

# Social Media Revolution in Journalism & Its Impact on The Future of Mainstream Media: A Critical Analysis

**Dr. Raghav Kumar Jha**

Senior Journalist, Dd News, India

## Abstract

Journalistic scenario has undergone a revolutionary change with the advent of social media. From conceptualizing ideas to covering events, from planning to gathering inputs and from preparing to presenting news, each aspect of journalism has completely changed. Thanks to the information available on social media, people no more wait for TV News Channels' Prime Time shows or morning newspapers for updated news. This creates pressure on journalist to do more home work before presenting a news item. The nature of news consumption has also changed. Now it is two way communication, where news organizations also have to satisfy the queries of their viewers/readers. Moreover in this fast-paced world, people have little time to watch television news or go through newspapers of the day. Naturally they switch to social media, which updates them without consuming their valuable time. So this media is also hailed as the future of journalism.

Against this backdrop a rigorous research was conducted to have a deep understanding of social media revolution in journalism and its long lasting impact on the future of the fourth estate.

**Keywords:** Literature in a hurry, Social media revolution in journalism, Communication scenario, Multi-tasker, Lightning speed.

## Introduction

The English poet and critic of 19<sup>th</sup> century Matthew Arnold once said, "journalism is literature in a hurry." In other words Matthew Arnold emphasizes the important role of speed in the delivery of journalistic contents. While on duty journalists make sure that the deadline is met at all cost. This importance of speed in journalism was further elaborated by the famous American journalist Edward R. Murrow. He said, "the speed of communications is wondrous to behold. It is also true that speed can multiply the distribution of information that we know to be untrue." Clearly the speed, which is an essential characteristics of journalism, plays a pivotal role in delivering news for the print or the electronic media.

Social media entered into the journalistic scene with its characteristic features like speed, immediacy, wide reach and cost effectiveness. Media industry extended a red carpet welcome to this ultra modern technology enabled communication channel. Mainstream media, be it newspapers or television channels, started using social media platforms prominently. With the passage of time media's dependence on social networks and messaging apps increased and now social media have become an integral part of the mainstream media.

It's a fact that social media have democratized the entire communication scenario, which was unimaginable earlier. Besides, social media is equipped with the modern technology, that is changing

every walk of life. In view of these developments, media experts hail social media as the future of mainstream media.

**Research Methodology**

Sample survey, Interviews & Content Analysis

**Literature Review**

The literature available on the topic is few and far between. However, the available books, articles and research papers were reviewed, which include “Social Media for Journalists: Principles and Practices” by Clare Cook and Megan Knight, “Mobile and Social Media Journalism: A Practical Guide” by Anthony Adornato, the article “Your news in 140 characters: exploring the role of social media in journalism” by Stassen Wilma, the article “A Decade of Research on social media and Journalism: Assumptions, Blind Spots and A Way Forward” by S C Lewis, the research paper “The Development of Journalism in the face of social media” by C. Thomas and the research paper “A Study on Journalistic Use of social media” by P Pradhan.

These studies point towards social media’s profound impact on the mainstream media and focus on the benefits of social media in journalism and argue that traditional media should take advantage of this tech-savvy media to fulfill the requirements of the changing times. Today journalists are largely dependent on social media for collection and distribution of news. Needless to say that Social media plays an important role in journalism. However, the larger question of authenticity of contents on social media remains unanswered. More research is needed in this field, so that a concrete mechanism could be developed to monitor the contents of social media. The literature also argues that online journalism is a danger to print media. However, this argument is not easily digestible. Fact of the matter is that publication industry still enjoys an esteemed place in the readers’ perception. Therefore more research is needed to go to a balanced conclusion.

