



Social Media's Influence on Print Media News Coverage

Mr. Vitthal Biru Edake

Ph.D. student, Dep. Mass communication and journalism
Shivaji University, Kolhapur. Maharashtra.
vbedake@gmail.com

ARTICLE DETAILS

Research Paper

Accepted: 15-04-2025

Published: 10-05-2025

Keywords:

*Social media, print media,
influence, graphic,
journalists, ethical
challenges*

ABSTRACT

Social media and other online news sources, also known as the “new media”, have become an integral part of modern society. The presence of such new media, social media in particular, has threatened the existence of printed newspaper. The effect of this threat is felt on the circulation of print newspapers, especially in the India. This qualitative research case study aimed to explore how traditional print media influence social media operations in graphic communication groups (how journalists gather news information, how editorial teams are established and function, and how news is distributed) and journalistic ethics. The purpose of the proposed study was achieved through semi-structured interviews with participating journalists and editorial staff of offline and online editions of graphic newspapers. Data analysis included content analysis of interview data to generate topics for discussion using graphic software. The study showed that social media is highly integrated into the work of graphic newspapers and is having a positive impact on its work, both in terms of the opportunity to reach news and stories to a wider audience and in terms of the speed of its work. Negative in terms of ethical challenges, plagiarism of the text, credibility of the text and authenticity, and focusing on specific and broad texts. The company considers social media sources as unverified sources that need to be verified, to ensure that stories and news are only sourced from verified social media sources, and finally, to ensure



that standards and codes of conduct are followed, the company has implemented a social media policy. The Graphic should continue the process of retraining its journalists in the art of using more social media platforms to further expand their reach and reap the benefits of social media.

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15382010>

Introduction:

The early 21st century saw major changes in the media landscape, driven primarily by the growing popularity of the Internet and in particular the emergence of social media platforms. Initially perceived as a separate entity, a space for personal interaction and easy sharing, social media has gradually become entangled in the structure of news consumption and production. For traditional print media, long accustomed to a unidirectional model of information dissemination, this integration has presented both unprecedented opportunities and daunting challenges.

The aim of this paper is to conduct a complex analysis of how social media has affected print media news coverage. This book goes beyond the simple approach of understanding social media as a mere distribution medium and delves deeper into its impact on the very core of journalism. From the initial stage of identifying breaking news to the final stage of stories, social media has become an undeniable force that determines what newspaper journalists will cover, how they will cover it, and at what pace they will work. Understanding this impact is important to understand the current state and future direction of print journalism in the age of digital connectivity and instant information.

The Rise of Social Media and its Initial Impact on News Consumption:

The early 2000s saw the rise of social media, with platforms such as Friendster, MySpace, and later Facebook and Twitter gradually gaining popularity. Initially, these platforms were used primarily for personal networking and social interaction. However, their inherent ability to rapidly exchange information soon began to influence the way people consumed news. Eyewitness reports, citizen journalism, and the immediate dissemination of information during breaking events began to weaken the gatekeepers of traditional media.



This change posed both threats and opportunities for print media. On the one hand, they faced increased competition for audience attention and, on the other hand, pressure to adapt to the real-time nature of social media updates. On the other hand, these platforms have emerged as potential sources of information, guidance and tools that directly connect to public sentiment. The initial response of many print publications was cautious, often viewing social media with suspicion and maintaining a degree of separation between their established journalistic practices and the chaos of online discourse.

Social Media as a Source and Catalyst of News:

Over time, the relationship between print media and social media has evolved from cautious observation to active participation. Social media platforms have become indispensable tools for news gathering in several key ways:

Breaking News and Firsthand Accounts: Social media often serves as an early source of information during breaking news events. Citizen journalists armed with smartphones can receive and share real-time updates, photos and videos even before official reports. Print journalists now actively monitor these platforms to identify potential news stories, verify early reports and find eyewitnesses. This requires quick verification and a keen understanding of the credibility of user-generated content.

