GATEKEEPING BREAKING NEWS ONLINE: HOW SOCIAL MEDIA AFFECT
JOURNALISTS' CRIME NEWS SOURCING AND DISSEMINATION IN INDIA

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A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate College of Bowling Green
State University in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2018

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ABSTRACT

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This study applies the Hierarchy of Influences Model proposed by Pamela Shoemaker and Stephen Reese, to examine how the advent of social media has affected journalistic gatekeeping practices in India, the world's most populous democracy, identify emerging challenges for the journalism industry, and explore sustainable strategies to address these challenges. In the first phase 274 journalists from 15 Indian cities completed an online survey that examined their perceptions about social media's usefulness and credibility as a professional tool. The survey further examined factors that influenced journalists' news online selection decisions. In the second phase in-depth interviews were conducted with 18 print, television, and online editors from five Indian cities, to gain greater clarity and elaboration.

Results showed journalists considered social media extremely useful, yet they did not trust much of the information available on such platforms. Further, while individual, organizational, and social institutional factors impacted journalists' news selection decisions on websites, such decisions were also influenced by their perceived usefulness and credibility of social media. When sharing breaking crime news on organizational social media handles, journalists were influenced mainly by factors such as potential page views, and advertising revenues.

Many editors agreed that social media was a useful tool for journalists, but said journalists were cognizant about the untrustworthy nature of such news. They suggested strategies to address emerging challenges such as investing in human resources, increasing gender and ethnic diversity in newsrooms, and providing regular social media training for journalists.

The findings imply that factors influencing gatekeeping decisions have changed radically with the advent of social media. As news media operate in multiple platforms, breaking stories are often selected for a specific platform, depending on the story's aptness to that platform. There were some significant differences between Indian newsrooms from their Western counterparts. Organizational and social institutional factors – two distinct stages of the Hierarchy of Influences Model – were perceived as one and the same by many Indian journalists. Editors clarified this could be because most news media owners were also large industrialists with interests in other businesses, and owed allegiance to different political parties. Organizational diktats therefore were perceived by journalists as political, advertising, and market diktats.

Further, many editors felt the term *gatekeeping* did not adequately describe journalism in an online-first era. Social media's ability to break news had created multiple gates that were impossible to 'keep'. Based on their statements, this researcher proposed that today journalists and news organizations work as *news-conditioners*: they are unable to prevent the public from consuming inaccurate, fake or misguiding information available on various online platforms. However, their own subscribers and followers are provided the most accurate, and relevant information. Their role therefore resembles that of an air-conditioning system, providing ambient air to those within an area of influence but unable to prevent others from breathing foul air.

Dedicated to the memory of my parents, Professor Gautam Chattopadhyay, and Dr. Manju

Chattopadhyay, who taught me above all to be a good person.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project could not have been completed without the help, inspiration, and collaboration of several individuals. I am extremely grateful to my advisor, and dissertation committee chair, Dr. Louisa Ha for guiding and supporting me throughout the whole process of the project – especially at times when I felt I had hit a roadblock. Thank you for believing in me, always encouraging me to submit papers to conferences, academic journals and for awards. Many of the awards and recognitions I have received in these past four years, as well as my research publications, would not have happened without her support. Thank you also for allowing me the freedom to explore new topics, and methods, and being such a rock star advisor.

I owe deep gratitude too, to my dissertation committee members Dr. Srinivas Melkote, Dr. Lisa Hanasono, and Dr. Jill H. Zeilstra-Ryalls.

Dr. Melkote, I came to Bowling Green, because I wrote to you, and you encouraged me to come! Thank you for being a mentor from even before I landed in the United States, for ensuring me and my family always had a 'home' at BG, and of course, for the many invigorating discussions on different topics during evenings at your house, and for being the taskmaster who ensured my dissertation project adhered to the high standards set for BGSU students.

Dr. Hanasono, thank you for being an inspiration in so many ways – for guiding me to write on my first co-authored research paper, for being a huge support whenever I faced challenges writing my dissertation, and for showing me how to be a great teacher and researcher at the same time. I hope I can be a teacher like you.

Dr. Zeilstra-Ryalls, thank you for so diligently examining my project right from the early stages, pointing out variables and factors I ought to examine, and for asking questions that encouraged me to be more rigorous in my research.

This project would never have been completed also without the help of innumerable friends and former journalist colleagues back in India who took time out to answer the online survey, and senior editors who, despite their extremely busy schedule, agreed without any hesitation to be interviewed at odd hours and different locations. Space constraints prevent me from thanking each one of you by name here. I would also like to thank all colleagues and friends at BGSU who helped me at different stages. Thanks also to Kim Fleshman at the University Libraries for all her help formatting the final document.

Last but not the least I would not be here today completing a PhD if not for my family. My wife Sriya was instrumental in encouraging me to work toward a PhD, and as a former senior journalist herself, has been a constant support, critic, guide, and editor as I wrote this project. Handling work, studies, a pre-teen son, and a cranky husband is quite a handful, and this project would not have been completed without the CEO at home.

The budding communication expert in the family, our son Ishan, deserves thanks too, for making sure there were few dull moments in these four years and for showing tremendous maturity well beyond his age in allowing his father to write for hours when he would have dearly loved to play a game, or watch TV together. I hope to make it up to him in the days, months, and years ahead.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

State of the News Media Today

Across the world mainstream news organizations such as newspapers, magazines, television news channels, and news websites are facing a crisis like never before, an existential crisis if there ever was one. Public trust in mainstream media as a source of accurate and unbiased information has been declining over the years, particularly in democracies such as the United States and India where freedom of press is a cherished liberty (Swift, 2016). While political affiliation and other factors do play a role in media trust overall, just about 40% of Americans trust traditional mass media (Swift, 2017). It has not crossed the halfway mark in over a decade and fell to 33% in 2016. Scholars have argued that levels of education and political opinion (Lee, 2010), exposure to television, newspapers, magazines, and news on the internet (Tsfati & Ariely, 2013) as well issues such as topic selection, selectivity of facts, journalistic assessment of news (Kohring & Matthes, 2007) and the news media's quest to meet audiences' demands for real time news, are among factors that affect public trust in media.

The past decade has also witnessed the phenomenal rise of social media platforms, or social network sites. Initially used solely for purposes of recreation and entertainment, many of these platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, and Instagram are increasingly being used now to seek information, including breaking news (Paulussen, & Harder, 2014; Westerman, Spence, & Van Der Heide, 2014). While the rise of social media as a source of news across the world (European Federation of Journalists, 2017) coincided with declining trust in mainstream media (Pew, 2016; Pew 2017; Harper, 2010), this may not necessarily mean one was caused by the other. Convenience of use (news can be consumed on mobile platforms such as phones or tablets on the move, while reading a newspaper or watching a news channel usually demands dedicated time) and comparatively lower costs (many online news media are free, unlike

subscriptions to newspapers or cable TV) are two major factors identified by scholars as reasons

for the rising popularity of digital social network platforms as news sources (Ha, Yoon, & Zhang,

2013). Facebook, and Twitter, for instance, have become two of the biggest platforms where

news in broken, shared, and consumed globally (Ju, Jeong, & Chyi, 2014).

       This is especially true of younger adults who not only seem to depend heavily on social

media for news, but actually "stay away from mainstream media for news updates" (Ha, Yoon &

Zhang, p. 10). In the U.S., for instance, 67% of adults today read news on social media (Gottfried

& Shearer, 2016; Pew, 2017).

       Social media's advent as a platform for news sourcing and sharing has disrupted many

time-tested journalistic practices. The ease with which Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, or

Twitter enable common citizens to consume, share and discuss news without direct involvement

of professional journalists or legacy news organizations, has led to much soul searching and

renewed research on how journalism functions, and how gatekeeping decisions are influenced.