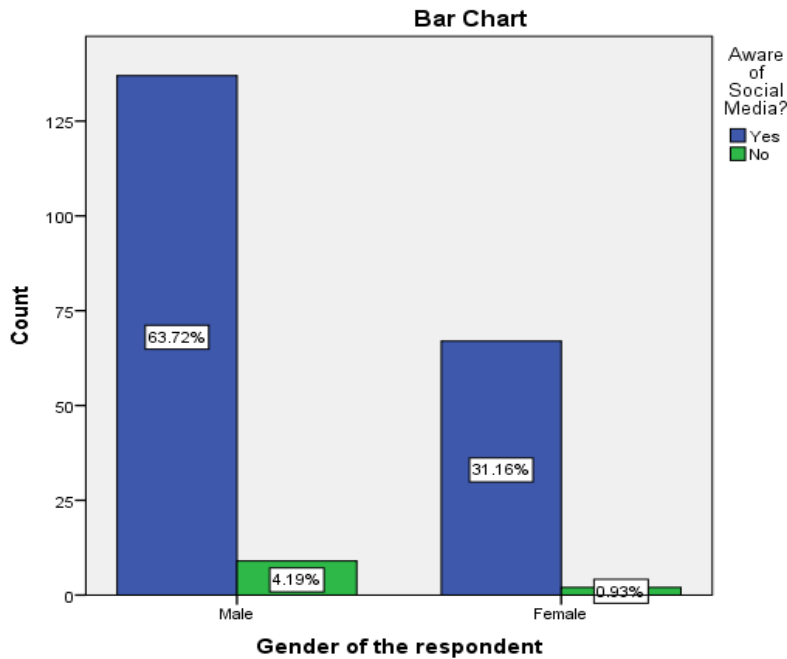
**Survey, Interviews & Data Interpretation**

A sample survey was conducted. The area of research was the national capital & NCR. Two hundred and fifteen respondents of different demographics took part in this survey. Besides, interviews of eight eminent personalities of the journalistic field were conducted. They include heads of leading TV News Channels, editors of prominent Newspapers/magazines and renowned media educators.

The data collected from this survey & interviews revealed many interesting facts regarding people’s perception of Social media. The interpretation of data gave a new perspective to this research study.

**Awareness of Social Media**

<b>Awareness of Social Media Crosstabulation</b>				
Count				
		Aware of Social Media?		Total
		Yes	No	
Gender of the respondent	Male	137	9	146
	Female	67	2	69
Total		204	11	215

