

Contradictory Development of Media: A study of Gandhian Model of Journalism and Contemporary Media

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Abstract

The Internet has changed the whole media environment. There is a tremendous change in the way of consuming news and information. World Wide Web has opened many doors at a global platform. It created a lot of news distribution channel on a single platform. News industries are experiencing great change. Social media acts as a platform of where they communicate, express and share their feelings, joys, happiness, different contents and news stories with amazing faster speed. People are highly affected by this, their social, cultural, political and economic behaviour is changed. People are sharing news stories on the social media platform. As we know Credibility and accuracy is the key in the journalism profession since inception. Mahatma Gandhi, "The father of the nation", was a revolutionary freedom fighter, a national leader and a social reformer. Apart from that, he recognized the power of journalism. In his movement of non-violence and truth, he achieved the collective opinions of people. Through his movement, people coming together, and share the idea to bring change in the society. And he achieved his aim with truth and nonviolence. Old and new journalism works differently. In this digital era, the line between the professional journalist and amateur (citizen journalist) has been blurred; as a result, the structure of representing news is changed. The core traits 'credibility' and 'accuracy' are highly affected. Yes, it's true, this digital information age gives us more breaking news and interactive platform than ever before but there are many negative consequences also. In this research paper, an extensive review of the literature has been carried on to analyze the overall positive and negative impact of social networking sites as a source of news. This study will reveal how people use social networking sites, to generate awareness in society and how it is affecting society in a positive and negative manner. Misinformation is a major threat to our society and it develops a negative mindset of society members and how this transformation of news consumption puts the Gandhiji's model of journalism at risk.

Keywords: Social Media, Digital communication Technology, Journalism, Citizen Journalism, Truth & Non-violence.

Special Statement

"Journalism should never be used for selfish ends or for the sake of merely earning a livelihood or, worse still, for amassing money".

--Mahatma Gandhi

Introduction

The evolution journey of communication is so long it started from smoke signals to carrier pigeon; Gutenberg printing press to smartphone social media ("From smoke signals to smartphones: The evolution of communication", 2019). The technique of receiving and imparting information is transformed. The customary pattern of consuming news through a traditional media is changed into the advanced structure. Social networking sites aren't restricted to just blogging and sharing pictures and recordings, it is more than that. There are various things which we are performing on social networking sites, it empowers us to share or make content and furthermore help us to take an interest in participative communication. Yet, today, social networking life is a point of contention likewise, a few people believe that it is an aid and many believe that, it is reviled. A few people are stating it is obliterating the psyche. The fake and inappropriate news content is developing negativity in our mind

which changes our attitude and behaviour. On the opposite side, some are stating it is a gift which associated us to all aspects of the world, we can meet our friends and family that are far, and we spread news awareness through it.

The questions that emerged to deal with the pulling and pushing of social media as a source of news by consumers were as follows:

- Why people are turning towards social media as a news source these days?
- How much trustworthy it is? Can we trust the news which social media delivers?
- How much accurate and factual it is?
- What are the positive and negative impacts of social media?
- Misinformation is a major threat to our society, so how to identify fake news?
- And how this social media is affecting the Gandhian model of journalism?

Defining Social Media

The Cambridge dictionary meaning of social media is “forms of media that allow people to communicate and share information using the internet or mobile phones” (“SOCIAL MEDIA | meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary”, 2019). The Investopedia describes “Social media is computer-based technology which facilitates the sharing of ideas, thoughts, and information through the building of virtual networks and communities” (“Social Media”, 2019)”. Kaplan & Haenlein define social media as “a group of Internet-based applications that builds on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The life of social media began as an approach to interact with loved ones however later it was adopted by many marketing/ business organisation to reach their target customers. The general public are utilizing social media sites for interaction, knowledge and latest current affairs. Business organizations use it for many business reasons like exchanging, promoting, trading, advertising, business bargains, advancement of products by feedback and so on.

