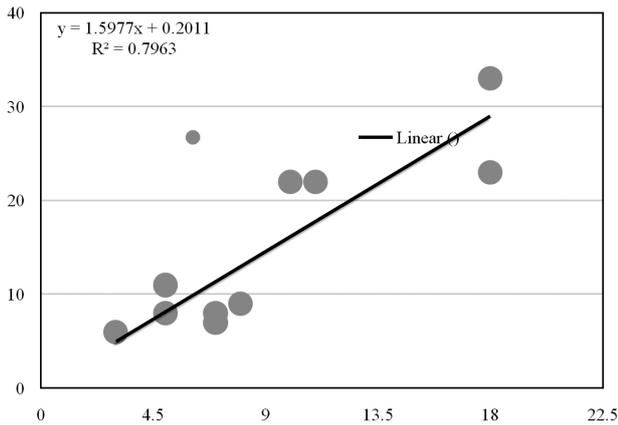


Figure 4. Scatter plot of h and g index for top authors in Corporate Communication

lesser impact as per h and g indexes. Arvidsson S. has a 5 and 11 overall h and g index respectively while Gupta S. has the highest h and g index despite average citations of 8.33. Figure 4 evinces authors' h and g index represented through a scatter plot. The h-g scatter plot showcases the linear relationship between the indexes of authors with a positive correlation ($r^2=0.796\approx 1$). The equation $y=mx+c$ ($1.5977x+0.2011$) is satisfied by the variables.

Top journals

As seen in Table 3, there are ten top journals in corporate communication during the period under study from the G20 countries with 10 or more

publications. It shows that journals having a high number of publications do not have high levels of impact. The “Corporate Communications” journal with the highest number of publications (163) has a lower cite score than the “Journal of Business Ethics” (cite score 12), having only 12 documents. Out of the top 10 journals, four have been published by Emerald Group Holdings Ltd. Figure 5 shows a linear and positive relation of the h and g indexes. It indicates that the values, indeed, are directly proportional and an increase in the h-index translates to a rise in the g-index as well. The value of r^2 is 0.893 (≈ 1) and $y=0.9674x+32.956$, which reflects the fitness of actual data to scatter plot line values.

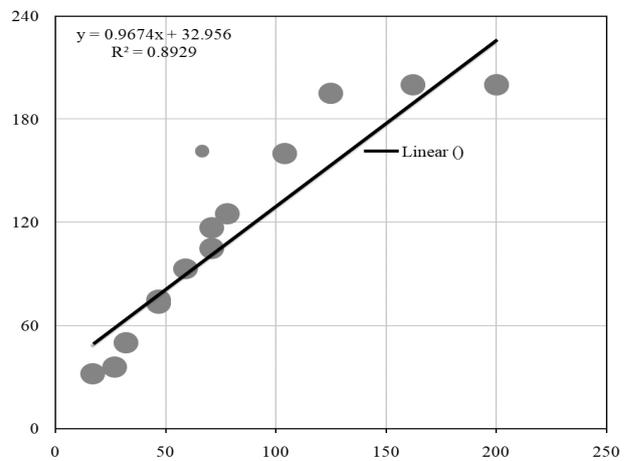


Figure 5. Scatter plot of h and g index for top journals in Corporate Communication

Table 3. Top 10 journals publishing ten or more documents

S. No.	Name of Journal	Publications	Cite Score 2022	Publisher	H-Index (Overall)	G-index (Overall)
1	“Corporate Communications”	163	3.7	Emerald Group Holdings Ltd.	71	105
2	“Journal of Communication Management”	74	4.5	Emerald Group Holdings Ltd.	47	73
3	“Corporate Communications: An International Journal”	51	3	Emerald Group Holdings Ltd.	47	75
4	“Public Relations Review”	44	7.4	Elsevier	104	160
5	“Corporate Reputation Review”	23	3	Palgrave Macmillan Ltd.	71	117
6	“European Journal of Marketing”	18	8.1	Emerald Group Holdings Ltd.	162	200
7	“Journal of Marketing Communications”	14	6.7	Routledge	59	93
8	“International Journal of Business Communication”	12	5.8	SAGE Publications Ltd	27	36
9	“Journal of Business Ethics”	12	12	Springer	200	200
10	“Communicatio”	11	0.8	Routledge	17	32

Top cited documents

The document published by the group “Wagner T.; Lutz R.J.; Weitz B.A.” (n=700) received the highest citations followed by groups of “Tate W.L.; Ellram L.M.; Kirchoff J.F.” (n=486) and “Bundy J.; Pfarrer M.D.; Short C.E.; Coombs W.T.” (n=467). Among the list of top documents cited at least 200 times, only two documents were single-authored out of 17 documents, belonging to Aula, P. (n=241) and Ford, J.D. (n=201). This shows that multi-authored documents have been cited more as compared to single-authored documents, signaling that multi-authored papers of corporate communication have better quality or citation potential than single author documents.

Annual Growth Rate (AGR), ARoG, RGR and Dt

The annual growth rate of publications has been calculated for 1999-2022 using Grácio *et al.* (2012) formula. The publication levels witnessed a dipping trajectory intermittently and a high path in 2021 and 2022, gesticulating a positive outlook for future years. The highest AGR was in 2004 (130.77), followed by 2000 (84.62) and 2008 (80). Post the dip in 2020 (-15.38), the publications had a positive AGR during the pandemic period.

By analyzing the annual ratio of growth in

scientific outputs, we present quantitative evidence of the rate at which scientific knowledge is expanding in the corporate communication discipline in G20 countries. Mahapatra’s Relative Growth Rate (RGR) and Doubling Time (Dt.) model have been used to gauge growth rate (Mahapatra, 1985). It’s an effective method to have an assessment of publications (Verma & Shukla, 2019). Table 5 and Figure 6 showcase the RGR and Dt. of publications from 1999-2022. Interestingly, we see a dip in doubling time in the year 2022, which cues an apparent decrease in the coming years. Years 2020 and 2021 had a similar doubling time of 11.55 that rose from 8.66 in 2019 and had a similar level in 2022. The Annual Ratio of Growth (ARoG) had a fluctuating trajectory. The ARoG values have been rising since the pandemic years.

Figure 7 showcases the positive and negative values of AGR accumulated over the years. We can see that mostly there has been a large positive growth and lesser declines in AGRs of the publications. The water flow chart gives us a metaphorical visualisation symbolising flow of publications with the varied intensity of flow each year. Higher columns indicate periods of significant growth and lower columns represent slower growth.

Table 4. Top documents cited for at least 200 times

Id	Documents	Citations	Doi
1	“Wagner T.; Lutz R.J.; Weitz B.A.”	700	10.1509/jmkg.73.6.77
2	“Tate W.L.; Ellram L.M.; Kirchoff J.F.”	486	10.1111/j.1745-493X.2009.03184.x
3	“Bundy J.; Pfarrer M.D.; Short C.E.; Coombs W.T.”	467	10.1177/0149206316680030
4	“Parguel B.; Benoît-moreau F.; Larceneux F.”	390	10.1007/s10551-011-0901-2
5	“Adams C.A.; Mcnicholas P.”	338	10.1108/09513570710748553
6	“Groza M.D.; Pronschinske M.R.; Walker M.”	322	10.1007/s10551-011-0834-9
7	“Branco M.C.; Rodrigues L.L.”	294	10.1108/13563280610680821
8	“Morsing M.; Schultz M.; Nielsen K.U.”	269	10.1080/13527260701856608
9	“Smith M.; Taffler R.J.”	269	10.1108/09513570010353738
10	“Barako D.G.; Brown A.M.”	263	10.1007/s10997-008-9053-x
11	“Welch M.; Jackson P.R.”	257	10.1108/13563280710744847
12	“Aula P.”	241	10.1108/10878571011088069
13	“Goodman M.B.; Booth N.; Matic J.A.”	220	10.1108/13563281111156853
14	“Luo Y.; Shenkar O.”	214	10.1057/palgrave.jibs.8400197
15	“Argenti P.A.; Druckenmiller B.”	205	10.1057/palgrave.crr.1540005
16	“Hutton J.G.; Goodman M.B.; Alexander J.B.; Genest C.M.”	203	10.1016/S0363-8111(01)00085-6
17	“Ford J.D.”	201	10.1108/09534819910300855

Table 5. Annual Ratio of Growth, AGR, RGR and Dt.

Year	Documents	ARoG	AGR	Aggregate Publications	w-1	w-2	Relative Growth Rate	Doubling Time
1999	13	0	0	13	-	2.56	0	0
2000	24	1.85	84.62	84.62	2.56	3.61	1.05	0.66
2001	14	0.58	-41.67	42.95	3.61	3.93	0.32	2.17
2002	12	0.86	-14.29	28.66	3.93	4.14	0.21	3.30
2003	13	1.08	8.33	37.00	4.14	4.33	0.19	3.65
2004	30	2.31	130.77	167.77	4.33	4.66	0.33	2.10
2005	25	0.83	-16.67	151.10	4.66	4.87	0.21	3.30
2006	33	1.32	32.00	183.10	4.87	5.09	0.22	3.15
2007	25	0.76	-24.24	158.86	5.09	5.24	0.15	4.62
2008	45	1.80	80.00	238.86	5.24	5.45	0.21	3.30
2009	40	0.89	-11.11	227.75	5.45	5.61	0.16	4.33
2010	57	1.43	42.50	270.25	5.61	5.80	0.19	3.65
2011	44	0.77	-22.81	247.44	5.80	5.92	0.12	5.78
2012	50	1.14	13.64	261.07	5.92	6.05	0.13	5.33
2013	60	1.20	20.00	281.07	6.05	6.18	0.13	5.33
2014	58	0.97	-3.33	277.74	6.18	6.29	0.11	6.30
2015	67	1.16	15.52	293.26	6.29	6.41	0.12	5.78
2016	56	0.84	-16.42	276.84	6.41	6.50	0.09	7.70
2017	70	1.25	25.00	301.84	6.50	6.60	0.10	6.93
2018	66	0.94	-5.71	296.13	6.60	6.68	0.08	8.66
2019	65	0.98	-1.52	294.61	6.68	6.76	0.08	8.66
2020	55	0.85	-15.38	279.23	6.76	6.82	0.06	11.55
2021	59	1.07	7.27	286.50	6.82	6.88	0.06	11.55
2022	82	1.39	38.98	325.48	6.88	6.96	0.08	8.66



Figure 6. RGR and Dt. of Corporate Communication publications

Degree of collaboration (DoC)

We investigated the DoC in the field of corporate communication utilising the formula by Subramanyam (1983), which is calculated through a ratio of uni/multi-authored documents and total documents. Table 6 highlights the degree variance from 0.38 to 0.12 throughout the temporal distribution, showing that there has been a decrease

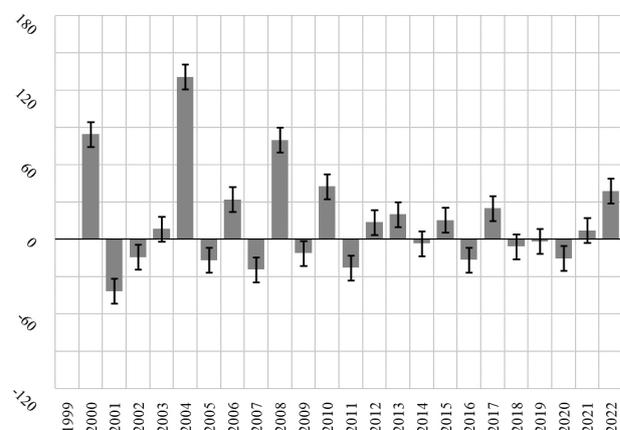


Figure 7. Waterflow analysis of AGR of publications

in single-author documents and an increase in multiple-author documents. The year 2003 had the highest DC of 0.62 while the maximum number of multi-authored documents was 72 in 2022.

Table 7. Hypothesis Testing

Category	Correlation Coeff. (R)	Degrees of Freedom (dF)	Covariance	Statistic	p-value	Significance
Authors	0.8924	8	43.2444	5.5921	0.0005149	Significant
Journals	0.9449	12	3643.7582	10.0038	3.56676×10 ⁻⁷	Significant

scores go along with soaring Y variable scores. The coefficient of determination comes to 0.7964, and the p-value is .0005149. The result is significant at p<.05. Since the p-value < α, H₀ is rejected. The population’s correlation is considered to be not equal to the expected correlation. The difference between the sample correlation and the expected correlation

is big enough to be statistically significant.

The value of R is 0.9449 for the Journal category. The value of the coefficient of determination is 0.8928, and the p-value is <.00001. The result is significant at p<.05. The null hypothesis that the h-index and g-index are independent is rejected at the 5 percent level based on the Pearson Correlation test.

Table 8. Time Series Analysis - Global Corporate Communication Research Output Prediction

S.No.	Year	x	Y	X	XY	X ²
1	1999	0	13	-11.5	-149.5	132.25
2	2000	1	24	-10.5	-252	110.25
3	2001	2	14	-9.5	-133	90.25
4	2002	3	12	-8.5	-102	72.25
5	2003	4	13	-7.5	-97.5	56.25
6	2004	5	30	-6.5	-195	42.25
7	2005	6	25	-5.5	-137.5	30.25
8	2006	7	33	-4.5	-148.5	20.25
9	2007	8	25	-3.5	-87.5	12.25
10	2008	9	45	-2.5	-112.5	6.25
11	2009	10	40	-1.5	-60	2.25
12	2010	11	57	-0.5	-28.5	0.25
13	2011	12	44	0.5	22	0.25
14	2012	13	50	1.5	75	2.25
15	2013	14	60	2.5	150	6.25
16	2014	15	58	3.5	203	12.25
17	2015	16	67	4.5	301.5	20.25
18	2016	17	56	5.5	308	30.25
19	2017	18	70	6.5	455	42.25
20	2018	19	66	7.5	495	56.25
21	2019	20	65	8.5	552.5	72.25
22	2020	21	55	9.5	522.5	90.25
23	2021	22	59	10.5	619.5	110.25
24	2022	23	82	11.5	943	132.25
Total		276	1063		3143.5	1150
a=ΣY/N			44.29			
b=ΣXY/ΣX ²			2.73			
Prediction						
1	2028			90.76		
2	2030			96.23		
3	2040			123.56		
4	2050			150.90		

Future projections

Time Series Analysis was utilised to estimate the future of Corporate Communication publications. Taking base year as the middle value (2011) of our data set of 24 years, we predict that the number of publications from the G20 countries in Corporate Communication will grow in the upcoming years. Going by the trends and estimating as per the formula, “Year ‘ $a = \Sigma Y/N$ ’ + (Year ‘ $b = \Sigma XY / \Sigma X^2$ ’ $\times (2028 - 2011)$),” we can estimate that there will be 91 publications in 2028, 96 publications in 2030, 124 publications in 2040 and 151 publications in 2050.

Discussion

This study gives us an insight into the implications and potential of corporate communication research coming from G20 countries. Firstly, the study puts forward a benchmarking and comparison of research output and the impact of corporate communication publications, creating grounds for understanding the contributions to variations in productivity and influence across the nations. Secondly, we could see interdisciplinary collaborations with about 46% pertaining to Business Management and Accounting, 25% to Social Sciences, 8% to Economics, 5% to Arts and Humanities, and remaining in other fields. The results from various scientometric analyses show that the domain of corporate communication research has an upward trajectory of publications. For example, there were only 13 publications in 1999 (Figure 2) and 82 articles in 2022. Relatively, there has been an increase in publications in 2022, reaching its peak, indicating enhanced research activity. With the pandemic setting in, the amount of publications were affected which could be due to shift in research interests. There was a stable research output during 2018 and 2019. The years 2005 and 2007 had comparable levels of publication, thereby mirroring a consistent research activity. These variations could be due to various factors impacting research productivity.

The Scientific Production Index was maximum for the United States, owing to its high quantity of publications as compared to other countries. However, despite the numero uno position in publication output, it lags behind Russia, which has 2297 citations, and Finland, which received 2076 citations. The quality of research publications is not dependent on the number of publications, as countries with lower quantities of publications had higher average citation per document scores. The authors who published three or more documents were few, and Arvidsson S. had the maximum citations for his publications. The h-index of authors

highlighted their research impact, and it was seen that Macnamara, J. and Gupta, S. emerged as authors with high levels of influence and recognition within the researchers’ community. However, it could also be influenced by factors like citation practices of the corporate communication field, career lengths of the authors, and variation in citation patterns. Therefore, we utilised other parameters to get a comprehensive outlook to understand the author’s research impact. We confirm the results by using the g-index and measuring the highest number of publications (n) that received at least (n^2) citations.

The “Corporate Communications” journal is the most sought-after journal (with maximum publications) amongst list of top 10 journals that have published ten or more documents during 1999–2022. Amongst the top cited documents (cited more than 200 times), there were only two single-authored documents that received 241 and 201 citations. The rest 15 documents were multi-authored. Through the water flow analysis, we could see a stubby flow of publications in the initial years. The volume of publications in the past five years showcases a developing research landscape and growing interest in Corporate Communication studies. A significant surge in research productivity was witnessed in 2022. However, the flow of publications is not uniform throughout the time frame. The irregular patterns of flow of publications could be marred by crises, such as recessions or pandemics, or a shift in research priorities or any disruptions in the research ecosystem. The growth in the latter years of the period under study can be attributed to the expansion of interdisciplinary research, collaboration levels and adoption of open science practices, amongst many other factors that have a bearing on research productivity levels.

By assessing the degree of collaboration, we could see that the collaboration levels were low, as researchers worked independently or with smaller research groups as compared to the latter half of the period under study. This could be due to factors not limited to a lack of communication or networking tools or practices that emphasize individual contribution. The noticeable increase in collaboration over the years could result from forged partnerships that were based on the pooling of knowledge and resources, leading to collaborative research outcomes. It could be fathomed that the research community from the G20 countries studying the field of Corporate Communication has embraced collaboration as an avenue to foster innovation, enhance research quality, and address research queries.

The keyword co-occurrence enabled us to analyse and visualise the relationships between the keywords

within the body of literature. This can be very useful for the exploration of interdisciplinary connections and cross-fertilisation of ideas. The keywords “Corporate Communication” and “Corporate Communications” were most frequently used. The scatter plots of the h and g index for authors and journals demonstrate interesting relationships between the variables. In both cases, there is a positive linear relationship, wherein, as the h-index increases, so does the g-index, implying a high frequency of collectively maximally cite publications and a broader impact on the author’s work. Our hypothesis that a significant correlation exists between the h and g index of authors and journals is accepted.

Through time series analysis, we gained valuable insights into future trends and patterns of research output from G20 countries in the Corporate Communication field. We could estimate 91 publications in 2028, 96 publications in 2030, 124 publications in 2040 and 151 publications in 2050 related to Corporate Communication. However, as time series analysis is based on historical data and assumptions, future outcomes may be influenced by factors beyond these. Factors like funding availability, policy changes, technological advancements, research priorities shift could significantly impact the publication trends. Nonetheless, the projections estimated mathematically, will provide the researchers, policymakers and institutions valuable information for strategic planning, resource allocation and understanding of potential growth or shifts in research output over time.

Conclusion

It can be concluded from the findings that we have entered the watershed years of research output from G20 countries in the field of corporate communication. The study systematically gauged cumulative trends and publication levels, which will be useful for future planning and resource allocation in the field of corporate communication. It enabled tracking research progress and evaluating productivity and gaining insights into impact and dynamics of scientific community. We could gain a comprehensive picture of performance indicators like g-index, h-index, citations, productive authors, journals, degree of collaboration and make estimations for future research productivity.

The research approach is evolving and with higher levels of collaborations amongst researchers, we have access to a greater number of publications that are impactful. This scientometric study of publications contributed to a broader field of research evaluation and highlights the importance of scientometric analysis in understanding productivity

and its implications for advancing knowledge and addressing research queries.

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A Paradigm Shift from Marginalisation to Mobilisation: Case Study of Vagad Community Media

ANJU JOHN¹ & BACHHA BABU²

ABSTRACT

It is well acknowledged that advancing gender equality and women's empowerment is essential to achieving sustainable development goals. To this purpose, governmental and non-governmental groups have launched several projects and activities. In this case, the media may be extremely important in mobilising women. However, the function of the catalyst is increasingly being assumed by tiny community media outlets. In light of this, the study examines how community media may encourage involvement and discussion. It also examines the elements that may support women's community mobilisation via community media. The research will proceed using mixed data, which will be gathered from individuals in rural Banswara, Rajasthan, India, through focus group discussions and quantitative surveys. Women's spaces, women's collectives, self-help groups, women's cultural events, etc., are started under the community media, which helps to break through women's shells and ensures their active participation.

Keywords: Community media, Democratic media, Democratic participation, Marginalised community, Women mobilisation

Introduction

The enhancement of democracy and development is embedded in the idea of participation. A crucial prerequisite underlying this attempt is the equal involvement of all people within the community (Gutmann and Thompson, 1996; Habermas, 1989). The ideal participation ensures the voice of each corner, and it overcomes the barriers such as caste, colour, gender, and creed. In this response, the study's primary focus is on how gender and deliberation are conducted within rural Indian culture, as well as the role of community media in offering a novel venue for addressing these issues. The latest survey results of the World Economic Forum revealed that present-day Indian society has not yet attained gender equality. According to the gender gap index conducted by the World Economic Forum, India is ranked 127 out of 146 countries. The statement highlights the distressing state that India is now experiencing. Gender participation and systematic use of deliberation have the potential to emerge as an effective and rapid strategy for addressing gender mobilisation within communities (Green & Gerber, 2019, Karpowitz *et al.*, 2012).

How to overcome it? This is a frequent question asked in the area of women's empowerment. Enhancing participatory communication platforms is one of the effective tools, but the mainstream media are not focusing on the information provider rather than the participatory media. And in the mainstream media is far away from rural women, in terms of representation and addressing. However, it has been observed that communication platforms and opportunities play very little role in women's lives; even though the emergence of community media makes a paradigm shift in this scenario. It provides a wide opportunity for deliberation, and the core idea of community media exists in participatory communication. The theory of participatory communication discusses how the dynamic diffusion of knowledge might facilitate developments. Participatory communication stands as a prominent theory within the field of development communication. The phenomenon initially emerged during the 1970s and subsequently had significant growth and popularity throughout the 1980s. During the 1970s, academics attempted to identify an alternate approach to the concepts of modernization and cultural imperialism. Both concepts emphasise

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the need to adhere to the norms and regulations of the existing system as the fundamental catalyst for development (Melkote & Steeves, 2001). In 1964, Wilbur Schramm authored the book titled “The Role of Information in National Development,” which provides a comprehensive analysis of the efficacy and significance of participatory communication. The author discusses the operational characteristics of radio, highlighting its capacity to disseminate extensive information on contemporary events. However, the introduction of farm radio programming revolutionised the communication landscape by incorporating a question-and-answer segment. The integration of radio broadcasting and group discussions in rural areas has shown to be a catalyst in facilitating the implementation of transformative changes. This innovative approach to communication has been widely recognised as a significant paradigm shift, as highlighted by Schramm in 1964.

Discussion and participatory opportunities are very effective tools for fostering development; particularly within the realm of promoting gender equality and empowering women. For several decades, women have been subjected to subjugation, a complex issue that a simple easy job cannot easily resolve. There is a need for a shift in the thinking of women. The community radio stations actively offer opportunities, facilitate discussions, organise events, and promote ongoing awareness. It will help not only women but the entire community to achieve gender-sensitivity. Women’s empowerment is a fundamental component in constructing an improved societal framework. The community as a whole has negative consequences when a significant portion of its people is compelled to engage in unpaid household labour and faces social subordination. Women’s active participation is crucial for enhancing political progress and societal development. Numerous projects and policies have been developed to enhance the empowerment of women. The Indian government believes that women are crucial in bridging gender disparity and serving as a catalyst for growth. These objectives are being pursued through a range of initiatives and strategies. Whether or not the individuals in question derived benefits from the programme and the determination of its overall performance still and needs to be solved. The critical factor that led to the ineffectiveness of these programmes was the breakdown of poor communication. Women residing in geographically isolated regions or needing more formal education have barriers to accessing information about these projects. The initial and paramount phase in the process of empowerment is the generation of novel information, which is crucial for the advancement of women - consequently, the absence of such knowledge

results in women’s progress and underdevelopment.

This study investigates the potential of community media in facilitating participation and deliberation and analyses the factors that can help promote mobilisation among the women’s community through community media. The study will proceed with the case study, both quantitative and qualitative data, which will be collected from the female listeners of Vaagad Community radio through focus group discussions and surveys from the rural part of Rajasthan in India.

Literature Review

The academic literature adjacent to communication for development argues that the spread of knowledge plays a crucial role in the advancement and progress of all societies. In the information super highway era, there is broad availability of internet connections and the expansion of digital media. Users frequently encounter challenges while attempting to navigate the constant stream of information produced by many media outlets efficiently. McQuail (2008) asserts that the media’s primary focus is on generating and disseminating knowledge in its most extensive manifestation. This acquired information empowers individuals to participate in and effectively navigate their social environment.

However, a segment of the population is marginalised and needs help to participate fully in media consumption. Those who are socio-economically disadvantaged encounter marginalisation of information technology, leading to significant consequences in their everyday existence. The fundamental determinant responsible for the media gap is the limited capacity of mainstream and commercial media platforms to connect with marginalised communities effectively. The importance of community media becomes evident at this juncture. According to Dutta (2011), the issue of inequality is clear in both the domains of distribution and communication. Dutta has contributed to the field of development and communication by proposing many theoretical frameworks, including the top-down approach, the structural approach, the individual approach, and the participatory approach. The participative method is widely recognised as a very effective strategy for development. According to Schramm (1965), efficient communication is crucial in facilitating social empowerment and the advancement of historically marginalised populations. Schramm asserts that fostering a climate of open communication plays a vital role in driving forward advancements. The concept of development communication also encompasses this notion. Roger (1976) argues the term development holds significant

emphasis within the framework of development communication. The term provided has broader implications, encompassing active involvement in societal transformation and advancements in attitudes and infrastructure amenities. The main aim is to familiarise individuals within the community with mass media and to provide them with knowledge on the importance of development and strategies to attain it (Roger & Singhal, 1989). The MacBride Commission Report places significant emphasis on unrestricted and equitable dissemination of information alongside establishing a novel global framework for information and communication known as the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). The primary objective behind the establishment of this commission is to foster the facilitation of democratic media dissemination and to address the challenges associated with the unidirectional nature of communication (McBride, 1980).

Similarly, Rogers (1974), in his paper titled "Communication in Development," discusses the impact of media on the development process and argues that the combination of mass media and interpersonal channels has great potential in achieving development objectives. In 2006, The World Bank (2006) identified two primary media outlets that can represent development: mass media, including television, print, radio, etc., and community media, including radio, folk theatre, and other outlets that give voice to the local community. The effect of media ownership patterns and commercialization on development agendas can be significant. The potential exists for the media dissemination to not effectively penetrate the outermost stratum of society, resulting in marginalised groups experiencing a limited comprehension of media consumption.

Another topic in the study that needs a literature analysis is community media and its effectiveness. The literature on the community media stated that the establishment of democracy and individual participation among marginalised communities are only possible through the community media (Singh, 2022; Howley, 2013). Community media may be seen as a media platform that prioritises the active involvement of individuals and the provision of a democratic environment. The primary concept envisioned was the notion of "community interest," wherein media fulfils the individual's requirements. The implementation of democratic principles can be realised through the utilisation of community media. It represents the advocacy for the rights of underprivileged people, which are often overlooked by the mainstream media (Carpentier, *et.al.*, 2003). The concept of the "symbolic construction of

the community" is a crucial notion put forth by community media, allowing individuals to actively engage and contribute within their community. In order to strengthen the argument, the researcher references Cohen's (1989) theoretical framework, which posits that the formation of a community is achieved by the active engagement of individuals and the utilisation of cultural and ethnic elements, rather than being solely determined by structural factors. In this context, the media serves as a catalyst for engaging community members. Community media provides an enhanced degree of engagement, enabling individuals to exert influence over the various aspects that affect their living situations. Furthermore, the communication services provided by community media play a crucial role in facilitating and highlighting the process of social transformation and development for disadvantaged and misrepresented groups. Gaynor and O'Brien (2017) assert that community media engagement spaces provide a platform for community people to engage in public discourse and exchange ideas. In addition to the realm of outer space, community media platforms provide a valuable source of knowledge for the general population, particularly by offering content in their own native languages. The dissemination of on-air information plays a crucial role in serving the public interest by facilitating the reduction of information disparities between marginalised communities and the broader community. Dutta and Ray (2017) conduct a theoretical analysis of the democratic practice of community media, while also advocating for the libertarian ideology of the media. Instead of mere participation, it will contribute to dismantling the dominant power structure in the media system. According to Škripcová (2017), there is a notable disparity between public and private media outlets and community media when it comes to the inclusion of individuals in content development. While the former tends to restrict involvement in this aspect, the latter provides opportunities for individuals to actively engage in content creation. Community media platforms offer a valuable opportunity for minority groups to showcase and express their unique cultural perspectives and viewpoints.

Objectives of the study

The study's main objective is to find out how community media works to enhance participation among rural women.

- To find out the awareness and opportunities provided by the community media.
- To find out the community participation and mobilisation of women.

Methodology

For the survey, a sample of 100 female community media listeners was collected from the Banwara region, Rajasthan, and 3 focus group discussions were conducted with 6-12 women from the same region. All the women belong to the rural part of the region, where the mainstream media has very little access. From the survey questionnaire, the researcher tries to understand the level of mobilisation that occurs through the community media. In the focus group discussion, the study analysed the opportunities provided by the community media.

Questionnaire and data collection

The questionnaire comprises four sections, with Part A) focusing on demographic variables. B) The level of engagement with community media, including participation, usage, and programme preference. C) Attitudes and perceptions towards community media. E) Social mobilisation through community media. F) Economic mobilisation through community media entails the utilisation of media channels within a community to stimulate and facilitate economic activities; G) Personal mobilisation through community media involves the utilisation of media platforms within a community to empower individuals. In the Focus Group Discussion (FGD), the primary objective was to assess the efficacy of community media in facilitating and augmenting women's mobilisation efforts.