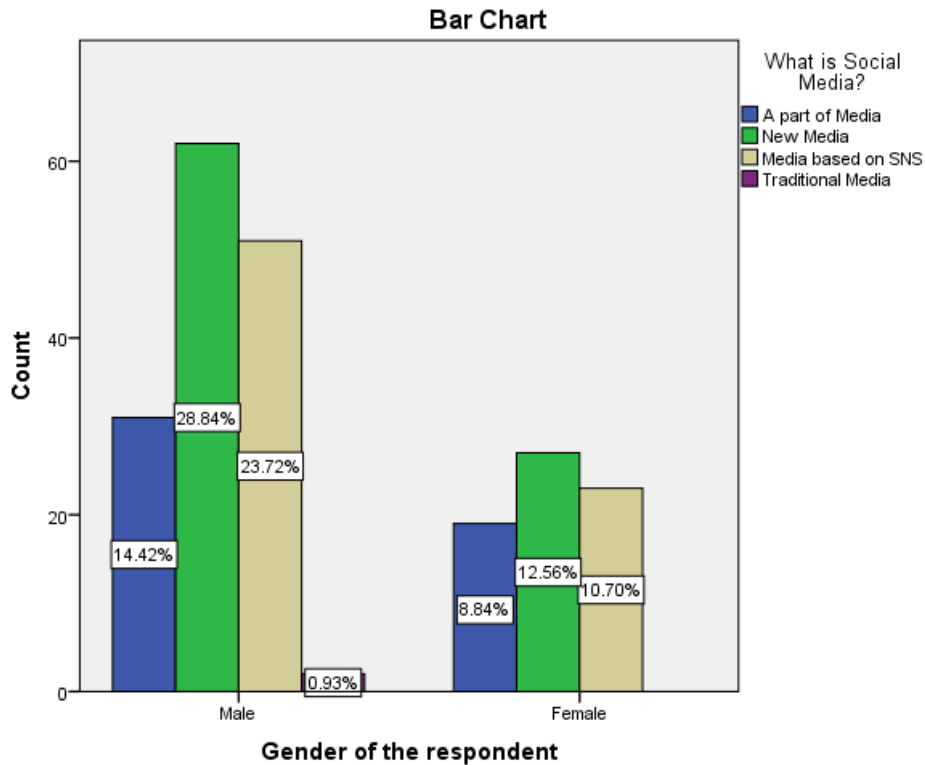


In the above cross tabulation and bar chart, respondents involved in the research study have been analyzed on the ground of their gender with respect to the question about their awareness of social media. Concluding analysis says that out of the 215 valid respondents, 146 respondents are male and 69 respondents are female. If we talk about male respondents then out of 146 respondents, 137 said that “Yes, they are aware of social media” whereas 9 respondents said that “No, they aren’t aware of the new media”. Secondly, Out of 69 female respondents, 67 said that “Yes, they are aware of social media” whereas only 2 respondents said that “No, they aren’t aware of this Media”.

In conclusion of the whole analysis, it can be clearly seen that out of total 215 respondents, 204 respondents said that “Yes, they are aware of social media” whereas 11 respondents said that “No, they aren’t aware of social media”.

### Understanding about Social Media

What is Social Media? Cross tabulation						
Count						
		What is Social Media?				Total
		A part of Media	New Media	Media based on SNS	Traditional Media	
Gender of the respondent	Male	31	62	51	2	146
	Female	19	27	23	0	69
Total		50	89	74	2	215



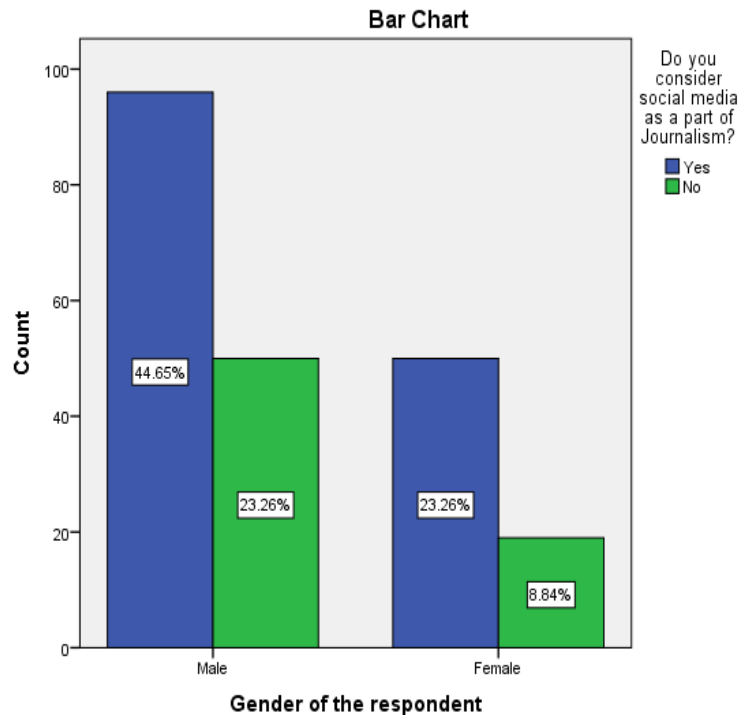
In the above cross tabulation and bar chart, the respondents have been analyzed on the ground of their gender and their response to the question that “What is Social Media?” Concluding the analysis We find that out of the 215 valid respondents, 146 respondents are male and remaining 69 respondents are female. When they were asked that “What is Social Media” then out of 146 male respondents, 31 respondents said that it is a part of media, 62 respondents said that it is new media, 51 respondents said that it the media based on social networking sites and lastly 2 male respondents think that it is traditional media.