Social Media a Potential Source of Information

Initially, the dissemination of news was limited, people had some offline broadcast channels and local and national publication. The news industry experienced a revolution in the manner in which news was gathered, distributed, published and consumed, with the beginning of social media. Reporters are making their own profile page and personalized blogging which establishes harmony between them and readers (Singh, 2014). As per the latest report of FICCI, Indian Media and media entertainment industry is one of the rapidly growing sectors in India. The quantity of the users on the web in India is required to cross 500 million this year. This report says India is turned into the second biggest cell phone user by 2017; data consumption has grown to an average of 3.9GB every month (Re-imagining India’s M&E sector, 2018).

Fascination toward social media: The social media has become a wide scale platform to share and communicate information, news, messages. The magnetism of social media has reached to such extent that knowingly or unknowingly people are using social media in their daily routine. Some of the salient features of social media are appended below:

- **User Friendliness and free accessibility:** It freely available and easy to navigate. After internet recharge, there is no need to pay extra for using social networking sites. And to explore social networking sites require exceptionally less technical knowledge.
- **Faster and Quicker:** Social networking sites are the best way of consuming news (Bharadwaj, Awasthi & Goundar, 2017). Initial research says, it is the fastest mode of news source, even the large portion of reporters everywhere throughout the world depends on social networking sites for investigation and collection of the news source. Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are considered as the best source of “breaking news”. (Hasan, 2014).
- **Every second is a ‘Breaking News’:** Today, everybody has a cell phone with camera facility; they clicked the photograph or record video of the particular incident, write a couple of lines on that issue, upload and share it on the social media with their friends and fan following. Within seconds this story goes on a worldwide dimension. Newman finds that on social media news is broken hours ahead of. He gives the instances of Indian Ocean Tsunami in 2004, Hurricane Katrina in the USA, the demise of Osama Bin Laden, the passing of Muammar Gaddafi, etc conventional news organizations (Newman, 2009).

- **Active participation converted into ‘Citizen Journalism’:** These days, online news readers are not just beneficiary but now they are benefactor also, they critically analyzing every news story. The interactive nature of social media and active participation of the audience in every story brought the new term called “Citizen Journalism”. The other name of citizen journalism is public or participatory journalism and democratic journalism (Baase, 2013). They are non-experts, nonprofessional, playing an active role gathering, reporting, analyzing and spreading information like genuine news correspondents or reporters (Bowman, Willis, 2003).
- **Social Media encourages speaking out:** Individuals love to get and see feedback as criticism or praise from companions and others at times. With the assistance of online stages like Twitter and YouTube, citizens can raise their voice. Sometimes these news stories are picked by conventional news organizations like CNN. Citizens can share information among their group of friends which has led to a decrease in consumption of traditional media (Squires, 2019).
- **Media acts as a cafeteria:** Presently, individuals are autonomous as far as what they consume from media. Like cafeteria, we have a menu to pick and choose what to read/write/see/ listen. People as per their choice, interest and mood choose news which is available in visual and infographic form. The viewers are easily attracted towards this because the human brain always processes visual information much more quickly as compared to text information (Ahmad, 2019).

Merits of social media as a source of information and news

A social networking site has the power to open the world up to you making it a smaller place than it has ever been before. On social networking sites, we get the news and we follow those who have something to say that we are interested in. People refresh themselves with the most recent happenings around the world. Skoler says, “Today’s new culture is about connection and relationship. Social networks are humming because they fit the spirit of the time, not because they created the spirit of sharing. They’re about listening to others and responding. The new culture values sharing information and being surprised by the experiences, knowledge and voices of others” (Skoler, 2009). In the past audience were passive and simply observing everything which was thrown by media but now the audience is active and interacting with the media and express about their likes and dislikes. It truly democratized knowledge and information. With the help of social media people raise their voice against any issue and here there is no chance for delayed feedback. Raising voice can be amazing in particular places where individual voices are broken, filtered, altered or simply not represented in real way. It exposes the content, which bring people’s opinion (Squires, 2019). The quick method for getting to news through news snippet is amazing. News isn't at all constrained to print distributions or recorded TV broadcasts. Reporters would now be able to report live to audiences and inform their followers by a notification, which gives them real- time coverage. Media houses can build websites that utilize Google techniques, for example, SEO and analytics that improve their online visibility to audiences. The websites are then successfully marketed and shared on social networking media (Dlamini, 2019). The blogs and the space of writing have been a blessing for the people who want to write and don’t want any interruption from others. In many autocratic countries where free to speak and fair journalism is not possible, that place also social media plays a wonderful job. Journalists and freelancers are freely expressed their emotions and views on the particular issue which they cannot express through traditional media. And most of the blogs are directly connected with the social media sites with links and the viewers and readers are allowed to make comment on the particular post. It truly offers freedom of expression (Toumi, 2011). Now, journalists are utilizing the advanced innovative technology tool which is used to create news in an interesting way. One of the advanced tools that are used by reporters is ‘Crowdsourcing’ which helps media houses to increase useful and valuable information and ideas from different audiences. Through Crowdsourcing the media can join the group of influencers and other media figures to share news content (Dlamini, 2019).

