

Research Article

A Study to Analyze the Trust of the Indian Youth on the Credibility of the Media

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A B S T R A C T

The Media is considered as the Fourth Pillar of a democratic society. It works as a watchdog over the legislative, executive and judicial systems of the government. The media's fair and unbiased reporting is essential for the smooth and better functioning of a democratic setup. It has been observed that the Indian media is involved in several ill practices in order to generate revenue which has impacted its credibility. Today, most of the media is not able to maintain the core objectives of journalism; by presenting unverified fake news and delivering half-truths or fabricated news to generate a high TRP. It is essential to study the role of Indian mainstream media in disseminating fake news and the perception of youth towards the declining credibility of the Indian media today. Hence, this study looked into the participation of Indian mainstream media in spreading fake news as well as the approach of the Indian youth towards the declining credibility of the Indian media and how they are contending with credibility issues?

Keywords: News Reports, Credibility, Youth, Globalization, Liberalization

Introduction

The Media is just like a mirror of society showing the real picture of the happenings of different sectors of society. People see through the eyes of the media and they believe what the media shows to them. It has an immense social, cultural and economic influence on its audience. For this the press was called as 'Fourth Estate of Realm'¹ because the society completely depends on the active and unbiased performance of media.² After independence, the Indian media has grown phenomenally but today's liberalization, privatization and globalization have corrupted the Indian media. Private television, print and online media are struggling to generate revenue and to increase their reach. Television media is mostly working to increase its Television Rating Point (TRP) The competition, approach to increase the TRP, readability and low wages of journalists,

has diverted the news media into lobbying, sensationalism and creating corporate and other harmful biases. There is immense scarcity of unbiased news reports in Television and newspaper, as a result of which, "the credibility" of the media seems to be at stake. The credibility of the news organization has seen its credibility marks decline because the media has diverted its aim from its main objectives which are; to inform and to educate the public.

Research Problem

The *World Press Freedom Index for 2018*, ranked India 138 in a total of 180 countries. In 2009, it was 105. The credibility of media is declining day by day. Therefore it is essential to study the role of the Indian mainstream media in disseminating fake news, how the Indian youth perceive the trust and credibility of the media and what kinds of

approaches they are opting to examine and cross-check the credibility of information.

Objective

- To study the participation of the Indian mainstream media in disseminating fake news.
- To study and evaluate the approach of youth towards the declining credibility of media.
- To study the alternative resources using by youth to fight with fake news.

Literature Review

The press works in different ways in a democracy and in a totalitarian state. In a democratic setup the press acts as a check on authority and in the totalitarian the press is a handmaid of the authority. The press encourages the people to think in a democratic setup and it was very true for the Early Indian media. Over the years, the Indian media has grown in size and coverage. Paid and fake news is bringing down the role of journalists, editors and their freedom to write and represent.³ The World Economic Forum 2018 reports that the Indian Media is the most corrupt in the world. Indian media houses and media personalities have been associated in cases of financial corruption and criminal, civil and sexual crimes. Sun TV, Zee News, National Herald, Times Now, Janasri TV, Somaya News, Aaj Tak and Tarun Tejpal are facing allegations of corruption, sexual harassment, criminal intimidation, paid news, fraud, money laundering, extortion, blackmailing, illicit-black-money etc.⁴ *Alt News* identified many incidents in which mainstream media are reporting fake news. It was also seen that the mainstream media is circulating fake news to drive some agendas.⁵

Audience Perception about Media Credibility

Audience perceptions about the credibility of news have been understood by clichés like “media credibility,” “trust in media,” “media skepticism,” and “media cynicism”.⁶ Media credibility is related to the more general concept of trust. The credibility of a news article or report is measured in three dimensions and they are: Media credibility, Message credibility, Source credibility.⁷ The Credibility of a message is through interlinked messages, messenger, media source and receiver and to each other.⁸ Being fair, correct, objective, complete, comprehensive, and accurate are some elements of news credibility.⁹ The difference and distance between a journalist and the public influences the public attitude towards the news media.¹⁰

Research Methodology

Five cases were taken in a research article to study the role of mainstream media in disseminating fake news and a multiple choice survey questionnaire consisting of 15 questions was circulated to 100 students of Lovely

Professional University to get their responses to meet the purpose of objectives.

Result

Fake news Broadcast and Published by Mainstream Media in India

Analysis of table 1

Table 1, contains five items of fake news which were circulated by the mainstream media without carrying out any verification. The first news with the title of *‘Jama Masjid in dark due to non-payment of electricity bills of over ‘four crores’ was published by the website of Republic TV. The second news titled ‘Fatwa in Saudi Arabia that men can eat their wives if hungry’ was also published by Aaj Tak website. The third news was shown by Times Now with the title of ‘Conversion rate card unearthed in Kerala’. Times of India renowned English daily which published the fake news with title ‘CPM cyber warriors troll Australian cricketer Tom Moody after Moody’s upgrades India’s ratings’. Aaj Tak, India Today, Zee News, ABP News and India TV all mainstream Indian media broadcast and published ‘Pakistani posts of Kirpan & Pimpal destroyed by Indian Army in an immediate retaliation to the beheading of soldiers’ without cross checking the facts and figures and veracity of that news.*

Respondents

The age group of the respondents is between 19 to 25 years.