Data analysis and interpretation

About Community Radio

The Vagad community radio station is situated in the Vagad district of Rajasthan. The region's demographic structure is acknowledged as one of the rural and socio-economically disadvantaged communities. The primary objective of the community media is to facilitate the integration of the indigenous group into the broader framework of mainstream development. It focuses on the promotion of local culture and customs alongside the establishment of the Vagdi language. Community media within the Banswara district serves as a platform for amplifying the voices of marginalised communities. The station was established in 2008 under the auspices of the charitable organisation VAAGDHARA (Voluntary Association for Agriculture, General Development, Health, and Reconstruction Alliance), with its coverage extending to a radius of 35 kilometres within the designated region.

VAAGDHARA is an organisation that emphasizes on three key areas: True Farming, True Childhood, and True Democracy. True Farming pertains to

the principles of food and farming sovereignty, which involve ensuring the rights and autonomy of individuals and communities regarding their food production and agricultural practices. True Childhood involves community-based initiatives to safeguarding child protection and promotes child rights. Lastly, True Democracy encompasses efforts to engage and empower the most marginalised individuals, ensuring their entitlements and active participation in governance.

Key programmes

The *Kheti Wadi* programme is dedicated to providing agricultural and farming-related information. The programme encompasses various components, such as updates on government initiatives and endeavours, discussions on climate change and its implications, strategies for addressing these challenges, expert lectures on agriculture, climate science, and farming practises, insights into high-yield seed varieties, advancements in agricultural technologies, and the introduction of diverse crops suitable for specific land conditions, among other topics. The target audience of the programmes is farmers.

Saccha Bachapan pertains to matters and subjects related to children. The primary focus lies in the domains of education for girls, the rights of children, and child labour. The programme known as "Yuvaon Ki Awaz" focuses on matters about the youth, including their concerns, and potential career opportunities, as well as government initiatives and projects aimed at addressing the needs and aspirations of young individuals. The programme encompasses a range of subjects, including drug and alcohol prevention initiatives, among other areas of focus. Their available formats are talk programmes, personal interviews, drama, and others.

Sachha Swaraj covers various subjects, such as the administration of civic affairs, promoting active engagement of individuals in the *Gram Sabha*, and the influence of election-oriented initiatives on voters' decision-making processes. The entertainment programmes consist of *Lok Sangeet*, *Sham-e-Ghazal*, *Chhoti Badi Baatein*, and *Manoranjan*.

The chat programmes "Hamara Swasthya" and "Hamari Baat Apke Sath," is broadcast daily, serve as platforms for individuals to articulate their concerns and issues. *Suno Kahani Kaho Kanahi* and *Katha Kahani* are two regional children's programmes that offer a platform for young individuals to exhibit their talents. The *Yug Parvarthak* programme is dedicated to the exploration of biographical narratives of prominent historical figures. The *Ghoomar* event serves as a customary gathering



wherein community members have the opportunity to showcase their cultural heritage and traditional folk arts.

Demographic variable

The subsequent part provides a comprehensive analysis of the pattern seen in the sample obtained from the survey. Demographic characteristics play a crucial role in the study. Based on the data shown in the table below, it is evident that a significant proportion of the participants belonged to the age of 30 to 40 years, with the subsequent highest representation observed in the 40 to 50 years age group. Approximately 85% of the female population falls into the group of individuals lacking formal education. The group identified as the Homemaker received the greatest score of 57%. It is evident from the data that the predominant occupation among the respondents was homemaker, closely followed by farmer. The category classified as Below Poverty Line (BPL) achieved the greatest percentage score of 74%, while the Above Poverty Line (APL) group received the lowest score of 26%. In the examination of the table provided, it is observed that respondents who identified as married attained the maximum percentage score of 85%, whilst those who identified as single had the lowest percentage score of 15%.

Table1: Sample distribution

Frequency of Age		
Age	Counts	% of Total
18 to 30	18	18 %
30 to 40	48	48 %
40 to 50	34	34 %
Frequency of Education		
No Formal Education	85	85 %
Upto 10th	15	15 %
Frequency of Occupation		
Farmer	32	32 %
Homemaker	57	57 %
Skilled labour	11	11 %
Total	100	100%
Frequency of Ration Card		
APL	26	26 %
BPL	74	74 %
Total	100	100%
Marital Status		
Counts		% of Total
Single	15	15 %
Married	85	85 %
Total	100	100%

Exposure to media

The current state of media exposure indicates that there is a high degree of usage of community media in this region, with women primarily relying on it as a source of information. According to data, a significant proportion of women, specifically 66%, engage with community media for a duration exceeding three hours every day. Women who live in this region exhibit a high degree of feedback. According to statistical data, a significant proportion of women, particularly 82%, actively engage in providing frequent input to community media platforms. The feedback level plays a crucial role in empowering the women's community by fostering confidence and facilitating discourse. This provides an overview of the ways in which women in this particular region engage with and respond to media.

Community media for mobilisation

This study investigated the correlation between community media and the mobilisation of women. Hence, this part provides evidence to support the relationship between the usage of community media and the mobilising of women. The literature review encompasses an analysis of the social, economic,

and personal dimensions. In order to determine the identification process, a survey and focus group discussion were carried out among female participants of community media in each local community, as indicated by Malhotra and Schuler (2002), Rowlands (1998), and Golla *et al.* (2011). The participants were given explicit instructions to indicate their level of agreement by using a five point Likert Scale on Stroglyly agree to Strongly disagree.

Social mobilisation refers to the process of organising and activating individuals, groups, and communities to collectively address social issues and achieve desired goals. The aim of the research was to investigate a range of elements that might potentially influence social mobilisation using community media. The table 2 shown below provides the average score and standard deviation (SD) for the relevant elements.

Social mobilisation encompasses the dynamic engagement of women across several dimensions of the societal framework, as well as their substantial contributions to the collective welfare of the community. Freire (1996) posits that the achievement of social empowerment is contingent upon individuals actively participating in the dissemination of knowledge within their own communities. The difficult nature of accessing social mobilisation underscores its sophisticated and multifaceted process. The researcher has utilised variables to evaluate the extent of social mobilisation among women, as described by Malhotra and Schuler (2002). The Likert scale was employed to assess each element, with responses ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” The spectrum of social mobilisation demonstrates a continuum that encompasses a maximum value of 45 and a low value of 9.

Table 2: Descriptive Social Mobilisation

Descriptive	Descriptive		
	N	Mean	SD
Freedom of movement	100	3.68	1.44
Gender equality	100	3.93	1.38
Education to girl child	100	4.9	0.48
Break stereotypes	100	3.13	1.37
Sexual violence and dowry system	100	5.00	0
Awareness in politics	100	3.07	1.3
Activate political discussion	100	3.00	1.26
Encourage them to cast a vote	100	4.94	0.34
Participate in Gram Sabha	100	5.00	0

From the table, it is very clear that the women who use the community media are achieving social mobilisation. The information related to variable social aspects are achieved through the community

media. All the statements score more than 3 out of 5.

The concept of economic mobilisation emphasises the role of women’s self-sufficiency as a significant factor in promoting empowerment. This process is believed to lead to outcomes such as respect, dignity, and acceptance.

Table 3: Descriptive Economic Mobilisation

Descriptive	Descriptive		
	N	Mean	SD
Traditional/non-traditional ways of income	100	4.94	0.42
Microfinance management	100	2.94	1.12
Entrepreneurship scheme	100	2.92	1.13
Government fund/aid in starting small-scale enterprises	100	5.00	0.00
The general financial condition of the family	100	2.58	0.71
Help to make a decision on saving and household economic	100	3.08	1.20
Banking related information	100	4.87	0.58

From the above table descriptive of Economic Mobilisation, Government fund/aid in starting small-scale enterprises achieved the highest mean score of 5.00, Banking related information achieved the mean score of 4.87, Microfinance management achieved the mean score of 2.94, Entrepreneurship scheme achieved the mean score of 2.92, Traditional/non-traditional way of income achieved the mean score of 4.94, Help to take a decision on saving and household economic achieved the mean score of 3.08 while General financial condition of family achieved the lowest mean score of 2.58. For all the above constructs STD dev varied between 0.42-1.20. Personal empowerment entails the ability to exercise autonomy in decision-making and is a fundamental aspect of the notion of personal empowerment. It is imperative for individuals to acquire this competency. The range of social mobilisation observed spectra lies between a minimum of 8 to a maximum of 40.

Table 4: Descriptive Personal Mobilisation

Descriptive	Descriptive		
	N	Mean	SD
Self-esteem	100	4.09	1.37
Childbearing decision	100	4.75	0.82
Reproductive decision and right	100	4.91	0.51
Healthy and hygienic living conditions	100	4.97	0.3
Mental and emotional health	100	3.14	1.38
Express your idea louder in your space	100	4.98	0.2

Menstrual hygiene	100	5.00	0
Feel more confident when you engage with community media	100	5.00	0

On the analysis of the above table with reference to Personal Mobilisation, Feel more confident when you engage with community media and Menstrual hygiene achieved the highest mean score of 5.0, Healthy and hygienic living conditions achieved the mean score of 4.97, Reproductive decision and right achieved the mean score of 4.91, Childbearing decision achieved the mean score of 4.75, Express your idea louder in your space achieved the mean score of 4.98, Self-esteem achieved the mean score of 4.09 while mental and emotional health achieved the lowest mean score of 3.14. For all the above constructs, the standard deviation varied from 0.20 to 1.38.

On the basis of the data shown in the tables, it is evident that community media holds significant importance as an information source. Moreover, the women residing in this region actively engage with community media platforms, leading to increased mobilisation within their communities. All factors, including social, personal, and economic information, demonstrate a significant level of mobilisation. Through this analysis, the research has successfully achieved the purpose of clarifying the findings and addressing the second research objective. Women are actively engaging in mobilising efforts through community media programmes, effectively utilising these platforms for their empowerment.

Awareness and opportunities

The first objective awareness and opportunities provided by the community media are assessed

in this section. This section aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of community media's role in women listeners' lives. The utilisation of focus group discussions is considered to be an efficacious approach for gathering insights, beliefs, and attitudes pertaining to a specific subject matter (Patton, 1990; Morgan, 1998). This section comprises three focus group discussions, with the participation of 6-10 female listeners in each discussion. The researcher arrived at a final numerical value by utilising the guidelines for focus group discussions as outlined by David L. Morgan in 1998. The length of the discussion ranges from a minimum of 45 minutes to a maximum of 1 hour and 30 minutes. The group comprised women from tribal communities, homemakers, and rural areas of Banshwara district. Semi-structured questions have been formulated to assess the effectiveness, and influence of community media on women's lives. The researcher employed thematic analysis to examine the focus group discussion. The selection of themes is based on the inputs and ideas from the focus group discussion and while selecting the themes the researcher was aware of the topic which she introduced in the focus group discussion. The following themes are presented: A) Accessibility and usage of community media, B) Knowledge and awareness, C) Attitudes and ideas, D) Adoption of new habits, E) Civic participation and engagement, F) Opportunities and challenges, and G) Community media for development.

Accessibility and usage of community media

Accessibility and community media usage are considered important factors in mobilisation.



The core idea of community media is to reach marginalised communities. In this section, the study explores the accessibility and usage of community media. The Banswara region is considered one of the most marginalised communities, and the people speak the local language. For the community members, the media who speak their language are very important. There is no mainstream media that speaks in their local language; hence, the community plays an important role in disseminating information. Therefore, the usage of community media is very high. The community media team ensures that it reaches the length and width of the Banswara. The community media is considered the primary source of media. A woman from the focus group discussion commented that:

“Every day, I used to listen to community media. Especially when I used to work, it helped me to enjoy the work and lighten my efforts. Also, the community is in our local language, so all the information delivered to the media helps to understand several things. In the time of COVID-19, media really helps a lot in our lives.”

Most of the women who participate in the community have the same opinion. Another crucial factor is the media’s participation. Only community media provide such provision; it really helps the community share their opinions, views, and concerns. Moreover, the reach of community media is the most attractive factor, as in the inner part of the community; they are not able to access mobile connectivity, which affects the day-to-day lives of the individuals in the community. The presence of community media eradicates the issue; it reaches the core area of community media, and people can easily access the information. Also, the volunteers regularly visit and help the community sort out the issues and concerns of society. From the focus group discussion, all the women who attended stated that community media is a very important part of their lives, and the media team ensures that it reaches all parts of their community.

Knowledge Generation and Awareness

Community media in the region is an important and primary source of knowledge and awareness. As mentioned earlier, the community relies on agriculture. Therefore, the primary information accessed by the community pertains to agriculture. It helps them in their daily life. Due to the fluctuations in climate change and other environmental factors, traditional agricultural practices are not effective. Hence the information related to the climate, the adoption of a high-yield variety of seeds, and the use of technology is helping the community to succeed in

the field. Similarly, the government provides several programmes, projects, and subsidies for farmers. However, in earlier times, a limited number of farmers were able to use such schemes as a result of a lack of communication and connectivity challenges. The widespread distribution of information through community media effectively raises community awareness of such information.

Not only the agricultural information but also knowledge related to health, education, and childbearing really help the women’s community. As a low-educated society, the information provided through the community media is very important for them. From the focus group discussion, it is very evident that the community media plays a vital role in knowledge generation and awareness on different topics. A woman commented that:

“Community media plays a significant role in facilitating my everyday life, particularly through the dissemination of health-related information. In relation to menstruation matters, I had been following a traditional approach. However, subsequent to community media awareness campaigns, I became aware of the unhygienic nature of the ways I had been using. Likewise, I have encountered several favourable experiences from the community media.”

Attitude and gender roles

As a marginalised and patriarchal society the region witnessed huge gender discrimination (National Commission for Women). This scenario will lead to the negative development of the society. On the basis of the 2001 census report in Banswara, only 23.78 % of women are literate, and the girl child dropping out after primary school is huge. To eradicate such issues the Vagad community media plays a crucial role. Continuous information is disseminated through the community media and campaign programmes conducted in the village helping the community to provide information related to topics like gender sensitivity, child marriage, girl-child education, marital rape etc.

Along with the awareness program provided by the community media organisation, the team started self-help groups in the villages. Where women can come together, they will get financial aid from the organisation and government to start small-scale businesses. These kinds of awareness programmes and the opportunities made by the community media help the women in the region.

“I never had the chance to pursue my education, and because I had faced so many challenges in my life, I never realised how important it was. But I never knew that education was one of the solutions to my problems. However, after paying attention to

the local media, I learned how important education is to success in life. Consequently, I will now, despite whatever difficulties I encounter, ensure that my children attend school”.

This is not a single story most of the women who attended the focus group discussion have such stories in their lives. However, the community media campaigns and the self-help group activities not only help the women community but also encourage the whole community towards a gender-sensitive approach.

The adoption of new habits and changes occur in life

Financial independence is considered a significant change in the lives of women in the Vagad region and it is not at all an easy task. From the focus group discussion, the women commented that the self-help groups of the community media organisation enabled them to achieve financial independence. Through the awareness programmes and the self-help groups, they receive proper guidance and relevant information on various financial aids. Under the media organisation, there are several women’s groups in each village, which really helps the women community to solve the day-to-day issues and general concerns. The committee of women assembles on a weekly basis to engage in discussions pertaining to various problems and issues and they will access the progress and working methods of their small-scale businesses. To get more support the media volunteers also attended the meeting for the proper audition.

Financial independence has a deep impact on individuals, influencing several aspects of their lives, including their relationships in the family. Additionally, they are actively engaged in the process of decision-making. During previous periods, individuals were not aware of familial or financial affairs. However, after starting their contribution to household finances, the whole approach of their family changed.

Opportunities provided by media

The community media serves as a platform for women to access self-help organisations and take part in small-scale businesses. It is considered one of the significant changes that occur. In addition, the media ensures the participation of women community groups in the community media campaigns and other programs. This initiative offers a chance for women to actively engage with society and participate and be aware of social issues. In the Vaagad region, women are typically confined to their household matters hence they lack the opportunities to engage in social matters but the community media engagement

shows significant changes within the community. Orientation programmes are another major change provided by the media. The community media organised orientation seminars for women inside the organisation, covering various topics such as maternal health, business planning, and agriculture. This approach offers a comprehensive awareness of society and the potential of women to achieve self-sufficiency. From the focus group discussion, a woman says,

“Even to the market, hospital, etc., I am too afraid to leave the house alone. I am not educated and don’t know how to behave in the public. After joining the organisation and actively engaging with the community media, I began to actively address my needs without depending on others’ help. Also, I started earning from our business and it helped to get significant improvement in my overall confidence. In the initial stages, it was very difficult to manage, sometimes I felt like an alien. However, the collective support of the group helped me facilitate my progress in our group, almost everyone was facing similar problems so we started to help each other we got proper help and advice from the media and now we are very proud of our transformation”.

Community development

The women believe that community media plays a significant role in fostering development. The previous examples of agricultural aid show the remarkable contribution of community media within the region. Examples of activities include the supply of a high-yield variety of seeds and the propagation of knowledge on advanced agricultural technologies. According to the survey, over 90% of respondents hold the belief that community media plays a transformative role in their society. In addition to agricultural concerns, community media plays a significant role in promoting gender-sensitive initiatives, such as girl child education and health. The dissemination of knowledge and information serves as a founding step for development.

Findings and conclusion

Women are widely regarded as the most significant catalysts for change within society. The mobilisation of women has the potential to contribute to the overall development and progress of the community. In this study, the researcher aims to investigate the extent to which community media contributes to the facilitation of women’s mobilisation. The strategic usage of community media facilitates widespread access to information and knowledge across society, with a particular emphasis on reaching marginalised groups, such as women. The dissemination of

information and the potential afforded by community media can serve as an encouragement for growth. This research, carried out in the rural area of Banswara in the state of Rajasthan, provides evidence of the effectiveness of community media in facilitating women's engagement and discourse, ultimately contributing to social development.

The listeners of Vagad community radio belong to the marginalised and illiterate group. The demographic characteristics of the region provide insight into the impoverished state of the area. The availability and visibility of other media channels are also limited in this context. The demographic variables prove that. The majority of individuals that engage with Vagad community media are between the age group of 30-40 years. Additionally, it has been observed that 85% of women residing in this particular location lack a formal educational certification. However, in the context of employment, those classified as homemakers constitute a majority of 57%. This phenomenon exhibits similarities to the other community media groups that are being examined. Regarding the economic situation, it is observed that 74% of the female population falls under the Below Poverty Line (BPL) category. According to statistical data, around 85% of women are in a marital union.

In this particular context, the prevalence of community media is notably extensive throughout the region, as it effectively disseminates information to all corners of the area. Consequently, women within the region heavily depend on community media as their principal means of accessing information. The result demonstrates the significance of community media regarding the aspect of mobilising. The findings from the Vagad community media study indicate that the social mobilisation score ranges from 3 to 5, the personal mobilisation score ranges from 3.14 to 5, and the economic mobilisation score ranges from 2.58 to 5. The data suggests that women in the area are successfully utilising community media as a means of mobilising. The personal mobilisations score exhibits the biggest value within the positive score. This indicates that women residing in the region are being facilitated with mobilisation efforts through community media initiatives. The programmes demonstrate a high level of effectiveness within the region. The research findings indicate a consistent pattern in terms of awareness and opportunity, as observed through the analysis of the focus group conversation. The focus group discussion comprised exclusively of female participants who engaged in sharing personal narratives pertaining to the transformative impact of community media on their lives. Nevertheless, it is

apparent that community media serve as efficacious instruments for strengthening mobilisation among marginalised communities. The media has played a significant role in empowering women, particularly in facilitating their participation in social issues and their active involvement in community development.

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Understanding Regional Social Mediated Politics in India: Issues, Modes and Spread Strategies in Punjab

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ABSTRACT

Social media has become the most popular means of engagement for all age groups with modern technology to communicate. New media's popularity benefits advertising, politicians, and global enterprises due to their unique properties of interaction, unlimited space, cost-effectiveness, and easy accessibility. As the literature reiterated, political matters are more frequently discussed on social media than on traditional news outlets these days. The last two US presidential and Indian legislative elections proved that social media is a favourable determinant. However, the use of social media in the regional political sphere of India needs to be explored in order to understand the phenomenon at the regional level. The researchers attempted to bridge the gap through this study and tried to figure out how mediated political communication happens on social media platforms from a regional point of view. The researchers found that regional parties' social media platforms, such as Twitter, WhatsApp, and Facebook, are more frequented by local issues than the major issues in federal mainstream politics.

Keywords: Agenda setting, Interactive media, Political communication, Political parties, Social media

Introduction

Social media's user-friendly and dynamic design is transforming mass communication. Web 3.0 semantic web technology enables users to post and share text, photos, videos, criticism, and other content. The Internet of Things, especially social media, has changed the business, goal, and function of mass communication, putting pressure on existing media outlets. According to Hampton *et al.* (2014), social media enables individuals to engage in open discussions over significant contemporary issues. Examining the use of social media by mainstream media for various purposes and as a means of information gathering might be a logical course of research. "Social networking sites are replacing traditional mass media channels as a source of information," Fortis asserts (as cited in Wu *et al.*, 2013).

The content created by internet users, such as blogs, vlogs, wall postings, and photos on social media, compensates for the gaps in mainstream media coverage. Social media has the potential to serve as an alternative means of communication

due to its versatile applications. According to Siles and Boczkowski (2012), online news providers that are emerging are causing the distinction between the source of news and the recipient to become less clear. Social media facilitates the formation of virtual communities where individuals and entities may engage in conversations, contribute, and exchange content. According to Rainie *et al.* (2014), Facebook and Twitter enable individuals to disseminate and provide feedback on news articles.

Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram consistently generate market-oriented content that is shared by diverse organisations and contributes to online and economic mobilisation, among other things. Social media offers entertainment, as well as a wealth of knowledge spanning social, political, and economic topics, and the ability to mobilise individuals and groups. A study conducted by CNN revealed that a greater number of Americans get their news via the internet as compared to newspapers or radio. Additionally, around 75% of these individuals receive news content through emails or social networking sites (Gross, 2010). The survey

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participants also discovered that Facebook and Twitter had enhanced the interactivity of news.

Social media, politics, and agenda setting

The majority of media outlets convey their ideological perspectives alongside the thematic content of a story, resulting in a scarcity of neutrality. The existing literature reaffirmed that conventional media's ability to set the topic is no longer generally problematic or exclusive to micro-blogging platforms (Chang *et al.*, 2017; Nip & Fu, 2015; Harder *et al.*, 2017; Wu *et al.*, 2013).

"The two-dimensional structure and widespread dissemination of social media have been highly effective in shaping social agendas," stated Demirsoy and Karakoc (2016). Through the incorporation of user-generated material, viewers have the ability to remark, share movies and photographs, and express their preferred political views via emojis. This social action facilitates "participatory democracy," which promotes the democratisation of media involvement via the use of social media. One could think social media gives ordinary people power. Social media, as an interactive tool, has the potential to function as a virtual weapon, safeguarding political rights across many contemporary communication mediums.

Over the last ten years, there has been an increase in the use of social media by political parties. Kumar and Natarajan (2016) (as cited in Khan, Shahzad, & Altaf, 2023) emphasised that social media has fundamentally transformed the way political communication is conducted. Politicians and political parties are increasingly using social media as a novel method to interact with the public.

The current incumbents may use social media to strengthen their status, whilst those aspiring for power can attract voters via their online presence. Candidates used Twitter (now X) extensively during the 2016 United States presidential election to connect with voters on an unprecedented scale. Furthermore, there has been an observed increase in the public's dependence on social media as a source of political information (Dounoucos *et. al*, 2019; Morris, 2017). The spiral of silence theory (Noelle-Neumann, 1974) offers various insights into historical events due to the existence of many manifestations of audiences' silence. They engage in activities such as sharing, forwarding, commenting, posting, linking, reacting, etc., all of which exemplify direct engagement, while lurking exemplifies indirect participation.

Media can shape the agenda based on viewer preferences. Following the 1968 election, Shaw and McCombs (1977) developed Agenda-Setting Theory (AST) by examining patterns in American presidential elections. The AST elucidates the

manner in which the media influence the prominence of public policy topics (McCombs & Reynolds, 2002). Agenda-setting theory examines the influence of media on viewers and how it attracts attention to societal concerns. It also explores how the media's unintentional focus on a limited number of subjects and their attributes impacts the general public. The news agenda is determined by external social, political, economic, and cultural influences that are outside the control of news organisations (Wright, 2015). News organisations serve as crucial but impartial conduits of information. In recent years, social media has facilitated the mobilisation of individuals, particularly women (Pedersen *et al.*, 2013; Shteivi, 2011). The pervasive use of social media influences the priorities and topics of discussion within society. Demirsoy and Karakoc (2016) assert that the media exercises control over the selection and duration of news broadcasts, as well as influencing societal opinions and emotions, determining whether compassion or repulsion is felt.

Mapping politics over social media presence in India

Political parties in India saw a surge in the use of social media platforms during and soon after the 2014 general elections. The Times of India, the primary English-language newspaper in India, states in its article "Election 2014 is all about social media" (Dutta, 2014) that political parties allocated a budget of Rs. 4,000 to Rs. 5,000 million specifically for digital advertising and publicity. The article states that Indian political parties made a deliberate and coordinated attempt to attract the support of young people during the 2014 election. In India, it is often seen that political parties extensively use social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook to disseminate information on their party's policies, initiatives, and goals. According to Srivastava (2013), there has been a significant increase in Internet use both in India and around the world in the past ten years. Indian social media users have grown rapidly (Sharma, 2017). In 2015, there were 142.23 million social media users; in 2019, 351.4 million; and in 2023, 447.9 million (Statista, 2020). India had 560 million internet users and 515.2 million mobile internet users in January 2019 (Statista, 2019). The utilisation of mobile devices and the visibility of the internet are closely interconnected. The number of mobile social media users in India is growing significantly. The ubiquity of mobile technology is the only factor responsible for the widespread availability of Internet access in every household. In January 2019, the number of active social media users was 310 million, while the number of mobile

users was 290 million (Statista, 2019).

Social media enables candidates to directly interact with voters. Saleem and McDowell confirmed that every prominent political party in India maintained profiles on both Facebook and Twitter (as cited in Bagga-Gupta & Rao, 2018). Social media platforms such as Twitter (now X), Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and others are revolutionising political communication. Engaging in online voter contact has the potential to enhance democratic participation. Social media plays a crucial role for politicians and political parties as it facilitates the acquisition of support, encourages citizen engagement, and enables open communication (Singh, 2016).

Theoretical underpinning and literature review

This study has two main objectives: firstly, to provide corroborating evidence for the assertions stated; and secondly, to establish a connection between national and regional social-mediated political communication scenarios from the researchers' standpoint.

According to Hans-Christian *et al.* (2018), it is believed that the Indian political and media landscape provides a conducive environment for conducting more advanced agenda-setting research. "The People's Choice" (1968) authored by Paul Lazarsfeld and his colleagues expounded on the principle of two-step flow. He examined the decisions made by voters in the 1940 presidential election. This statement emphasises that "opinion leaders" are highly engaged media consumers who collect, analyse, and disseminate the messages they receive to less-active audiences. It signifies that those who have limited media use would depend on information provided by others who have more media exposure (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1968). Maxwell McCombs's (1970) research, titled "Civic Osmosis: The Impact of Media," categorised individuals' media use into two distinct categories: inadvertent exposure and regular exposure. Browsing through the stuff on social media is both unintentional and regular. An incidental is deliberately arranged and intentionally exposes the viewer to it.

Saleem and McDowell (as cited in Bagga-Gupta & Rao, 2018) discovered that in India, all prominent political parties devoted significant focus to their social media presence. They used platforms like Facebook and Twitter (now X) to establish connections with their supporters and disseminate election agendas and other pertinent issues. Meti (2014) discovered that the use of social media by political leaders and parties facilitated public participation in government affairs and resulted in enhanced political transparency. In the 16th Parliamentary General

Election in India, Narasimhamurthy (2014) observed how candidates and political parties engaged in direct communication with the public using social media platforms. In addition, he examined the use of social media by candidates and political parties in 2014 to recruit volunteers and generate funds for their campaigns. Bali and Jagan (2017) research determined that politicians are fond of social media due to its captivating nature and ability to reach vast audiences.

Toor (2020) provides an in-depth analysis of political communication on social media:

"Social media is an effective tool, and consumption of it gives rise to political expression and serves as a public sphere of diverse political opinions, which was not possible in the past. As of its interactive features, social media has made advancements in political communication among common people and politicians and plays a vital role in creating political discussions."

From Toor's insight these researchers came to the realisation that social media and the social media presence of political parties are closely interconnected. Petrovic and Besic (2019) observed that, in the absence of democracy, individuals resort to social media as a means to acquire knowledge about political matters. Their research has also shown that social media information has a significant influence on the users.

Research questions

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the topic, the researchers were able to formulate the following research questions after conducting a cursory review of the relevant published material:

- What kinds of issues are circulated or posted through social media by political parties at the regional level?
- How much is the presence of political parties on social media, particularly the regional parties of Punjab, in comparison with the parties at the national level?
- Which social networking sites (SNS) are emerging as their most reliable platform to reach out to party workers and other supporters?

Research methodology

This research used a quantitative methodology, using primary data-gathering techniques. In order to collect secondary data, the researchers examined the social media accounts of prominent national and regional political parties. The purpose was to analyse

their level of influence on social media and compare the online presence of national and regional political parties in Punjab. The original data was gathered from 60 respondents from regional and national political parties in Punjab using a combination of online and offline questionnaires. In order to get a diverse viewpoint, the researchers picked respondents for the poll based on their affiliations with various political parties, including party workers from both rural and urban backgrounds.