Demerits of social media as a source of information and news

Nowadays, the role and the responsibility of editors and journalists are increased towards society because they are the only persons who control rumours and able to clarify all negative news (Quigley, 2016). As singer argues, “anyone can publish anything with virtual impunity; moreover, the publisher can choose to remain anonymous” (Singer, 2006). The editor/ gatekeeper plays a crucial role in journalism; He/she is an individual who is in charge of what is published or broadcast, they are

overall responsible for all mistakes available in the information. He/she checks or double checks the accuracy of the information before making it an open public property (Butt, 2015).

Authentication of information through social media is still a question mark?

The empirical study believes, today anybody with a Smartphone and laptop can spread information and video around the globe instantly. In this digital age, it is almost unthinkable for anybody to veil their cruelty and anybody can talk about oppression to a global audience. Be that as it may, this digitization has a dark side too. Social media like Twitter and Facebook frequently release information to the public that has not been checked and verified more often. Along with this, it is feasible for the wrong information to spread rapidly. In contrast to conventional journalism, social media does not have any responsibility and duty towards society. Correspondents (Citizen Journalists) are not accountable to anyone (Acemoglu, Ozdaglar & ParandehGheibi, 2010). Many Researchers believe that independent content developers never supplant mainstream journalists because mainstream journalists know about fundamentals of news writing, they know the basic journalism news values, laws and ethics of the news industry and they have proper training of reporting and gathering of sources (Quandt, 2008). The journalist knows the significance of credibility, objectivity, fairness and the news values.

Obstacles

Misinformation is a major threat

As per Empirical Research, fake news is news articles that are intentionally and variably false and could mislead readers ("Why we study digital misinformation | CNetS", 2016). Fake news includes false information and it is created with dishonest intention to mislead consumers. This definition has been widely adopted in recent studies (Mendoza et al., 2010). False information on the web and social media has affected stock markets (Bollen, Mao & Zeng, 2011), slowed responses during disasters (Lamba, Kumaraguru & Joshi, 2013) and Fisher and Starbird found terrorist attacks (Fisher et al., 2016). Recent surveys have alarmingly shown that people increasingly get their news from social media than from traditional news sources (Perrin, 2015).

Recently we can obviously observe the quick ascent of fake news on social media. It has turned into a political tool to misdirect individuals. It's being used to raise one political side and to debase the other. The arrival of fake news came into limelight during the Presidential Elections of the United States in 2016. Everything began in Macedonia, with some youngsters creating pro-Trump websites to gain traffic and acquire money through commercials .i.e. clickbait. This business model finally became successful, and it had a big impact on the election results too" (Banerjee & Haque, 2018). 'The Guardian' a British daily Newspaper did a story on this issue, highlighting the business and the money involved in the fake news propaganda online. Currently, fabricated news stories become the means of earning for some writers; publics are highly influenced by this story.

Mainstream journalism is highly affected and many unethical problems are associated with this. They are as follows:

- Manipulative practices lead to conflict in news story;
- Rumours and Misinformation affect accuracy of news;
- Lack of accountability;
- Lack of logical coverage;
- People are in dilemma, what to believe or what not?