Identifying trends and public sentiment: Social media provides a vast and dynamic repository of public opinion, trending topics and emerging stories. Print journalists use this platform to assess public interest in various issues, identify potential angles to stories and understand the prevailing sentiments around events. This helps them to customize coverage and provide more relevant and engaging content for their readers.

Finding sources and expertise: Social media platforms attract a variety of individuals, including experts, academics, activists and people directly affected by events. Journalists can use this platform to identify and contact potential sources, gather diverse perspectives and enrich their reporting with first-hand experience and specialized knowledge.

Keeping track of competitors and the broader media landscape: Social media gives print journalists the opportunity to gain insight into the coverage provided by their competitors and other news organizations. This constant monitoring can influence their editorial decisions, prompting them to think of unique perspectives, conduct in-depth analysis or correct errors in existing reporting.

**Impact on news reporting and narrative structure:**

The influence of social media goes beyond news gathering and significantly affects how print media create and structure their stories:

Responding to online discussions: Immediate and often unfiltered reactions on social media can pressure print media to address specific aspects of a story or respond to public criticism. This can lead to adjustments in framing, inclusion or withdrawal of different perspectives, and even corrections.

Resonating online stories: While aiming for objectivity, print media can inadvertently echo influential stories circulating on social media. This can be especially evident in highly polarized events, where emotionally charged content and biased viewpoints often gain significant momentum online. Journalists must be careful to critically evaluate these stories and avoid perpetuating misinformation or biased framing.

Adopting social media language and style: In order to connect with digitally native audiences, some print publications have adopted a more informal and conversational tone in their online presence and, to some extent, in their print editions. This may include using more direct language, incorporating social media slang, and structuring content in a way that is easily digestible by online readers.

Visual storytelling and multimedia integration: The visual nature of many social media platforms has influenced print media to place greater emphasis on photography, infographics, and multimedia elements in their online and even print versions. This reflects recognition of the power of visual storytelling to capture the attention of audiences and effectively convey information in a visually rich environment.

Challenges and ethical considerations:

The increasing integration of social media into print journalism is not without its challenges and ethical considerations: Verification and dissemination of misinformation: The rapid and often uncontrolled nature of information dissemination on social media is a significant challenge for print journalists. Verifying the truth and accuracy of user-generated content is important, but it takes time. The pressure to deliver on time can sometimes lead to inadvertently ingesting misinformation or unverified claims.



Bias and echo chambers: Social media algorithms often create echo chambers, which feed users information that primarily aligns with their existing beliefs. Print journalists should be aware of this phenomenon and strive to present balanced and diverse perspectives even when reporting on issues that are polarized online.

Privacy and consent: Using social media content, especially personal posts and images, raises ethical concerns about privacy and consent. Journalists should adhere to strict ethical guidelines when using publicly available social media content and ensure that they do not violate individuals' privacy rights.

Maintaining journalistic standards: The pressure to generate online engagement and keep up with the pace of social media can sometimes compromise traditional journalistic standards of accuracy, fairness, and in-depth analysis. Print media should avoid the temptation to prioritize sensationalism or clickbait over original reporting. **Blurred Lines Between Journalism and Advocacy:** The immediacy and interactive nature of social media can blur the lines between objective reporting and personal opinion or advocacy. Journalists must maintain their professional integrity and clearly distinguish between factual reporting and their own views, especially when they interact with audiences on social media.

The Future of Print Media in the Age of Social Media:

Despite the challenges, social media also presents significant opportunities for the future of print media:

Increasing Audience Reach and Engagement: Social media platforms offer print publications a powerful tool to reach new audiences, promote their content, and interact directly with their readers. This can create a sense of community and build brand loyalty.

Increasing Storytelling and Interactivity: Social media allows print media to experiment with new forms of storytelling, including multimedia elements, interactive features, and opportunities for audience participation. This can enrich the reading experience and make news more engaging.

Building Brand Identity and Trust: By actively engaging with their audiences on social media and demonstrating a commitment to accuracy and ethical reporting, print publications can build a strong brand identity and build trust in a digitally noisy environment.

Developing New Revenue Streams: Social media can be a valuable tool for print media in the digital age to drive traffic to online platforms, encourage subscriptions, and explore new revenue models.