Data analysis

Secondary data

Political parties are using social media platforms as a means to engage with voters. The study conducted by Hans-Christian *et al.* (2018) revealed that media agenda-setting in India is mostly characterised by a bi-directional influence. The most popular social media platforms used by political parties are Facebook, Twitter (now X), and YouTube. In the last ten years, almost every significant political party, whether at a national or provincial level, has created Facebook pages and Twitter accounts that have amassed hundreds or even millions of followers. Political parties use various social media platforms to engage with their followers and inform them about their policies, objectives, and accomplishments. Consequently, political parties may use these venues to establish their agenda.

Political Parties' Social Media History

Table 1 provides direct connections to the Facebook site of some significant Indian political parties.

The impact of a political party's early use of social media on its electoral success remains uncertain, since the Communist Party of India (CPI) updated its Facebook page somewhat sooner (by 12 days) than the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). However, the CPI failed to attain political authority at both the national and state levels. The cause of this may be inconsequential to the current study's setting.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), Samajwadi Party (SP) and Trinamool Congress (TMC) have 4.3 million, 2.9 million, and 1.3 million Likes and 5.4 million, 3.9 million, and 1.3 million Followers, respectively, in a popularity war. Regarding regional parties, it is noteworthy that the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), a regional party in Punjab, refrains from openly acknowledging its substantial support base, despite amassing 566 thousand Likes and 595 thousand Page Followers on Facebook. SAD has all the necessary elements to potentially serve as a political figure, organisation, and emblem of local concerns to be raised on social media. Since its inception on Facebook in 2010, it has potentially expanded to a magnitude that might position it as a rival to political parties at the national level. Currently, SAD is facing obstacles in effectively promoting its message on

Table 1: Facebook pages of political parties*

S. No.	Name of the party	Name of the page	Created On	Page Likes	Page Followers
1	All India Trinamool Congress	All India Trinamool Congress	July 5, 2011	1.3 M	1.3 M
2	Bharatiya Janata Party	Bharatiya Janata Party	May 30, 2010	15 M	16 M
3	Communist Party of India	Communist Party of India	May 18, 2010	62,110	66,080
4	Communist Party of India (Marxist)	Communist Party of India (Marxist)	March 9, 2014	510 K	537K
5	Indian National Congress	Indian National Congress	February 20, 2013	5.7 M	6.2 M
6	Nationalist Congress Party	Nationalist Congress Party	October 16, 2013	638 K	715 K
7	National People's Party	National People's Party	January 01, 2018	41,395	43,122
8	Aam Aadmi Party	Aam Aadmi Party	October 21, 2012	4.3 M	5.4 M
9	All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam	Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam	October 09, 2012	275 K	286 K
10	Shiromani Akali Dal	Shiromani Akali Dal	October 16, 2010	566 K	595 K
11	Samajwadi Party	Samajwadi Party	September 30, 2010	2.9 M	3.5 M

*The above data was retrieved from the official Facebook pages of political parties at on April 23, 2022 at 5 PM

Facebook. They may have been unaware of the platform's potential to effectively reach a substantial audience.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is the most popular political party in India, with a massive following of 16 million individuals and garnering 15 million likes. Based on the data provided in the Table 1, it can be inferred that the BJP, a prominent national political party in India, entered the realm of social media in 2010. In contrast, the Indian National Congress (INC) joined social media platforms about three years later, in 2013. This implies that prior to the BJP assuming power in 2014, it likely took the strategic choice to engage with its substantial base of supporters via social media platforms. The BJP's entry into social media was not only ahead of its time but also remarkably successful. Although regional parties entered the world of social media around the same time as their national counterparts, their fan following may not be commensurate in size.

The data shown in Table 2 provides information on the creation dates of Twitter (now X) accounts and the corresponding number of followers.

According to Table 1, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has the highest number of followers (T=16 million) and likes (T=15 million) on Facebook. It is followed by the Indian National Congress (INC) with 5.6 million followers and 5.7 million likes. The number of likes is directly proportional to the number of followers on one of the pages. The AAP has the largest number of followers, with a staggering 4.5 million, followed by the SP. The table-2 also shows that the BJP has the most followers (T = 18.2 million), followed by the INC (8.4 million) on Twitter. Again, the number of followers on a Twitter account is the same as the number of tweets. AAP has the third-most people who follow them on

Twitter (6 millions). AAP has been competing with the two biggest national parties, the BJP and INC, and beating all of their other counterparts.

The Bharatiya Janata Party made its online presence felt just four months after it joined the Facebook platform. The INC seems to have embraced Twitter in 2013, almost four years after the BJP had already done so. However, the INC failed to attract even half of the 8.4 million individuals that were total followers of the BJP. The AAP and SP have 6 million and 3.3 million voters, respectively, making them the next most popular parties behind the BJP and INC. The Samajwadi Party (SP) has a Twitter following that exceeds that of any other regional party by almost 3 million. The National People's Party has a very modest following of 2,950 individuals, indicating a limited level of support. In terms of social media presence, the SAD of Punjab is relatively new to Twitter compared to other regional parties. Additionally, it has a limited number of followers in comparison to the overall number of individuals that follow it.

According to the above facts, it is possible that the proverb "the early bird gets the worm" is accurate. The national party, the BJP, was an early adopter of social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter, seeing their significance before other political parties, both regional and national, did. The BJP's early embrace of Twitter, as the first political party to utilise the site, may have contributed to its win in 2014. It is paradoxical that the political parties with the greatest historical significance, such as the INC, and the longest periods of governing were coincidentally in power when the BJP established its distinct presence on the internet. It is possible that INC failed to take advantage of the votes submitted online, resulting in a missed opportunity to secure a victory.

Table 2: Creation of Twitter (now X) accounts by different political parties

S. No.	Name of the Party	Twitter- joined on	Number of followers
1	All India Trinamool Congress	April, 2011	578 K
2	Bharatiya Janata Party	October, 2010	18.2 M
3	Communist Party of India	April, 2018	6,822
4	Communist Party of India (Marxist)	February, 2014	430 K
5	Indian National Congress	February, 2013	8.4 M
6	Nationalist Congress Party	August, 2013	654 K
7	National People's Party	January, 2018	2,950
8	Aam Aadmi Party	July, 2012	6 M
9	All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam	February, 2014	446 K
10	Shiromani Akali Dal	May, 2015	86.1 K
11	Samajwadi Party	May, 2010	3.3 M

*The above data was retrieved from the official Twitter pages of political parties on 23rd April, 2022

The aforementioned tables clearly demonstrate that almost all national and regional political parties own social media profiles with a substantial number of followers, and these figures are expected to fluctuate in the future. The prevalence of the BJP and the INC in several states is indicative of their substantial support base. The fan base of SAD is lower compared to other regional parties due to its membership being mostly confined to the Punjab area alone. Nevertheless, the categorization of AAP as a regional party remains ambiguous, not due to its substantial support base, but rather because it operates primarily in one of India’s several northern regions.

Furthermore, the aforementioned figures indicate that almost all prominent political parties use social media as a means to conduct their campaigns. The majority of India’s national and regional political parties consistently maintain and update their websites and web pages. Political parties may recruit individuals for their IT cells, responsible for maintaining and updating their websites, web pages, Facebook pages, Twitter accounts, blogs, and other online platforms.

Primary data analysis

A random sample of sixty political workers or activists, aged 18 and above, was surveyed throughout the Amritsar district, including both rural and urban regions. After analysing the data, we have derived the following findings:

Political affiliations

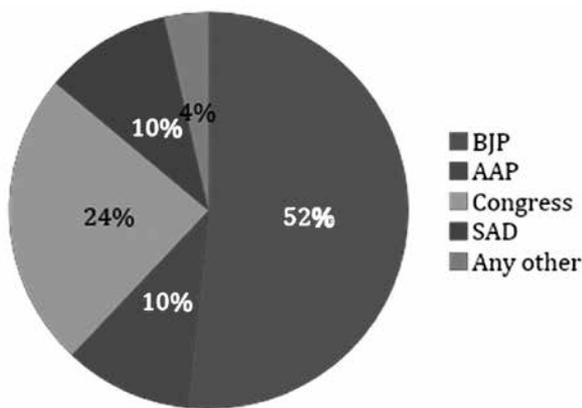


Figure. 1: Political Affiliations

Figure 1 displays the affiliations of party workers selected at random during the survey in the sampled region. Although the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has never been in control in Punjab, a significant 52% of the poll respondents, especially in metropolitan regions, identified with the party.

Subsequently, the Indian National Congress (INC) has a 24% share, while the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) and the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) each own a 10% share. The remaining percentage of 4% is distributed among smaller parties. Due to the random selection of samples, the percentages shown above do not correspond accurately to the actual number of individuals supporting each political party in the area. Furthermore, the researchers have not attempted to establish any association between the parties and their replies in the current study.

Topographic and pedagogical holdings

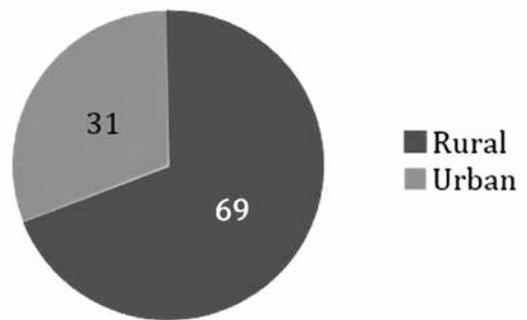


Fig. 2: Topographical holdings

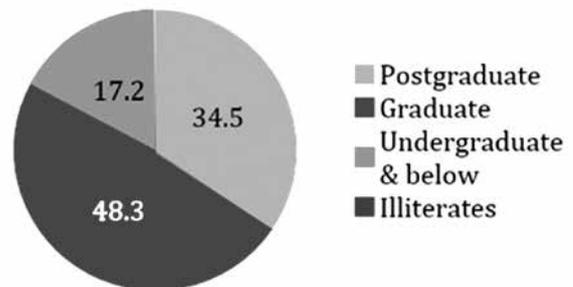


Fig. 3: Pedagogical holdings

Figures 2 and 3 depict the number of political activists and their credentials. A majority of political workers and activists, namely 69%, come from the rural parts of district Amritsar. The remaining 31% corresponds to the urban area, which serves as the central hub of the city. This is mostly due to the higher population density and larger electorate in rural regions compared to metropolitan ones. Regarding the educational attainment of political workers and activists, 48.3% have undergraduate degrees while 34.5% have completed postgraduate studies. This trend highlights the significance of knowledge in using social media and the potential for individuals to engage in Indian politics via democratic means.

Information disseminating modes

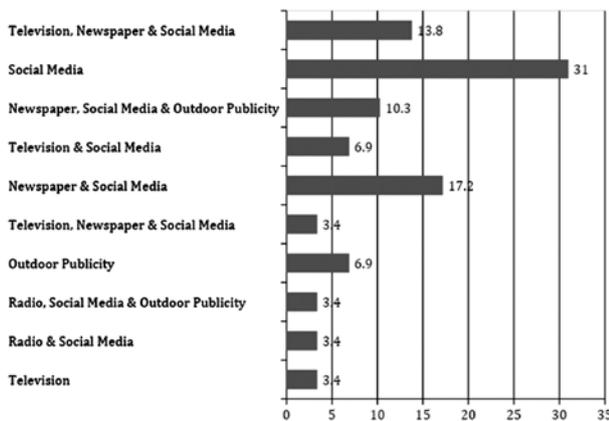


Fig. 4: Means of disseminating information

According to Figure 4, social media is the predominant method for party workers to disseminate information about party operations, with newspapers and television following closely behind. Approximately 31% of participants exclusively use social media as their primary means of communication, whilst the remaining majority employ several methods. This strategy is sometimes referred to as the “Media Mix.” 17.2% of respondents said that they convey information using both newspapers and social media, while 13.8% reported disseminating information using a combination of TV, newspapers, and social media. Approximately 10.3% of survey respondents use newspapers, social media, and outdoor advertising as their primary means of disseminating information. According to the aforementioned findings, social media is the primary means of communication for political workers, with a combination of other media platforms being utilised less often.

Issues disseminated

As per the above data, (Fig. 5) 31% of survey respondents said that they use the media to disseminate information on political, social,

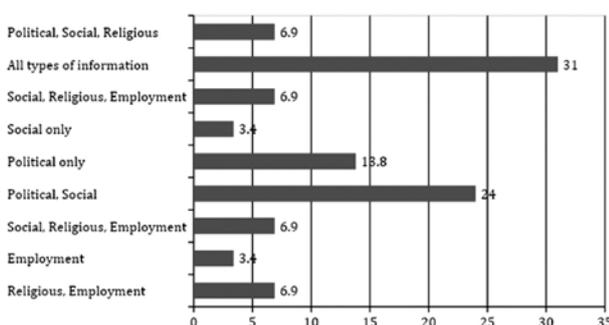


Fig. 5: People use media to disseminate issues

employment, and sometimes religious activities. Out of the respondents, 24% said that they use the media as a platform to discuss politics and social problems, however only 13.8% specifically mentioned using the media to discuss politics. It is noteworthy that 6.9% of the information on politics, society, religion, and employment overlaps with other material. Both job difficulties and social issues get an equal allocation of 3.4%. Based on the graph shown, it is evident that jobs, religion, and politics are the predominant topics of discussion on social media. Religion and work concerns often feature in discussions within regional and national politics at now. These subjects are often discussed in political discourse among the general populace.

Precursors of agenda setting

The party’s objectives, achievements, philanthropic efforts, and criticisms towards political adversaries are extensively disseminated via social media platforms. Approximately 34.5% of the participants use media for various purposes, whilst 17.4% employ media to discuss party agendas, accomplishments, and social initiatives. Additionally, 13.8% only utilise media to discuss party objectives and achievements. Social media has effectively raised awareness of the party’s significant goals and achievements. It was evident from the poll that party workers and activists often used internet platforms to publicise their achievements, showcasing the parties’ efforts in tackling local and everyday concerns.

Considering the general type of activities posted on social media by regional party workers, it is evident that social media is extensively used for establishing an agenda. The topics, including successes, social work, and others, mirror the agenda setting strategy used by political parties.

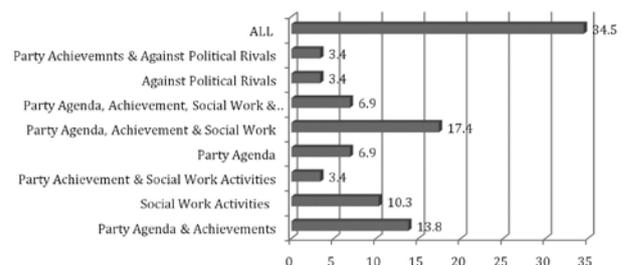


Fig. 6 Agendas undertaken

Predilections

Figure 7 presents statistics about the preferred social media platforms among political workers and activists. The data presented indicates that over 24.2% of the participants use Facebook and WhatsApp as their primary social media platforms,

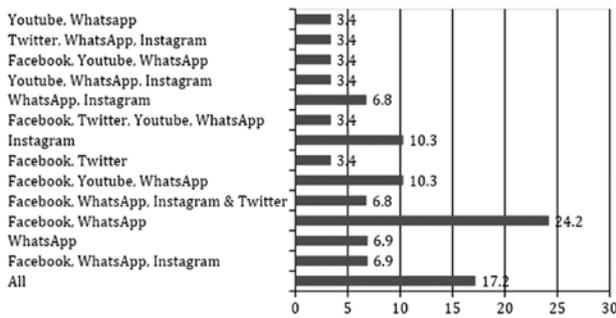


Fig. 7: Preferred channels

surpassing all others. Furthermore, roughly 17.2% of the respondents reported using all of the main social media platforms, including YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. The cumulative user populations of Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp accounted for 10.3%. In addition, a mere 3.4% of political communication takes place on the least favoured social media platforms.

Social media provides us with the opportunity to explore and test other identities outside our own. By using these alternatives, political parties may enhance the likelihood of engaging in more productive discussions with prospective voters across a diverse range of subjects and platforms. Although this diversity is intriguing in terms of technology and ecology, it might impact our understanding of political communication. Political staff and volunteers may be instructed to maintain active accounts on several popular social media platforms to effectively engage with voters. Hence, political activists and workers would choose their favourite social media sites based on the instructions of their political leaders and the goals of their organisation. Political discourse in social media, particularly in relation to agenda-setting, may be affected or grounded on political exigencies.

Hackneyed platforms

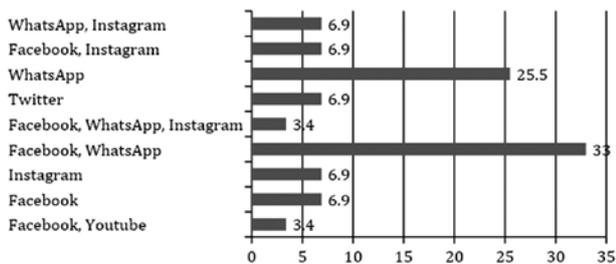


Fig. 8: Accessed platforms

Instagram and YouTube rank as the second most popular accessed social media platforms, behind Facebook and WhatsApp. 33% of the respondents use both Facebook and WhatsApp, while the

remaining 25% only use WhatsApp. Facebook and Instagram together contribute to 6.9% of the distribution of political information, and the same applies to Facebook and WhatsApp. While politics only accounts for 6.9% of the total time spent on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, each site is used in distinct ways. The majority of respondents in the aforementioned demographics are avid users of Facebook and WhatsApp. Subsequently, Instagram and YouTube channels follow.

According to Figure 8, Facebook and WhatsApp have emerged as the primary platforms for political organisations to disseminate information and further their parties’ objectives. Facebook’s “wall” allows users to post content at their convenience, making it a highly accessible social media network. The post may include audio, video, and text of varying lengths and formats. In addition to its time and space efficiency, Facebook offers a very practical functionality wherein the owner of a “Facebook wall” may tag a post to a substantial number of users. The activists may find it more convenient to maintain communication with their “voter acquaintances” on Facebook. WhatsApp, a popular social networking platform, serves as a valuable tool for exchanging material with those who possess the authority to choose the destination of the information.

Media agenda setters

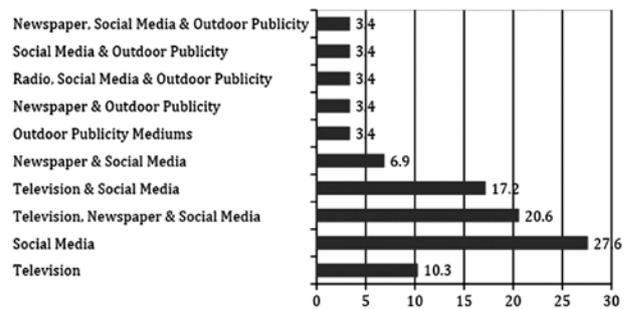


Fig. 9: Agenda setters

Based on the Figure 9, it is evident that a significant majority of participants believe that social media is the most effective means for a political party to disseminate its message to the general public. Approximately 27.6% of respondents said that social media is the most effective means of disseminating information on political objectives, whilst 20.6% stated that a combination of television, newspapers, and social media is the optimal approach for spreading such news. Approximately 17.2% of respondents believe that integrating television and social media is the optimal approach, while an equal proportion of individuals advocate for combining television, newspapers, and social media. Primarily,

the majority of respondents believe that social media is the most effective means of accomplishing the political objective.

Despite the widespread discussion around new media and its pervasive nature, traditional media still has a significant advantage in terms of exerting influence in the digital era. Newspapers and social media play a significant role in effectively disseminating political parties’ objectives to voters. Additionally, this might indicate that Indian political parties have adopted social media as a means of engaging with the public, in addition to their traditional reliance on print media. Despite the distinct “media biases” shown by conventional media and social media, political parties may be attempting to use the advantages offered by both platforms.

Efficacy of social media modes

Figure 10 reveals that WhatsApp, a highly personalised communication network, is overwhelmingly the most widely used form of social media, comprising 44.8% of the total user base. Facebook and Instagram both had a market share of 20.7%, while Twitter had a market share of 13.8%. The extensive appeal of the WhatsApp social media platform among political parties may be ascribed to its user-friendly interface and engaging functionalities. In terms of accessibility, this platform differs from others in that it does not need users to log in often. Within a brief timeframe, an individual has two options for handling a message: they may either respond directly to the sender or engage in interactivity by forwarding the message to their contact list as the new sender.

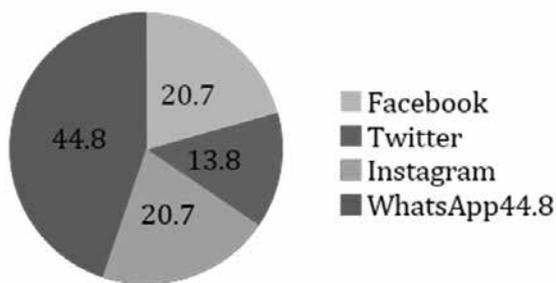


Fig. 10: Efficacy of platforms

Conclusion

Social media has seemingly erased the boundaries between various hierarchical positions or groups and across different geographical locations, which would typically be politically, socially, and culturally separate. This is likely due to its many features, affordable nature, and widespread availability. The media’s coverage of politics is influencing

the agendas of political parties. Political concerns discussed on social media may vary among regions and political parties, as they prioritise various aspects to further their goal.

The literature review for this study focused on the media’s influence in shaping political agendas, particularly the role of social media in agenda-setting at both the domestic and international levels. However, there is a lack of research focusing on the regional political aspect of agenda-setting, namely the spread of political discourses occurring across various venues. This study attempted to address the gap by investigating the mechanisms of mediated political communication on social media platforms from a regional perspective. The researchers discovered a correlation between the problems seen on the social media profiles of regional political parties and local concerns. The concerns that regional political parties tackle via social media are often related to regional matters, unless the parties’ goals are entirely unrelated. The researchers discovered that social media problems in certain regions are confined to those regions and revolve on issues that are unique to those areas, as opposed to national political issues. The same concerns may not align with the agenda pursued by the same political party at the national level, regardless of all politicians using the same platforms at both national and regional levels.

Punjab is a neighbouring state that has a substantial border with Pakistan. However, despite its geographical proximity, the province’s political parties prioritise concerns such as unemployment and local political achievements. The regional and national parties on social media address common issues such as unemployment, religion, and social matters. However, they noticeably neglect important topics like defence, budget, health, and international relations, which are instead primarily focused on at the national level.

Social media use aligns with worldwide trends, except for the significant prevalence of Twitter among influential politicians. The researchers discovered a decrease in Twitter use and an increase in WhatsApp usage in regional-mediated political communication. This indicates that political players choose to interact more via closed networks such as WhatsApp, rather than open-access platforms like Twitter and Facebook. The research also aims to confirm that, while there was some early hesitation in establishing a reliable presence, the use of social media by Indian political parties has seen significant growth, as shown in the last Indian legislative elections. Although national parties strive to emphasize national issues, there may still be a significant difference between regional and national parties in terms of the exact details of their agendas.

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COVID-19 Health Reporting on Indian News Channels: A Study of AAJTAK and ABP News on YouTube

ANURAG DWIVEDI¹, MOHAMMAD AAMIR PASHA² & LALITANK JAIN³

ABSTRACT

In the era of the ‘infodemic’ – an era marked by an overwhelming flood of information – the role of effective health communication becomes crucial in enhancing public health literacy. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has intensified public focus on health-related issues, underscoring the critical need for accurate and timely health information. This scenario has propelled news organizations and individuals globally to turn to social media as a primary platform for sharing health narratives. This study highlights the pivotal role of media in delivering precise health messages to diverse audiences rapidly and effectively to foster public health-promoting behavioral changes. The research underscores the significance of health communication in not only guiding the general public but also influencing decision-makers in the political and medical spheres. It addresses the challenge of ensuring accuracy and credibility in health reporting, which is essential for enhancing health literacy. The study also critically examines the prevalence of speculative, false, and misleading information in health reports, which compromises the quality of information disseminated to the public. This research critically examines the source dynamics in health news reporting by prominent Indian TV news channels, Aaj Tak and ABP News, on YouTube during the initial phase of the COVID-19 pandemic (March-May 2020).

Keywords: COVID-19, Health communication, Health literacy, Infodemic, Media framing, Media sources, Pandemic

Introduction

The COVID-19 epidemic has raised public awareness of health-related issues and resulted in an extraordinary need for rapid and accurate information. In this age of information overload, effective health communication is essential because it improves public health literacy and influences behavior for the benefit of all. After realising how urgent the situation was, electronic media outlets in India took on the difficult work of reporting on the expanding pandemic using a wide range of sources (Mheidly & Fares, 2020).

By utilising both domestic and foreign news sources, the media landscape increased its coverage even further and offered a thorough worldwide analysis of the pandemic’s course. At the same time, academic opinions from research articles and medical publications provided priceless insights into the complex aspects of the pandemic (Coumare *et al.*, 2021). Disseminated through formal news conferences and social media channels, the voices of health experts and political leaders significantly influenced public

policy responses and conversations (Chipidza *et al.*, 2022).

Hospitals, healthcare organisations, and local reporters provided firsthand information that illuminated the pandemic’s effects on local populations (Bircher & Wehkamp, 2011). Furthermore, information obtained from opinion surveys and public surveys provide an essential barometer of public sentiment and compliance with safety recommendations. Various viewpoints from academic and research institutes, non-governmental organisations, and non-profit groups were included in the contributions, which enhanced the conversation (Amundsen *et al.*, 2021).

It is expected that when this important inquiry is conducted, the results will strengthen health communication plans for upcoming public health emergencies and improve knowledge of the media’s function in providing health information during emergencies. By carefully analysing sources and how they affect the way news is disseminated, a stronger and more knowledgeable society will be created to

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confront previously unheard-of global health issues.

Research objectives:

1. To evaluate the reliability and accuracy of sources used in health reporting by Indian TV news channels (Aaj Tak and ABP News) during the initial COVID-19 wave.
2. To determine the sources frequently used in news coverage during COVID-19 coverage.
3. To provide recommendations for improving the quality of health reporting, including strategies to enhance source reliability and accuracy, aiming to strengthen the media's role as a trusted source of health information.

Literature review

Gupta *et al.* (2022) provided a comprehensive analysis of online reporting in India, concentrating on how the media presents COVID-19 health information in compliance with WHO guidelines. The study's conclusions show that a sizable portion of articles successfully covered important topics such as symptoms, risk factors, transmission, and prevention. Nonetheless, several noteworthy deficiencies were noted. The study underscores the deficiency of pragmatic suggestions in media coverage, stressing the media's need to take a more proactive stance in guiding the public's reaction to the pandemic. This result emphasizes how important it is to efficiently communicate evidence-based prevention and treatment choices in order to counteract the pervasive transmission of false and misleading information.

Nafees and Khan's study (2020) examines how the Indian populace sought information during the pandemic. The research identified key areas of interest: symptoms, causes, treatments, and prevention of COVID-19. It found that news websites, virus-specific sites, and medical professionals were the most trusted information sources. However, issues with authenticity and credibility posed significant challenges, with 35% of the information from January to May 2020 being incorrect or misleading. This study is vital for social welfare organizations, health departments, and health communicators in India, shedding light on public health information-seeking behaviours and the spread of misinformation during the pandemic (Nafees & Khan, 2020).

Parikh *et al.* (2020) explored the perspectives and understanding of the general public and healthcare professionals regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. Utilizing questionnaires based on information from credible sources like WHO, ICMR, CDC, NIH, and NEJM, the study provided an in-depth analysis. The study highlighted the reliance on different information sources, with healthcare professionals predominantly

consulting authoritative organizations. This underscores the importance of reliable information sources and effective communication in managing public health crises.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has developed a dedicated COVID-19 website to aid public understanding and evaluation of virus-related news. This platform regularly updates on various aspects of the disease, including detailed information on vaccines, misconceptions, side effects, immunization sites, and vaccination documentation. It also tracks COVID-19 cases, deaths, vaccination progress, and transmission rates by county, and provides specific guidance for schools, businesses, communities, and travelers. Similarly, India's MyGov website offers a comprehensive dashboard for COVID-19 case tracking, mortality rates, and vaccination updates, along with guidelines for international arrivals and patient management, and state-wise helpline (Schwitzer, 2017)

Theoretical framework: Media Dependency Theory

Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Melvin DeFleur developed the Media Dependency Theory posits that individuals increasingly rely on media as a primary information source to satisfy their need for knowledge and reduce uncertainty. This theory underscores a reciprocal relationship between people and the media, where the media not only disseminates information but also shapes public perceptions, emotions, and behaviours (Ball-Rokeach, 2010). The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified this dependency, particularly for accurate and timely health information, highlighting the media's crucial role in addressing the 'infodemic' – the excessive spread of health information (Ahmad, 2022). Media outlets, such as Aaj Tak and ABP News, play a pivotal role in educating the public, serving as a bridge between official health authorities like WHO and ICMR and the general populace. The Media Dependency Theory suggests that individuals gravitate towards specific media sources perceived as reliable and credible. This research explores the impact of this dependency on viewers of ABP News and AajTak, particularly in terms of their comprehension and interpretation of health-related information during the pandemic.

Research methodology

Research design

This study uses a quantitative content analysis methodology to thoroughly investigate the sources utilised in health reporting by Indian TV news channels (Aaj Tak and ABP News) during the initial COVID-19 wave (March 2020 to May 2020). This methodology

provides a systematic and balanced analysis of the content, in accordance with the objectives of the study.

Data collection

Sampling criteria

The research concentrates on news shows that air between 6 and 11 PM in order to record prime-time reporting, which usually attracts a larger audience.

Data collection procedure

Data collection is conducted using a systematic approach. All news programs aired within the designated time period are recorded, providing information such as the broadcast date, title, content, and referenced sources.

Content analysis process

Source categorization

Sources are categorized into different categories, including official authority (e.g., WHO, ICMR, MoH), specialists, unofficial sources, and others. This categorization enables a thorough assessment of different types of sources.

Reliability assessment:

Every source is evaluated for its credibility and accuracy according to predetermined criteria. This assessment is crucial in ascertaining the reliability of the information presented.