Credibility of the news circulated on social media

We live in an age of perplexity and false news world and this fake news have serious consequence on our society. It is our responsibility to detect fake news on social media. Fake news can mislead people by looking like trusted websites or using similar names and web addresses to reputable news organisations. There are many online sites which deliberately write false news stories in a humorous way under the special genre. "The Onion" is a good example. "The Onion presently enjoys a daily readership of 4.3 trillion" (Garden & Myth, 2019). We Indians are highly emotional and suffering from a lack of common sense. Whenever we receive any message through social media, or any news story which is based on our beliefs associated with our country (patriotism), political parties, caste, religion etc we trust on such posts. Example – a post which has a picture of a girl/God and says "comment and see the magic" "comment xx and get a good news within 24 hours", "god does not

give you luck just because you liked/commented/shared a Facebook post and magic will not happen if you ignore this message” etc. Latest example is pulwana attack on CRPF’s Jawan. Another example is after demonetization, the news of currency notes embedded with a nano-GPS chip, in less than 24 hours after the chip inside the currency note rumour started.

Tagging and accountability

First of all, we are accountable for whatever they share and forward to others, we must do a check before we share them with others. First, try to understand the news story then follow these points:

- Checked the source of information; who benefits from telling the story?
- We should become mature and first reject the biased and false news;
- Make it look as it’s written/produced by a public figure or known organization
- Partial use of religious values/patriotism/emotions

Indian Government is taking actions to control the dissemination of fake news. Under the instruction of Prime Minister Mr Narendra Modi, the ministry of information and broadcasting should report within 24 hours, if they found any journalist writing or broadcasting any ‘fake news’ would lose their government accreditation. **“In the past year, we’ve worked to destroy the business model for false news and reduce its spread, stop bad actors from meddling in elections and bring a new level of transparency to advertising. Last week, we started prioritizing meaningful posts from friends and family in the News Feed to help bring people closer together. We have more work to do and we’re heads down on getting it done.”** – Statement by Facebook (Ganguly, 2018). Facebook had recently appointed Mr Ajit Mohan as a Managing Director and Vice-President, Facebook India to control the spread of fake news. Whatsapp also appointed Mr Komal Lahiri as grievance officer in India (Ganguly, 2018). Twitter is also planning to do something in the same direction. In an official blog post, In India Facebook had announced a plan and had partnered with BOOM, an independent digital journalism initiative, for a pilot program that will first roll out in the state of Karnataka to control fake news.

Social Media a threat to Gandhian Model of Journalism

Today, journalism is losing the faith and trust of people. Corporate and conglomerates have occupied the profession of journalism. There was a time when rumours and fake news was spread by word of mouth but now it is done by social media. Truth is in danger, now once again world needs Gandhiji’s journalism which was based on ‘Truth’. Gandhiji, a well-known politician, lawyer, saint (popularly known as Mahatma), freedom fighter and the journalist. He was the editor of Indian opinion and Young India. During freedom fighting, he used journalism as a tool to bring awareness among citizens. Gandhiji says “The sole aim of journalism should be served”. But now journalism is more than politics and getting advertisement.

Gandhi ji’s Model of Journalism

In this advanced digital age, communication is easier and faster than before. Now, journalist and public both have the power to speak. Social media is a platform where two way communications are very easy. This model says:

- "In the very first month of Indian Opinion, I realized that the sole aim of journalism should be service” (Desai, Suhrod & Nandy, n.d.).
- "What is really needed to make a democracy function is not the knowledge of facts, but right education. And the true function of journalism is to educate the public mind, not to stock the public mind with wanted and unwanted impressions. A journalist has, therefore, to use his discretion, as to what to report and when. As it is, the journalists are not content to stick to the facts alone. Journalism has become the art of ‘intelligent anticipation of events’" ("Mahatma Gandhi's views on Journalism | Articles - On and By Gandhi", 2008).

Objectives and Goals of Gandhiji’s Journalism

- To give news to every one of the areas of society without any discrimination in their own local language.
- To give the whole information of every event happening in that area. To find out the cause of certain issues.
- To give by-line (name of writer/contributor) to all competent writers, experts and contributors.

- To cover all the important aspects of life like social, moral, important intellectual issues etc.