The Attitude of Youth towards Declining Credibility of Media

A total of fourteen close-ended questions were distributed to the respondents to evaluate the impact of the declining credibility of media on youth.

Analysis of Table 2

A total of 86 students out of 100 students accepted that they were aware of paid news but 65 students opted yes for the question that paid news is very frequent in these days. On the issue of awareness about fake news, 72 students out of 100 accepted that they have information about fake news, 53 out of 100 students thought that all media produced or published biased news. On the question of, the media showing half-truths and fabricated news of an incident 51 student out of 100 agreed that the media did fabricate or show half-truth of the news. 78 students out of 100 claimed that today’s media reporting is not fair. 94 out of 100 students said yes to the trustworthiness of media declining day by day. 65 out of 100 students said they don’t rely on any single media for information. 67 students out of 100 students said they always cross check the information. On the question of cross verification news platform, 30 students refer to a newspaper, 32 students see

news channels and 23 students check websites and only 15 students said they asked their peer group to check the news. 76 out of 100 students said they prefer International media to check the authenticity of news, 63 students out of 100 students said Indian media is more prone to fake news, on the question of the right thing to do when anyone spotted fake news, no student was in favor of spreading fake news, 38 students out of 100 said it's better to comment on links with correction, 23 students among 100 said that setting the record straight is right thing in case of fake news. 39 out of 100 students said they would do nothing when they received any fake news.

Discussion

The result shows that the Indian mainstream media is actively participating in disseminating fake news and the students are familiar with the concept of fake and paid news. They also feel that the media showed half-truths or fabricated news to set the agenda. Due to this reason they are not able to trust any one single media for information. They knew the repercussion of fake news but they are not able to fight against fake news. They accepted that most of the media is not fair and is losing its trustworthiness today and that is a very dangerous situation.

Table I

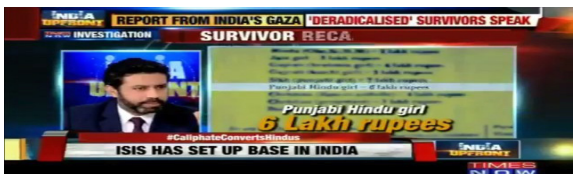
Media	News	Images
Republic TV	Jama Masjid in dark due to non-payment of electricity bills over four crores.	
Aaj Tak	Fatwa in Saudi Arabia that men can eat their wives if hungry.	
Times Now	Conversion rate card unearthed in Kerala.	
Times of India	CPM cyber warriors troll Australian cricketer Tom Moody after Moody's upgrades India's ratings.	
Aaj Tak, India Today, Zee News, ABP News and India TV:	Pakistani posts of Kirpan & Pimpal destroyed by Indian Army in an immediate retaliation to beheading of soldiers.	

Table 2

S.No.	Question	Respondent (yes)		Respondent (no)	
1.	Are you aware of the paid news?	86		14	
2.	Is paid news common these days?	65		35	
3.	Do you have any idea about fake news?	72		28	
4.	Do you think that the media produces and publishes biased news?	53		47	
5.	Do you think the media shows half-truths and fabricated news of an incident?	51		49	
6.	Do you accept that today's reporting is not fair?	78		22	
7.	Do you think the trustworthiness of media is declining day by day?	94		6	
8.	Can you trust a single media for information?	35		65	
9.	Do you cross verify the news?	67		33	
10.	Generally what do you do to verify the news?	Refer newspapers	See news channels	Check in web sites	Ask to peer groups
		30	32	23	15
11.	For cross verification of news which media do you prefer?	National media		International media	
		24		76	
12.	Do you think Indian media is more prone to fake news?	63		37	
13.	Do you think Indian media is more prone to sensationalizing news?	96		4	
14.	Do you think International media gives more authentic news than Indian media?	71		29	
15.	What is the right thing to do when you spot fake news?	Spread it	Comment on links with you own correction	To set the record straight	Do nothing
		0	38	23	39

There is a huge credibility crisis in the television and print news media. They feel that the International media is more authentic than the Indian media. The active role of the media is a basic need to run law and order in a democratic society. But in the present scenario, it is also a fact that the credibility of media is declining alarmingly. To maintain the credibility of the media has become a very big challenge for all media scholars, practitioners, responsible people and officials of the society.

Conclusion

India is the world's largest democracy and a vibrant, active and diverse media is required to run it. A fearless media can become the effective voice of Indian people but in the present scenario, due to Indian media's involvement in fake and sensationalized news it is losing its credibility and trust among the youth. Indian youth is more dependent on the International media for news and it is an alarming situation for the largest democratic country in the world. Therefore,

it is high time that the Indian media needs to wake up and work at regaining the trust of the Youth and enable them repose their trust and credibility on media. The people will start believing in the media if the media ensures that they are transparent. Editorial independence and transparent ownership will make Media organizations trustworthy. It is high time that the Indian media needs to work on itself to regain its lost sense of credibility.

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