Data analysis

Descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages, are employed to concisely summarize the distribution and attributes of the investigated sources.

Content analysis

Table 1: Aaj Tak NEWS YouTube Video
Source: 2020

Source Used	
	Frequency
WHO	3
MOH	11
Other	13
No	9
Total	36

The current data displays the preferred sources utilised by Aaj Tak and ABP YouTube channels for their coverage of COVID-19 news stories. The Ministry of Health (MOH) is referenced frequently (11 times), which is indicative of the substantial role it plays in determining coverage. Three separate references to the World Health Organisation

(WHO) bring an international dimension into focus. "Other sources" (mentioned 13 times) illustrate the existence of a wide variety of inputs in addition to MOH and WHO. Notably, nine of the examples need to cite their sources, which points to the necessity of transparency. These data can further inform the examination of the source influence and content framing on YouTube channels.

Table 2: ABP NEWS, YouTube Video
Source: 2020

Source Used	
	Frequency
WHO	0
MOH	7
Other	7
No	17
Total	31

Out of a total of 31 occurrences, the Ministry of Health (MOH) was mentioned the most often, with a count of 7. The World Health Organisation (WHO), which was never mentioned during the entire news programs, and other sources were cited 17 times. Whereas, 17 out of the 31 news programs have pointed out the absence of any sources that could be identified. These findings highlight the crucial role that MOH plays in news transmission while also indicating the need for further research into the diversity of sources and the consequences those sources have for the credibility of the media during public health emergencies.

Recommendations

Based on the analysis, the study can make recommendations to improve the quality of health reporting. These recommendations may include:

Diversify sources: It is essential to advocate for news channels to enhance the diversity of their sources by incorporating a comprehensive array of experts, including but not limited to statisticians, virologists, public health officials, and medical practitioners. This offers a more extensive and holistic viewpoint on matters pertaining (Anwar *et al.*, 2020).

Fact-Checking and verification: It is essential to advocate for the implementation of thorough fact-checking and verification procedures prior to the dissemination of health-related information. It is imperative for journalists to diligently verify the authenticity and credibility of their sources while also engaging in the practice of cross-referencing material from various reputable sources (Luengo & García-

Marín, 2020).

Establish editorial guidelines: In order to enhance the quality and accuracy of health reporting, it is imperative to establish comprehensive editing rules. The rules ought to clearly delineate the criteria utilised in the selection and evaluation of sources. The guidelines may encompass various criteria, including the professional credentials, reputation, and track record of the source. (Marušić & Campbell, 2016).

Promote transparency: It is essential to promote and uphold transparency in the process of sourcing. It is imperative for news networks to provide transparency on the origin of information, encompassing the disclosure of the expert or authority's identity and qualifications being cited. The establishment of transparency fosters the development of trust among the audience (Saghafian & Hopp, 2017).

Continuous training: Establish a continuous programme for the provision of training and education to journalists and reporters specialising in health reporting. The educational offerings encompass a range of activities such as workshops, seminars, and courses that aim to enhance comprehension of medical and scientific research, terminology, and effective strategies for disseminating health-related information (Davidoff, 2014).

Engage medical reviewers: Maintain an active training and educational programme focused on health reporting for journalists and reporters. This can include things like workshops, seminars, and courses on comprehending medical and scientific research as well as terminology and the best practices for delivering health information (Steffens *et al.*, 2017).

Balance expertise with perspective: While having specialist knowledge is absolutely necessary, it is also important to think about integrating a variety of perspectives on health-related matters. For instance, the experiences of a patient or a whole community can provide a valuable perspective on the impact that health concerns have in the real world (Müller *et al.*, 2012).

Peer-reviewed research: Insist that primary sources for health reporting come from research and studies that have been examined by experts in the field (McCartney, 2014). Research that has been assessed by one's peers is often seen as being more dependable and accurate (Al-Aboud *et al.*, 2015).

Public health collaboration: Work together with public health organizations and subject matter experts

to ensure that the information provided about health is in accordance with the official recommendations and guidelines (Sweet *et al.*, 2009).

Regular self-assessment: Create a system that allows for regular self-examination as well as evaluation of the reporting processes that are in place. The coverage of news networks should be evaluated on a regular basis, and any necessary adjustments should be made based on viewer comments and knowledge gained. (Baker *et al.*, 2004).

Findings

Our study revealed notable differences in the reliability of sources and accuracy of reporting between Aaj Tak and ABP News. Both channels predominantly relied on government officials and medical professionals, aligning with recommended practices for authoritative sources in health journalism. However, discrepancies in data accuracy from various sources were observed across both channels, underscoring the need for stringent fact-checking during public health crises like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Throughout the pandemic's different stages, both channels consistently favored official and medical sources. A shift in source utilization was noted; patient experiences became more prominent in coverage as the pandemic progressed, although initial reliance was mainly on government officials. This shift underscores the importance of expert input in health reporting and reflects the adaptability of news networks in addressing the evolving information needs of their audience during extended crises. Our research suggests several key improvements for health reporting. Firstly, diversifying sources to offer a more comprehensive view on health issues is crucial. This can be achieved by including a broader range of expert opinions and patient stories. Secondly, establishing a systematic fact-checking process and adhering to strict editorial guidelines are vital for ensuring information reliability and accuracy. Incorporating medical reviewers for fact verification and providing ongoing journalist training in health reporting are recommended. Emphasizing ethical reporting practices and transparency in sourcing information is also crucial for enhancing health journalism quality.

Conclusion

The research conducted has yielded a number of significant recommendations aimed at enhancing the calibre of health reporting. The act of diversifying sources is of utmost importance in order to provide a more thorough and multifaceted outlook on matters pertaining to health. This objective can be accomplished by integrating a broader range of authoritative

perspectives and anecdotal evidence from patients. Additionally, it is imperative to establish a methodical fact-checking procedure and uphold explicit editorial principles to guarantee the dependability and precision of the disseminated material. Proposed measures encompass the implementation of ongoing training programmes for journalists aimed at augmenting their competence in health reporting. Additionally, the involvement of medical reviewers is advocated, with the purpose of meticulously examining and affirming the veracity of the disseminated information. The enhancement of health reporting quality was found to be contingent upon the identification and prioritisation of two key factors: promoting transparency in sources and integrating ethical considerations into reporting processes. The aforementioned findings emphasise the significance of implementing a methodical and empirically supported approach to health journalism.

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Farmers' Protests as Discussed in News Media: A Content Analysis of Debates on Hindi News Channels in December 2020

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ABSTRACT

The farmers' protest against new laws in India marks a historically significant event, gaining prominence for its multifaceted nature. The narrative war that unfolded throughout the year added a unique layer, making it particularly pertinent for scholarly examination. This study delves into the dynamics of the protest, exploring facets such as the level of participation in debates and the intricacies surrounding it. Furthermore, analysing the tone and congruity in discussions sheds light on the alignment between the debate topics and the underlying issues. The focus of these discussions was always on themes directly related to the demonstration itself. Throughout the sessions, a consistent tone of seriousness and assertiveness formed. Disparity in debate congruence with their respective subjects emphasises the significance of monitoring and correcting incongruities in debates to guarantee the quality and relevance of discourse.

Keywords: Farmers' protests, News media, Prime-time TV debates, Representations in debates, Tone of debates

Introduction

In the 21st century, which is a technologically driven society, our actions, ideas, and preferences are bound to be influenced by evolving technology; hence, the role of media has also been increasing exponentially and highly influencing public opinion. Based on the news, people make decisions and have notions about the realm (Cooley, 2009). The key function of media is to inform and provide the public with the information they need to make well-versed policy and leadership decisions. In a democracy, the media operates as a watchdog examining government activities. They establish the agenda for public debate on topics, offer a platform for political expressions, and expedite community growth by serving people to find shared causes, recognise civic groups and solve social problems (Owen, 2017).

Television news has been a dominant public information source for several decades. It is a powerful tool that shapes public opinion and influences people's views on various issues. Television impacts viewers' cognitive, affective, and behavioural aspects (Atkin, 1981). Because of its audio-visual characteristics, it is more helpful in disseminating news and views among the masses than newspaper and radio channels (Aririguzoh, 2011). Due to such particular advantages of television, politicians and policymakers use television

to reach the most significant number of people. Mass communication research scholars unanimously believe that all media significantly influence political opinion. In recent years, the rise of 24-hour news channels and the increasing prevalence of social media have only added to the significance of television news as a source of information.

Television news' role in shaping public opinion and the relationship between the two is a subject of ongoing debate and research. The relationship between television news and public opinion is complex, involving numerous factors that can influence how news is received and processed by the public, as noted by several scholars in media studies. As Grabe and Kamhawi (2009) argue, the effects of television news on public opinion are not forthright, and may hinge on a variety of factors, including the content of the news, the individual's prior beliefs and attitudes, and the context in which the news is consumed (p. 4). In other words, the relationship between television news and public opinion is shaped by many variables that interact in complex ways. Understanding this relationship is crucial to understanding how television news shapes public opinion and the impact that this has on society. One of the crucial factors that influences the relationship between television news and public opinion is the

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content of the news. How a particular issue is framed or presented in the news can significantly impact public opinion. For example, a news story focusing on a specific issue's negative aspects may lead to a negative public perception. In contrast, a story that focuses on the positive aspects of the same issue may lead to a positive public perception.

The media's role in shaping public opinion is framing events and issues. Price (2003) argues that the media does not simply reflect public opinion but actively contributes to forming public opinion by how it frames events and topics. The relationship between television news and public opinion is complex and multifaceted, shaped by a variety of factors, including the content of the news, the individual's prior beliefs and attitudes, the context in which the news is consumed, the underlying structure of the media system, and how events and issues are framed.

The farmers' movement in India has a long and rich history that dates back to post-independence. In the early years after independence, the Indian government made significant efforts to promote agricultural development, including introducing new technologies, establishing cooperatives, and creating credit facilities. However, despite these efforts, farmers' living standards remained low, and many struggled to make ends meet. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the farmers' movement in India gained momentum, with farmers coming together to protest against government policies and demand better crop prices. One of the most notable movements during this period was the *Navnirman* movement, which took place in Gujarat in 1973 and was led by farmers frustrated with the state's economic policies.

In the 1980s, the farmers' movement in India shifted its focus to land rights and access to resources, with several protests taking place throughout the country. In particular, the *Shetkari Sanghatana* movement in Maharashtra, led by Sharad Joshi, sought to challenge the government's agricultural monopoly and push for more private investment (GO, 1993). In the 1990s, the farmers' movement in India shifted its focus again, this time to the issue of water rights. The movement gained national attention with the *Narmada Bachao Andolan*, which protested against constructing large dams in India that would have displaced thousands of farmers and tribals.

In recent years, the farmers' movement in India has gained significant momentum, with large-scale protests and demonstrations taking place across the country. The current wave of protests began in late 2020 when farmers in the northern state of Punjab started protesting against the new farm laws introduced by the Indian government. The laws enacted in September 2020 sought to deregulate the agriculture

sector and provide greater market freedom to farmers. However, the farmers, who are predominantly small and marginal, argued that the laws would harm their interests by leaving them vulnerable to exploitation by corporate interests. The protests quickly spread to other states, with farmers from across the country joining in to demand the repeal of the laws and the implementation of measures to protect their livelihoods. The farmers' movement garnered significant national and international attention, with protests continuing despite repeated attempts by the government to quell them.

Review of literature

Television news has long been considered one of the primary sources of information and news for the general public. Research consistently shows that television news significantly impacts public opinion and political attitudes. A study by Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996) found that television news is one of the most commonly used sources of political information, with nearly 80% of respondents reporting that they regularly watch television news to stay informed about political issues.

In a similar study, Prior (2005) found that television news has a powerful impact on political attitudes and beliefs. Respondents who reported high levels of television news consumption were likelier to hold more polarised political views and less likely to support moderate candidates or political positions. Television news content also plays a significant role in shaping public opinion. A study by Jamieson and Cappella (2008) found that the tone and framing of news stories can significantly impact public opinion. For example, they found that news stories that focused on the negative aspects of a political issue were more likely to shape public opinion in a negative direction.

In contrast, stories that focused on the positive aspects of an issue were more likely to shape public opinion in a positive direction. In addition, studies have shown that the amount of coverage a particular issue receives can impact public opinion. For example, a study by Baum and Jamieson (2015) found that issues that received more media coverage were more likely to be considered important by the general public.

The media can affect public opinion through the use of sensationalism. Sensationalism refers to using attention-grabbing headlines and images to draw attention to a particular issue or event. The media can use sensationalism to generate interest in a specific issue or event, even if it is unimportant. The result is that the public's perception of the importance of the issue or event may be influenced by the media's coverage, even if it is not accurate or relevant (Gitlin, 1980).

Social movements and the media have a complex

and dynamic relationship. Social movements rely on media attention to bring attention to their cause, mobilise support, and ultimately bring about change. Meanwhile, the media plays a critical role in shaping public understanding and opinion about these movements and their goals. One of the ways that social movements utilise the media is through staging public demonstrations, such as marches and protests. The media often cover these events, providing social movements a platform to disseminate their message and raise awareness about their cause. However, the media's coverage of these events is not always favourable to social movements. Research has shown that the media often frame social movement demonstrations negatively, emphasising violence and conflict over the peaceful expression of dissent (Gitlin, 1980). This can impact public opinion and understanding of the social movement, potentially undermining its efforts to achieve its goals.

The role of mass media in determining public opinion and understanding of social movements is also influenced by how events and issues are framed (Price, 2003). The media can frame events and issues differently, emphasising certain story aspects and downplaying others. This framing can impact public understanding and opinion about the social movement and its goals.

Prime-time television shows are a significant part of the media landscape, and their content and themes often reflect and shape public opinion. Research has shown that the messages and themes presented in prime-time shows can significantly impact public attitudes and beliefs (Gerbner, 1980). He found that prime-time shows were a significant source of information for the public and that their messages and themes often reflected the values and beliefs of dominant cultural groups. He also found that repeated exposure to these messages and themes could help shape public opinion.

In a similar study, Morgan and Signorielli (1989) found that prime-time shows significantly impacted public attitudes towards gender roles and relationships. They found that prime-time shows often portrayed women as passive and submissive, which could help to reinforce traditional gender roles and beliefs. Smith and Searles (2013) studied the content and effect of opinion programs during the 2008 U.S. presidential election. Around 58,000 adult U.S. respondents were surveyed by telephone using the random digit dialling method. The data showed that opinion programs made audiences more favourable towards the like-minded candidate and less favourable towards the opposite candidate.

V. Abdul M. (2014) studied the influence of prime-time political news and debates on the viewers' awareness of Malayalam TV news networks before

and after a panel survey was conducted during the 2011 Kerala assembly polls campaigns. He found that the respondents were highly politically aware of the ongoing issues. Males, older people, the well-educated, and employees in the public and private sectors had higher levels of political awareness. Females, homemakers, and students were less aware in comparison to others.

Safullah, (2019) studied the impact of prime-time news coverage on the party's vote increase in the 2014 Lok Sabha election. A total of 73 hours of prime-time news of 10 political parties were considered in the study. It was found that more coverage of election campaigns in prime-time news has a positive impact, and political parties gain significant votes. This study shows that prime-time shows significantly impact the audience's mind.

Rationale of the study

The rationale for conducting a content analysis of media debates related to farmers' protests in India is to understand how media framed the protests through debates and what information and arguments were presented to the public. The farmers' protests in India went on for several months and received widespread media coverage. However, there have been concerns about the accuracy and fairness of the media coverage, with some arguing that the media is biased against the farmers and is presenting a distorted view of the protests. Very little research has been done on the media content of farmers' protests, mostly on newspaper media. TV debates, especially prime-time shows, are most seen by the audiences, thus playing a pivotal role in opinion-making. Debates have more impact than news because, firstly, they provide candidates with a platform to communicate their ideas and policies directly to the public, allowing audiences to make more informed decisions. Second, debates are often more engaging and entertaining than news, which can help to increase audiences' engagement. Third, debates provide a forum for candidates to challenge each other's positions and hold each other accountable, which can help to expose weaknesses and inconsistencies in their arguments.

Research objectives

This research aims to conduct a comprehensive content analysis of media debates on farmers' protests in India. This research would involve collecting and analysing data to identify patterns and trends in the debates' representation, framing, and contents. The objective would be to provide a detailed and nuanced understanding of the debates on farmers' protests in India, including the dominant issues, discourses, actors involved, and the variations in coverage and tone across different media platforms. The findings of this

analysis could be used to inform recommendations for improving the quality and inclusivity of media debates on farmers' protests in India and contribute to broader discussions on media and democracy in the country.

Research questions

1. How are the media debates on farmers' protests in India structured regarding format, duration and participation?
2. What are the dominant issues in debates on farmers' protests in India?
3. What are the significant tones of stakeholders involved in the debates on farmers' protests in India?
4. What is the congruity between the debate topics and the issues discussed in the debates?

Research methodology

Content analysis is one of mass communication's most popular research methods. Content analysis is used to investigate and analyse communication systematically, objectively, and quantitatively to measure variables (Kerlinger, 2000). Content analysis is used traditionally and descriptively to identify what exists (Wimmer and Dominick, 1997).

Content sample selection: The analysis employed a multistage sampling method to select debates for study. In the first stage, content sources were sampled, focusing on Hindi news channels because the protests were centred in the National Capital Region (NCR), which falls within the Hindi-speaking belt. Four prominent Hindi news channels were chosen based on their TRP ratings and popularity- Aaj Tak, ABP News, Republic Bharat, and NDTV. These channels were selected to ensure a diverse representation of perspectives and coverage of the protests. In the second stage, the selection of dates was conducted. The agitation against the new farm laws began with sporadic protests in September 2020. Still, it gained momentum after the farmers' union in Punjab and Haryana called for the "Delhi Chalo" march on November 25, 2020. The clash between Delhi police and protesting farmers on November 26 garnered nationwide attention. Following the clash, on November 28, the government offered to hold talks with the unions. Given that the farmers' issues were most debated during this period, content from December 2020 was selected for this study.

Eight debates, two from each channel, were selected and studied at an average interval of 15 days using available samples. From Aaj Tak channel, '*Farmers Protest: Sarkar aur Kisano ke Beech Kab Banegi Baat?*' broadcast on December 1, 2020, and '*Farmers Protest: Kya Saatvein Daur ki Baatcheet Mein Maan Jayenge Kisan?*' broadcast on December 16, 2020,

were taken as samples. From ABP News, '*Hoonkar: Why Govt Failed to Gain Farmers' Trust?*' broadcast on December 2, 2020, and '*Hoonkar: Kisan-Sarkar mein Takrar, Arthvyavastha ka Bantadhaar!*' broadcast on December 15, 2020, were selected for the analysis. '*Kisan Ade, Baithak Benatiza*' broadcast on December 1 2020, and '*21 Din Se Ghamasan, Kab Samadhan?*' broadcast on December 16, 2020, from Republic Bharat channel were selected. From NDTV India, '*Farmers Protest: Kisano Ki Farm Laws Wapas Lene Ki Maang*' and '*Farmers Protest: Kyu Bane Takrao Ke Halat*' broadcast on December 5 2020 and November 29, 2020, respectively, were studied. These debates were thoroughly observed and analysed regarding the representation of different stakeholders, duration given to them, dominant issues discussed, stakeholders' tones, and the congruency between debate topics and issues discussed.

Structure of the debates

All analysed debate shows featuring a host or moderator exhibited a multi-panel list format. Each debate was initiated with an opening remark from the moderator, followed by coverage of recent developments related to the farmers' protest and concise interviews with ministers, leaders, and celebrities. The number of panel lists varied between 4 and 9, totalling 45 participants representing diverse political parties, experts, and leaders from different farmers' organisations. The cumulative duration of the eight debates amounted to 334 minutes, with an average duration of 41.50 minutes per debate.

Notably, the Republic Bharat channel conducted the lengthiest debates, averaging 53 minutes, while NDTV India hosted the shortest, with an average duration of 33 minutes.

The issues debated

The examination and analysis of eight debates broadcast across four Hindi media channels indicate a diverse range of topics under discussion. A total of 10 issues emerged as prominent subjects in these debate shows. The critical areas of focus included the politicisation of the farmers' protest, ongoing negotiation talks between the government and farmers' representatives, minimum support price (MSP), maoism, corporatism, anti-national activities, Agriculture Produce Market Committee (APMC), inflation, communalism, and economic consequences.

'Politicisation of the farmers' protest' was discussed the maximum number of times, 7 out of 8 debates. 'Negotiation talks' between government and farmers representatives were discussed in 6 debates. 'MSP (Minimum Support Price)' and 'Maoism' (protest hijacked by maoists) were discussed in 5

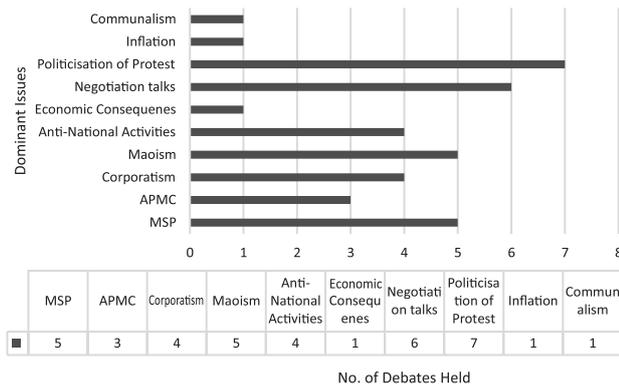


Fig. 1: Dominant issues primarily discussed in the debates

debates. ‘Anti-national Activities’ (Khalistan, naxal, etc.) and ‘Corporatisation’ were discussed in 4 debates. APMC was discussed in 3 debates, and the economic consequences of the protest, ‘Inflation’ and ‘Communalism’ were discussed in one debate. Major issues which were set as the main agenda of the debates were:

- The politicisation of the protest by opposition parties - In the debates, it was tried to portray that opposition parties are trying to destabilise the government by misleading the innocent farmers.
- Negotiation talks - The talks between the government and the farmers’ representatives were one of the main agendas discussed in the debate. Those in favour of the protest were firm in their support for repealing the laws, whereas those against the protest showed trust in the government and were optimistic about the negotiation talks.
- MSP - It was discussed affluently in the debates. The agenda about MSP that debates tried to set was that the government is trying to scrap MSP through the farm laws.
- Maoism - The hijacking of the innocent farmers’ protest by left maoists naxalites was discussed. The presence of Left-wing students and political leaders at the protest site was discussed notably.
- Corporatisation - Corporatisation of agricultural activities, markets, lands, etc., through new farm laws was discussed.
- Anti-national activities in the name of protest - CAA activists’ involvement in the protests, the statement of Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, and Khalistani activities were also discussed.

Representation in terms of participation

The analysis extended to examining the representation of diverse stakeholders in the debates, with participants drawn from political parties, farmers’ organisations, and field experts. The total number of participants amounted to 45, and they were categorised into two distinct groups: a) individuals who expressed

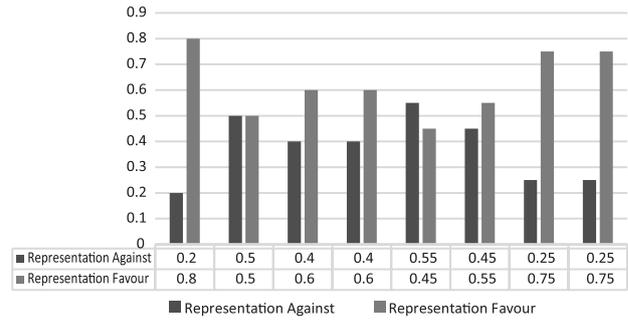


Fig. 2: Representation in terms of participation

positions against the protest, and b) those who advocated in favour of the protest.

Figure 2 illustrates the representation of stakeholders aligned in favour of and opposing the farmers’ protest, and among the total of 45 stakeholders, 17 (0.375) expressed viewpoints against the farmers’ protest, while 28 (0.625) articulated positions supporting the protest.

Representation in terms of duration

The analysis extended to the representation of stakeholders based on their respective screen time allocations in each debate. The total screen time accorded to each stakeholder in every debate was categorised as ‘Fair’ or ‘Less.’ Subsequently, an aggregate assessment was conducted on the overall screen time allocated to those in favour and those against the subject matter. The tabulated presentation below delineates which side received fair or less screen time.

Table 1: Representation in terms of duration

Screen Time	Against	Favour
Debate 1 (n=5)	Fair	Less
Debate 2 (n=4)	Less	Fair
Debate 3 (n=5)	Less	Fair
Debate 4 (n=5)	Less	Fair
Debate 5 (n=9)	Fair	Less
Debate 6 (n=9)	Less	Fair
Debate 7 (n=4)	Less	Fair
Debate 8 (n=4)	Less	Fair

Table 1 indicates that individuals supporting the protests received a greater overall allocation of screen time than those opposing them. Across the eight debates analysed, proponents of the farmers’ protest prevailed in six instances, securing most of the screen time. Conversely, those expressing dissent or advocating for the farm laws were granted more screen time in only two debates.

Tone of the debates

The tone of a debate is a crucial element that shapes

the atmosphere, influences audience perception, and ultimately determines the effectiveness of communication. Tone plays a pivotal role in shaping public perception. Analysing the tone of participants provides insights into the level of civility, respect, or adversarial nature of the discourse. Understanding these nuances is crucial for evaluating the overall quality of public dialogue. Secondly, the tone in TV debates contributes significantly to the persuasiveness of arguments. This analysis helps uncover the effectiveness of communication strategies in conveying messages and sway public opinion. After analysing the debates, six prominent tones were categorised, namely (a) Disrespectful: Using foul language against counterparts or any other entity; (b) Serious: emphasising the seriousness of the issue; (c) Assertive: exudes confidence and authority; (d) Defensive: concerned with justifying actions and words; (e) Incoherent: lacking usual clarity in speech or thought; and f) Optimistic: conveying positive outlook.

Table 2: Tone and number of participants

Tone	No. of Representatives	Overall Percentage
Disrespectful	5	0.11
Serious	21	0.47
Assertive	24	0.53
Defensive	15	0.33
Incoherent	18	0.4
Optimistic	15	0.33

As Figure 3 shows, one-third of all participants (N=45) were optimistic in their tone. 5 out of 45 representatives used foul or uncivilised words against other participants. 21 debated aggressively and were serious in nature. Twenty-four (>half of all the participants) were assertive during the debate. Meanwhile, 15 (one-third) participants were defensive. 18 out of 45 participants talked incoherently in the debates.

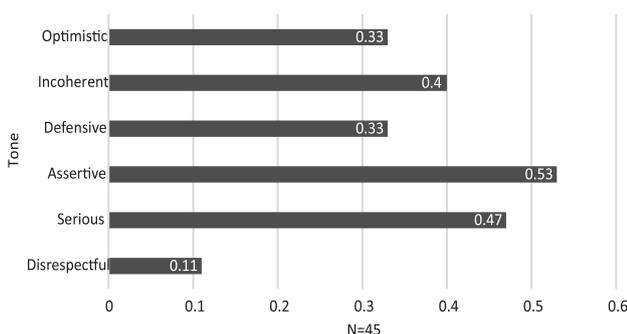


Fig. 3: Tone of the overall participants

Tone of participant in favour of protest

Of all the participants studied, 28 debated favouring the farmers’ protest. The tones of those speakers were categorised based on the given six parameters. Most of them were serious, assertive and incoherent in their tone. Only those who supported the farmers’ protest spoke disrespectfully against their counterparts.

Table 3: Tone of participants in favour

	Disrespectful	Serious	Assertive	Defensive	Incoherent	Optimistic
Favour	5	15	14	8	12	9
Favour (%)	0.18	0.53	0.5	0.28	0.43	0.32

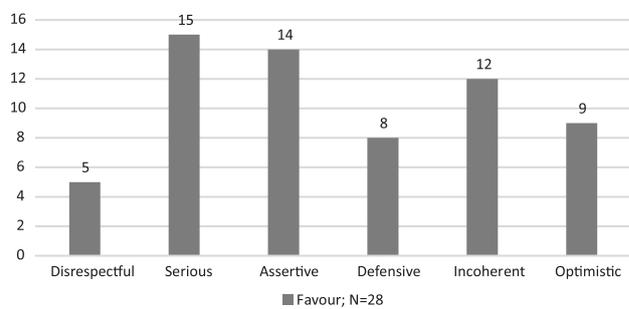


Fig. 4: Tone of participants in favour

Figure 4 suggests that over half of them were serious and assertive while debating. Many of them, i.e., 43%, were incoherent during the debate. 18% of speakers in favour were disrespectful and used foul language against their counterparts. 0.28% of the total in favour of the farmers’ protest used a defensive tone, whereas 0.32% were optimistic in the debates.

Tone of participants against the protest

Out of 45 participants, 17 spoke against the protest and defended the new farm laws. None of them used a disrespectful tone against their counterparts. Meanwhile, 0.35% of them were serious in their tone. 0.59 % of them were assertive and defensive in their tone. While 0.18% were only incoherent during the debates. One-third of the participants were optimistic and objective during the debates (Fig. 5 and Table 4).

Table 4: Tone of participants against the protest

	Disrespectful	Serious	Assertive	Defensive	Incoherent	Optimistic
Against	0	6	10	10	3	6
Against (%)	0	0.35	0.59	0.59	0.18	0.35

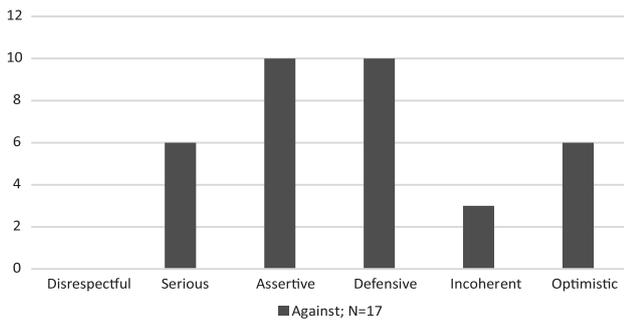


Fig. 5: Tone of participants against the protest

Comparative examination of tones in favour and against

A comparative examination of tone in favour and against a particular subject or issue is conducted to comprehensively understand the dynamics within debates. Studying the tone helps uncover any biases or imbalances in how arguments are presented. It allows for evaluating whether both sides can express their views and whether the discourse is characterised by respect or adversarial behaviour. The tone in debates significantly shapes how the public perceives the discussed topics and the individuals presenting their views. Comparative analysis helps gauge how different tones contribute to the overall reception of arguments, influencing public opinion and discourse. A comparative examination of tone is a valuable tool for evaluating communication quality, fairness, and effectiveness in debates, contributing to a more informed and discerning public discourse.