Understanding of Gandhian Model

- The journalist should be truth finder with a balanced mind. He should be accountable for the society first instead of an organization. He should be bold and perform his duty with complete honesty. His job is to develop rational thinking in the mind of readers. The main focus of journalism should be to serve people. Don't focus on politics and profit earning through advertisement. Whatever write always think about everyone, including the person is standing in the last position in queue.
- Satyagraha should be a basic principle and should be followed by every journalist. Satyagraha means 'insistence on truth' or holding truth always. A journalist should be a truth seeker and he cannot go against 'Satyagraha'.
- The duty of every news organization is to train their journalist properly in a peaceful and motivational environment. Conducting misbehaviour in working place is not allowed.

Qualms of Modern Journalism which affect Gandhian Model:

- **Goal:** The first and primary goal of journalism is to speak the truth and aware people. If anybody wants money in their career, he/she should not choose journalism as a career option. There is no place for fake news.
- **Over importance to advertisements:** Digital age is giving more stress on the advertisement. Profit earning is the main motive now. But don't promote any story just for money related to vulgar, communal, violent, corruption or political benefit (O'Malley, 1941). In Kerala, Mathrubhumi the national daily reject crores of advertisement revenue by rejecting the advertisements of Co-Co cola and liquors. It is a good step in the editorial supremacy (Joy, 2010).
- **News Manufacture:** Many media houses plant news stories artificially due to the cut-throat competition (Agarwal, 1995).
- **Sensitivity and emotional issues:** Gandhian Model believes truth, peace, love and compassion is the guiding force for any society. Inequality and injustice do not exist here. This model believes in the theory of Gram Swaraj (Village Empowerment) (Gandhi, 1991).
- **Sensational news story:** As per Gandhiji's model the aim of journalism is to provide service to people. But Communalism, hidden political agenda's for maximizing profit and tarnishing of news stories are the main characteristics of today's sensationalised approach. It is called yellow journalism (Agarwal, 1995).
- **Association for economic assistance:** Gandhian model believes that money is always needed to run any organization. So, association with the right intention not for any propaganda, communal or violence promotion is allowed. Gandhiji believes that apart from advertisement, organizations can take financial assistance from Gandhi associated institutions, public donation and Government help (Gandhi, 1991).

Social media basically means any human communication or sharing information on internet that occurs through the medium of computer, tablet or mobile. There are numerous websites and apps that make it possible. Social media is now becoming one of the largest means of communication and is gaining popularity rapidly. Social media enables you to share ideas, content, information and news etc. at a much faster speed.

Conclusion

In last few years social media has grown tremendously at an unexpectedly fast rate and has captured millions of users around the world. Social networking sites as a source of news and information to unite people on a huge platform. This brings positive change in the society; it generates awareness among society like campaigns, advertisement articles, promotions which helps the society to be up to date with the current information. It updates the society at all fronts. The social media has both merits and demerits, when it comes on sharing the views ad spreading information. Misinformation and fake news on social media are destroying the real charm of journalism as well as the Gandhian model of Journalism. We live in an age of modernization, commercialization and technological advancement. This high-speed news on social media modernized the minds of journalists. The commercialisation of

the news and layering the truth of the content of the news with fake information is against the ethic of Gandhian model of journalism. The commercial news agencies forgets the ethical laws, humanity and even press laws. Here Gandhiji's model of Journalism has relevance. A Journalist should understand that Journalism is an intellectual work. Journalists are highly intellectual persons of the society and their role is to give right direction to society, more and more new ideas and vision to the society. Mahatma Gandhi, as the journalist, was such a visionary. Today most of the journalists have lack of genuine deep thinking and knowledge. Today's journalists are seeking for short and easy solution for every problem. Before writing or preparing any news report, they take the advantage of using vast available online social media resources, they not even bothered to find the proper facts related to that content, and write news stories. Yes, Gandhiji's newspapers are not complete newspapers in the modern sense. But even then he advised the journalists not to write anything without evidence. Do not tarnish any one's image or do not glorify anyone unnecessarily. Journalism must be for social progress and common good. Otherwise it will be harmful to the society. Gandhiji opposed all sorts of commercialisation of the media. Today media is a big business. Though we cannot easily follow Gandhian values in this situation. As a result, it is too early to draw any perfect conclusion from the available literature review; furthermore, research is required to understand the constantly changing media landscape and deep research is required to understand more about Gandhian Models and theories of Journalism.

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