       Politicians, celebrities, journalists and common citizens all use social media as

promotional platforms (Conboy, 2014; Nuernbergk, 2016). For example, U.S. President Donald

Trump was quoted in the *Washington Post* saying that having a Twitter account was "like

owning the *New York Times* without the losses" (Johnson, 2016), perhaps referring to the speed

with which social media posts can reach a global audience. In many countries across the world,

social media platforms have become powerful tools for professional journalists and news

organizations to source (Knight, 2012; Naaman, Becker, & Gravano, 2011), select (Reed, 2011;

Rupar, 2006; Swasy, 2016), and promote news (Tandoc, 2014; Tandoc & Vos, 2015; Bossio &

Socco, 2016; Chorley & Mottershead, 2016), just as they have become powerful tools for the

public to share information or even mobilize action (Fahmy, 2015). This ability of social media

users to consistently break news and share such news with millions of people at the click of a

button (Poell & van Dijck, 2015) may have contributed to a rising concern among legacy media

journalists and newsrooms about how to stay relevant and trustworthy (Tufekci, 2013) in the eyes

of the public. Social media practices of journalists in sourcing and selecting news, and their

perceptions about social media's usefulness and credibility perhaps determine the way news

organizations share a developing story on their websites, social media handles, and in their

legacy media platforms.

In some ways therefore, the Internet represents the ultimate realization of the democratic

ideal of free speech, expanding access to the press for ordinary citizens. On the other hand, it

seems to have given rise to a cacophony of voices that has raised new concerns about what news

is and how its veracity can be determined, and about the extent to which these new media pose a

challenge to democratic process.

The news media in India has so far bucked the trend of low trust in media. India is one of

the only three out of 28 nations surveyed (including USA, the U.K., Australia, Germany and

France) in consecutive Edelman Trust Barometer surveys (2016, 2017) where trust in media

remains at above 60% Despite this relatively high score, media in India too is increasingly facing

a crisis of trust, with less percentage of people saying they trust the media each year. A recent

BBC study, for example, found that 83% Indians were concerned about fake news and almost as

many had a hard time distinguishing between real and fake news. However, unlike in some other

cultures such as the U.S., rising concerns about fake news were driving more and more

consumers back to well-established legacy media/traditional media outlets Therefore, traditional

newspapers, television channels, and websites of these same brands were still the most trusted

media, and the trust level for these traditional news organizations were more than 40% higher

than the relatively new digital-only news websites (Scroll, 2017). The 2017 Edelman Trust

Barometer Survey of 31,000 people in 28 countries found that nearly 70% Indians trusted news

media, making it the second-most trusted media industry among surveyed nations, ahead of USA,

the U.K., Canada, Australia and China (Edelman, 2017). Yet, even as the popularity of traditional

or legacy media continues to grow, social media usage is also burgeoning exponentially in

India—a medium that consumers are increasingly using more than before, but one in which they

seem to have a lack of trust.

India, therefore, is a particularly interesting site to study social media's effect on

journalistic practices—not just because mass media scholars have largely ignored studying

journalistic practices in the sub-continent so far, but because legacy media and news/social media

thrive side by side, making India an especially interesting setting to study journalistic practices in

an era of instant news updates.

Social & Digital Media in India

India is home to one of the largest English newspaper markets in the world (Barclay,

Pichandy, & Venkat, 2012) with the top 10 English dailies alone read by close to 19 million

people every day (IRS, 2014). It is also one of the fastest growing news media industries in the

world. An estimated 330 million copies of different newspapers are circulated daily (IRS, 2014;

Rao, 2014). At the same time, the country has 462 million active internet users, accounting for

13.5% of the 3.63 billion global internet users (LiveStats, 2016) of which 153 million are active

social media users (Velayanikal, 2016). This means India now has more internet users than the

United States, and is second only to China (Taylor, 2016). Almost all Indian newspaper and

television channels have websites and official social media accounts. A 2015 content analysis of

69 Indian newspapers (Kori & Chhabra, 2015), for instance, found almost all of them (n=68) had

a website and used at least one social media channel. Within this sample, the 29 English

newspapers analyzed all had websites and were present on at least two social media sites. Media

houses have not created their own social media pages just for fun. Data shows more and more

Indians are getting connected online, using social media and consuming news on digital

platforms where news is uploaded and updated in real time (Rangaswami, 2013).

This, in turn, means social media in India is becoming an extremely powerful tool for

news sharing and opinion building, especially in the hands of the economic elite who have most

access to the internet. These social media users have the potential to not only influence

government and media, but common people in various ways (e.g. as employers, political leaders,

celebrities, or teachers). Some recent studies have found how political parties in India recruit

voters by offering incentives such as free meals or free gadgets on various social media such as

Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp and mobile messaging groups (Thachil, 2014). That caste-elites

(leaders of different castes in India) wield influence on people of their own castes and use this

influence to swing public opinion is well established (Witsoe, 2009), and using social media may

only increase that influence. Few studies, for instance, have examined if the changing nature of

how people consume news, or how news is increasingly shared, have influenced journalistic

gatekeeping practices vis-à-vis social media.

As previous studies on social media's influence on audiences have found, even a single

tweet, post, or video from an influential user or organization can potentially influence global

headlines (Pentina & Tarafdar, 2014), and affect the fortunes of governments (Shirky, 2011).

Historically understudied, the effects of social media platforms on India's thriving and vast news

industry needs to be studied to contribute to a growing body of international mass

communication research on news sourcing, selection, and dissemination processes in media

organizations in an age of real-time news. Similar studies in the American context have

examined journalists' use of social media for professional reasons such as finding sources or

promoting content (e.g., Al-Rawi, 2016; Hermida, Fletcher & Korell, 2012), and found

increasing evidence of a new newsroom mantra where journalists need to be "anywhere, anytime

on any platform" (Stassen, 2010, p. 117). Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter

enable news organizations to be present anywhere at all times, perhaps offering modern-day

journalists many benefits such as direct contact with their audiences, steady access to eyewitness

quotes, and even a storehouse of story ideas. However, the ever-present nature of social media

also means news of events often break first on social media platforms—a feature that may have

affected several time-tested journalistic practices, norms, and values that drive good journalism

(Hermida, 2012; Singer, 2010)—in effect making the process of gatekeeping more complex than

before. Which specific practices have been affected more significantly, what factors have

influenced these changes, and how these changes in turn may be perceived as affecting trust in

mass media, or posing new challenges for newsrooms, are still relatively grey areas that need

further exploration. This is especially for cultures outside of Western democracies where

journalistic practices and social media's effect on such practices, have been relatively

understudied.

Social Media & Effects on Journalistic Practices

While many recent studies have examined how Indian journalists and news organizations

frame news on gender issues such as rapes (Rao, 2014; McDougal & Raj, 2009; Durham, 2015;

Rao & Wasserman, 2015), few, if any, studies have examined how journalists perceive social

media as a tool, and how breaking news on these platforms influence their daily gatekeeping

decisions. Some scholars have explored how news media select and share information about wars

(Thussu, 2002), or how media in India have taken a more pro-active role in building opinion about important issues by using multiple platforms (Rodrigues & Ranganathan, 2014). Few, however, have attempted to question how journalists in India use social media to source, select and promote news on a real-time basis, how they perceive this platform's credibility, and how they use social media professionally. This is especially important considering findings of studies in other cultures that journalists and news organizations are some of the most frequent and extensive users of social media (Al-Rawi, 2016; Hermida, Fletcher & Korell, 2012; Hermida, 2012; Singer, 2010; Heravi, 2015; Hanusch & Bruns, 2016). How, for instance, do journalists verify a tweet or a Facebook post's truthfulness (Singer, 2010) or decide which trending item on social media is genuinely newsworthy, or would be loved equally by advertisers and audiences?

These questions assume an even more critical nature when the breaking news is not a political story, but one that involves the fears, hopes, safety and lives of ordinary citizens— stories in the crime genre—especially stories that are sensitive, such as rapes or sexual assaults. News media organizations in most democracies are perceived as having a political bias, favoring a political party or parties (Groeling & Baum, 2013; Barclay, Pichandy, & Venkat, 2012). In the case of India this bias is sometimes more clearly evident, as some newspapers are owned directly by political parties or owners are leaders of political parties (e.g., Bengali daily *Ganashakti* with a circulation of over 2 00,000 is owned by Communist Party of India-Marxist; English newspaper *Pioneer* is owned by leaders of Bharatiya Janata Party), some have owners who are members of a political party (e.g., English daily *The Hindu* is owned by a family whose patriarchs are members of the Communist Party), while some others are closely associated with a political party (e.g., owners of *Hindustan Times* are known to be very close to the Congress Party). Journalists working with news organizations are usually aware of the political biases of

their owners or management, and these known biases often dictate their coverage of political news.