Figure 6 illustrates that participants in the debate who were in favour of the protest were more serious, incoherent, and disrespectful in their tone during the debates. Meanwhile, participants who were against the protest or supported the farm laws were optimistic, assertive, and defensive in their tone during the debates. Both sides were almost equally optimistic during the debates.

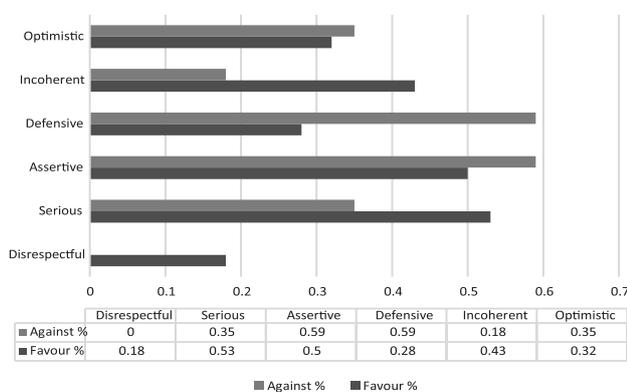


Fig. 6: Overall comparison of the tones of participants in favour and against

Congruency in debates and their respective topics

Studying the congruency between debates and their respective topics is crucial for comprehensively

understanding discourse dynamics. This exploration sheds light on the harmony or discordance in the alignment between the discussed subject matter and the arguments presented by participants. The necessity of such a study arises from the potential impact on effective communication, critical thinking, and the development of informed perspectives. By studying congruency, researchers can distinguish whether participants stay on-topic, maintain logical coherence, or deviate into tangential discussions. Furthermore, this examination aids in evaluating the overall health of public discourse, helping identify instances of misinformation, diversionary tactics, or genuine engagement.

Table 5: Congruency of debates with their respective topics

Debate	Congruency
Debate 1	Mostly Congruent
Debate 2	Mostly Incongruent
Debate 3	Mostly Congruent
Debate 4	Mostly Congruent
Debate 5	Mostly Incongruent
Debate 6	Mostly Incongruent
Debate 7	Mostly Congruent
Debate 8	Mostly Congruent

Among the sampled debates, a notable pattern emerges as 3 out of the 8 discussions exhibit a substantial degree of incongruity with their assigned topics. Participants turned away from the central theme in these instances, introducing loose or unrelated arguments. This divergence could indicate a lack of focus, misinterpretation, or deliberate attempts to sidetrack the discourse. Conversely, most debates, totalling 5 out of 8, maintained a commendable level of congruency with their respective topics. Participants in these discussions followed closely to the central subject matter, presenting arguments and evidence directly related to the assigned theme.

Limitations

While this study provides valuable insights into TV debates, it is important to recognise its inherent limitations. The sample size may restrict the generalisability of findings, limiting our ability to draw broad conclusions about the overall landscape of televised discourse. Additionally, selecting only four channels introduces the potential for channel-specific biases, overlooking variations in debates aired on other platforms. The study underscores the need for future research with larger and more varied samples to increase the robustness of our understanding. As media landscapes evolve, so should our methodologies for studying them.

Conclusion

This study underscores that media debates provided more voices in favour of the farmers' protest. The focal points of these deliberations consistently revolved around issues directly linked to the farmers' protest itself. Throughout these discussions, a prevailing tone emerged: seriousness and assertiveness. Supporters of the protest tended to adopt a serious and assertive tone, emphasising the gravity of their stance. Conversely, those opposing the protest exhibited an assertive and defensive tone, reflecting intense pressure within the discourse. The observed discrepancy in congruity in debates with their respective topics highlights the importance of monitoring and addressing incongruities in debates to ensure the quality and relevance of discourse, ultimately contributing to a more productive and informed public dialogue.

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Viewers' Perceptions and Expectations regarding News Programs in the Rajasthani Language: A Study

YOGESH KUMAR GUPTA¹ & MANOJ KUMAR SHARMA²

ABSTRACT

Over the past ten years, regional language programs have become a major growth engine for TV viewing. The "What India Watched 2019" study from BARC India noted that between 2016 and 2019, the number of viewing minutes for the majority of regional language programs has doubled. The first public regional channel in Rajasthan was DD Rajasthan, which debuted from Jaipur in 1987, followed by the first private regional news channel, ETV Rajasthan; which is now known as NEWS 18 Rajasthan. Currently 12 regional and local news channels are broadcasting news in Rajasthan. According to the 2011 census in Rajasthan, where over 25 million people speak Rajasthani, only 27% of the population speaks Hindi. But in Rajasthan, all private regional news channels, except DD Rajasthan telecast news programs in the Hindi Language whereas more than 35 per cent of people in Rajasthan speak the mother tongue Rajasthani. As per the Joshi Committee Report 1983, the development of software for the urban elite audience is not for the rural population. Kendriya Sahitya Akademi has also recognized Rajasthani as an independent language, but it has not yet received constitutional recognition. The researcher attempts to analyse the viewer's choices; preference and response for news programs' language. This article is based on field research and a survey conducted in Jaipur district. The primary data includes a survey and interviews with viewers. A structured survey with questions on the aforementioned goals was distributed to 200 respondents in Jaipur city.

Keywords: Audience perception, News programs, Rajasthani language Regional media, Rural and Urban public

Introduction

The revolution in Indian television media was brought about by the economic liberalization of 1991, which significantly altered television related services. Today, almost 392 news channels broadcast news at the national and regional levels. The first television broadcast aired in Rajasthan on August 1, 1975, as part of the Satellite Instructional Television Experiment, which targeted the districts of Kota, Sawai Madhopur, and Jaipur. Doordarshan Kendra in Jaipur was set up on June 1, 1987, at Jhalana Doongri, and transmission started on July 6, 1987.

In Rajasthan, regional news channels are broadcasting news, including the first private regional news channel, News 18 Rajasthan, formerly known as ETV Rajasthan. The state administration has taken the initiative to broadcast a bulletin in the state language. On November 7, 2014, ETV Rajasthan started its inaugural "Aapni Khabran" bulletin in the Rajasthani language (Sachdeva, 2015).

In 2021, regional channels received 26 percent more ad volume compared to national channels. Regional ad volume is 836 hours per year, and national ad volume is 664 hours per year (Jaisani & Pradhan, 2021). According to Supreme Court order of 1995, airwaves or frequencies are public property. In the people's best interests and to guard against the violation of their rights, their use must be monitored and regulated by a public authority. (*Supreme Court Judgement on Airwaves | Ministry of Information and Broadcasting | Government of India*, 2016).

Rajasthan is the largest state of India, and the local language of the people here is Rajasthani. The history of the Rajasthani language has been very glorious. Grierson (1990) first used the term "Rajasthani" for the language of Rajasthan in his book "Linguistics Survey of India." Grierson gave a collective name for all the languages spoken in the region. This name has been accepted for the language of the state. Kendriya Sahitya Akademi has also recognized Rajasthani as

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an independent language, but it has not yet received constitutional recognition. Also Grierson was the first to present a scientific analysis of the Rajasthani language as an independent language. He has written about five sub-branches of Rajasthani. In India, Rajasthani is written in the Devanagari script, an abugida that is written from left to right. Earlier, the Mahajani script, or Modiya, was used to write Rajasthani. (Rajasthani Language, 2024).

Regional news channels encompass media outlets that are primarily affiliated with specific geographic regions or states. This category encompasses local television channels, as well as the region-specific segments of nationally recognized news channels, exemplified by entities like News 18 Rajasthan and Zee Rajasthan News (Sachdeva, 2015).

Review of literature

The proliferation of regional media within the region is indeed a positive development. However, it is worth acknowledging that these channels, despite their claims of offering distinct local content, are primarily accessible solely within the state capital. Furthermore, the perceived uniqueness of their content can be somewhat compromised. Even when the state's various districts receive reasonable coverage, the news landscape is often overshadowed by extensive reporting on political matters and criminal activities. It is essential to underscore that the fundamental mission of a media outlet is to serve as a conduit that informs and enlightens the society it caters to, ensuring comprehensive coverage of all pertinent and critical events transpiring within the state (Sachdeva, 2015).

It becomes evident that the media has exerted a substantial influence on the evolutionary trajectory of Indian languages. The scope and quality of regional media, along with its pervasive exposure, play a pivotal role in directly shaping the growth and sustainability of these languages. This dynamic is especially pronounced when considering media as a catalyst for social change. However, it is imperative to acknowledge that, historically, media in India has been subject to various constraints and regulations, including instances like the Vernacular Press Act during the Emergency period. These limitations have at times hindered the autonomy and vibrancy of local media outlets. Consequently, the impact of regional media on the everyday usage of Indian languages and their societal perception cannot be underestimated (Kumar, 2010).

In line with these observations, the underscores the pressing need to enhance the quality of editorial content within regional media. The study's ultimate inference is that content should assume a more

educational stance. In essence, it should prioritize informativeness and equilibrium over sensationalism and sensational news, aligning with the broader goal of fostering a more informed and balanced media landscape (Shendurnikar, 2011).

In terms of content, Aaj Tak stands as the audience's preferred choice in both Jaipur and Patna. On the other hand, other news channels, notably Zee and Star, appear to grapple more with issues pertaining to their news strategies than concerns related to the presentation of news. Contemporary dynamics indicate a perceptible shift in the meaning of news, as news is increasingly perceived as an entertainment product, signifying a transformative departure from traditional journalistic paradigms (Krishnatray *et al.*, 2010).

In academic discourse, the concept of proximity encompasses both physical and psychological dimensions, signifying that individuals typically exhibit a heightened interest in subjects that are geographically and cognitively nearer to them. The study by Devereux (2008) shows that, the notion that local occurrences exert a more significant influence on individuals compared to events transpiring in more remote locations. Consequently, it follows that communication conducted in the local vernacular has a more pronounced impact on the audience, mitigating any linguistic disparities that might otherwise create a communication gap (Devereux, 2008).

The utilization of local languages in communication holds considerable value, facilitating both comprehension and preservation of the linguistic heritage intrinsic to a particular region. This practice not only enhances accessibility but also operates as a safeguard for the vitality of local languages (Kumar, 2010).

In a developing country like India, where over 70 percent of the population resides in rural areas, agriculture emerges as a significant concern. However, it is rather surprising that news producers do not deem it worthy of inclusion in their news bulletins. Notably, agriculture holds paramount importance for a considerable portion of the population, and its neglect in news reporting is a concerning oversight (Kuthiala & Singh, 2006).

- According to the 2011 Census, Rajasthan in there are 33 administrative districts, characterized by an urban population constituting 24.87 per cent of the total, while the rural populace accounts for the remaining 75.13 per cent. The literacy rate in Rajasthan stood at 66.11 per cent, with a notable gender disparity. Male literacy registered at 79.19 per cent, while female literacy lagged at 52.12 per cent. Specifically within rural areas of Rajasthan,

male literacy was 76.16 per cent, whereas female literacy was notably lower at 42.20 per cent. The overall literacy rate in rural Rajasthan averaged 61.44 per cent. The census data from 2011 indicates that the total count of literate individuals in rural areas of the state amounted to 26,471,786. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that, according to the 2011 Census, Rajasthan is home to over 25 million individuals who communicate in the Rajasthani language, residing in various geographical regions across the state (Rajasthani Language, 2024).

- **The initiative known as “Helo Mayad Bhasha Ro”** (advocating for my mother tongue) has been instigated by the Rajasthani Yuva Samiti. This campaign strategically aligns with the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, aimed at garnering support from the vast community of non-resident individuals of Rajasthani origin scattered across the globe. The Samiti employed a Twitter-based launch for this movement, amassing over 2,000 tweets and employing the hashtag # for this purpose.

It is worth highlighting that Rajasthani, a distinct language, has garnered recognition from prominent institutions such as India’s National Academy of Letters, the Sahitya Akademi, and the University Grants Commission (UGC). This recognition has translated into its inclusion in the curriculum at educational institutions like Jai Narain Vyas University (JNVU) and Maharaja Sayajirao University (MS University). Additionally, the State Board of Secondary Education (SBSE) has incorporated Rajasthani as an optional subject since the year 1973. Rajasthani is typically transcribed in the Devanagari script, an abugida system characterized by writing from left to right (Rajasthani Language Movement, 2023)

Research objectives

1. To ascertain the audience’s inclination toward viewing news programs in Rajasthani language.
2. To ascertain the audience’s preferences regarding the types of news programs genre they favour watching in Rajasthani language.

Research questions

- RQ1. Does the audience prefer to watch news programs in Rajasthani language?
- RQ2. What are the audience’s preferences when it comes to the types of news programs they favour watching in Rajasthani language?
- RQ3. What time do audiences prefer to watch news programs in Rajasthani language?
- RQ4. Is it beneficial to broadcast news in the Rajasthani language?

Methodology

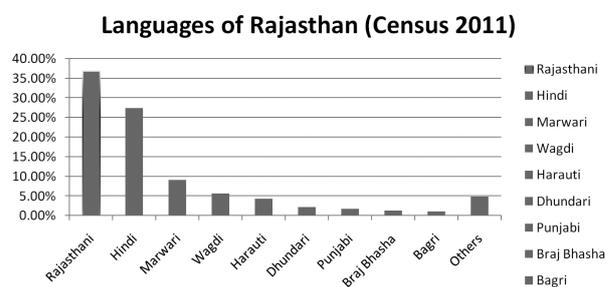
The objective of this survey-based study was to analyze the viewers’ perceptions of regional news channels in Rajasthan. This study covers 200 respondents; those watching regional TV news channels. The convenience sampling method was adopted for the study. Jaipur is the capital of Rajasthan. It has the highest number of viewers and population, were chosen for the study to obtain feedback from audiences.

Regional news channels in Rajasthan



Source: (Media in Jaipur, Newspapers in Jaipur, News Channels in Jaipur, n.d.)

The languages in Rajasthan (Census 2011)



Source: (Rajasthani Language, 2024)

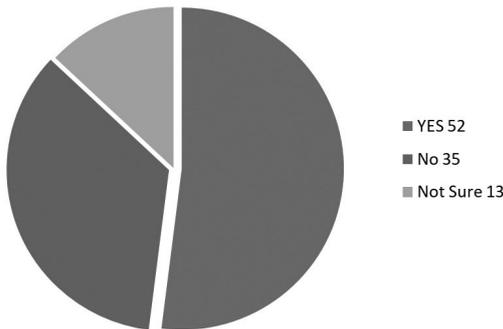
Analysis and discussion

Communication in one’s local language contributes significantly to the preservation of cultural identity and facilitates the empowerment of local journalism. It also plays a pivotal role in fostering robust community bonds. Regional news channels have been in operation in Rajasthan since 1985, yet the development of news content in the Rajasthani language has not progressed as expected. With the exception of DD Rajasthan, there is a noticeable absence of channels that prioritize news coverage in Rajasthani language.

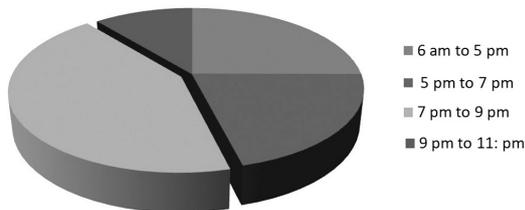
According to audience feedback, the inclusion of news broadcasts in the Rajasthani language could be highly beneficial for the rural populace. According to (Kuthiala & Singh, 2006), it is worth noting that approximately 70 per cent of Rajasthan’s population resides in rural areas, yet the news content language has predominantly catered to the urban demographic.

The channels often priorities content aimed at maximizing TRP ratings. For instance, Zee Rajasthan and News 18 Rajasthan are widely popular in Rajasthan, but they primarily highlight national news. To better serve the local populace, it is essential for regional news channels to include Rajasthani language broadcast programs, accentuating regional news, and featuring content related to social development and government initiatives that cater to the specific needs of rural communities.

Is it beneficial to broadcast news in the Rajasthani language?



The preferred time to watch news in the Rajasthani language.



Is news broadcast in the Rajasthani language beneficial?

Respondents indicate that viewers prefer to watch programs in their local language. In rural audiences and those who have a strong connection with their local language express a desire for news programs in their language. Respondents elaborated that Hindi programs can be challenging to comprehend, especially for the illiterate population. They often miss out on important news related to agriculture, weather, and the spread of diseases in animals. For instance, a significant incident in Rajasthan, the outbreak of cow flu, resulted in the deaths of thousands of cows. Villagers were unable to effectively address this disease due to the communication gap between remote areas audiences. The preferred time to watch news in the Rajasthani language reveals a preference for news programs presented in the regional language, with a strong inclination towards viewing these programs during the evening hours, specifically from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., as this is the time when they are free from their daily tasks and wish to receive news in their native language. Urban audiences,

on the contrary, seem to be generally satisfied with Hindi news programs.

Share of news genre topics in the prime-time

- News Genre
- Political
- Crime
- Entrainment
- Sports
- Discussion
- Environment
- Development
- Social
- War
- Technology
- Agriculture
- Social issues
- Religion

News program’ genres are broadcast on news channels, and the order of priority for airing news programs is from top to bottom. According to Dewal and Kumar (2017),

Conclusion

This study found that broadcasting programs in Rajasthani language will help in understanding the current weather situation, the implementation of local government development policies, issues related to animals, agricultural production, and the current state and regional situation. While most programs were telecast in Hindi, having some programs broadcast in the regional language can preserve the culture and provide support to the remote population of the region, helping them comprehend the beneficial policies and schemes in place.

News 18 Rajasthan, Zee Rajasthan, and DD Rajasthan are popular regional news channels that broadcast news and provide information for the audience. Private regional news channels primarily focus on political and crime beats, but other segments of news are also crucial for the audience.

If the channels were to present news stories in the regional language, it is likely that many of the prevalent issues within the region could be effectively addressed. These issues encompass various concerns, including water harvesting, child marriage, child education, women’s rights, magic tricks, and government policies to assist impoverished communities. Presently, these topics are predominantly covered in Hindi.

If the channels communicate in the regional language, it will potentially serve as a remedy for the issues in the state. According to the 2011 census data, the number of Rajasthani language speakers in the

region surpasses that of Hindi speakers. Therefore, utilizing the local language for communication, especially in villages and remote areas, can significantly enhance the audience's ability to engage with information and news content and contribute to the development of the region.

Broadcasting news programs in regional languages is essential for ensuring audiences receive timely, relevant, and comprehensible information. It empowers these communities, preserves their cultural heritage, and contributes to more inclusive and informed rural societies.

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Indophobic Western Media and their Negative Narrative building: Extensions of Pernicious Colonial Tactics in the Postcolonial Era

YASH DEEP SINGH¹

ABSTRACT

In today's globalized and digitized world with expanding internet access, the impact of digitalized press has propelled swiftly, enabling it to shape, manipulate and influence public opinions on a global scale. In general, the mindset of Western media agencies is inherently and discreetly colonial, racist and xenophobic, although they pretend not to be so explicitly. An in-depth close analysis of the ways in which Western media usually projects India bears testimony to the prejudices, ill-will, mocking attitudes and vilifying intent of the Western media houses towards India. The Western media reporting on India is agenda-driven, and the agenda is to systematically defame the democratic and secular credentials of India, defile the image of India's democratically elected Government and its Prime Minister, in particular, create negative perceptions about Indian society and work as a catalyst for disintegrating India's nationalistic unity. This article explores the Indophobic mindset, pernicious mentality and divisive tactics of the Western media that systematically creates and circulates anti-India narratives for manipulating unfavourable global perceptions pertaining to the democratically elected Indian Government and the people of India.

Keywords: Western media, India, Prejudices, Narrative building, Indophobia, Propaganda

Introduction

Baudrillard (1998) opined in his book *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*, "Journalists and advertisers are mythic operators: they present the object or the event as drama, as fiction. They offer it up reinterpreted and might even, at a pinch, construct it deliberately" (p. 127). This makes good sense in today's era of widespread internet access and 360-degree exposure to digital media. Consequently, public opinion and general worldview in the 21st century get influenced to a substantial degree by media-moulded sensibility shaped through the narratives craftily created as well as controlled by the Western media houses that have global networks as well as wide-scale digital circulation. Shamelessly shunning the objectivity and even-handed ethical attitude, which is a pre-requisite for any responsible media agency, the most influential news agencies of UK and USA, namely *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Guardian*, *BBC*, *CNN*, *The New Statesman*, *The Independent*, *The Telegraph* and *The Economist* collectively and strategically follow specific pre-

decided templates in their reportage pertaining to India. Quite often, these media agencies disseminate lopsided half-truths, selective criticism, exaggerated or cooked-up stories and prejudiced vicious opinions that are wishfully-fabricated propaganda about the Indian state of affairs, meant to hammer predisposed media-moulded negative perceptions in the psyche of readers.

Review of literature

The roots of negative reporting regarding India can be traced far back to the racist Indophobic mindset of Western colonial-era officials plagued with White-supremacist ideology. During the colonial era, several Western intellectuals and colonial officials discreetly used to engage in negative narrative building that projected Indians as racially inferior barbarians bereft of civilized socio-cultural ethos. The views of celebrated Western personalities like James Mill, Thomas Babington Macaulay and Winston Churchill can quintessentially illustrate the deep-rooted racist loathing that the West has persistently harboured towards India for the past several centuries. James

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Mill in *History of British India*, Volume-1 published in 1817 tries to prove that the natives of India are of an inferior race, weak in morals, character, intellect, physical abilities, culturally degraded and of degenerated manners. The following excerpt from his book is indicative of his deep-rooted sense of racial bias towards Indians:

The love of repose reigns in India with more powerful sway than in any other region probably of the globe. This listless apathy and corporeal weakness of the natives of Hindustan have been ascribed to the climate under which they live. There is a state of barbarity and rudeness which implies, perhaps, a weakness of mind too great to be capable of perceiving, with clearness sufficient to operate upon the will, the benefits of labour. The muscular strength, however, of the Hindus, is small; their stature is in general considerably below the European standard (p.410).

The ages-old Western disdain towards Indians can also be well traced through this excerpt from the document titled “Minutes on Education in India” (1835), drafted by Mr Macaulay:

A single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia. The intrinsic superiority of Western literature is, indeed, fully admitted by those members of the Committee who support the oriental plan of education. It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say that all the historical information that has been collected from all the books written in the Sanskrit language is less valuable than what may be found in the most paltry abridgements used at preparatory schools in England.

Even a century later, the Indophobic biases rooted deeply in the Western psyche get manifested through the famous speech “Our Duty in India” delivered by renowned British statesman, Winston Churchill on 18th March, 1931, in the Albert Hall, London:

Here you have nearly 350 million of people lifted to a civilization and a level of peace, order, sanitation and progress far above anything they could possibly have achieved themselves or could maintain. This wonderful fact is due to the guidance and authority of a few thousands of British officials who have for generations presided over the development of India. If that authority is injured or destroyed, the whole efficiency of the services, defensive, administrative, medical, hygienic, judicial, upon which the Indian masses depend for their culture and progress, will perish with it. India will fall back quite rapidly through the centuries into the barbarism and privations of the Middle Ages (Churchill, 1931).

Such misleading discourses that projected Indians as an inferior race incompetent of efficient

self-rule due to their inferior culture and barbaric temperament legitimised and normalised the notions of White supremacist ideology. Ironically, even in today’s era, Western media is plagued with the same prejudiced outlook towards India. Further, their neo-colonial intent to wreck Indian prestige propels them to fabricate demeaning narratives about India with the help of a handful of armchair journalists, pernicious columnists and biased editors who have little understanding of the ground realities and are driven by politically motivated agendas. The Western colonisers also harboured hidden motives and discreet designs to disintegrate India’s socially harmonious fabric by fanning the sectarian divide and exploiting the communal faultiness among the various sections of the multicultural Indian society. In the aftermath of the Great Indian Mutiny of 1857, when the combined efforts of Hindu and Muslim soldiers supported by both Hindu and Muslim native monarchs and chieftains jerked the British Colonial Empire in India to its very core. The colonial authorities tactfully devised the policy of ‘Divide and Rule’ on the basis of the recommendations made by several British–Indian officials. The Chief-of-Staff from 1857 to 1859 in British India, Sir William Rose Mansfield was strongly of the opinion that “Mussalmans should not be in the same company or troop with Hindus or Sikhs, and that the two latter should not be mingled together. The motto of the regimental Commander-in-Chief must be for the future ‘Divide et impera’” (Stewart, 1947, p. 156). Lord Elphinstone (Governor of Bombay in 1859) candidly asserted, “Divide et impera was the old Roman motto and it should be ours” (Stewart, 1947, p. 157). The colonial-era Major General Sir HT Tucken had similar opinions and he envisaged the encouragement of caste and religious differences to “divide and so neutralise the strength of the castes and nationalities” (Stewart, 1947, p. 157) that resided in the Indian subcontinent. The Eden Committee Report supported the recommendations of the Jonathan Peel Commission and asserted that the Army men serving under British Rule in the post-mutiny era should be “divided into distinct bodies, so distributed that they shall be deprived, as far as possible, of national sentiment and interest” (Stewart, 1947, p. 158). Lord Curzon’s decision in 1905 to partition Bengal on communal lines and later the partition of India in 1947, were much in sync with the British colonial policy of divide and rule.

Research objective

The objective of this research paper is to highlight the problematic nature of the biased journalistic approach of the Western media towards India, expose the anti-India propaganda masqueraded as journalism

and trace the roots of such pernicious projections in the colonial-era attitudes of ‘orientalism’ that colours general Western perceptions even today. The paper makes an attempt to logically prove this argument that the Western media is engaged in politically motivated negative narrative building, by drawing parallels between the tones, tenor and terminology of the Western digital press and the xenophobic discourses of colonial-era officials. Through this comparative analysis of a large number of published pieces and colonial discourses, this paper makes an attempt to testify the fact that the present-day Western media has been systematically functioning as an instrument of anti-India propaganda motivated by pernicious intentions to derogate India’s reputation and manoeuvre communal polarization to weaken it, exactly like the racist colonial officials whose colonial discourses and policy to ignite sectarian discord finds extensions through Western media in the post-colonial era.

Research methodology

Nearly 200 articles, opinion pieces and editorials that were published in the ten most widely circulated Western media digital platforms (i.e. *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Guardian*, *BBC*, *CNN*, *The New Statesman*, *The Independent*, *The Telegraph* and *The Economist*) were taken into consideration. The headlines/titles of these digitally published pieces were studied closely and carefully examining their terminology, thrust area and the impression they created. Based on their thematic focus, these headlines/titles were clustered into following three categories and then distributed into seven Tables, based on the individual media agency that has published them:

- (A) Communal issues projecting Indian minorities as victims of majoritarian persecution.
- (B) Questioning and downgrading India’s secular democratic credentials.
- (C) Degrading the image of democratically elected Prime Minister of India and his Government.