When the same question was asked from female respondents, out of 69 respondents, 19 respondents said that it is a part of media, 27 respondents said that it is new media, 23 respondents said that it the media based on social networking sites and no female respondent thinks that it is traditional media.

In conclusion, it can be clearly seen that out of total 215 respondents, 50 respondents said that it is a part of media, 89 respondents said that it is new media, 74 respondents said that it the media based on social networking sites and lastly 2 respondents think that it is traditional media.

**Social media a part of Journalism**

Do you consider this media as a part of Journalism? Crosstabulation				
Count				
		Do you consider social media as a part of Journalism?		Total
		Yes	No	
Gender of the respondent	Male	96	50	146
	Female	50	19	69
Total		146	69	215



In the above cross tabulation and bar chart, the respondents have been analyzed on the ground of their gender and their response to the question if they consider social media as part of journalism or not. Concluding analysis says that out of the 215 valid respondents, 146 are male and 69 respondents are female. If we talk about male respondents then out of 146 respondents, 96 said that “Yes, this media is a part of journalism” whereas 50 respondents said that “No, it is not a part of journalism at all”.

Similarly, when this question was asked from 69 female respondents then 50 respondents said that “Yes, this media is a part of journalism” whereas 19 respondents said that “No, it is not a part of journalism”.

In conclusion, we find that out of total 215 respondents, 146 said that “Yes, this media is a part of journalism” whereas 69 respondents said that “No, it is not a part of journalism”.

In a nutshell, majority of respondents are of the view that it is a media based on SNS and they consider it as a part of journalism.

## REVOLUTION IN JOURNALISTIC LANDSCAPE

Social media has become an inseparable part of journalism & mass communication today. It has transformed the journalistic scenario in totality. The way journalists gather news and present their stories and the way people consume news, every aspect of mass communication has undergone a sea change. The Editor research in Outlook, Ajit Kumar Jha emphatically says “Social media has deep influence on the mainstream media. This media alerts news makers. When T.V news anchors read news and some breaking news come, they immediately go to social media. This media’s reach is global while the reach of mainstream media is relatively less. Besides, Social media has unlimited space whereas mainstream media has lesser space. So, when a newsman is writing some news or anchoring a news story, the unlimitedness of social media impinges on him and obviously it has a great impact on him.”

Underlining the importance of Social media in journalism, Prof Sanjeev Bhanawat says, “today entire mainstream media has come on social media. All TV Channels are on social media. Thanks to social

media, it has become a challenge for newspapers to maintain their readership by making their presentation, livelier. Now the criteria for lead news have become the retweets on the subject.”

Assistant Professor at the Bennett University, Sandeep Bhushan opines, “there’s huge importance of Social media on news telecast by electronic media as it is a 24/7 media, which constantly requires content. He adds that Social Media is the biggest content creator platform. Naturally it has a great influence on the electronic media. However, he says that the same argument doesn’t apply to print media.

In this era of social media, traditional one-way communication has turned into two-way conversations. Interactive dialogue and social interactions are exclusive features of this media, which provide a platform to journalists to have real conversations with their audience, viewers or readers. One more noticeable change that has taken place in journalism & mass communication after the advent of social media, is that online debates have become new normal, where everyone can express himself without any hesitation or restriction.

Thanks to its wide reach, fastness, cost effectiveness and portability of smart phones, Social media rules the roost in the field of communication today.

Social media is increasingly being used as sources in mainstream news coverage. Twitter has emerged as the most popular and powerful platform for breaking news. News organizations in general and journalists in particular depend on twitter to get breaking news, to find out quotes and to contact eminent people, they might not have come across face to face.