**Conclusion:**

The relationship between social media and print media news coverage is dynamic and evolving. Social media is no longer a peripheral phenomenon but has become an integral part of the news ecosystem, profoundly impacting how print journalists gather information, present stories, and communicate with their audiences. This integration offers numerous opportunities for increased reach, faster reporting, and greater audience engagement, but it also poses significant challenges related to verification, bias, ethical considerations, and the maintenance of journalistic standards.

Going forward, the success of print media in the age of social media will depend on their ability to effectively navigate this complex landscape. This will require embracing the opportunities presented by these platforms, developing robust verification processes, and raising a critical awareness of potential pitfalls while upholding core journalistic values. By strategically integrating social media into their workflows while committing to accuracy, depth, and ethical reporting, print media can adapt to the changing media landscape and continue to play a vital role in informing and engaging the public. The shifting sands of the digital age require adaptability and innovation, and the future of print journalism will be shaped by its ability to harness the power of social media responsibly and effectively.

References

- Hermida, A., Fletcher, F., Korell, D., & Logan, D. (2012). "Share, Like, Recommend: Decoding the Social Media News Consumer."
- Tandoc, E. C., Jr., & Koh, J. (2019). "Revisiting the Social Media News Use Scale: Exploring Demographics, Motivations, and Media Consumption."
- Newman, N., Levy, D. A., & Nielsen, R. K. (2015). "Digital News Report 2015."
- Lee, C. S., & Ma, L. (2012). "News Sharing in Social Media: The Effect of Gratifications and Prior Experience."
- Domingo, D., Quandt, T., Heinonen, A., Paulussen, S., Singer, J. B., & Vujnovic, M. (2008). "Participatory Journalism Practices in the Media and Beyond: An International Comparative Study of Initiatives in Online Newspapers."



- Nielsen, R. K., Fletcher, R., Newman, N., & Brennen, S. (2018). "Navigating the 'infostorm': Roles, routines, and strategies in the everyday politics of platform disinformation."
- Wasserman, H., & Madrid-Morales, D. (2019). "The platform press: How Silicon Valley reengineered journalism."
- Vosoughi, S., Roy, D., & Aral, S. (2018). "The spread of true and false news online."
- Pew Research Center (2024). "News Use Across Social Media Platforms 2024."
- Carlson, M., & Zenger, T. (2019). "Social media as a catalyst for online deliberation? Exploring the affordances of Facebook and YouTube for political expression."
- Deuze, M. (2019). "Understanding Journalism's Innovations: A Meta-Analysis of the Literature on Digital Journalism."
- Fletcher, R., Cornia, A., Graves, L., Nielsen, R. K., & Newman, N. (2016). "Measuring the reach of "fake news" and online disinformation in Europe."
- Adoni H, Nossek H. The New Media Consumers: Media Convergence and the Displacement Effect. *Communications*,2001:26(1):59-83. doi: 10.1515/comm.2001.26.1.59
- Atkin C. Anticipated Communication and Mass Media Information-Seeking. *Public Opinion Quarterly*,1972:36(2):188. doi: 10.1086/267991
- Chaffee S, McLeod J. Individual vs. Social Predictors of Information Seeking. *Journalism Quarterly*,1973:50(2):237-245. doi: 10.1177/107769907305000204
- Effects of Covid-19 on TV viewing. (2020). https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0023/205088/covid-19-news-consumption-weektwenty-ninebarb.pdf
- Katz E, Gurevitch M, Haas H. On the use of the mass media for important things. *American Sociological Review*,1973:36:164-181.
- Gupta N. Four strategies from The Hindu to navigate the subscription game - WAN-IFRA. Retrieved, 2021. from <https://wan-ifra.org/2021/11/four-strategies-fromthe-hindu-to-navigate-the-subscription-game/>
- Himmelweit HT, Swift B. Continuities and discontinuities in media usage and taste: A longitudinal study.*Journal of Social*, 1976:32:133-156.



- Hu, B., & Zhang, D. (2014). Channel selection and knowledge acquisition during the 2009 Beijing H1N1 flu