Table 1: Sample of the headlines used in The New York Times regarding portrayal of India

(A) Communal issues projecting Indian minorities as victims of majoritarian persecution	(B) Questioning and downgrading India’s secular democratic credentials	(C) Degrading the image of democratically elected Prime Minister of India and his Government
New Indian textbooks purged of Muslim history and Hindu extremism (Published Online on 6 th April, 2023)	India’s proud tradition of a free press is at risk (Published Online on 12 th February, 2023)	Modi’s final assault on India’s press freedom has begun (Published Online on 8 th March, 2023)
As Hindu extremists call for killing of Muslims, India’s leaders keep silent (Published Online on 24 th December, 2021)	The world’s biggest democracy is jettisoning freedom and tolerance (Published Online on 8 th February, 2023)	Narendra Modi’s crackdown on civil society in India (Published Online on 9 th January, 2017)
An anti-Muslim symbol from India is paraded on main street, New Jersey (Published Online on 25 th September, 2022)	Modi’s India is where global democracy dies (Published Online on 24 th August, 2022)	As Modi pushes Hindu agenda, a secular India fights back (Published Online on 20 th December, 2019)
‘Perpetual violence’: India’s dangerous new pattern of communal tensions (Published Online on 11 th May, 2022)	India’s embattled democracy (Published Online on 30 th May, 2018)	He’s the world’s most popular leader. Beware (Published Online on 18 th March, 2023)
How my hometown became the epicentre of India’s religious politics (Published Online on 18 th May, 2019)	The paradox of India’s democracy; Are the conditions in India favourable to democracy? Decidedly not (Published Online on 3 rd June, 2019)	Under Modi, a Hindu nationalist surge has further divided India (Published Online on 11 th April, 2019)
India’s soundtrack of hate, with a pop sheen (Published Online on 10 th November, 2019)	In India, fashion has become a nationalist cause (Published Online on 12 th November, 2017)	The rise of Modi: India’s rightward turn (Published Online on 21 st May, 2019)
Film on expulsion of Kashmir’s Hindus is polarizing and popular in India (Published Online on 26 th May, 2022)	In a region in strife, India’s moral high ground erodes (Published Online on 6 th November, 2021)	In India, Modi’s policies have lit a fuse (Published Online on 1 st March, 2020)
For India’s persecuted Muslim minority, caution follows Hindu party’s victory (Published Online on 16 th May, 2014)	The new India: Expanding influence abroad, straining democracy at home (Published Online on 24 th September, 2022)	How Narendra Modi seduced India with envy and hate (Published Online on 23 rd May, 2019)

Tensions that roiled English city have roots in India (Published Online on 2 nd October, 2022)	Violence in India threatens its global ambitions (Published Online on 2 nd April, 2020)	Modi's majoritarian march to Kashmir (Published Online on 8 th August, 2019)
'They are manufacturing foreigners': How India disenfranchises Muslims? (Published Online on 15 th September, 2021)	The transformation of India is nearly complete: The Indian Supreme Court's decision to allow the building of a temple for Rama on a disputed site is likely to intensify the Hindu nationalist efforts to turn India into a majoritarian nation (Published Online on 11 th November, 2019)	Mr Modi's perilous embrace of Hindu extremists (Published Online on 23 rd March, 2017)

*Source: Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/spotlight/india>

Table 2: Sample of the headlines used in The Washington Post regarding portrayal of India

(A) Communal issues projecting Indian minorities as victims of majoritarian persecution	(B) Questioning and downgrading India's secular democratic credentials	(C) Degrading the image of democratically elected Prime Minister of India and his Government
The world continues to ignore the radicalization of India (Published Online on 17 th October, 2022)	India takes a distressing retreat from democracy (Published Online on 20 th April, 2023)	Has Modi pushed Indian democracy past its breaking point? (Published Online on 31 st March, 2023)
As violence and threats grow, India's Muslims fear the worst (Published Online on 12 th May, 2022)	India among the 'worst autocratisers' in the last 10 years, says Sweden's Varieties of Democracy Institute (Published Online on 7 th March, 2023)	In India, calls for Muslim genocide grow louder. Modi's silence is an endorsement (Published Online on 29 th December, 2021)
New Indian textbooks purged of nation's Muslim history (Published Online on 6 th April, 2023)	In India, 75 years after independence, democracy dies in prime time (Published Online on 15 th August, 2022)	Modi's India is becoming a reflection of Jinnah's fears (Published Online on 14 th August, 2022)
How bulldozers in India became a symbol of Hindu nationalism: As religious tensions rise, the ruling BJP party orders demolitions in largely Muslim neighbourhoods (Published Online on 27 th April, 2022)	India has become an 'electoral autocracy.' Its COVID-19 catastrophe is no surprise (Published Online on 5 th July, 2021)	A lynching over beef-eating is part of a rising tide of Hindu nationalism in Modi's India (Published Online on 5 th October, 2015)
Religious clashes across India spark fears of further violence (Published Online on 20 th April, 2022)	India marks a new low for a democracy (Published Online on 19 th December, 2019)	The Indian government continues to harass journalists. I'm facing prison over a tweet (Published Online on 29 th June, 2021)
Why Hindu nationalism keeps gaining ground in India (Published Online on 5 th August, 2020)	India is trying to suppress social media platforms. The U.S. should stand up for them (Published Online on 26 th April, 2021)	Modi is enflaming hatred of Muslims in India, as the world looks the other way (Published Online on 11 th May, 2023)
1 city, 2 people—and India's widening religious divide (Published Online on 19 th April, 2023)	India marks a new low for a democracy (Published Online on 19 th December, 2019)	Modi doesn't need the autocrat's playbook (Published Online on 28 th March, 2023)
Tracking rising religious hatred in India, from half a world away (Published Online on 16 th January, 2023)	India was a miracle democracy. But it's time to downgrade its credentials (Published Online on 14 th August, 2019)	Narendra Modi is pulling India back to the 1970s (Published Online on 23 rd January, 2017)
How India's BJP cultivated a Muslim front for its Hindu nationalism (Published Online on 30 th May, 2019)	India's cruelty to its critics shows the deterioration of the world's largest democracy (Published Online on 18 th July, 2021)	An investigation sheds light into Modi's machinery of online hate and manipulation (Published Online on 18 th January, 2022)
As mob lynchings fuelled by WhatsApp sweep India, authorities struggle to combat fake news (Published Online on 2 nd July, 2018)	India's iconic democracy feels like it is under siege (Published Online on 25 th January, 2020)	A timeline of hate, intimidation and injustice in Modi's India (Published Online on 16 th August, 2021)

*Source: Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com>

Table 3: Sample of the headlines used in The Wall Street Journal regarding portrayal of India

(A) Communal issues projecting Indian minorities as victims of majoritarian persecution	(B) Questioning and downgrading India's secular democratic credentials	(C) Degrading the image of democratically elected Prime Minister of India and his Government
Indian State tries to stop marriages that Hindu nationalists say are part of 'Love Jihad' conspiracy: Critics say the new law opens the door to harassment of interfaith couples and Muslims (Published Online on 25 th November, 2020)	'India is Broken' review: The difficult future for a giant poised to become the world's most populous nation, India struggles to deliver to its citizens both a healthy economy and a flourishing democracy (Published Online on 3 rd March, 2023)	India's Modi marks a historic win for Hindu nationalists at a tricky moment (Published Online on 4 th August, 2020)
Facebook services are used to spread religious hatred in India, internal documents show (Published Online on 23 rd October, 2021)	'The Struggle for India's Soul' Review: Nationalism in New Delhi (Published Online on 3 rd December, 2021)	Modi picks Hindu nationalist to lead India's most populous state (Published Online on 20 th March, 2017)
Hindus take a Muslim site. What's next? (Published Online on 14 th November, 2019)	Hindu nationalism threatens India's rise as a nation (Published Online on 9 th June, 2022)	With protests, India's Muslims push back against Modi government (Published Online on 20 th December, 2019)
India tries to police religious conversions (Published Online on 23 rd February, 2023)	Saffron India is an opportunity and danger (Published Online on 10 th August, 2020)	Does Modi threaten Indian democracy? (Published Online on 30 th May, 2019)
Hindu nationalists' crazy crackdown on 'Love Jihad' (Published Online on 25 th November, 2020)	Flawed freedom rankings have a real point about India (Published Online on 19 th January, 2023)	India's Government considers a 'Muslim ban' (Published Online on 18 th April, 2019)
Hindu nationalism finds outlet in Indian schools (Published Online on 28 th February, 2022)	Is India still a democracy? The answer isn't so clear (Published Online on 15 th April, 2021)	COVID-19 punctures Narendra Modi's aura as some supporters sour on India's strongman (Published Online on 14 th June, 2021)
Muslims in India say their homes are being demolished after protests, clashes (Published Online on 23 rd July, 2022)	Who's killing India's secularism? (Published Online on 4 th May, 2017)	Modi is hurting himself by brawling with the BBC (Published Online on 2 nd February, 2023)
India says the path to citizenship will get easier, but Muslims see a Hindu plot (Published Online on 11 th December, 2019)	India accused of censorship for blocking social media criticism amid COVID surge (Published Online on 26 th April, 2021)	India's hijab debate is both nuanced and nasty: head scarf bans are a fraught topic, but it's hard to argue Modi is merely pushing secularism (Published Online on 17 th February, 2022)
Hindus, Muslims clash over India citizenship law (Published Online on 26 th February, 2020)	Indian democracy suffers for a lack of a competent opposition (Published Online on 27 th May, 2022)	Wanted Modi's Magnitsky 11: meet the officials who make India an unsafe place to invest (Published on 13 October, 2022)

*Source information: Retrieved from <https://www.wsj.com/world/india>

Table 4: Sample of the headlines used in The Guardian regarding portrayal of India

(A) Communal issues projecting Indian minorities as victims of majoritarian persecution	(B) Questioning and downgrading India's secular democratic credentials	(C) Degrading the image of democratically elected Prime Minister of India and his Government
The truth behind Indian extremists' anti-Muslim 'great replacement theory' (Published Online on 30 th May, 2022)	Western countries stay silent as India cracks down on democracy (Published Online on 23 rd February, 2023)	The Guardian view on Modi's India: the danger of exporting Hindu chauvinism (Published Online on 27 th November, 2022)

‘Poetry is the antidote’: in fight against Hindu nationalism, India turns to verse (Published Online on 11 th January, 2019)	Indian government accused of rewriting history after edits to schoolbooks (Published Online on 6 th April, 2023)	Narendra Modi and the new face of India: World’s largest democracy is entering its most sinister period since independence (Published Online on 16 th May, 2014)
Rise of Hindu ‘extremist’ spooks Muslim minority in India’s heartland: In Gorakhpur, the power base of a firebrand monk, religious tension grows with Uttar Pradesh’s 40 million Muslims (Published Online on 26 th March, 2017)	Mahatma Gandhi’s killer venerated as Hindu nationalism resurges in India: Nathuram Godse rehabilitated from traitor to patriot for many, as Gandhi’s vision of secular India eroded by ruling BJP (Published Online on 17 th January, 2021)	Hindu nationalist Narendra Modi to speak to parliament: Vote-winning Indian politician was banned from Britain for close to a decade over his role in deadly sectarian violence (Published Online on 14 th August, 2013)
Hard line Hindu nationalists campaign against Taj Mahal: Resentment over Muslim emperor building India’s most recognisable monument fuels campaign to push it to margins of history (Published Online on 30 th October, 2017)	The Guardian view on India at 70: India’s pluralistic democracy is under threat from right-wing Hindu extremists (Published Online on 14 th August, 2017)	Narendra Modi’s BJP bans Indian Islamic group for ‘terrorist’ links: Popular Front of India, which says it fights for rights of minorities, victim of ‘political vendetta’ by Hindu nationalist government (Published Online on 29 th September, 2022)
Thousands of mosques targeted as Hindu nationalists try to rewrite India’s history (Published Online on 30 th October, 2022)	The hanging of Afzal Guru is a stain on India’s democracy (Published Online on 10 th February, 2013)	Narendra Modi: the divisive manipulator who charmed the world (Published Online on 9 th November, 2015)
What is Hindu nationalism and how does it relate to trouble in Leicester? (Published Online on 20 th September, 2022)	How Hindu supremacists are tearing India apart? (Published Online on 20 th February, 2020)	Modi’s model is at last revealed for what it is: Hindu nationalism underwritten by big business (Published Online on 18 th February, 2023)
Death threats sent to participants of US conference on Hindu nationalism (Published Online on 9 th September, 2021)	It’s tempting to see India as a place apart. But it offers lessons for us all (Published Online on 11 th January, 2020)	‘Bulldozer politics’: Modi’s demolition drive fuels Muslims’ fears in Kashmir (Published Online on 19 th March, 2023)
India’s Muslims quiver in the new dawn of an emboldened Narendra Modi (Published Online on 26 th May, 2019)	Why Modi’s Kashmir coup threatens India’s democracy? (Published Online on 10 th August, 2019)	India, Modi and the rise of Hindu nationalism (Published Online on 26 th February, 2020)
Indian state razes Muslim homes after riots over Prophet remarks (Published Online on 12 th June, 2022)	India’s founding values are threatened by sinister new forms of oppression (Published Online on 28 th December, 2019)	India enjoyed a free and vibrant media. Narendra Modi’s brazen attacks are a catastrophe (Published Online on 19 th February, 2023)

*Source: Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/india>

Table 5: Sample of the headlines used by The BBC regarding portrayal of India

(A) Communal issues projecting Indian minorities as victims of majoritarian persecution	(B) Questioning and downgrading India’s secular democratic credentials	(C) Degrading the image of democratically elected Prime Minister of India and his Government
Jai Shri Ram: The Hindu chant that became a murder cry (Published Online on 10 th July, 2019)	‘Electoral autocracy’: The downgrading of India’s democracy (Published Online on 16 th March, 2021)	India is now only ‘partly free’ under Modi, says report (Published Online on 3 rd March, 2021)
‘Beef’ lynching: Failure of India’s political imagination? (Published Online on 5 th October, 2015)	Nationalism a driving force behind fake news in India, research shows (Published Online on 12 th November, 2018)	Narendra Modi: Hindu foot soldier to India’s prime minister (Published Online on 23 rd May, 2019)
Trads: The extreme Hindu nationalists inspired by alt-right memes (Published Online on 29 th May, 2022)	Are Hindu nationalists a danger to other Indians? (Published Online on 12 th August, 2015)	India’s Muslims fear for their future under Narendra Modi (Published Online on 16 th May, 2019)

Beaten and humiliated by Hindu mobs for being a Muslim in India (Published Online on 2 nd September, 2021)	India election 2019: Meeting a ‘foot soldier’ of the Hindu far-right (Published Online on 26 th April, 2019)	Why people get away with hate speech in India (Published Online on 14 th April, 2022)
Bihar Sharif: The 113-year-old India library torched in a riot (Published Online on 23 rd April, 2023)	Is India descending into mob rule? (Published Online on 26 th June, 2017)	How bulldozers became a vehicle of injustice in India (Published Online on 20 th June, 2022)
India history debate after chapter on Mughals dropped (Published Online on 21 st April, 2023)	Why India’s Hindu hardliners want to sideline Mahatma Gandhi? (Published Online on 30 th January, 2017)	How Narendra Modi misread the mood of India’s angry farmers? (Published Online on 13 th January, 2021)
Uttar Pradesh: India’s Muslim victims of hate crimes live in fear (Published Online on 21 st February, 2022)	Who’s the Hindu hardliner running India’s most populous state? (Published Online on 29 th March, 2017)	Why journalists in India are under attack? (Published Online on 4 th February, 2021)
Madhya Pradesh: Why an Indian state is demolishing Muslim homes (Published Online on 15 th April, 2022)	Love jihad: The Indian law threatening interfaith love (Published Online on 8 th December, 2020)	Indian farmers clash with police over reforms (Published Online on 27 th November, 2020)
Babri mosque: India’s Muslims feel more abandoned than ever (Published Online on 1 st October, 2020)	Citizenship Amendment Bill: India’s new ‘anti-Muslim’ law explained (Published Online on 12 th March, 2023)	Narendra Modi BBC Documentary: India The Modi Question (Published Online on 17 th January, 2023)
Bangalore: How polarisation is dividing India’s Silicon Valley (Published Online on 7 th April, 2022)	Nupur Sharma: How Islamophobia is hurting India’s foreign policy (Published Online on 8 th June, 2022)	Students detained over planned screening of BBC’s Modi documentary (Published Online on 26 th January, 2023)

*Source: Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india>

Table 6: Sample of the headlines used by The CNN regarding portrayal of India

(A) Communal issues projecting Indian Minorities as victims of majoritarian persecution	(B) Questioning and downgrading India’s secular democratic credentials	(C) Degrading the image of democratically elected Prime Minister of India and his Government
In the world’s largest democracy, ‘looking Muslim’ could cost your life (Published Online on 19 th May, 2022)	Indian journalists warn of new government assault on press freedom (Published Online on 7 th April, 2023)	Does Narendra Modi threaten secular and liberal India? (Published Online on 16 th May, 2014)
India’s Hindu extremists are calling for genocide against Muslims. Why is little being done to stop them? (Published Online on 14 th January, 2022)	Arundhati Roy: ‘The damage to Indian democracy is not reversible’ (Published Online on 22 th June, 2022)	Modi says India’s minorities are living in world of imaginary fear. Muslims disagree (Published Online on 29 th May, 2019)
In today’s India, clothing choices signal a deepening religious divide (Published Online on 11 th March, 2022)	India’s growing religious intolerance (Published Online on 4 th November, 2015)	India’s minorities fear return of Modi (Published Online on 22 nd May, 2019)
India’s latest box office smash ‘The Kashmir Files’ exposes deepening religious divides (Published Online on 28 th April, 2022)	‘Mobocracy’ cannot be the new normal, says India’s top court on lynching (Published Online on 17 th July, 2018)	Indian officials demolish several houses after protests over anti-Islam remarks (Published Online on 12 th June, 2022)
‘We have been living in terror’: Muslims in New Delhi say they are being targeted (Published Online on 21 st April, 2022)	Is India becoming intolerant? (Published Online on 4 th November, 2015)	‘They tried to stifle the voices of our children’: Meet the women protesters who have been occupying a New Delhi street for a month (Published Online on 16 th January, 2020)

His house was demolished because he is Muslim, he says (Published Online on 22 nd April, 2022)	India passes controversial citizenship bill that excludes Muslims (Published Online on 17 th December, 2019)	India downgrades Kashmir’s status and takes greater control over contested region (Published Online on 31 st October, 2019)
In Hindu-nationalist India, Muslims risk being branded infiltrators in their own country (Published Online on 14 th December, 2019)	In secular India, it’s getting tougher to be Muslim (Published Online on 19 th November, 2019)	Kashmir: New violence feared in old flashpoint, as Indian ruling party pushes long-held agenda (Published Online on 6 th August, 2019)
Hijab protests spread in India as girls refuse to be told what not to wear (Published Online on 15 th February, 2022)	Indian police arrest Muslim journalist accused of insulting Hindus (Published Online on 28 th June, 2022)	India: Slow police response to latest mob attack sparks outrage (Published Online on 24 th July, 2018)
15 charged in India for lynch killing of Muslim man who allegedly ate beef (Published Online on 24 th December, 2015)	You can read this article. An internet blackout means no-one in Indian-controlled Kashmir can (Published Online on 9 th August, 2019)	Prime Minister Narendra Modi could have prevented India’s devastating Covid-19 crisis, critics say. He didn’t (Published Online on 1 st May, 2021)
India’s Muslims feel targeted by rumours they’re spreading COVID-19 (Published Online on 23 rd April, 2020)	Under the curtain: Kashmir residents contend with pellet guns and restrictions (Published Online on 28 th August, 2019)	Has Narendra Modi gone too far with controversial New Citizenship Law (Published Online on 18 th December, 2019)

*Source: Retrieved from <https://edition.cnn.com>

Table 7: Sample of the headlines used by Some Other Western Newspapers and Political Magazines regarding portrayal of India

(A) Communal issues projecting Indian Minorities as victims of majoritarian persecution	(B) Questioning and downgrading India’s secular democratic credentials	(C) Degrading the image of democratically elected Prime Minister of India and his Government
The New Statesman: Misinformation about minorities in India is widespread – and it’s getting worse (Published Online on 7 th October, 2021)	The New Statesman: The accelerating rise of a dangerous new nationalism in India (Published Online on 17 th June, 2020)	The New Statesman: Modi’s re-election could turn the world’s biggest liberal democracy into an illiberal one (Published Online on 28 th November, 2019)
The New Statesman: For Indian Muslims, Narendra Modi’s emboldened leadership is a reign of terror (Published Online on 18 th March, 2015)	The New Statesman: India reveres its democracy, but the room for dissent is shrinking (Published Online on 15 th December, 2021)	The New Statesman: Is India still a democracy? Narendra Modi has bullied critics and suffocated the press into endorsing his Hindu-nationalist version of modern India (Published Online on 6 th January, 2020)
Independent: Hindu nationalists are gaining power in India - and silencing enemies along the way (Published Online on 26 th February, 2014)	Independent: An arrogant act of Hindu nationalism has left India less democratic, less free and less secure (Published Online on 6 th August, 2019)	Independent: Modi’s election win is a victory for far right Hindu nationalism – India’s secular democracy is under threat (Published Online on 23 rd May, 2019)
Independent: 1 city, 2 people — and India’s widening religious divide (Published Online on 19 th April, 2023)	Independent: India slips below Afghanistan to 161st on World Press Freedom Index (Published Online on 4 th May, 2023)	Independent: India’s Modi is getting a state visit with Biden, but the glitz is shadowed by human rights concerns (Published Online on 22 nd June, 2023)
The Telegraph: Surge in Hindu vigilante mobs who ‘attack and kill’ beef-eating Muslims (Published Online on 9 th April, 2023)	The Telegraph: What should worry us is the insidious recasting of the Republic of India as a Hindu State (Published Online on 25 th May, 2019)	The Telegraph: Old icon-editorial on how Modi Govt. has reduced Mahatma Gandhi to a mere icon (Published Online on 23 rd May, 2023)
The Telegraph: Home of Muslim student activist bulldozed after anti-blasphemy protests (Published Online on 13 th June, 2022)	The Telegraph: The citizenship rights of Indian Muslims are eroding rapidly (Published Online on 19 th September, 2019)	The Telegraph: Shared stain-Narendra Modi has, with calculated ruthlessness, covered most of the bases to secure formidable power over the polity (Published Online on 25 th May, 2023)

The Economist: The erosion of secular India—Many Muslims resent Narendra Modi’s Hindu-nationalist government (Published Online on 4th February, 2020)

The Economist: The organs of India’s democracy are decaying (Published Online on 12th February, 2022)

The Economist: Intolerant India-Narendra Modi stokes divisions in the world’s biggest democracy (Published Online on 23rd January, 2020)

The Economist: India’s government is ignoring, and sometimes even encouraging, hatred of minorities (Published Online on 13th January, 2022)

The Economist: How Narendra Modi is remaking India into a Hindu state? (Published Online on 14th May, 2022)

The Economist: Narendra Modi’s sectarianism is eroding India’s secular democracy (Published Online on 23rd January, 2020)

*Sources: The New Statesman: Retrieved from <https://www.newstatesman.com>

The Independent: Retrieved from <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia>

The Telegraph: Retrieved from <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news>

The Economist: Retrieved from <https://www.economist.com/asia>

Findings and analysis

Taking account of around two hundred published titles/ headlines included as samples in the aforementioned Tables 1 to 7, it is evident that all of these titles project India in a negative light. Just as the colonial masters decided to create frictions among the various communities of the Indian society, the Western media is relentlessly making persistent attempts to exploit the fault lines by projecting the Indian minorities as victims to majoritarian persecution, thereby promoting separatism and communal disharmony. Provocative terms like “Hindu Nationalism”, “Hindu Supremacy” and “Hindu Chauvinism” have been coined and recurrently circulated by Western media to manipulate dissent and promote societal disintegration. As illustrated by the samples, repeated use of phrases like anti-Muslim, targeted, lynched, disenfranchised, persecuted, extremism, rising religious-hatred, genocide, murder-cry, abandoned, reign of terror, hatred of minorities, erosion of secular India, etc. cement the impression woven by the Western media that the Indian minorities are bearing prolonged persecution at a pan-India scale. This is clearly an extension of the colonial-era policy of ‘Divide and Rule’ that the Western media is diligently, discreetly and strategically forwarding even in this postcolonial era. For constructing a murky picture of deteriorating, damaged, strained and under-threat Indian democracy, topics like ‘Death of Indian Democracy’, ‘Embattled Democracy’, ‘Decaying Democracy’, ‘Electoral Autocracy’, ‘Democracy under siege’, ‘Assault on Press Freedom’ and ‘Crackdown on Civil Society’ are among the most favourite rants of the Western media, masqueraded as reportage. India’s Prime Minister and his political party that has democratically been successful in forming government for two consecutive terms on the basis of being elected by Indian voters are vilified and demonized by Western media in most horrendous terms. As reflected in the

headlines randomly selected as samples, numerous Western media opinion pieces, articles or editorials refer to the Indian Prime Minister as a threat to Indian democracy and secularism, pushing regressive sectarian agenda, dividing India by embracing majoritarian extremists while enflaming hatred of minorities, harassing journalists and pushing Indian democracy past its breaking point. Such politically motivated, defamatory and propagandist reportage is liberally done by Western media under the license of press freedom, for building a negative image of the Indian Government and its premiere. It is noteworthy that the journalists and editors of Western media evince such strong loathing for Indian Prime Minister that their journalistic objectivity ceases to remain even thinly veiled, thereby exposing their lack of journalism ethics.

Discussion

Parth (2021) points out that “the words/language that these publications have used the most in context of India are negative, divisive, outrageous, full of contempt and ridicule for India. A collective reading and scrutiny of the thematic thrust and choice of phrases used in all these published titles/ headlines strongly testify this assertion. To figure out the fundamental reasons behind such anti-India discourses prevalent in the Western Press for several years, the mindset of Western colonisers needs to be analysed. While the discourses by James Mill, Thomas Babington Macaulay, Winston Churchill, Sir William Rose Mansfield, Major General Sir H.T. Tucken, Lord Elphinstone, etc. mentioned earlier in this article give a clear clue to the general racist mindset of West, it also indicates towards their longstanding motives to keep India disunited by exploiting its sectarian fault lines. The premise that the agenda-driven Western media has been functioning as a political apparatus for furthering the colonial era conspiracies and xenophobic

Indophobia, is quite evident from multiple similarities that can be traced between the digitally published headlines/titles sampled here and the discourses of colonial officials. Interestingly, the discourses of colonial officials and the Western media references or reportage pertaining to India demonstrate stark resemblances in essence; as all of these collectively construct stereotypical images of India that are in sync with conventionally racist orientalism and colonial discourses. In his famous book *Orientalism* (1978), postcolonial theorist Edward Said has pointed out the use of strategic narrative building by the West, to paint negative demeaning pictures of the orient. While in the colonial era, Western officials undertook the mission of “orientalising the orient” (Said, 1978, p.49); the Western Press continues to do the same in the postcolonial era. In their research-oriented book *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, Herman and Chomsky (2008) demonstrate through multiple case studies that the mass media agencies in the West have an extensive track record of functioning on a “propaganda model whereby they mobilize bias and patterns of news choices that ensue” (p. 56). A close reading of the sampled headlines reveals clearly that all these published articles, reports, opinion pieces and editorials collectively aim at constructing a stereotypical image of India as regressive inferior civilization steeped in communal disturbances and persecution of minorities, ruled by an undemocratic leadership that has no regard for human rights, secularism and press freedom. Foley (2021) agrees substantially with the research findings by Herman and Chomsky and asserts that the “pre-eminent agenda-setting liberal media often adhere to the propaganda model”, thereby making their credibility as trusted media organizations problematic and questionable.

Conclusion

It can, thus, be concluded that all the prominent Western Press agencies are functional propaganda machines with anti-India motives and racist colonial-era hangover. It is for this reason that they express no

praises and only contempt for Indian society, Indian culture, and its leadership. Moreover, they make every effort to disrupt the communal harmony and unity of Indian society by overhyping any incident of sectarian dissent, even demonizing the Government of India and accusing it of being sectarian, without providing any authentic journalistic testimony. The collective objective of the Western media today is to create rift amongst Indian citizens and they execute this aim systematically by unnecessarily branding the majority as persecutors and the minority as persecuted victims. It is really shameful and unbecoming on their part to engage in such degenerated unethical practices of prejudiced narrative building aimed at harming India, masquerading as media reportage or editorial opinions. Due to their global outreach and widespread digital networks, such adversarial narrative building by the Western media has the potency to influence unfavourable public opinions towards India, and this is alarming beyond doubt.

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Communication through Digital Platforms: Consumers' Perspectives towards e-Grocery Shopping

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ABSTRACT

Increased use of digital technology and digital communication has led to an increase in online shopping. e-Grocery shopping is one of the newest areas in online shopping. The present study was designed and conducted to assess consumer perception towards e-grocery shopping. A well-structured online questionnaire was developed to collect information related to consumers' socio-economic status, reasons behind e-grocery shopping and perceptions. Results revealed that most males living in rural areas prefer e-grocery shopping using the regular app(s). Consumers mostly preferred purchasing snacks and branded foods followed by food grains, oils and spices through e-grocery shopping. The various factors that contributed to preference for e-grocery shopping include time-saving, convenience, availability of multiple brands, and better deals and offers. The study also revealed some constraints in e-grocery shopping such as difficulty in physical examination of the product, security issues in online payment, high price of desired products compared to local grocery stores and issues related to internet connectivity. It can be concluded from the present study that the use of online platforms is gaining popularity among consumers for shopping for grocery items with some constraints.

Keywords: Communication, e-Grocery, Consumer perception, Online grocery, Shopping

Introduction

As India is progressing towards sustainable development, digital communication has come up with an effective transition in society. The availability of various electronic devices and the use of various platforms for communication has increased during the COVID and post-COVID pandemic. Among all digital communication, online shopping has become a relief to all customers in the current digital era, particularly the post-COVID pandemic. The widespread internet penetration and the growing use of computers/tablets/smartphones have increased the use of online shopping across countries, including India. It has brought about new distribution methods which have provided new opportunities for consumers (Chawla & Kumar, 2022).

Food is our basic need and some of the food materials (raw materials as well as ready-to-cook

and ready-to-eat) are purchased daily and some are purchased weekly and monthly according to their requirement and perishability. "Online grocery shopping or e-grocery shopping is growing seven times faster globally than other shopping methods, and Indian online shopping is also increasing due to many factors like convenience, home delivery, ease of shopping and variety" (Agrawal *et al.*, 2021). The Indian retail industry is estimated to be worth over \$500 billion (one of the world's top 5 markets) and 30–40% of the businesses will be in the online retail space over the next seven years (Budhiraja & Mittal, 2016).

A few years back in India, people used to purchase different food items from local markets/known Kirana stores/mandis/haat and sometimes from local street vendors. But nowadays, especially during and after the COVID pandemic, the use of ICT has increased digital communication, and

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consumers are slowly shifting towards the online mode of shopping for groceries (e-grocery). According to Agrawal *et al.* (2021), many other factors like a growing economy, increased spending by the middle class and changing habits and lifestyles of consumers have contributed to the increase in the market for e-grocery shopping.

Taruna (2017) reported that in urban areas, e-grocery shopping has increased since most of the working people don't have enough time to do shopping offline, whereas online shopping can be done from home or the workplace. After getting good service response, quality of product, competitive price and on-time delivery through e-grocery shopping, they always try to recommend their friends and family members for e-grocery shopping. Various demographic factors like age, gender, income, educational background, etc. also influence the preferences and perceptions of consumers in shopping. Earlier, only cash was used as a payment option while purchasing but nowadays various payment methods like credit card, debit card, internet banking and cash-on-delivery (COD) have contributed to the expansion of e-grocery shopping. Various other factors also influence the consumer's perception of e-grocery shopping. Keeping this in view, the present study was conducted to analyse consumers' digital communication perspective towards e-grocery shopping.

Review of literature

Digital communication technology includes methods of electronic communication like e-mail, text messages, faxes, and even social networking. Grewal *et al.* (2022) reported that digital communication is influencing consumers' perceptions, attitudes, behaviour and shopping journeys. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in many transformations in our daily lives like following hygienic practices, social distancing, etc. This has resulted in an increase in the use of Internet and Internet-based services (Koch *et al.*, 2020). Increasing digitalisation and internet access have created opportunities for retailers to offer e-shopping platforms to their consumers. E-shopping has offered a platform for consumers to directly purchase goods from a seller over the Internet using a web browser (Taruna, 2017). Studies have also concluded that there are many other advantages of e-shopping and it is now becoming common in today's life. It provides flexible and quick delivery of the selected products with satisfied consumers' responses (Patel, 2018; Taruna, 2017).