Such diktats, however, do not exist for news in the crime genre, especially for sensitive news such as rapes, sexual abuse, dowry deaths or crimes of passion. To make matters more complex, even the Press Council of India in its 111-page Guidelines for Journalists dedicates just two sentences about coverage of rapes and assault on women: "While reporting crime involving rape, abduction or kidnap of women/females or sexual assault on children, journalists cannot raise doubts and questions touching the chastity, personal character and privacy of women. The names, photographs of the victims or other particulars leading to their identity shall not be published" (PCI, 2016).

What happens then when news of a sexual assault breaks on social media and needs to be uploaded on a media organization's official website as soon as possible? Few rules and norms exist at present that inform journalists how to go about news sourcing and selection at such times (King & Cook, 2013; Vander Haak, Parks & Castells, 2012). What processes influence the decision to promote that news on the organization's website or social media? Historically, this process and levels of influences were most accurately explained through the Hierarchy of Influences Model (HOI) where Gatekeeping (Shoemaker & Reese, 1995; Shoemaker & Vos, 2009) was used as a metaphor to describe how journalists sourced, selected and disseminated news.

However, newsrooms, journalistic practices and the very essence of how news is now consumed have undergone a radical, almost revolutionary change in the past few years. Breaking, sharing and discussing news across time zones can now be done within seconds. As a result, professional journalists and news organizations may have been forced to change their journalistic

decision-making practices. While some recent studies (Hermida, 2012; Singer, 2012; Vos & Heinderyckx, 2015; Vos & Finneman, 2016) have contributed significantly to scholarly understanding of this changing landscape, fewer studies have explored and tried to understand the phenomenon through the eyes of journalists and editors themselves. Those that have are single method case studies (Tandoc & Vos, 2015) that have used observation or interviews to understand journalistic practices which cannot be generalizable to the overall journalism profession.

Even fewer studies have looked at this phenomenon in India, the world's most populous democracy and home to one of the fastest growing and largest news media sectors in the world, where social media usage is growing rapidly too. How mainstream media and professional journalists in India use and perceive social media as a professional tool, especially in the context of the hugely popular crime news genre needs deeper investigation, not to mention Indian media has been historically understudied.

The researcher in this study is a former journalist from India, where he spent 18 years as a news reporter and senior editor with some of the nation's largest print and online news media brands. He has lived and worked in four Indian cities. During his tenure as a journalist in Kolkata, Mumbai, New Delhi, and Ahmedabad, he observed the birth and rise of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp, and how journalists increasingly used these applications to source, select, and share information both with the media fraternity and outside world. As a journalist working in and heading both print and online platforms of different news organizations over the past decade, the researcher is perhaps well-positioned to observe from close quarters how social media were extensively used by colleagues and peers, both as a source of news and as a news sharing platform, as well as some of the positive and negative effects that

such usage of social media posed for some of his colleagues and for different newsrooms. He is

deeply motivated, therefore, to gain a better understanding of how journalists of many hues in

different Indian cities perceive and use social media, especially in the context of breaking news

in the crime news genre, how these perceptions influence their gatekeeping decisions, and what

challenges lie before Indian journalism as a result of these perceptions and decision-making

factors. There have been few studies examining effects of social media platforms on journalistic

practices in India, and even fewer that have explored these effects in the context of breaking

crime news.

Purpose and Research Problem

The overarching purpose of this study is to examine how social media platforms have

affected journalists' gatekeeping practices in India, the emerging challenges, and possible

sustainable strategies to help news organizations retain public trust while continuing to use social

media as a professional tool. More specifically, the aim of this study is to understand (a) how

journalists perceive social media's usefulness as a professional tool, (b) how credible they

perceive news posts on social media to be, (c) what factors influence their news selection process

and decision to promote such news on their organization's website and social media handles

when crime news breaks on social media; (d) what challenges and concerns do these effects pose

for Indian journalism, and finally, (e) what sustainable steps can be taken to address the emerging

challenges. Overall, the answers to these broad questions will hopefully not just help scholars

and practitioners understand Indian journalism and the challenges it faces better, but also develop

a blueprint for sustainable solutions that address issues such as declining public trust, fake news,

and gatekeeping dilemmas. Not all journalists, for instance, are likely to embrace social media

equally (Schulte, 2009; Hedman, & Djerf-Pierre, 2013; Nielsen, & Schrøder, 2014), and may

differ on their perceptions of how useful or necessary social media is to their profession. This, in turn, may influence their gatekeeping decisions differently (Hedman, & Djerf-Pierre, 2013). Few studies have actually examined journalists' perceived usefulness of social media and how such perception influences journalistic decisions to source information from those platforms, or post developing news first on them (Brems, Temmerman, Graham, & Broersma, 2017; Brandtzaeg, Lüders, Spangenberg, Rath-Wiggins, & Følstad, 2016), especially in non-western cultures. Similarly, because journalists both source from, and share information on, social media platforms, it is critical to understand how they view such platforms as credible sources of information (Cassidy, 2007; Tylor, 2015). The Hierarchy of Influences Model proposed by Shoemaker & Reese (1996; 2014) has proved to be a sturdy and credible model to predict journalistic behavior and practices in most western cultures. India is a democracy modelled on Western democracies and boasts of a large English news media industry. However, it is also a multi-lingual multi-cultural society with very different socio-economic and political conditions compared to Western nations. The same set of influences may or may not impact journalistic decisions in India, as they do elsewhere. Few studies have actually examined how different levels of the Hierarchy of Influences Model affect journalistic decisions in Indian newsrooms in an online-first era. Social media's ability to disseminate and share information in real-time is well-known. The impact it has had on journalistic practices in India, and the challenges and opportunities it has brought about for journalism in India, are relatively unknown. Understanding these influences and effects will help Indian journalists and media scholars to explore the way forward, create sustainable strategies to address emerging challenges and harness emerging opportunities to the fullest—hopefully leading to a more robust news industry.

To address these research problems and explain journalists' social media practices and decision-making process, the Hierarchy of Influences Model (Shoemaker, & Reese, 1996; 2013) and Gatekeeping Theory (Lewin, 1947; White, 1955; Shoemaker, 1991; Shoemaker & Vos, 2009) were used as theoretical framework.

The results of this research will not only provide a better understanding of how breaking news, especially breaking crime news on social media have affected journalistic practices in India, but also offer insights into emerging challenges and concerns for mainstream journalism, and possible strategies to address them—building on existing knowledge of journalism in a digital era for both scholars and practitioners. This, in turn, will hopefully encourage not just new scholarship focusing on journalism and social change in India, but also encourage media organizations and journalists to think afresh about their work, challenges and solutions that can lead to greater public trust in good journalism.

Significance of Study

Theoretical Significance. Media scholars have largely looked at journalistic practices in news sourcing, selection and dissemination, through the lens of Gatekeeping Theory (Singer, 1998; Singer, 2008; Shoemaker, Vos, & Reese, 2009; Shoemaker & Vos, 2009; Vos & Heinderyckx, 2015; Vos & Finneman, 2016). However, the very structural foundations of mainstream news media have undergone tremendous changes in the past decade (Vos & Heinderyckx, 2015). Gatekeeping theorizes the central process that describes news gathering and reporting mechanism in newsrooms. The "systemic transformations" in context of "development of digital technologies" (Heinderyckx & Vos, 2016, p.29) have meant that certain mass media theories have come under new scrutiny. Many recent studies have looked at Gatekeeping Theory

in light of technological changes in newsrooms, to critically examine its relevance. As Vos and

Heinderyckx argue: "To remain in the game, gatekeeping theory needs to be revamped" (p. 30).

