

Impact of Social Media on Mainstream Journalism

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The single most important transformation in Journalism in the present age is the impact of Social media on mainstream news production, distribution and consumption. Journalists are using Social media as a professional tool, to assess top news trends, to obtain sources, research stories, break news online, obtain feedback and for community engagement. Stories are breaking on facebook, twitter and Youtube and are finding their way into the mainstream media. Opinionated blogging has also been a major transformative force in Journalism. This study explores how mainstream journalists are utilising social media for finding story ideas and reporting news, apart from building audience involvement and obtaining reader feedback. 300 journalists from South India participated in the study that obtained their responses to various issues concerning social media and Journalistic practice. As focus of news shifts from being source centric to reader centric, community engagement becomes important for any mainstream Journalist. The challenge for most of the traditional Journalists and media organisations therefore, is to respond and adapt to the evolving landscape of Journalism, increasingly being dominated by the social media. This paper examines how Journalists from mainstream media are using Social media at various levels of journalistic practice. It draws upon data obtained from Journalists and from previously published research. Some of the conclusions from this study are; the growth of Social media in India has been phenomenal in the past few years and people are increasingly turning to social media for news. Journalists therefore face the challenge of adapting to changing news consumption patterns of people and learning to use the Social media for keeping pace with evolving forms of Journalism, Journalists are facing a myriad of problems, ranging from breaking news that occurs on social media first, verifying the accuracy of stories on social media, checking source credibility, using social media as news source and keeping the audience engaged, Social media has become a source of news for Journalists They are also using more user generated content in their news stories, Journalists share their opinion more freely on Social media than on mainstream media. They also feel that their influence has grown through social media and they are able to obtain instant feedback from readers, the pace at which Journalists are beginning to embrace Social media tools like Twitter, Blogs and Facebook is quite slow and a majority of them are not making an optimum utilization of these media networks in their journalistic practice. Reasons range from lack of awareness, inability to keep pace with evolving technology and inability to blend presence on social media with their organizational goals. The study also found that mainstream Journalists are trying to understand the challenges raised by personal and social media. Issues such as editorial control; ownership of intellectual property; the blurring of professional and personal spheres; and lack of awareness on how to make optimum use of social media for journalistic purposes are impending factors.

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