Chawla and Kumar (2022) stated that a secure

and reliable system is essential for e-business firms to work successfully and cash on delivery is the priority option for online shopping. Website information and effective customer care services build a customer's trust. Besides factors such as security, privacy, warranty, customer service, and website information, laws governing consumer rights protection in e-commerce influence customers' trust. Robust legal framework i.e., Consumer Protection Act, 2019 and Consumer Protection (E-commerce) Rules, 2020 and consumer protection measures have contributed to customer trust and loyalty towards e-shopping.

Online shopping is a rapidly growing platform because consumers' preferences have changed due to COVID-19. Safety, variety and hassle-free payments make online shopping more preferable (Chintan, 2021). Das and Todmal (2020) reported that the availability of a wide range of products, and the freshness and quality of the products attract more customers to online platforms for shopping rather than offline. An easy and seamless return policy is also one of the important features of e-shopping and customer satisfaction.

Kavitha (2017) reported that the online grocery industry is one of the growing industries in India. Access to the internet and various offers available online has increased the demand for products and services on online platforms. Unrestricted shopping and time-saving are also important factors influencing customers' choice of e-shopping rather than offline shopping.

Shen *et al.* (2022) investigated physical grocery shopping and online grocery shopping models and found that during COVID-19, various advantages of online grocery shopping have been recognised and are likely to remain popular even post pandemic and it may last after the population is largely vaccinated.

Alaimo *et al.* (2022) reported that the rise of the internet and the development of ICTs have transformed the communication and marketing of products and services affecting significantly consumption patterns and habits. Consumers' acceptance and intention to use online tools to buy food products are affected by the consumers' previous experiences and the ease of using these online instruments. The dimension linked to the ease of use of online tools in the phases of online searching and purchase generates a higher level of satisfaction than the outcome measured in terms of service usefulness.

Consumers have changed their habits during the COVID-19 pandemic by adopting more responsible behaviours, more influenced by the socio-economical context than by pro-environmental

behaviour. During the pandemic period, the lower frequency of going to supermarkets, the greater engagement in more home cooking and the health concerns in the choices of food products contribute to reducing food waste (Jribi *et al.*, 2020). Murphy (2019) stated that retailer who earns less than 4-star on a rating scale is not preferred by consumers. Reviews and retailers' responses also influence consumers' choices for purchase. Samson *et al.* (2014) reported that customers' preferred source of information is online digital media and communication.

Keeping this in view, the present study was planned and conducted to assess how the digitalisation of various areas and platforms has changed consumers' behaviour and perspective towards highly essential requirements, i.e., groceries.

Research objectives

1. To study the demographic profile of consumers of e-grocery shopping.
2. To identify various factors influencing e-grocery shopping.
3. To analyse consumers' perspectives regarding e-grocery shopping.

Research methodology

The research design, target population, sampling strategy, data collection instruments, data collection process and statistical techniques employed are presented below:

Research design

The present study was a cross-sectional study conducted through an online survey method.

Sample size and sampling methods

The researchers have used a purposive sampling technique for selecting respondents for the study. The use of purposive sampling is to select respondents that are most likely to yield appropriate and useful information (Kelly, 2010). The developed online questionnaire was distributed via electronic mail and WhatsApp to the participants (grocery consumers) with or without experience in e-grocery shopping. The questionnaire was sent to about 300 consumers out of which 133 consumers of various socio-economic profiles participated in this study.

Research tool

An online well-structured questionnaire was developed to collect the required and relevant information. There were two sections in the

questionnaire. Section 1 covered questions based on the demographic characteristics of respondents like education, occupation, locality, age, number of household members, etc. and questions related to shopping online. Section 2 included questions based on consumers' perceptions regarding e-grocery shopping, which was rated on a 5-point Likert rating scale (Likert, 1932). Maeda (2015) reported that Likert scales can be used to make relative and absolute judgments about measures of attitude and perception.

Data analysis and presentation

The information collected was analysed by the quantitative method and the results were presented in the form of descriptive statistics, *viz.* simple frequency and percentages. The data were depicted in the form of tables and figures for a more visual presentation of the results.

Results and discussion

The results obtained from the analysis of the data are presented and discussed under three major categories:

- a) Demographic characteristics of consumers
- b) Information related to e-grocery shopping by consumers, and
- c) Consumer's perception regarding e-grocery shopping.

a) Demographic characteristics of consumers

The results of the study about the demographic characteristics of the consumers are presented in Table 1. Out of 133 respondents, most of the respondents were male (54.1%) and the female participation was 45.9%. Nearly one-third of the consumers were intermediate pass (34.6%), followed by graduates (32.3%), doctorate (16.5%), postgraduate (15.8%) and only 0.8% were 10th pass or below. The locality also influences the perception towards e-grocery shopping. The majority of respondents (85.7%) were from urban areas and only 14.3% belonged to rural areas. It was also observed that most of the consumers belonged to the age group below 25 years (64.7%) and 16.5% of consumers were in the age group of 36-45 years (Table 1). These results reveal that e-grocery shopping is more common among young consumers still that there are ways to attract both younger and older consumers to purchase their products online (Etumnu & Widmar, 2020). Chouhan and Kumar (2020) reported that young customers are highly equipped with internet usability skills, which makes them more interested in online shopping.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents

Sl. No.	Parameters	Responses (n=133)
1)	Gender	
	Male	54.1% (72)
	Female	45.9% (61)
2)	Education	
	10 th Pass or below	0.8% (1)
	12 th Pass	34.6% (46)
	Graduation	32.3% (43)
	Post-Graduation	15.8% (21)
	Ph.D.	16.5% (22)
3)	Locality	
	Urban	85.7% (114)
	Rural	14.3% (19)
4)	Age of the respondents	
	< 25 years	64.7% (86)
	25-35 years	12.0% (16)
	36-45 years	16.5% (22)
	> 45 years	06.8% (9)
5)	Number of household members	03.8% (5)
	1	24.8% (33)
	2-3	57.9% (77)
	4-5	13.5% (18)
	6 or more	
6)	Working Status	
	Only Husband is working	46.6% (62)
	Only Wife is working	06.0% (8)
	Both are working	47.4% (63)

Numbers in the parentheses indicate the number of respondents.

As the number of family members increases, the requirements of grocery also increase which has a direct influence on the mode of shopping and perception. The results of the present study revealed just over half of the consumers (57.9%) have 4–5 members in their family while only one-fourth (24.8%) have 2–3 members and 13.5% of consumers have 6 or more members. It is also clearly evident from the results that in the case of 47.4% of the consumers, both husband and wife are working, while 46.6% reported that only husband was working (Table 1). This clearly shows that e-grocery shopping is the preferred mode of shopping for grocery items when both husband and wife are working. Tamilarasi and Angayarkanni (2016) concluded that online shopping is very comfortable since consumers can save items in their cart and buy later at their convenience, which ensures customers are happy and loyal.

b) Information related to e-grocery shopping by consumers

The majority of the consumers (72.2%) reported that they prefer regular apps as compared to instant

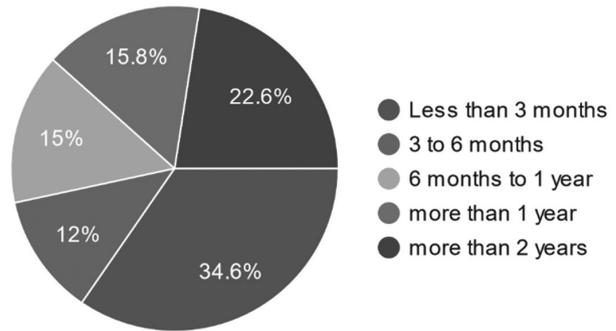


Fig. 1: Period of usage of e-grocery apps

delivery apps (37.6%) for online shopping groceries. This shows that respondents plan to purchase groceries online well in advance. It is evident from Figure 1 that just over one-third (34.6%) of respondents were using e-grocery apps less than 3 months and only 22.6% of the respondents were using apps more than 2 years.

Digital communication is imparted through various apps and platforms. Regarding the frequency of ordering groceries through apps, most of the respondents (55.6%) reported that they occasionally ordered groceries through apps and only 18% of respondents ordered groceries online once a month. Only about 9% and 4.5% of respondents purchased groceries online once a week or 2–3 weeks and 2 to 4 times a week, respectively. Nguyen *et al.* (2020) reported increased use of digital communication for various purposes.

There are various products and categories available while purchasing groceries online. Studies indicated that consumers buy both fresh and non-fresh food items. The majority of respondents (56.4%) preferred to shop for snacks and branded foods online using app(s), followed by food grains, oils and masalas (42.9%), fruits and vegetables (30.1%), bakery and confectionery products (27.8%), beverages (23.3%), milk and milk products (21.1%), egg, meat and fish (11.3%), and exotic foods (8.3%).

As digital communication is increasing, online shopping platforms are also increasing day by day. Reasons behind the preference of using online apps and websites are many and the present study made

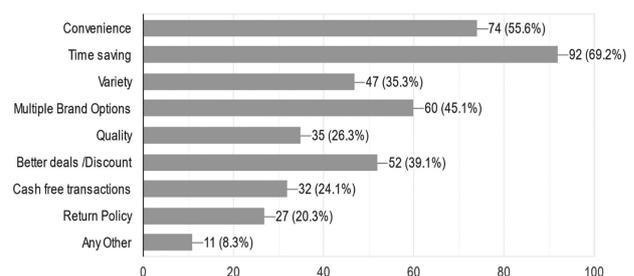


Fig. 2: Reasons for e-grocery shopping

efforts to identify them. As depicted in Figure 2, the primary reason (69.2%) for preferring online shopping of foods (e-grocery shopping) is time-saving, followed by convenience (55.6%) and availability of multiple options (45.1%). The other reasons include better deals and discounts (39.1%), variety (35.3%, quality of products (26.3%), cash-free transactions (24.1%) and easy return policy (20.3%). Mofokeng (2021) also reported that consumers perceive dimensions like colour, variety of product display and ease of locating products to develop a perception of online shopping. Taruna (2017) reported that the price of the product is the most important factor that affects consumers when they shop online.

Even though online shopping is more convenient and time-saving in this digital communication era, respondents also reported some of the disadvantages that make e-grocery shopping optional or less convenient.

The majority of consumers (66.2%) reported that physical examination is an important factor while purchasing foods/groceries which is not possible in e-grocery shopping. Just over one-third (38.3%) of the respondents informed that the high price of desired products as compared to local grocery/Kirana stores influences their preferences for shopping. Other disadvantages reported include security issues in online payments (36.1%), receiving products whose

use by/expiry date is very short (24.1%), connectivity issues with the internet (15%), receiving products in dirty or unhygienic conditions, and products were not maintained as per the desired temperature (12.8% each) and intended product not received (12%).

Nowadays, consumers are using many digital devices for digital communication and e-shopping. Mobile is the most preferred tool (93.2%) used more frequently for e-grocery shopping, followed by laptop/desktop (5.3%) and telephone (1.5%). Rita *et al.* (2019) reported that the huge number of smartphone users has created an opportunity to develop mobile online store applications for online shopping.

c) Consumer digital communication perspective regarding e-grocery shopping

The consumer perception regarding various aspects of e-grocery shopping is presented in Table 2. Out of the 133 respondents, the majority of the respondents agreed that e-grocery shopping is convenient to shop anytime and anywhere, and groceries are delivered to their doorstep as per their desired date, time and place (38.35% and 37.59%, respectively). Respondents neither disagree nor agree that online shopping helps them to monitor and control their monthly groceries, allows them to shop in bulk, helps them to buy fresh and quality food products, and it's a status symbol for them.

Table 2: Consumer perspective regarding e-grocery shopping (n=133)

Sl. No.	Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Online grocery shopping helps to monitor and control monthly shopping for groceries	10.53% (14)	24.06% (32)	33.83% (45)	26.32% (35)	5.26% (7)
2	It is convenient to shop anytime, anywhere	9.02% (12)	9.77% (13)	16.54% (22)	38.35% (51)	26.32% (35)
3	Groceries get delivered to doorstep as per the desired date, time and place	11.28% (15)	9.02% (12)	22.56% (30)	37.59% (50)	19.55% (26)
4	Online shopping allows one to order groceries in bulk	12.03% (16)	16.54% (22)	28.57% (38)	27.82% (37)	15.04% (20)
5	Online shopping helps to buy fresh and quality food products	9.77% (13)	21.80% (29)	37.59% (50)	24.81% (33)	6.02% (8)
6	Online e-grocery shopping is a status symbol	27.82% (37)	21.80% (29)	33.83% (45)	12.78% (17)	3.76% (5)
7	Products that are not available in the offline stores are available in online shopping	9.77% (13)	15.04% (20)	27.07% (36)	36.84% (49)	11.28% (15)
8	Returning groceries bought online is easy and convenient	11.28% (15)	23.31% (31)	27.82% (37)	27.07% (36)	10.53% (14)
9	Recommend e-groceries to family members and friends	5.26% (7)	15.79% (21)	37.59% (50)	33.83% (45)	7.52% (10)
10	Review of the products in app(s)/digital communication of other customers influences purchasing of e-groceries	10.53% (14)	14.29% (19)	27.82% (37)	36.84% (49)	10.53% (14)

Sl. No.	Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
11	Products delivered in online shopping are safe and hygienic	6.77% (9)	16.54% (22)	39.10% (52)	30.83% (41)	6.77% (9)
12	Advertisement and branding of online shopping apps influences shopping	9.16% (12)	19.08% (25)	34.35% (45)	29.77% (39)	7.63% (10)
13	E-grocery apps/websites recommend products based on previous purchases or preferences	11.28% (15)	9.77% (13)	27.07% (36)	39.10% (52)	12.78% (17)
14	e-Grocery helps to avoid traffic, parking worries, long-queue in the store and carrying cash and change	9.02% (12)	11.28% (15)	21.05% (28)	36.84% (49)	21.80% (29)
15	Helps to add items to the shopping list throughout the week	9.02% (12)	12.78% (17)	35.34% (47)	30.08% (40)	12.78% (17)
16	Helps to purchase products as and when required and not in advance	7.52% (10)	12.03% (16)	33.08% (44)	37.59% (50)	9.77% (13)
17	Helps in better planning and monitoring expenses on grocery	12.03% (16)	12.78% (17)	31.58% (42)	36.84% (49)	6.77% (9)

Numbers in the parentheses indicate the number of respondents.

About one-third of the consumers (36.84%) agreed that products which are not available in offline stores are available in online shopping easily, while only a few (9.77%) disagreed with this. Nearly one-fourth of the respondents were neutral (27.82%) and agreed (27.07%) that returning groceries bought online is easy and convenient, while 23.31% disagreed. Regarding recommending e-grocery purchase to family members and friends, 37.59% of respondents were neutral, while 33.83% of respondents agreed to do so. About one-third of the respondents (36.84%) agreed that their purchase on online shopping is influenced by product reviews and comments.

Further, the study also revealed that 39.10% and 34.35% of respondents were neutral about the safety and hygiene of products delivered in online shopping and the influence of advertisement and branding of the apps for e-grocery shopping, respectively. The majority of respondents (39.10%) reported that e-grocery apps/websites recommend various products based on their purchase history or preferences, while 9.77% of the respondents disagreed with the same. E-grocery shopping helps to avoid various difficulties like traffic, parking worries, long-queue in the stores and carrying cash and change, as reported by most of the respondents (36.84%).

About 35% neither disagreed nor agreed that online shopping helps them to add items to the shopping list throughout the week, whereas only 9.02% of respondents strongly disagreed with this. Eger *et al.* (2021) reported that restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic have affected our shopping behaviour. Major transformations in society and

digital communication have led to an increase in online shopping. The majority of respondents (37.59%) agreed that e-grocery shopping helps to purchase products when it is required, and 36.84% of respondents agreed that e-grocery shopping helps in better planning and monitoring expenses on groceries. Hebrok and Heidenstrom (2019) highlighted that the use of online grocery services allows consumers to more easily check the supply of food products before purchasing, helping to decrease food waste. According to Rita *et al.* (2019), consumer satisfaction had a positive impact on repurchase intention and site revisit.

Conclusion

COVID-19 has brought drastic changes in our life, among which the use of technology in various aspects and increased use of digital communication is the most prominent. In post-COVID-19, our dependency on technology is still persistent. Over the last decade, there have been numerous reports of the exponential development in the use of digital technologies and the accessibility of mobile software applications (apps) in various fields, including marketing and supply chain of food produce. E-grocery shopping is one of the recent modes of shopping in this digital era. The results of the study revealed that most males living in rural areas prefer e-grocery shopping using regular app(s). Consumers mostly prefer snacks and branded foods, followed by food grains, oils and spices for e-grocery shopping. Various factors contributed to preference in e-grocery shopping, which includes time-saving, convenience, availability of multiple

brands, and better deals and offers. The study also revealed some constraints of using e-grocery shopping like difficulty in physical examination of the product, security issues in online payments, high price of desired products and internet connectivity. It can be concluded from the present study that the use of online platforms is preferred by consumers for grocery shopping considering some precautions while shopping. This study lays out the foundation for more exploratory research on e-grocery shopping. For instance, retailers' perspectives for e-grocery shopping can provide additional information for better understanding.

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Evaluating Effectiveness of Crisis Communications Tools and Methods Adopted by Government Agencies to Enhance COVID-19 Prevention Awareness among Urban Audience

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 epidemic presented a significant challenge to the governments of every country in the world, from taking human lives, wrecking healthcare systems, and testing the top researchers in the world. We were aware of the human race's vulnerability throughout this pandemic. However, a crisis always offers us something new to learn. Different governments around the world developed different strategies to combat the pandemic and lessen the effects of COVID-19. Some had just limited success, while others had utter failure. India handled the crisis successfully despite its enormous population, diversity, and high percentage of illiteracy. Government officials' public interest communication played a crucial part. The introduction of National Digital Health Mission (NDHM), the PM's TV addresses, recorded phone messages, and other measures were taken to effectively respond to and lessen the impact of this life-threatening condition. This study intends to investigate the 'role of government communication—messages and mediums' used in raising awareness and managing COVID-19. To gather important insights, a consumer survey and qualitative content analysis of news stories, business research papers, and international journals were conducted.

Keywords: Health communication, COVID-19, Public interest communication, Government communication, crisis communication

Introduction

Over the past two decades, the world has faced numerous communicable health hazards which have taken shape of infectious inter- and intra-country breakouts. SARS (2003), H1N1 Flu (2009), MERS (2012), Ebola (2014), Zika virus (2016), and COVID-19 (2019) are some such conditions which have directly or indirectly affected India and the world. Yet, if we analyse the communication readiness of the government authorities across the world, we realise that majority of the administrations were neither ready, nor effective in the initial phase of the breakout to contain public panic or spreading of misinformation via numerous official and unofficial mediums. Any health emergency which poses a risk to human life is bound to impact public behaviour and timely and effective communication can have a huge role to play in managing such a crisis situation to calm and reassure the public at large.

The world has not seen anything like the novel Coronavirus for close to past 100 years. COVID-19 was declared as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 30th January 2020. At that time, only 62 cases were reported in India, a mere 0.05% of the global count (Mondkar, 2020). In less than two months, WHO declared the COVID-19 outbreak as a pandemic on 11th March 2020. This pandemic has impacted the world at a socio-economic level like never before and still continues to impact various facets of our daily lives from personal health concerns, to professional life alterations, to social connections with friends, family, relatives, colleagues and most importantly, public gatherings of importance like marriages, funerals, festive get-togethers, religious activities, marketplace gatherings and more. But, it is these efforts of social distancing and maintaining personal hygiene that have resulted

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in relatively lower levels of community spread across various states in India and, needless to say, public interest communication efforts by the government have had a huge role to play. The case of India is further complex and unique in many ways. Crisis contact in India is a dynamic exercise, with about 736 districts in 28 states and 8 union territories, and different shades of dialects and cultures within the states. Not only does it have to address 1.3 billion people, but it must also draw up customised and tailored crisis communication plans for all states and parts of society, especially the poor and oppressed (Mondkar, 2020).

Information vs Infodemic

The effects of a life-threatening pandemic, such as COVID-19, are felt at many different levels, including psychological, sociological, economic, cultural, and beyond. Since March 2020, the situation has remained unchanged. People continue to experience limited mobility, home restrictions, uncertainty about the availability of necessities, the threat of losing their jobs, and a generalised fear for their own health and the wellbeing of their loved ones. The general populace strives to learn as much as they can from as many sources as they can in such a situation.

When mass communication is required, the digitally connected, virtual world full of information and updates can be a godsend. However, it can also be a problem because it promotes the dissemination of false or incorrect information. Saying that there was an excessive amount of information moving via various portals, mobile applications, television, radio, word of mouth, and more would not be an exaggeration. During the early stages of the pandemic, print was one of the media that was badly affected, and its

distribution suffered. Government acted swiftly in such a circumstance and established various official lines of communication to disseminate information to the public that had been verified as fact.

Public interest communication by Government of India

If one looks up the internet for official information regarding COVID-19 in general – from preventive guidelines, to healthcare assistance, to information regarding current or past cases, to vaccine updates, to tele-health policies or anything remotely significant with regard to COVID-19 in India, there are numerous resources which will help you with information in native vernacular language. While it is imperative to have robust knowledge hub, at the same time, an overwhelming amount of information can confuse general public and therefore it is important to evaluate effectiveness of message delivery.

When a closer look is taken, certain aspects are common across information sources: communication material which spreads information and awareness, training material for various stakeholders and emergency contact services with regard to healthcare support. As the pandemic spread and more and more citizens got affected, the government was quick to rollout support policies, schemes and guidelines to support them with as much information as possible digitally and as much physical support as possible on-ground. Having said that, containing a healthcare crisis of this nature in a heterogeneous population set of 1.3 billion was a herculean task which is still being carried out.

Needless to say, this crisis was ridden with extreme emotions and psychological challenges which needed equal attention and redressal. To keep healthcare workers motivated despite the fear

Table 1 is a summation of top portals (official and non-official) which share key information regarding COVID-19 in India:

Resource	Description	Key information displayed	Social media
MyGov portal - https://www.mygov.in/	On July 26, 2014, Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, introduced the ground-breaking MyGov platform. It was an exceptional, first-of-its-kind effort for participatory governance involving all classes of the Indian population. With the aim of assisting India's social and economic development, the concept of MyGov aimed to bring the government closer to the masses by using online platforms as a bridge to create an interface for a productive exchange of ideas and viewpoints between the general-public and professionals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID-19 dashboard • COVID-19 state wise status • Important Links • Updates and notifications • Activities • Blog • Podcast • Social Hub • MythBusters and Fact check • Infographics • Corona warrior stories • Symptoms • Videos • Helpline details 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twitter • Facebook • Instagram • YouTube • WhatsApp • LinkedIn • MyGov messenger

Resource	Description	Key information displayed	Social media
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare - https://www.mohfw.gov.in/	The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India portal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel advisories • Behavioural Health - Psycho-Social helpline • Citizen details • Hospital details • Training material • States / Departments / Ministries • Employees • Awareness Material • Inspirational stories on healthcare service personnel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Icon to download Aarogya Setu app
National Health Portal - www.nhp.gov.in	In accordance with the National Knowledge Commission's recommendations, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare of the Government of India established the National Health Portal to give Indian citizens access to consolidated health information and to provide healthcare-related information. The Centre for Health Informatics was formed by the National Institute of Health and Family Welfare (NIHFW) to serve as the secretariat for overseeing the National Health Portal's activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction • Symptoms • Causes • Diagnosis • Management • Prevention 	
https://www.india.gov.in/	The GOI established the National Health Portal to give Indian population the access to consolidated info and to provide healthcare-related material. The Centre for Health Informatics was formed by the NIHFW to serve as the secretariat for overseeing the National Health Portal's activities. The NIC, a leading ICT organisation of the GOI under the supervision of the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology, planned, created, and hosted this official portal of the GOI. Providing information is the platform's main goal. Through this portal, an effort has been made to offer a thorough, accurate, dependable, and all-in-one source of information about India and its many elements. The current portal is a metadata-driven website with linkages to other portals and websites run by the Indian Government for the most recent information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PM-CARES Fund • Digitally collaborating to combat COVID-19 • Join the war against COVID-19 - Register as Volunteer • COVID 19 Solution Challenge • States & Union Territories Helpline Number • RBI Regulatory Package to mitigate the economic impact of COVID-19 	

of life looming on their heads day-in and day-out was a sensitive yet necessary task. The government agencies worked towards creating a database of 'stories of courage', 'awarded, rewarded, appreciated and celebrated COVID warrior' from different walks of life.

Government communication - mediums and messages

It is well established and recorded that the Indian government undertook numerous initiatives to communicate effectively via numerous mediums, in different languages, adopting a range of tones

to make sure that the messages are clear and sharp and also evoke desired actions. Over the course of future research, scholars, experts, academicians and other relevant stakeholders will explore this subject deeply to evaluate the pros, cons, effectiveness – hits and misses of various communication tools and material. For now, appended is a summation and brief evaluation of the kind of communication adopted:

- **Information and Education Communication (IEC):** COVID-19 subjected individuals to psychological distress, exhaustion, occupational burnout, anxiety, stigma, so it is of utmost importance to ensure efficient contact in the

workplace, families and communities. Sharing real time information to build awareness, offer reassurance and contain community spread was critical. Simple initiatives like changing the caller tune of all telephones, setting up digital knowledge hub, sharing stories of COVID warriors were some initiatives and examples of such communication (Reddy & Gupta, 2020).

- *Behaviour change communication (BCC):* During COVID-19, little was known by healthcare authorities, and to contain community spread, it was imperative to drive behaviour change. Simple information like the primary prevention strategies of covering the mouth while sneezing and coughing, frequent and proper hand washing, social withdrawal, and getting medical attention as directed if ill. During a pandemic, behaviour change communication was targeted through an engaging conversation with a well-known person. Amitabh Bachchan, an actor, had been enlisted by the government to encourage good COVID-19 behaviour. Another BCC tactic was a television ad campaign that informs viewers about the need for a COVID-19 suspect to be quarantined at home. (2021) (#IndiaFightsCorona COVID-19).

Review of literature

Government response to COVID-19 - An international overview

COVID-19 was a time for the world to unite as one and fight this deadly virus which is still threatening the sheer existence of humanity. Therefore, exchange of information and effective ways of dealing with various challenges was extremely important. India took the lead in offering support and learning to its international counterparts and was equally open to receiving knowledge and information. In order to address efforts to tackle the COVID-19 situation in South Asia, Prime Minister Narendra Modi took the lead in arranging a video conference with SAARC leaders. Prime Minister also took the initiative to hold the G-20 leaders' video conference. On a large scale, India has organised inward and outward evacuations. To boost medical preparedness in India, a global procurement and supply chain has initiated. India has been offering medical aid abroad, including in Kuwait and the Maldives, but is behaving properly now to protect people's security, welfare, and economic stability (MICA, 2020).

Legal and regulatory considerations - India's case

India is a diverse nation and it is critical to have greater readiness for national emergencies,

exigencies, crisis and pandemics. To leave things to chance or good intent of governing bodies and political parties' isn't the most prudent thing to do. When legal literature is reviewed and juxtaposed to the actions taken in the past 11 months, grave gaps and scope of improvement is seen. To combat the crisis outbreak and limit community spread, all state agencies had started working on ways to implement social distancing. Although by invoking section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), the state government had begun enforcing state-wide curfews, a strong direction from the centre only came on 19th March 2020 when Prime Minister Narendra Modi called for a 'Janta Curfew' to be followed on 22nd 2020 March. But, this curfew was not implemented as effectively as people mistook the 'Clap act' as a community exercise and disregarded social distancing and came out on streets to salute healthcare workers. Around the same time, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced formation of a 'COVID-19 Economic Response Task Force' which also got blurred. These overlapping incidents diluted effective communication as State and Centre communication agencies were not in sync and the Government machinery was under-prepared to tackle such a pandemic (Mondkar, 2020). The announcement of the lockdown was highly symbolic but not as effectively communicated on day one, which led to panic and scare. People started stocking up food items and other essentials over and above their personal need. Migrant workers in Delhi saw temporary loss of livelihood as a huge threat and started moving back to their villages in groups adopting torturous mediums like bicycles and even on foot. In such a situation.

COVID-19 exposed numerous loopholes in the Indian public administration services. Adoption of 22-day national lockdown as the only containment strategy had impacted the economic and financial health of the country immensely. Around 95% of all workers in India are informal, with little to no social security and no legal protection from their employers. The lockdown, deprived the informal workers of paid jobs without notice, instantly and sharply affected all such employees (Ghosh, 2020). During the pandemic, the centralisation of power by the Union Government was rapid. There were also worse effects of fiscal centralisation.

Objectives of the study

The available literature suggests that all forms of communication—digital, print, OOH and beyond—from across the sources have a deep impact on shaping public behaviour during a healthcare crisis situation. Yet, information from formal and official

government sources, issued in public interest is received with greater seriousness and therefore has immense power to influence mass actions in challenges and testing times. While the correlation and impact is evident and notable, it has not been documented as meticulously and comprehensively in the past. The world has changed dynamically in the past 50–70 years and thanks to technology, it is much more connected. This virtual connectivity also leads to consistent information exchange and therefore there is a need for exploration and evaluation of impact of government communication on public behaviour. Keeping all these factors in mind, this study aims to explore the following aspects:

- To study the impact of government communication on public at large during COVID-19.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of communication—interpretation and understanding of messages.
- To assimilate and study the consumer opinion regarding impact and effectiveness of mediums of communication used.