Some recent studies have indeed challenged the idea of gatekeeping as a metaphor that

can adequately describe how journalists and newsrooms function and have suggested way-

finding (Pearson & Kosicki, 2016), gate-checking (Schwalbe, Silcock, & Candello, 2015), or

gate-watching (Bakker, 2012) as alternative ways of understanding how newsrooms function.

These studies have gone to the extent of suggesting that the advent of social media, blogs and

citizen journalism have meant there are no longer any gates that keep out news from the public

and, therefore, journalists have ceased to be gatekeepers. Schwalbe, Silcock, & Candello (2015),

for example, argue the ability of digital technology to produce hundreds of images or visuals

within a few seconds has changed the definition of what news is. Taken together, the speed at

which information is delivered via both written and visual media make it almost impossible for

traditional gatekeepers such as journalists to control any gates by themselves. They suggest that a

new breed of "gatecheckers" (p. 478) now curate information from across the web who "select,

verify, and disseminate visual and textual news via legacy media platforms" (p. 478), at

increasingly break-neck speed. Gate-checking, then, builds on Gatekeeping theory by creating a

model of multiple gates in a technology-driven media ecosystem that are controlled by everyone

from citizen journalists and public relations professionals to government officials and hackers. In

an era of fake news, these checkers cleanse the air and provide ambient air to consumers,

ensuring the survival of truth in a complicated news ecosystem. Gatewatching (Bruns, 20011;

Bruns & Highfield, 2015; Pearson & Kosicki, 2016) also builds on Gatekeeping but suggests that

in an era of breaking news on social media, traditional gatekeepers such as journalists have low

control over content that passes the gate and reaches people. Instead, there is a growing trend of

sharing news after it has been published where a two-step flow of communication has re-emerged—influential persons or aggregators who observe the output gates of legacy news publications identify important news items and repost those stories, thereby sharing information relevant to the tastes of their own followers or subscribers. Others have proposed phrases such as ambient journalism to describe the phenomenon (Hermida, 2012). These studies have challenged Gatekeeping as a metaphor but have not discounted multiple levels of filters and gates before information reaches the public. The gates however, no longer belong in newsrooms alone, with influential individuals on social media platforms, aggregators, and group leaders also taking on the role of gatewatchers, way finders, gate-checkers, and providers of ambient news.

Some of these studies do not necessarily account for the fact that journalists are no longer just gatekeepers who decide what to tell people, but also information seekers exposed to breaking news that have passed through gates controlled by the public. In this instance, journalists receive news as consumers, but then don the clock of gatekeepers to decide the usefulness, or credibility of the information. In other words, many of these studies did not necessarily integrate news sourcing from social media and news promotion and online delivery on social media in their research framework. Nor did they look at specific news categories beyond political news. For instance, few studies examine how crime news such as news of murders, violence, terrorist attacks, rapes, or sexual harassment are often 'broken' by common members of the public first on social media platforms, and how journalistic practices have been affected by this trend. Indeed, crime news is one of the most widely consumed type of news on across print, TV, and web (Surette, 1994; Schildkraut, Elass, & Meredith, 2017).

Finally, there are very few previous studies on this topic of journalistic decision making, especially in the Indian context. Few scholars have had the unique opportunity of access to not

just hundreds of multiplatform journalists but also several senior media managers and editors—

advantages that this researcher brings to the table in this case.

Methodological Significance. Historically, much of the previous literature on social

media's effect on journalistic decision-making has been single-method studies (Shoemaker &

Reese, 1995; Shoemaker & Vos, 2009; Vos & Henderyckx, 2015; Singer, 2012; Drache &

Velagic, 2014). Current understanding of journalistic practices and processes in an online era

therefore is still fragmented. This study employed a sequential mixed-method approach

(Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutman, & Handson, 2003) with the site of study being three of the

largest urban centers in India—New Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata.

While quantitative methods such as surveys are "particularly useful in describing the

characteristics of a large population" (Babbie, 2011, p. 304) such as professional journalists, they

can seldom deal with contexts of social life. They are also relatively inflexible, particularly

online surveys, and not easy to follow up questions from respondents (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011).

Therefore, in the second sequential stage, qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted

with editors of newspapers, magazines, television news channels and websites, to confirm,

clarify and elaborate on responses obtained in the survey. The in-depth interviews therefore

complement the survey. This mixed method approach offers a new perspective in measuring and

explaining journalistic decision making, to provide scholars and practitioners a holistic idea

about social media's effects on journalism in India.

Practical Significance. Scholarly understanding of how journalists and news

organizations source and select crime news when it breaks on social media, online-first practices

of journalists, how they use social media to promote news and how they view social media's

usefulness as a professional tool, is still largely fragmented. While some recent studies have

focused on American and European news media in this context, studies that focus on India as a site have been few. More research has focused on framing and agenda-setting literature, focusing on how India's media frame crime news such as rapes (Rao, 2014; Durham, 2015) or social media's influence on journalism in political reporting (Rodrigues, 2014). They have not explored crime news as a genre in context of breaking news on social media and journalistic practices, nor have they explored journalistic perceptions of social media for professional purposes or journalists' perceptions about the online-first strategy of news promotion that most media houses follow today.

The findings of this study will hopefully help journalists and media managers in different parts of the world understand how Indian journalists' gatekeeping behaviors are affected by social media's perceived usefulness as a sourcing and sharing platform, and its ability to break news first, as well as the challenges and opportunities these behavior changes pose for newsrooms. Further, the in-depth interviews with senior editors will definitely offer key insights about sustainable strategies that media leaders in the world's largest democracy are considering in order to address emerging challenges to good journalism posed by the social media onslaught. The findings of the study will no doubt benefit journalists in India and media scholars by helping them understand changing dynamics of journalistic practices in an online-first era and aid them in creating an ecosystem where journalists and newsrooms can function more efficiently in their pursuit of truth. The findings will hopefully also benefit journalists across the globe as they understand how their peers in other cultures are influenced by various factors in their gatekeeping, or news selection and sharing decisions, how social media is perceived and used, and how those perceptions affect journalistic decisions of their colleagues in another part of the world. The emerging challenges identified in this study and the sustainable strategies to address

those challenges offered by media leaders, may also provide key insights about how journalism

works in India. This is important as India's booming news and media industry is continuing to

attract foreign investment, leading to many American, British and Australian media companies

setting up joint venture businesses in that country. Further, these findings could also help

journalists in other parts of the world better understand some of the behavior patterns of their

own colleagues, and perhaps get inspiration from some of the successful strategies implemented

by Indian media houses to address emerging challenges.

The study's findings will also help media scholars gain deeper understanding of social

media's effect on journalistic practices in the world's most populous democracy, and the HOI

factors that have greater influence on gatekeeping decisions in new age newsrooms. This, in turn,

will provide insights about points of similarity that exist between journalistic practices in the

U.S. and other western nations, and India.

Organization of Dissertation

This study first examines Indian journalists' perceived usefulness and credibility of social

media as a professional tool, then measures what factors influence journalists' decisions to

promote breaking crime news on their organization's websites and social media platforms, and

finally asks what sustainable steps can be taken to help India's newsrooms use social media

optimally while ensuring continued/growing public trust in mass media. Thus, Chapter I

describes the study's background, purpose, and research questions, as well as significance of the

present research.

Chapter II analyzes related literature: the first section discusses journalists' use of social

media, news promotion on social media, and breaking crime news on social media and

challenges to journalism posed by social media; the second section introduces Gatekeeping

Theory and the Hierarchy of Influences (HOI) Model and explains both their importance and the need to reexamine some key assumptions of these theories in an age of instant news, especially in non-U.S. settings; the final section discusses the general lack of research on mass media in India, especially with regard to how journalists use new media, how it may have affected journalistic practices, and as a result affected how news is gathered, selected, and shared, and explain how this study fills the gaps in previous research.

Chapter III introduces the research framework and model, study setting, and elaborates on research questions. This chapter also explains different key concepts and variables used throughout the study.

Chapter IV describes the study methods and reasons for choosing the methods, including survey questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Operationalization of all measures and reliability of the scales are reported here.