Former Director General of DD News Mayank Agrawal says, “tweeting has become a fad these days, particularly for breaking news.”

Underlining the importance of Twitter, the roving editor of The Telegraph Sankarshan Thakur says, “in most countries, political leaders and big organizations like UN, WHO break news on twitter. So, it has become very important platform for news reporting.”

Professor in the department of Media Studies of Mahatma Gandhi Central University Bihar, Dr Arun Kumar Bhagat observes, “opinion based news comes in public domain through twitter. Often twitter war breaks out in the morning which comes to its logical end in the evening.”

Remarking on twitter effect in journalism, Assistant Professor at the Bennett University Sandeep Bhushan says, “earlier, taking bytes from celebrities was a tough task for reporters. Now eminent personalities tweet on the subject they want to express their views. This has made the task easier. Many leaders including PM Modi don’t hold press conferences, but express themselves on twitter every now and then. It is convenient for them as they express their views without facing searching questions of journalists. So, twitter has emerged as an important platform to provide information.”

In Muck Rack’s 2017 journalist survey, 70 percent of journalists said they saw Twitter as their most valuable social network and 72 percent journalists track how many times their own stories are shared on social media.

Moreover, social media is setting the agenda of the news on the mainstream media today. The roving editor of The Telegraph Sankarshan Thakur says, “earlier 24/7 TV News channels used to set agenda of the day’s news. But nowadays social media is setting this agenda.”

Professor in the department of Media Studies of Mahatma Gandhi Central University Bihar, Dr Arun Kumar Bhagat also argues in the same direction. He says, “Social media is used in a planned way to make any news viral or to troll someone. Today social media is virtually setting the agenda of the news on the mainstream media particularly TV News channels. Tweets and retweets on any issue become the agenda of the news for a particular day. Many times, the same news becomes the highlight of newspapers which get published the next day.”

Managing Editor of TV9, Bharatvarsh, Sant Prasad Rai also echoes the same sentiment. He says, “earlier TV channels used to plan what to be shown first. But now there’s so much news fall on social media in general and twitter in particular, that there’s a continuous pressure to change the priority of news. It is a very powerful tool, particularly because it is considered the social platform of the elite class.”

Social media has become a necessity for newsroom operations today. The Editor research in Outlook, Ajit Kumar Jha observes, “while a program is being telecast on a T.V channel, concerned production staff always remain glued to social media because updates on the same news comes directly through social media. The same thing applies to the print media as well. A magazine editor discusses the cover story of the upcoming edition with senior editors, the owner of the group or the chairman in the newsroom for 8 to 10 hours, but the cover story changes as some other important news breaks on the social media.”

In the changing times journalism is taking new shape. Managing Editor of TV9, Bharatvarsh, Sant Prasad Rai points out that today social media and electronic media have become complimentary to each other. Both need one another. Both are dependent on one another. And many times, television is more dependent on Social Media.

### **The Future of Journalism**

Online inputs are continuously updated in real-time in the digital journalism, which means that you will have all the latest and appropriate coverage on the current issues of the world. This gives digital journalism a significant edge over the print media, where you have to wait for the next 24 hours for the most recent updates.. TV news channels also update their bulletins, but digital platforms are much faster than television news channels. Thanks to this media’s lightning speed, wide reach and unlimited space, it is hailed as the future of journalism. Veteran journalist N K Singh observes, “A major change is going to take place. There will be no formal media any more, no news channels and much less the newspapers. Print media is in shambles post corona. People are not reading newspapers. They simply watch mobiles for news. That is how the formal media is about to get extinct. A new form of media is taking shape and that is social media. So, the entire media world is going to change.” Mr. Singh gives one more reason in the favour of his argument. He says, “Social media is becoming popular because the formal media failed to live up to the people’s expectations.”