Research design and methodology

In order to seek insights regarding pre-defined objectives mentioned earlier, a digital research questionnaire with a combination of quantitative and qualitative questions was administered. The researchers carried out a detailed primary research to study the impact and effectiveness of government communication on public at large. The idea was to evaluate how effectively the messages landed with relevant target audience, including mental stickiness and interpretation of the call-to-action intended by the authorities. Additionally, the idea was also to understand if respondents were in sync with the approach, speed and mediums of communication adopted by central and state authorities. As part of secondary research, the researchers reviewed media stories, medical and business reports from different organisations, evaluated communication strategies adopted by other countries and referred to various editorial pieces and whitepapers. COVID-19 impacted individuals socially, financially, economically and psychologically as it restricted mobility and social interactions. In such a time of uncertainty, fear and anxiety, a voice of reason backed with scientific and factual information is extremely critical. Therefore, formal government communication issued in public interest to offer reassurance of social protection was one of the most critical equaliser. This was needed to be done sensitively as the matter pertained to human lives and emotions was intense. Public opinion regarding all the above nuances was evaluated via qualitative research. Appended below are section-wise insights and figures along with interpretations.

Method used

The researchers used ‘Survey method’ digitally via Google forms to carry out the primary research. This research was conducted in the last quarter of the year 2020, from October 2020 to December 2020. As there were restrictions on physical mobility and one-to-one, in-person communication, digital survey method was adopted.

Sampling

- COVID-19 was a global crisis and all parts of Indian population were impacted. Having said that, the context of research was restricted to urban population as internet penetration was highest which impacted the access rate.
- The research study pertained to the entire population included all genders and age groups, and hence the sampling was broad-based, inclusive and holistic.
- Quantitatively, a sample of 100 respondents was taken to complete the entire survey within a timeframe of three months and this sample was evaluated for the purpose of the study.

Tool used for data collection

Google Forms was used to distribute a structured questionnaire with 12 closed-ended Likert scale questions and 2 open-ended questions. The questionnaire included pertinent questions to assess respondents’ perceptions on key topics such as awareness levels, the effectiveness of the communication medium, the effectiveness and impact of message delivery, response times, dissonance-causing elements, etc.

Data interpretation and analysis

India reported its first case of COVID-19 in Thrissur district, Kerala, on 30th January 2020 and since then the nation has saw lakhs of cases across numerous states, cities, towns, districts and villages. The count of active COVID cases as of 29th December 2020, 9 pm IST stood at 1,02,24,303 (#IndiaFightsCorona COVID-19, 2021). Government authorities across states and the Centre have been actively communicating with the consumer via numerous mediums and issued over 4,057 orders on COVID-19 crisis in less than 4 months from January 2020 to May 2020 (The Print, 2020). This survey was conducted in the last quarter of 2020, and therefore the respondents had lived this crisis first hand throughout these months to be exposed to various communication mediums and shared their experiences regarding the same.

A. Age, gender and location: This is a section carrying basic background information on the

age and gender of the respondents.

Age range of respondents: 64.1% of respondents were between the ages of 18 and 25 years, followed by 16.5% of respondents between the ages of 25 and 35 years. Then, 12.6% of people aged 35 to 45 years and 6.8% of people aged 45 years and beyond were affected.

Gender: There was a balanced representation of gender in the research, with 55.3% male and 44.7% female respondents.

Location: While 60% of the respondents were from the metro cities, around 17.5% respondents were from mini-metro and a sizable 22.3% of the respondents were from other locations. This is a balanced national representation reflecting awareness levels of public from different regions who may be exposed to different communication material and mediums.

B. This section contains insights which aim to evaluate the impact of public interest communication on awareness levels of the respondents. Basis results and observation, researchers aim to evaluate the information consumption patterns, effectiveness of mediums and the messages.

To what extent do you agree that government messages/advertisements helped create awareness during COVID pandemic:

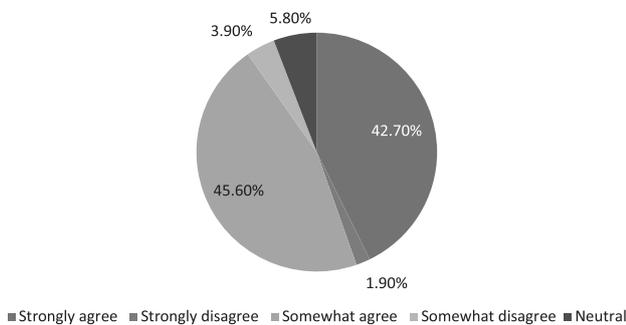


Fig. 1: Role of public interest communication in building awareness

Source: Primary Data

Role of public interest communication in building awareness: A dominant majority of 42.7% respondents strongly agreed or somewhat agreed (45.6%) that the advertising and communication by government authorities via numerous mediums was extremely helpful in creating awareness regarding COVID-19. A receding 3.9% respondents somewhat disagreed with the efficacy of communications and 1.9% respondents strongly disagreed. A moderate 5.8% respondents maintained a neutral stance on the question.

Most reliable medium to access formal COVID-19 communication: While there were numerous mediums of communication adopted over the

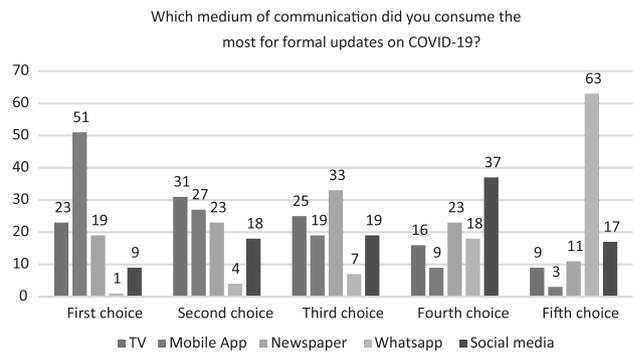


Fig. 2: Most reliable medium to access formal COVID-19 communication

Source: Primary Data

duration of 11 months, we have limited the options to sources which were accessible despite mobility restrictions. Needless to say, mediums which were digital in nature were most accessible in comparison to print media and options like OOH have been kept out of consideration set as a vast majority of public is still operating from home.

- *First choice:* Accessing information via mobile applications like Aarogya Setu or MyGov or news applications across English or vernacular languages was the first medium of preference.
- *Second choice:* As majority of the public was home bound with mobility restrictions, many reports suggest that consumption of news on TV as a medium went up and the second choice.
- *Third choice:* Despite the digital evolution and technology wave, traditional news consumption medium—the good old newspaper—was considered one of the most credible source of information and it comes across as close third choice.
- *Fourth choice:* Consuming news via social media including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube was the fourth choice.
- *Fifth choice:* Despite the popularity of WhatsApp as a medium, when it comes to accessing reliable and credible information, the public at large realise that forwarded messages do not qualify as news. But, this insight also reflects on the fact that a large majority of public was not aware of GoI's formal WhatsApp update service or somehow was not consuming it as a formal update.

Most effective medium of communication: While accessing information via particular medium might be a factor of convenience, ease or reliability, being able to comprehend and interpret those messages effectively is another conversation. This question aims to understand which medium of communication delivered messages clearly and effectively.

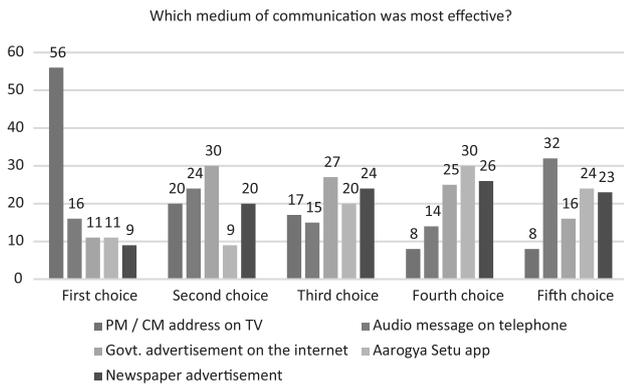


Fig. 3: Most effective medium of communication

Source: Primary Data

- **First choice:** Close to 50% respondents found the public addresses by government authorities, especially the regular press conferences hosted by the PM / CM and other representatives fairly effectively and trustworthy.
- **Second choice:** Modi government has always been a strong believer of the power of the internet and being true to its orientation of ‘Digital India’, they were very quick to launch numerous internet-enabled mediums. This was the second most-effective medium of communication.
- **Third choice:** Similar to reliability factor, newspapers were also the third most-effective medium for interpreting communication.
- **Fourth choice:** Mobile applications like Aarogya Setu were the fourth choice for accessing information
- **Fifth choice:** Last but not the least, while the pre-recorded telephone message reached masses, it was considered least effective as repetition and reiteration led to fatigue and disinterest amongst audiences.

C. **Message delivery, comprehension and effectiveness:** This section aims to make observations regarding the effectiveness of

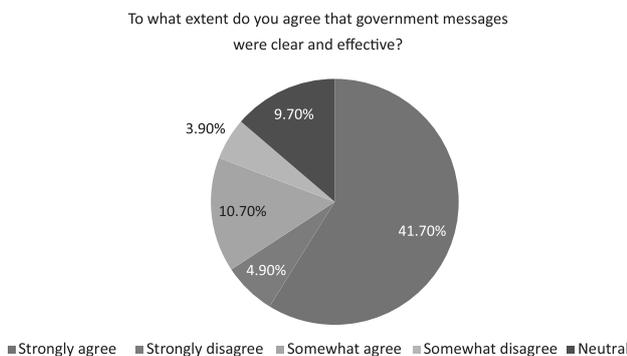


Fig. 4: Understanding extent of clarity and effectiveness of message delivery

Source: Primary Data

message delivery. While it has been established that certain mediums and messages were relatively better received than the other, it is imperative to understand what the masses take away was and how did the public rate these on various metrics like level of understanding, implementation, etc.

Understanding extent of clarity and effectiveness of message delivery: Close to 50% of the respondent set strongly or somewhat agree that the messages shared by the government authorities were clear and effective. But, about 10% respondents strongly or somewhat disagree on the efficacy and clarity of message delivery. There is also a sizable 10% who maintained a stance of neutrality and did not share specific take on agreement or disagreement.

Efficacy of message delivery (open-ended question):

- **Question:** Do you think the concepts like social distancing or hand washing or overall hygiene were well explained in government communication? Please support your response with some details.
- **Insights derived from the responses:** Close to 70% respondents felt that CTA (call-to-action)-led messaging was clear, direct and triggered desired action. Majority respondents felt that reiteration of safety measures on TV and social media worked as a good reminder to help them watch their actions. Many respondents recalled slogans like - “Do gaj doori, mask hai zaroori” and quoted it as an effective message, roping in a ‘father figure celebrity like Amitabh Bachchan’ was appreciated. There was a section of around 30% respondents who thought that the messages weren’t as effective. The rationale as stated for ineffective communication was monotony set-in

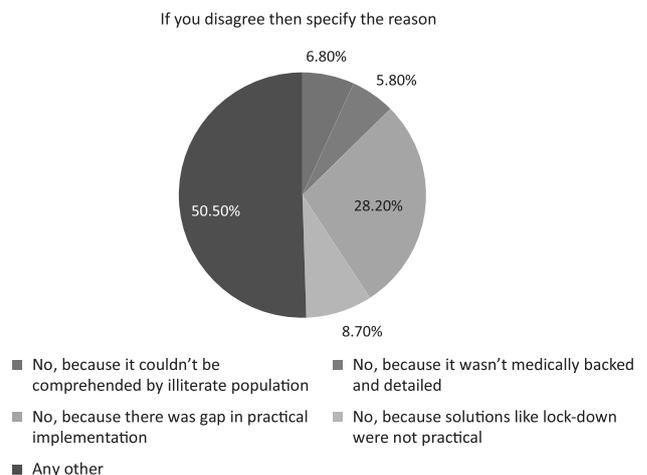


Fig. 5: Reasons for communication ineffectiveness, if any

Source: Primary Data

due to lack of creativity in message delivery while repetition of the same messages led to fatigue. Many respondents felt that the information regarding the need for wearing a mask and enforcing the act could have been much stronger. Additionally, there is a section of respondents who felt that awareness activities were started with immense force and rigour, but they fizzled out in later months as the lockdowns were lifted.

Reasons for communication ineffectiveness, if any: While majority of the respondents felt that the formal communication was effective. Appended below are factors that suggest how communication could be made more effective:

- A pandemic is a time of critical crisis, and communicating regularly via diverse mediums is extremely critical. Some sections of the public could not comprehend the range of communication and felt that a lot was being communicated which led to lack of effectiveness, as the call-to-action was less than message delivery.
- A small proportion of 8.7% respondents felt that unplanned and sudden national lock-down impacted livelihoods and was less practical from a business and economic lens. But, in the long term, such an activity was critical to contain COVID-19.
- Initial communication was more preventive and as the virus was too new, it was impossible to support it with medical and scientific reference. Last but not the least, despite all efforts to deliver messages in regional vernacular languages and through multiple mediums, there are respondents who felt more could have been done to include the rural community better.

D. Performance analysis at an action as well as communication level: Whenever actions of any public administration are evaluated, numerous

lenses could be worn which pertain to different aspects of response management or talk to the diverse stakeholder sets. While we have evaluated message delivery via various mediums so far, it is imperative to have a look at the performance of the government from on-ground action perspective.

- *Extent of cohesive functioning—central and state government:* Whenever a nation is hit with a crisis situation such as COVID-19 which threatens and risks human lives, it is critical for government departments across states and regions to work hand-in-hand to attain strategies which are directed towards the maximum benefit of the public at large. From policies to guidelines, to rules and regulations, all should be kept seamless, easy to comprehend and most importantly practical and effective in terms of implementation. There may be a significant discrepancy in the intention, promise, and execution of relief or response activity if any of these components are absent. Close to 65% respondents mentioned felt that the central and the state governments could work more cohesively and seamlessly during these testing times of the pandemic.
- Over 25% feel that various ministries, departments and the state and central governments did work well together in public interest.
- Around 5% respondents maintained a neutral stance.

Crisis response—Indian government v/s international government authorities: While it may be argued that resources, infrastructure, governing style, clinical prowess, digital and technology connectivity, etc. across different nations is heterogeneous, yet when the whole world is battling a similar situation and facing a common pandemic, comparisons are inevitable. The crisis panned out differently in different nations; factors like genetic

To what extent do you agree that state and central governments worked cohesively to deal with the COVID situation effectively

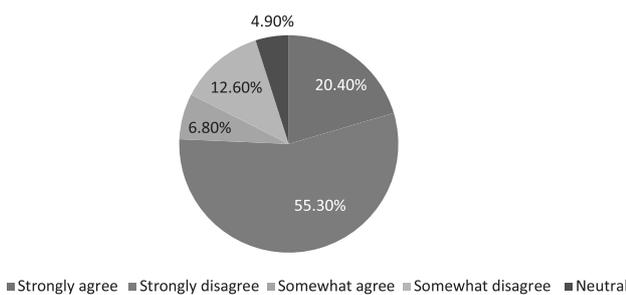


Fig. 6: Extent of cohesive functioning—central and state government

Source: Primary Data

To what extent do you agree that compared to international governments, do you think India tackled COVID situation better?

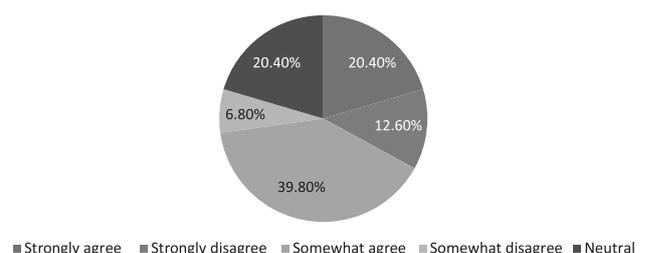


Fig. 7: Crisis response—Indian government v/s international government authorities

Source: Primary Data

mutations, basic anatomy, speed and rate of infection exposure, etc. also had a role to play and despite best of research minds working on the situation, everyone was wanting to exchange as much information as possible to learn from each other. Compared to its international counterparts, here is how respondents feel India fared:

- There is a vast majority of close to 50% respondents who strongly or somewhat agree that the Indian authorities tackled the situation much better in comparison to their international counterparts.
- Around 20% respondents felt India was as good as the international peers.
- Lastly, a fairly notable set of about 20% respondents reserved their point of view as neutral in this regard.

Meticulous planning for crisis management and impeccable implementation strategy for future is advised: The purpose of this study, as stated at the beginning of this section, was to evaluate the effectiveness of the government's initiatives and see whether the general public had any more suggestions for improvement.

- The public opinion is in favour of (46.6% respondents) creation of policies for relief work in a way that the average daily wage earner could benefit—this insight could also be a result of the fact that the respondents were concentrated in metros where this matter became a huge political issue between the central and the state governments as both indulged in blame shifting.
- Around 25% respondents felt that the hospital management should be improved in the future, in terms of provisions, updates and overall management.
- Close to 10% respondents felt that the authorities could have planned the lockdown in a phased approach as the announcement was made 24 hours in advance so certain necessary provisions could be made.

Thoughts and suggestions for effective crisis response in future from a communication perspective (open-ended question):

While a lot was done to respond quickly, concisely, consistently and effectively, there is always a scope for further improvement. The researchers requested respondents to share thoughts and ideas on how the government authorities could have made overall communication better and effective.

Here are some key takeaways and common responses:

- Respondents felt that the initial communication was crisp, to the point and action oriented. Yet, it was one sided with limited scope of interaction and redressal.

- Efforts could have been made for rebuttal of fake news as that instigated fear. This is primarily media's responsibility in a democratic nation and government could regulate and share guidance.
- Stronger call-to-action for stricter implementation of rules and guidelines.
- Need for diversity in creative content - Over the last few months, immense fatigue has set-in with similar sounding messages.
- Information exchange should have been more real time and the authorities could create more national and local champions to spread information and address queries. PM was the only face, but was most trusted for the necessary reassurance.
- Economic outlook: Scope of integration and collaboration between businesses and NGOs for on-ground support. Make in India was appreciated.

Key findings, discussions and implications

1. A dominant majority of close to 90% strongly or somewhat agreed that the advertising and communication by government authorities across India was extremely helpful in creating awareness regarding COVID-19.
2. Mobile app mediums like Aarogya Setu / MyGov were rated as the most reliable medium of accessing official information. News updates via TV and newspapers were the close 2nd and 3rd choices. The least dependable mass communication channels were identified as fluid ones, such as social media and WhatsApp.
3. Somewhat similar trend was seen when it came to evaluation of effectiveness of the message delivery—TV news, followed by official government website updates, followed by newspapers, were the most effective mediums whereas mobile apps and pre-recorded telephone messages were seen as a bit repetitive leading to fatigue.
4. Over 50% respondents felt that government communication was clear and effective.
5. 70% respondents felt that CTA (call-to-action)-led messaging was clear, direct and triggered desired action.
6. Many respondents recalled slogans like - “*Do gaj doori, mask hai zaroori*” and quoted it as an effective message; roping in a ‘father figure celebrity like Amitabh Bachchan’ was appreciated.
7. Close to 65% respondents mentioned that they feel that the central and the state governments did not work cohesively and seamlessly during these testing times of the pandemic.
8. Close to 50% respondents strongly or somewhat

agree that the Indian authorities tackled the situation much better in comparison to their international counterparts.

Conclusion

COVID-19 has been an unprecedented situation which no government across the globe was ready for and the Indian government was lauded nationally and internationally for its swift and effective communication and on-ground action. The response management strategy had two critical aspects—first being the real on-ground action and the second being the larger communication narrative. As this pandemic was solely centred on the aspect of ‘community containment’ and the core aim in the initial phase and even till date is to limit the virus from spreading, it was imperative to share timely information with the public at large. Building mass awareness, bursting myths, rebutting fake news, offering assurance, managing in logistical needs like infrastructure, healthcare, clinical support and the larger digital adoption across fields to be able to tackle the situation effectively were just few bases to be covered by the public administration. In order to keep the country running efficiently, it was necessary to assemble a COVID army at the same time, which included medical professionals, vital service providers, bureaucratic and political teams, R&D specialists, and many other supporting roles. Delivering timely, clear and effective communication which may be interpreted and acted upon by a huge population base of 1.3 billion was an uphill task. There are different schools of thought on possible effectiveness of communication delivery. True to its words and vision, Modi government utilised digital mediums fairly effectively to keep the Indian population informed and updated. Yet, the lack of coordination between the States and the Centre resulted in undesirable occurrences like the mass exodus of migrant population from Delhi, which could have been better managed. Similarly, management of livelihoods and a stronger economic support package would have helped masses maintain better mental health. Having said that, the overall efforts of consistent and detailed information dispersion have been appreciated by the public. As per this research, it can be stated that the communication was well crafted, effectively delivered and was able to generate desired reaction when it was most needed in the initial phase of COVID occurrence in India.

Digital mediums including mobile applications and reliable TV and newspaper sources were regarded as extremely helpful and informative. Yet, there have been recommendations made in general which can still help the authorities’ course

correct their actions and help strengthen community connect and engagement. Aspects like economic and financial security, state and central collaboration, safeguarding the interest of the vulnerable, opening up platforms for public interaction and inclusivity were highlighted as areas which can still be worked upon by the government authorities.

Areas of further research

1. Evaluate and examine possible need for legislative changes with regard to healthcare crisis communication. The lockdown was enforced under the colonial Epidemic Disease Act, 1897 and the National Disaster Management Act, 2005. But, neither of these acts take into account any crisis communication framework, one of the most important tools of crisis management in such times.
2. To study the impact and effectiveness of COVID communication on parameters of behaviour change communication.
3. To study various crisis communication models adopted during COVID-19 response and create a future roadmap for response management.
4. To study the role of government communication on various stakeholders individually—business community, healthcare workers, public administration (internal communications) and more.
5. To juxtapose and evaluate the measures taken by the Indian government vis-a-vis their international counterparts.

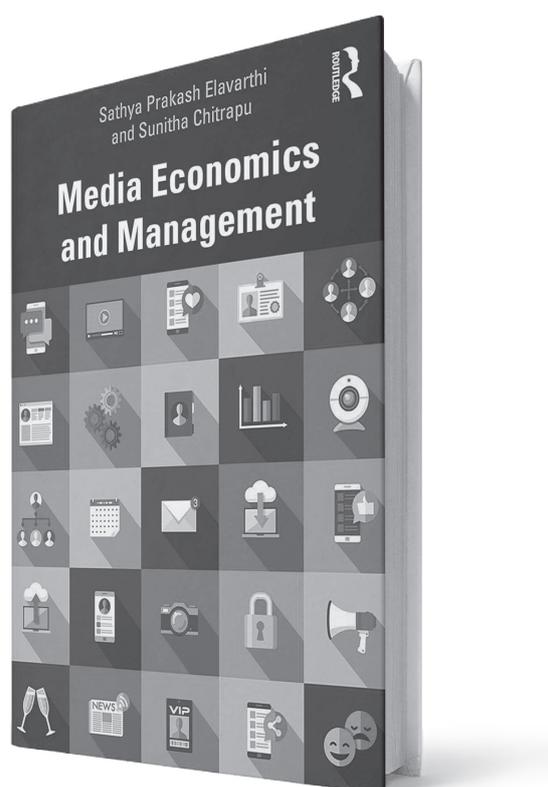
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BOOK REVIEW



Media Economics and Management
(South Asia Edition)

Author : Sathya Prakash Elavarthi and Sunitha Chitrapu
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At the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century, we find that Indian media industries are diverse, rapidly evolving and highly profitable, attracting media and business students seeking professional careers in them. While we have well-established traditions of media research from critical and policy perspectives that have examined the Indian media as social, political and cultural entities, the economic aspect is still in a nascent stage in the areas of mass communication and their intersections with social sciences and humanities, despite its continued

presence in many graduate and undergraduate course curricula across the country. The Bachelor's Degree programme in journalism started by Hislop College affiliated to Nagpur University in 1964 was one the earliest to have a full paper on newspaper business management. These undergraduate and post-graduate programmes have relied on the several excellent textbooks on media economics that are available internationally. The current curricula on media economics and management in communication departments cover many more industries besides print by including research journal articles, industry reports and a few other publications. This book builds on all these efforts and also supplements them in many ways.

The economics of the media has received far less scholarly attention in India compared to pursuits by peers elsewhere and, perhaps more importantly, what its media landscape deserves. Despite three decades of the so-called media boom in India, the insufficiency of a social science engagement with the economics of this boom, and that of its recent erosion, remains somewhat of a mystery. Although the last decade has witnessed periodic and increasing press reportage and public discussion in the press over the media business, these oscillate between two extremes: either glowing accounts of activities of select media companies, including their expansion and stock valuations, or concerns over the viability and sustainability of certain businesses, especially in the news media. Both these articulations are short of a systematic and conceptually informed understanding of the economics of the media industries in India. This has been ascribed equally to the muted development of media studies as an academic field of inquiry in India and its sub-field, media economics, being marginalised therein. More surprising is mainstream economics and management studies in India, known to take up frontier areas, also being tentative in exploring this exciting sub-field of media studies.

While media economics offers a macro perspective of the political economy of the media, the meso and micro perspectives are often pursued under the scholarly rubric of media management as well. This

book marks an important contribution in relating key concepts in this sub-field of media studies with knowledge about media businesses in India that will be of use in both these areas—political economy of the media as well as media management. It speaks to the needs of the increasing number of university departments, variedly dealing with media studies, mass communication and journalism, offering courses in media economics, media management and, more generally, the political economy of the Indian media. For students in these programmes, both at the undergraduate and research levels, this work by authors offers a handy and much-needed reference point to all such teaching/learning initiatives.

Whether the workings of newspapers, television and cinema in India indicate a modern industrial activity or is akin to other businesses organised along traditional, familial lines is itself a matter of debate. In either case, however, understanding their economic organisation and dynamics becomes the key, including if we choose to wade into such a debate. This book seeks to reach out to a multiplicity of constituencies, including those who do not primarily identify themselves as students of economics. Pioneers in the discipline of media economics have identified four methodological approaches in this field, namely trend studies, financial analysis, econometrics, and case studies. Of these, financial analysis and case studies have evinced most interest in books from India. In venturing beyond these methodological thrusts, important as they are, we would also be able to better appreciate the heterodoxies increasingly marking the approaches and analytical emphases in media economics.

In an era where the media occupies a pivotal role in society and politics, the study of its economics is too consequential a matter to be left to professional economists alone. This, then, also demands the teaching of the economics of the media in India be obliged to reach out to students from a wide array of disciplines or motivated by varied professional concerns. Unpacking the economics of the media is, therefore, also very much part of the larger pursuit of media literacy. Immersed in this sensibility, this book takes up the challenge to further such pursuits. By linking basic concepts and theoretical formulations about key media sectors with the experiences of what we see about their performance and behaviour, the authors speak to this need. No doubt, the media tend to perform in ways similar to many other economic activities. While explicating this, the authors also try to clarify how the media are different from other economic activities and why its characteristics may inform different types of decision-making.

The authors have addressed what is known about

the economics of the media in India as also what calls for being explored more granularly. In this sense, the book is part of an on-going intellectual churn in media studies in India striving to conceptualize not only processes of economic change intrinsic to the workings of the media, but also the role of extra-economic logics in shaping these processes. This is but one way in which the book contributes to inculcating a critical media literacy amongst its readers, be they inclined towards traditions of political economy or management, or those with professional or wider academic interests.

While the economics of media are universal, Indian media industries demand more research attention than they have received this far. Linguistic, economic and cultural diversity in India make it a country of not one but several media industries and markets, and this diversity is important to understand if we want to explore the economics of Indian media industries. While there are some reference books in this area, this book will fulfil the long-felt need for a textbook on media economics and management that can provide a good grounding in the fundamentals of media economics for post-graduate and undergraduate students. This book will also play a key role in formalizing the new and emerging area of media economics and management as an area of research in India.

This book is divided into ten chapters. The first four chapters present a broad conceptual framework of media markets, industry structures, firm behaviour, advertising markets, public policy, production, pricing and consumption choices in media industries. Beginning with an understanding of media products as public goods and their dual product markets, the first chapter examines demand uncertainty, media market structures, firm behaviour and media industry lifecycles. The second chapter builds on these concepts by examining revenue streams in media industries, cost structures, economies of scale and scope, production functions, demand and pricing in product and advertising markets. The third chapter focuses on audiences and advertising markets including the principle of relative constancy and media audience measurement. The fourth chapter builds on these ideas by presenting a view of media industries and public policy with special reference to market deficiencies, abuse of market dominance, and information asymmetries and policy interventions for the same.

Chapters 5 to 8 use the framework presented in the first four chapters to provide an in-depth look into four key media industry sectors in India—newspaper publishing, television broadcasting, film, and digital media industries—and their business and regulatory

environments. This book examines the fundamental role played by language and geography in the Indian media industries. Chapter 5 presents an in-depth look at the newspaper industry, including segmentation, cost reduction and revenue maximization strategies and the challenges offered by digital media to this sector in India. Chapter 6 deals with the television industry, its market segments, revenue streams, pricing and distribution strategies and key challenges faced by this industry. Chapter 7 examines the film industry, horizontal and vertical integration in its segments and revenue streams, and emerging trends in distribution, financing and exports. Chapter 8 deals with digital media with an emphasis on over-the-top platforms (OTTs) and digital rights management (DRM) issues in this sector.

The last two chapters of the book deal with two topics that are relevant to all sectors of the media business: the creative industries approach, and copyright issues. Chapter 9 offers a view of the context within which media industries operate using the creative industries perspective to discuss risk, innovation and the nature of work in these industries. Chapter 10 addresses copyright terms, issues and

debates with appropriate case studies. The book covers only four industry sectors in this edition: newspaper publishing, television, film and digital media.

This book provides a wide-ranging analysis of the research literature in the area of media economics and management, taking into consideration international and Indian contexts while presenting examples and data to illustrate key concepts, policy and market analysis, so that they are relevant and accessible to students interested in these topics. A broader understanding of the Indian media as economic entities will further inform and strengthen future media research from critical and policy perspectives.

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