Chapter V analyzes both quantitative and qualitative data and examines combined findings to answer the research questions and hypotheses. The survey findings describe respondent profiles to clarify the country-wide spread and diversity of respondents, presents how journalists perceive usefulness and credibility of social media as a journalistic tool. Further hierarchical regression analysis results are presented to describe how different HOI factors affect journalists' decisions to use information from social media platforms to upload breaking news on their organization's websites, and on official social media handles of their organizations. The possible influence of other factors such as age, rank, and sex of a respondent are also presented in this section. To further explain journalists' decisions, a few post-hoc analysis findings such as audience focus vs. ethics focus factors are discussed in this chapter. The researcher was curious to find out if those who identified as traditional media journalists differed significantly in their web uploading or

Social Media Promotion behavior compared to those journalists who worked solely on online platforms. The results of the t-tests are presented in this chapter as part of the additional or post-hoc findings. Further, based on initial findings of factors that seemed to influence journalists' online news uploading and sharing behavior, the researcher was curious to understand which specific items most influenced their decisions. An exploratory factor analysis of *web uploading*, and *social media promotion* practices yielded two factors: Audience Focus and Ethics Focus. The mean and SD scores of the emerging factors are presented in this chapter.

The qualitative findings are presented in the same chapter as results of phase II. Participant demographics are presented here. The findings of open-ended research questions are then presented.

Finally, Chapter VI combines the quantitative and qualitative findings to discuss implications for both scholars and practitioners and offers suggestions for future research. Limitations of the study are also discussed.

Summary

In many countries of the world, particularly in democracies such as India and the United States, falling trust in media is a growing cause for concern among media leaders and managers. Despite consistently showing growth in readership and viewership across platforms, Indian media have also faced ire of the public, and issues of trust and credibility. While the advent of social media as a source of breaking news has democratized information society, it has brought along several challenges. Previous studies conducted in other countries and cultures for instance, have found that in some instances audiences find social media to be an untrustworthy source, but many people also tend to believe what they read first, irrespective of where they read it.

Other studies have argued that because of the pressure to deliver breaking news as fast as possible to the public, and to compete with social media platforms, many journalists and media houses have sacrificed accuracy of news at the altar of speed. While most of these studies have examined audience perceptions of journalism, and social media, this study is unique in that it engages with journalists directly to understand how they themselves perceive social media as a tool, their perceptions of social media's effect on gatekeeping practices, and time-tested norms, values and influences, and finally what these effects mean for Indian journalism, and how the problems and challenges posed by social media can be addressed. The research is a mixed-method study, using online survey and in-depth interviews to provide both a degree of generalizability to the study while examining a localized phenomenon in depth, and seeking elaboration and development. It is hoped that the results of this study will not only provide a better understanding of how newsrooms and journalists function in an online-first, social media-driven era, but also contribute to the body of knowledge about research on emerging challenges for journalism in non-western contexts, and search for strategic solutions to the challenges. This knowledge can then be oriented toward raising consciousness among not just scholars but practitioners and initiating action plans to address newer challenges facing journalism today. After all, a fourth estate that is perceived as a reliable, trustworthy, accurate and timely source of information is essential for the smooth functioning of any modern democratic society.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

In any research, it is crucial to have a theoretical foundation to examine and explore assumptions. Theories are also useful as aids in organizing and giving a synopsis of existing knowledge. One of the most helpful characteristics of theories is that they allow a conceptual map for researchers to examine concepts, contexts, or people and their relationships. In journalism and mass communication research for instance, theories are important for developing a roadmap for investigation, examining issues, exploring critical questions, and addressing possible solutions.

Media and communication scholars have long been interested in researching how journalism is practiced in different cultures, including day-to-day functioning of newsrooms, how news is sourced, selected, and presented to members of the public (e.g. White, 1950; Janowitz, 1975; Streckfuss, 1990; Johnstone, 1976; Hanitzsch, & Mellado, 2011; Agarwal, & Barthel, 2015; Weaver & Willnat, 2016). Ever since Kurt Lewin (1947) first used the term, and then David Manning White (1950) incorporated the phrase in his study of how news was processed and filtered in newsrooms, *Gatekeeping* has by far been the most common theoretical lens used to study journalistic practices of news sourcing, selection and dissemination (e.g., Bass, 1969; Brown, 1979; Cassidy 2007; Lasorsa, Lewis, Holton, 2012; Roberts, 2005; Singer, 2016; Shoemaker, Vos, & Reese, 2009; Shoemaker & Vos, 2009; Tandoc, 2014; Vos & Heinderyckx, 2015; Heinderyckx & Vos, 2016). This study uses Gatekeeping Theory as a foundation to understand journalistic decision-making practices and examine how the model is applicable 7n explaining the influence of social media platforms on journalists and newsrooms in the world's most populous democracy.

Gatekeeping Theory

Gatekeeping in the context of journalism research refers to the process by which journalists decide which news items to select and share with the public, and which to reject (Shoemaker & Riccio, 2016). Even today, numerous events occur in the world each day, but only a few of them are published as news. Gatekeeping theory is founded on probably two inarguable facts: that throughout any 24-hour cycle, almost every minute, numerous events occur around the world; and news media cannot cover all of them. Proponents of Gatekeeping Theory argue many decisions are made between the occurrence of an event and its transmission as news and each of these decision points can be referred to as gates and decision makers as gatekeepers. Thus, the decision-making process is the core of gatekeeping.

Throughout the second half of the 20th century and the first few years of the 21st, as traditional media platforms such as radio stations, newspapers, magazines, and television channels remained primary sources of information for the public, journalists were perceived as primary gatekeepers of news. However, over the past decade or so, as newer digital media platforms, especially social media platforms emerged allowing members of the public to share, break and contribute to news—information started to move not just in a unidirectional manner, but in multiple directions, integrating into a new journalism in which reporters and newsrooms have less control over the flow of information than ever before (e.g., Singer, Domingo, Heinonen, Hermida, Paulussen, Quandt, T.,& Vujnovic, 2011; Williams, & Delli Carpini, 2000; Pearson, & Kosicki, 2017; Bro, & Wallberg, 2014; Bro, & Wallberg, 2015).

Some scholars argue that multiple audiences now exist, some more influential than others, and so do multiple types of gatekeepers (e.g., al Nashmi, North, Bloom, & Cleary, 2017; Foust, 2017; Singer, 2008; Groshek, & Tandoc, 2017). In other words, information now reaches

us not just from traditional newspapers, television channels, or websites, but via social media

applications such as Twitter, WhatsApp, Facebook Live, or many other means—with the

common public being able to share information with millions of people at the click of a button, a

feat that was almost impossible to achieve even a decade back. The gates therefore are many, as

are the keepers of these gates. No longer can journalists alone control decisions about what

information to share with the public and which information to keep hidden behind the gates.

Gatekeeping has over the years emerged as the most well-articulated and generally

acceptable theoretical foundation to explain the news selection process in news media

organizations around the world—even though the roots of this theory do not lie in journalism, but

in behavioral sciences. Kurt Lewin, who first introduced the term Gatekeeping in 1947, was a

social psychologist. He introduced gatekeeping theory as a way to conceptualize food

consumption practices of post–World War II households. In his conclusions, however, Lewin

noted this type of understanding could be applied to media and news consumption as well.

Wilbur Schramm (1960) argued that gatekeepers moved information through mediated and

interpersonal chains. Tuchman's (1973) study delved deeper, examining how journalists selected

and presented news and categorized news reports behind the gates, and identified a set of

routines journalists used on a daily basis.

It was in the early 1990s however, that Pamela Shoemaker (1991) and others such as Dan

Berkowitz (1990) re-introduced gatekeeping theory as a lens through which to specifically study

journalistic practices—by categorizing five distinct influences that shaped journalists'

gatekeeping decisions. Shoemaker identified these influences as societal, institutional,

organizational, routine, and individual practices. Thereafter, other scholars (e.g., Reese &

Ballinger 2001; Shoemaker & Vos, 2009) conducted multiple studies to add significantly to

scholarly knowledge about Gatekeeping Theory and the various influences that shape

gatekeeping decisions in newsrooms. More recent studies (e.g. Shoemaker & Reese, 2013;

Tandoc & Vos, 2016; Bruns, & Highfield, 2015) discuss both new gatekeeping concepts, as also

different factors that influence gatekeeping in an online-first digital era.