Replying to a question that who is the journalist of the future, famous journalist Mr. Ajit Kumar Jha says, “a multi-tasker, who has a degree in computer science or in some technology before a degree in journalism because social media is purely a technology driven platform. So future journalists have to be tech savvy, they have to have a high degree of alertness and passion for news breaks. It won’t be an exaggeration to say this media is literature in a lightning speed. So precise writing with speed will be the characteristics of future journalists.” Almost all the journalists interviewed unanimously say that Common man on the street with some brains, who has a sense to understand what is right and what is wrong and who is well equipped with modern technology will become the journalist of the future. Ajit Kumar Jha

says, “those with specs and high pitch voice .... “India wants to know” won’t exist in the days to come.” Veteran journalist Mr. Sankarshan Thakur underlines the importance of truth in journalism and says that the person who pursues truth is journalist of the future.

### **Excessive Dependence Detrimental to Journalism**

There’s also a flip side of social media. Excessive reliance on this media decreases the quality of journalism because there is neither content monitoring system nor editorial control over materials in the social media. Anyone without any training or journalistic background can generate and publish news on this media. As a result, the media audiences and readers have become skeptical about the information available on social networking sites. Digital platforms are losing the trust of viewers/readers, which is the most valuable asset of any media.

And if this media influences mainstream media, naturally the quality of journalism would be compromised.

Media experts raise serious objections on the arbitrary behavior of social media and say no one can take liberty of circulating any content on the pretext of media freedom. They rightly say that Social Media is taking all liberty of the fourth estate without any responsibility.

Pointing finger at the ethics of journalism in the digital media, Mr. Ajit Kumar Jha opines, “ this media is harvesting news without paying anything to the original source, it’s a big question mark on social media. In fact, social media is least concerned with the ethical aspect of journalism. It is taking liberty without any responsibility. Many times, society bears the brunt and pays dearly for the irresponsible behavior of social media.” Mr. N K Singh also raises question on the nature of this media. He remarks, “Social media is capricious. It’s not tangible. Therefore, you cannot force it to follow the guidelines. Social media can develop some dangerous forms. As of now there is no mechanism to catch some person who misuses this media for some vested interests.” Mr. Sandeep Bhushan also puts question mark on the irresponsible behavior of Social media. He says, “they sex up headlines. Often headlines don’t tell the tale. Selling grabbing journalism has become the order of the day. The contents are being compromised in the fast speed of news. These are attack on journalistic ethics.”

In short, this media is not reliable for mainstream journalism. Despite this fact, if mainstream media fall for social media hook, line and sinker, it would prove to be suicidal.

### **Conclusion**

Due to unlimited space, speed and wide reach Social media has a great influence on the mainstream media. Be it print or Television News channels, social media has become indispensable for newsmen. Because of two way communication on this media, news organizations know their readers/viewers far better today.

Social media has brought revolutionary changes in the way journalists collect news. This media is increasingly being used as sources in mainstream news coverage. Social media is already a fixture for reporting for many journalists, especially around breaking news events. 87% journalists who professionally use social media, say it has a very or somewhat positive impact on their ability to promote stories, while about 79% say it helps their ability to connect with their audience and find sources for stories.



Experts say that social media's influence is so powerful that trending news on social media become the topic of discussion in the prime time and headlines in the next day's newspapers.

Needless to say that social media which is faster and more responsive, plays a key role in journalism today. But often it is erroneous and frequently based on popular opinion rather than facts and truth. This is the flip side of social media journalism, which, encompasses a wide range of web-based applications, technology, and platforms that are used by unprofessional bloggers, writers, and people with vested interests to create content on a variety of topics. Against this backdrop finding reliable information becomes a tough task for journalists. However, it is the moral and professional responsibility of journalists to cross check the veracity of each piece of information before using it in the mainstream media. By doing so they will not only rhyme with the time and be able to provide quality inputs to their newspaper/TV news channel, but also remain safe from the dangers inherent in the Social media. If this precaution is maintained, Social media revolution in journalism would prove to be a boon for the mainstream media.

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