Hierarchy of Influences Model (HOI) in Gatekeeping

Who exactly is a gatekeeper? Journalists including editors, reporters, news editors, bureau

chiefs, producers, news directors, online editors, content managers and many others who occupy

different positions within news organizations (Schwalbe, Silcock, & Candello, 2015) are all

gatekeepers of information to varying degrees. They select, shape and present news content in a

systematic process, guarding different gates by which numerous messages that reach the

newsrooms are edited, filtered, and rejected, before a few hundreds of these messages reach

consumers (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009).

Each journalist within a news organization may be a gatekeeper. Every time a news

breaks, editorial selections and prioritizations are made at different levels, from the junior

reporter who uses personal filters to decide if the story merits a visit to the spot, a telephone call,

or is to be ignored; the bureau chief who checks every story for factual accuracy; to divisional

editors who rewrite or edit a copy, an audio recording, or a video; news editors who decide how

an event or a news is to be framed (e.g., how it is to be headlined, what kind of visuals should

accompany it); and the overall editors who may decide placement, order of appearance and final

presentation of the story.

At each level, selection, rejection and prioritization decisions are made——making

gatekeeping one of the most complex processes in news organizations. At every level, at every

gate, one or more factors influence news selection decisions. These influences or factors are

organized and conceptualized as the Hierarchy of Influences (HOI) (Shoemaker & Reese, 1995,

2016). The HOI model describes how forces at different gates influence overall news selection

process. For example, personal factors, such as beliefs, attitudes and such individual factors may

affect what is considered important at the initial stage. However, since journalists also align with

organizational values, they may choose to join an organization because of its preexisting policies,

history, and organizational culture, thereby affecting their news selection process further. Media

organizations and their employees, in turn, usually function within the ideological boundaries set

by larger society (Reese & Shoemaker, 2016) and also under increasing influence from various

social institutions. Multiple studies have found evidence of one or more stages of the HOI Model

influencing news selection or gatekeeping decisions in newsrooms across different cultures and

nations, and also across multiple platforms (e.g., Reese, 2001; Hanitzsch, Anikina, Berganza,

2010; Hanizsch, Melado, 2011). The updated HOI Model (Reese & Shoemaker, 2016)

acknowledges the advent of digital media and social media platforms as a disruptive force that

may have affected the hierarchy of influences.

Individual Level: At the core or basic level, *individual* factors can affect gatekeeping

decisions. Individual journalists are often able to "control potential messages from entering the

organization and to reshape those messages" (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009, p. 114). Factors that

influence decision making at an individual level may include personality and background of the

journalist (e.g. ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, education, religion etc.), life values,

professional role conceptions and type of job entrusted to the journalist (Shoemaker & Reese,

2013).

Routine Level: The routines level includes news values with immediate constraining and

enabling concerns as well as larger patterns within which journalists operate. These routines are

defined as "repeated practices and forms that media workers use to do their jobs" (Shoemaker &

Reese 1996, p. 105). These may include concerns such as perceived magnitude of a story, clarity,

relevance to audience, unexpected events, continuity with past events, and perceived timeliness

of story. However, these routine factors by themselves do not explain news selection. Production

of news is a collaborative effort in any news organization. Routines play an important role in

news selection but may be impacted or influenced in turn by organizational and societal factors.

Organizational Level: The organizational level sees journalists consider factors different

from routine filters, since this level consists of influences of the larger organized entity within

which individuals operates, come into force (Reese & Shoemaker, 2016). Factors that affect

gatekeeping decisions at this level may include a journalist's job role, organizational policy, and

focus and structure of the news organization (e.g., a tabloid newspaper with a focus on local

crimes and civic issues, or a national news channel). Within this organizational boundary,

external gatekeepers such as reporters who get information from external forces may channelize

selected messages to internal gatekeepers such copy editors or senior editors—who, in turn,

impose their own gatekeeping filters. The surviving news items are then transmitted to editors

and, sometimes, members of the management for final selection and dissemination to the

audience. In some news organizations, other non-editorial organizational forces are also at work.

For example, those in key leadership positions such as head of advertising, sales or the CEO,

may also have some influence over news selection. McChesney (2015), for instance, show that

many news media in the U.S., the world's most powerful democracy, are driven by the profit-

seeking motive of their management. In India, the world's largest democracy, the situation is

becoming similar, with greater ownership control over news selection and dissemination policies.

Social Institutional Level: At this level, larger structured relationships are formed between different organizations and sectors, which in turn exert powerful influence on the news selection process (Shoemaker & Reese, 2013). Often a news may be judged based on whether it is aligned to market demands such as advertiser needs, financial market demands, or beneficial to source of the story (especially if the source is a large government agency). News items that can have negative effects on any of these extra-media forces can go through a far more rigorous gatekeeping process. Other channels such as public relations firms, political parties, and media owners, also play a part in influencing news selection decisions.

Social System Level: This is the outer-most ring of the model, including influences on content from society (Reese & Shoemaker, 2016) or ideological forces encompassing how all the other levels add up to a larger result. News media organizations are also part of the social system they operate in and are cognizant of norms, values and beliefs of society. Therefore, issues such as social structure of the city or region, ideology of the cultural milieu and local culture itself may determine gatekeeping decisions (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009).

Factors at each of these levels may be on display simultaneously in a newsroom and influence gatekeeping decisions regarding an event, or only a few of these factors could be at play at a time.

Multiple studies have found that in legacy media newsrooms, the gatekeeping process works in a predictable manner. For example, if a reporter receives breaking news of an accident, a fire, or a sexual assault, the journalist's decision to gather information about the story may be influenced by his or her individual views about the topic, as well as by routine factors such as perceived importance, relevance, and accuracy of the story. These factors may determine how the story is presented for consideration to the bureau chief or an editor. The chief of bureau, the

online desk-head, or news channel shift-in-charge may then decide to select or reject the news

story based on specific organizational factors such as organizational diktats, policy regarding

such stories, as well as routine factors such as length of story, timeliness and relevance.

Thereafter the written and edited news story may go through further gates, where both

mechanical constraints and organizational priorities could influence news selection. Mechanical

or physical constraints could include length, size or duration of the story depending on the

medium. Organizational priorities could include concerns about possible reaction from

advertisers, sources, and other agencies, as well as concerns about perceived effect of the story

on target audiences. A combination of these factors often leads journalists, editors, television

producers, or content heads to decide whether to reject or share a specific news, and the manner

in which to present the information to the public.

A central idea in the HOI Model is that various norms, values, practices, and routines

embedded in the news gathering, and dissemination process that are influenced by consumers,

information suppliers and news processors, play a key role in the final media content presented to

the public. Many studies on journalistic decision making in the previous two decades (and

earlier), for instance, found journalists' news values and ideologies (individual factors) could

predict their news selection decisions significantly (e.g. Westerståhl & Johansson, 1994;

Kepplinger & Ehmig, 2006). Shoemaker (1996) also argued that gender and culture also had a

significant impact on journalists' news section decisions. Multiple studies involving traditional

news media concluded journalists seemed to have certain rules and abided by those rules even if

they ran counter to cultural or social imperatives, or market trends (Schudson, 2001). Some

scholars believe, based on their own research, these practices were similar across cultural and

national barriers (e.g. Hanitzsch, 2006), and the core values that exemplified American

journalism (Price & Tewksbury, 1997) were a template for how journalists behaved and worked in other democracies (Zhong & Newhagen, 2009). They also found organizational norms and instructions were often the key influence that dictated journalists' news selection process (Shih Kim, 2002), and factors such as visual possibilities of a story, its localness or relevance to local audience, and its readiness/completeness were factors that influenced decisions to accept or reject a story (Abbott & Brassfield, 1989).

Previous research also indicates the gender of the journalist makes a difference in how they report news, especially news about gender issues such as rape, and sexual harassment (Rogers & Thorson, 2003; Craft & Wanta, 2004; Anderson, 1994) Other factors such as community-level experiences can also influence how journalists select news content (Hanitzsch & Mellado, 2011).

There are two possible relatively unexplored areas in these studies that the current research hopes to address. First as Reese (2001) pointed out, many earlier works in media sociology primarily used North American or British case studies. As he argued, "the newsroom ethnography studies that have come to exemplify this style of research have been done primarily in U.S. media organizations. A more comparative approach would be useful in calling into question the features of these systems: what is common versus idiosyncratic (Reese, 2001, p. 176). Second, pre-digital era studies provide valuable insights into how different factors influences gatekeeping in a traditional media set up and resultant challenges, as well as strategic solutions. However, they are studies that pre-date social media onslaught. Among those in the digital era, many do not account for the disruptions to newsroom practices that social media may have brought about.

In the current digital-first era where newsrooms and organizations are competing to be the first to break news to the public – not just with each other, but also with millions of citizens active on social media platforms – the HOI Model in its current form may not embrace or account for all factors that predict how journalists source, select and disseminate news on websites and social media platforms. The disruptions have been widespread and deep, yet varied and disparate. Journalists across the world therefore seem to disagree and sometimes differently interpret some of their practices, and influences on those practices (Willnat, Weaver, & Choi, 2013). Willnat and others' study of newsrooms in 31 countries found, for example, that while more than 50% journalists "agreed that it was extremely important to report the news quickly," (p. 173), in many countries such as the United States, Korea, Belgium, and the U.K., journalists now valued such "speed of reporting" much less than they did just a few years ago. Again, while journalists in most nations agreed with previous research (e.g., Wenger, Owens, & Cain, 2018: Sanusi & Esiri, 2015) that online research and multimedia skills are very important for journalistic competency, and that social media is more a friend than threat, journalists in at least 10 of the nations mentioned speed as not important, and social media as a potential threat. Even the classical concept of the journalist as a watchdog and gatekeeper was understood differently across cultures. The watchdog role was "supported by only about 4 in 10 journalists overall… support ranged from a low of 7 percent in Germany to 90 percent in Australia" (Willnat et al., p. 179).

The ability of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Instagram to break news and share information with millions of others in a matter of seconds, has irrevocably disrupted the traditional flow of gatekeeping. How are gatekeeping decisions made,

and what factors play a more important role in influencing journalists' decisions when news is

sourced and selected from social media platforms, and shared thereon?

The online-first approach for news organizations, need for speed, and inter-media

competition driven by more and more breaking crime news on social media have arguably altered

the process by which news is sourced, selected, and disseminated—a process that perhaps the

lens of "gatekeeping" is not enough to explain. Indeed, with multiple studies finding that

journalists are some of the heaviest and most frequent users of social media to both source

information and engage with audiences (Willnat, Weaver, & Choi, 2013), the effects of such

platforms on journalistic practices requires a thorough investigation to better understand how

journalism works today.

Journalists' Use of Social Media

Previous studies have examined journalists' use of social media in some depth, including

their usage of social media to source information (e.g. Lawrence, Molyneux, Coddington, &

Holton, 2014; Djerf-Pierre, Ghersetti, & Hedman, 2016; Hladík, & Štětka, 2015), and social

media's impact on gatekeeping practices (e.g. Opgenhaffen, & Scheerlinck, 2014; Sada, 2011;

Saldaña, Joyce, Schmitz-Weiss, & Alves, 2016), including journalists' propensity to upload

breaking news online first (e.g. Carpenter 2008; Larisky, Avery et al. 2009; Reed, 2011;

Broersma, & Graham, 2012), and news sharing practices (e.g. Willnat & Weaver, 2014; Lee,

2015; Brandtzaeg, 2017; Al-Rawi, 2016b; Cozma, & Chen, 2013; Lee, Kim, & Kim, 2015;

Rogstad, 2014.)

For example, a key difference is the belief among many journalists, especially in western

democracies, that it is unnecessary for news media to establish guidelines regarding utilization of

social media platforms as a professional tool. In one study for instance, interviewed journalists

agreed that: "common sense should be sufficient to make proper use of social media and that introducing strict rules is in contradiction with the media logic of the platform," (Opgenhaffen, & Scheerlinck, 2014, p. 737). Journalists were also found to be more likely to post or upload breaking news first, and then edit more correct and updated information as they received it on the run—a practice that is also relatively new.

Social media's wide reach and ability to become a storehouse of readily available information also seems to have disrupted time-honored journalistic practices. For instance, one study found that journalists covering political stories often expressed opinions on their official social media handles "in ways and to a degree that has not traditionally been permissible in their primary professional forums" (Lawrence et al. 2014, p. 799). Yet, in other matters, journalists were seen to be desperately hanging on to their power, avoiding retweeting or using posts or tweets from the public. Often, they preferred to link to their own stories, or reposting/retweeting only what their fellow journalists posted or tweeted (Lawrence, et. al. 2014).

Social media today is a major platform for promotion and dissemination of news for news organizations (Lasorsa, Lewis & Holton, 2012; Tandoc & Vos, 2016). A Pew study (Holcomb, Gross, & Mitchell, 2011) that analyzed tweets posted by 70 mainstream U.S. news websites found journalists were unlikely to use social media primarily as a reporting tool. Just 2% of the analyzed tweets used by journalists were information-gathering in nature, and only 1% was retweets of tweets from a member of the public. Instead, most tweets were aimed to share information, promote stories on the organizations' website or an upcoming show on the television channel, or build public opinion. This only shows that mainstream news organizations are aware of social media's reach and influence and are keen to grow their presence on such platforms, instead of merely using them to gather information. Between February 2011 and

October 2011 (the Pew study period), the main Twitter feeds of news organizations studied saw

an average of 65% rise in follower base. For several organizations such Fox News, Washington

Post and MSNBC, the number of followers doubled. Most sites studied were using social media

to promote news they were covering. Similarly, an examination of Twitter feeds of 13 individual

Canadian journalists—the most followed at each media organization in the sample frame—found

that only 3% of their tweets solicited information, and 6% were "retweets of postings from

outside entities" (p. 2).

Compared to such large-scale studies in North America and Europe, few works have

examined if professional journalists in India or South Asia—home to over two billion people or a

third of the world's population—use similar norms and follow the same set of practices to

source, select and share information on social media or other online platforms. The Pew findings

do not necessarily end the debate on this question. Other, more recent studies have found

contrasting results. Adornato's (2016) study on social media's impact on editorial decisions

found most news channels used at least one social media platform to gather content or find story

ideas for newscasts. All (100%) news directors surveyed in the study said they used Facebook to

gather content or ideas, with Twitter coming a close second at 94%. At least half of those

surveyed said content sourced from social media ends up being reported in a newscast. Over 47%

of those surveyed said they frequently used social media for story ideas, while 33% answered

'sometimes'. Another 16% said 'always'.

Journalists also offer opinions in their social media posts. Lasorsa, Lewis and Holton

(2012) found 16% of American journalists' tweets were opinions, and an additional 27% who

primarily conveyed information also contained at least an element of opinion. Overall, social

media appears to have become, in a relatively short time, an instrumental tool for reporters to source, select, and promote news, as well as express their opinion (Willnat & Weaver, 2014).

Online-First News Uploading

Those who have traditionally donned the role of major gatekeepers in news organizations such as news directors, producers, editors, news editors and content editors, typically determine whether an item is newsworthy based on traditional news attributes (Adornato, 2016) such as timeliness, proximity, importance or impact, interest, conflict, sensationalism, prominence, and novelty (Berkowitz, 1990; Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). As some recent studies have found however, the carpet bombing of breaking news on social media has disrupted traditional news gathering and selection routines, challenging the traditional top-down, one-way notion of gatekeeping (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009; Jordaan, 2013; Redden & Witschge, 2002). Once viewed as passive, the audience is now active—and influential—in news organizations' editorial and production processes (Robinson, 2011). Nowhere is this active-ness more visible than when sensitive and sensational news is broken and shared on social media much before it makes an appearance on mainstream media.

In their study of how college students accessed breaking news during the Boston Marathon bombings, Tandoc & Johnson (2016) found that a majority of respondents (52%) received the breaking news from Twitter, followed by personal communication (9.9%) and mobile phone alerts (9%). Traditional news platforms trailed behind. Of those who heard the news first from either friends or family, many visited Twitter (38%) or Facebook (10 %) to get more information. One reason why audiences tend to depend more on social media sites for breaking news, is that these sites are accessible across platforms—laptop, tablet, smartphone. They also provide ease of access and use and are habit-forming. Social media channels work best

in situations of a rapidly developing or breaking story—a story unravelling so fast that

mainstream media can't assemble all the facts at once. Under these circumstances, audiences

prefer mobile online platforms to access news as it happens (Farhi, 2009). So, if consumers are

indeed increasingly moving to social media, why is it still important to examine how mainstream

media works? Why is it relevant?

Tandoc and Johnston's study of the Boston bombings found that of those who heard the

news of the Boston Bombings from Twitter first, (n = 82), 22% turned to TV news websites for

more information while another 22% turned to newspaper websites. A further 17% turned to

cable television news, while 13% turned to network television news (p. 8). In other words, nearly

three-fourths of the respondents moved to mainstream traditional media to seek confirmation,

elaboration and clarification of the event after initial exposure to social media.

Audience consumption patterns have nonetheless increased the importance of news

organizational websites and social media platforms as important sources for promoting breaking

news. The 2015 State of the News Media report for the United State noted that Facebook and

Twitter are the "most popular social networks when it comes to finding news" (Jahng & Littau,

2016, p. 40).

News Promotion on Social Media

It will not be surprising if social media's ability to break news and the tendency of

audiences to go to mobile online platforms for such news affect some time-honored decision-

making practices of journalists. Trying to share news with audiences almost as an event is

unravelling is not an entirely new phenomenon for journalists who have always strived to get

news to the public as soon as possible, (Lee, 2015). However, the definition of speed and cycle of

news have become faster than ever before with rise of digital technology and social media. The

news industry's "obsession with speed" (Lee, 2015, p. 217) has led to more journalists being

encouraged to publish content online quickly at the expense of accuracy (Thurman & Walters,

2013). For example, most newspapers now update their websites every few minutes throughout

the day and disseminate breaking news alerts through their Twitter or Facebook accounts. Lee

(2015) contended that news organizations favor speed-driven journalism because they believe

faster updates translate into more eyeballs, which equates more profit.

However, this quest for speed is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, journalists now

have the opportunity to share with the world every twist and turn in a developing story,

encompassing both what they do and do not know, though some suggest the extent to which

journalists actually do so may be limited (Hermida, 2013; Sacco & Bossio, 2016). On the other

hand, speed-driven journalism has "the potential to do society and democratic political systems a

disservice" (Lee, p. 220). For example, with the drive to constantly publish and to keep news

current, speed-driven journalism discourages investigative journalism, which takes more time to

produce. Also, the publish-first-and-correct-later mentality leads to greater chance of errors,

which contributes to more misinformation in society and erodes audiences' trust in the press

(Maier, 2005).

Journalists and news organizations have reacted to this threat to their credibility at two

levels. At one level, as Singer (2005) found with journalists who blog, journalist-tweeters appear

to be normalizing microblogs to fit into their existing norms and practices (Lasorsa, Lewis &

Holton, 2012). In the United States, traditional news outlets such as the *Washington Post* have

shown instances of this process of "gatekeeping social media" (Farhi, 2009). For instance, in

Farhi's study, one interview respondent told him, "When it comes to Twittering, our senior

editors should know beforehand if a reporter plans to tweet or otherwise live-blog something she

is covering. Anything controversial should be checked with an editor before transmission. Tone is also important," (p. 31). In other words, traditional reportorial norms still largely govern the practices of journalists in a new digital age of convenient information access (Santana & Hopp, 2016).

At the second level, measures are being taken to ensure the survival of the core gatekeeping function of maintaining accuracy of news. Using the Paradigm Repair Theory, Hindman and Thomas (2013) argue that as members of the journalistic paradigm, journalists are an "interpretive community", policing their profession and defining, shaping, and reinforcing its norms, values, standards, and practices (p. 269). When this paradigm is threatened, journalists have options to ignore it, acknowledge shortcomings, change the story, or repair the paradigm itself. Scholarly literature indicates that media institutions have thus far overwhelmingly opted for paradigm repair, to bind together the interpretive community of journalists during times of stress (Hindman & Thomas, 2013). In times of crises when journalistic paradigms are challenged, abused or misused, "journalists re-present these paradigms anew to readers and audiences, in an attempt to re-acquaint consumers with what journalism really is and what role it plays in society" (p. 269).

Overall, literature seems to suggest journalistic decision-making practices to promote news may need further examination since social media seems to have negatively affected the quality of journalism (Adornato, 2016).

Social Media as News Platform: Benefits and Challenges

Some previous studies have discussed the many benefits to journalism that social media brings, as also some emerging challenges and concerns (e.g., Ritter, 2015; Adornato, & Lysak, 2016; Broersma & Graham, 2017). What are the emerging concerns, challenges and

opportunities these studies, largely based in the United States and in developed nations of the

West (e.g. Scherr & Baugut, 2015; Gulyas, 2013; Heravi & Harrower, 2016), have found?

Although journalism is not per se a political job, there is ample evidence that journalists see

themselves as important for a wide array of societal functions (Scherr & Baugut, 2015) as a

gatekeeper/watchdog, detached observer, or socially committed advocate for the disadvantaged

in society (Willnat & Weaver, 2014). Lee (2015) argued that social media's influence on news

practices have been multifaceted in this context. On the one hand, it has had a direct impact on

journalists' production of speed-driven content through new news routines that demand more

frequent micro-updates. At the same time journalists, or at least many journalists across different

cultures, continue to actively resist the power of the common person to influence news trends on

social media. Instead of embracing opportunities that participatory media platforms may offer,

journalists across many nations of North America, Europe, and some Asian countries use Twitter

and other social media platforms to simply report their stories that appeared on traditional

platforms, and attempt to guide their followers to consume only such information as they desire

(Lasorsa et al., 2012). In other words, they use social media to reinforce the traditional

gatekeeping role where journalists decide what audiences should know.

Yet, there is little doubt that social media has impacted journalism across the world—

perhaps in varying degrees and in different ways, but the effect has still been disruptive. Time-

honored journalistic practices such as cross-verification of information for instance, may have

taken a backseat on occasions as a result of social media posts constantly providing journalists

with a slew of 'expert' opinions, and posts from 'verified' sources (Reich & Godler, 2017), even

though by and large journalists self-report that they still cross-verify information "when all other

paths to evidence and knowledge have been exhausted" (p. 570). Social media have also

influenced many news organizations (and their journalists) to package and market their news

stories in a way that panders to audience tastes and pushes through specific stories for specific

audiences (Tandoc & Vos, 2016). Unlike in the past, Gatekeeping then no longer refers to merely

checking news to ensure the most relevant information passes through gates. Gatekeeping now

"also includes *how* gatekeepers push news through gates" (p. 962) and how they pay attention to

market demands. While social media's perceived lack of credibility as a source of information

may lead many journalists to claim cross-verification, members of news corporations usually

report social media such as Twitter as extremely useful tools, as a means, for instance, to "get

users or followers to provide them feedback or evidence in the exploratory stages of a story"

(Ahmad, 2010, p.151), as research tools, and as great platforms to market their organization's

stories.

Like most technology-driven products, social media too have brought along its share of

concerns and challenges for news organizations and journalists. While journalists can now

provide live updates of developing stories such as a court decision on a sexual assault case

(Hermida, 2012), terror attack, or murder, the increasing focus on speed has on many occasions

seriously undermined journalistic credibility (e.g., Maier, 2005; Vos & Henderyckx, 2015). With

the race to be first to upload breaking news on websites or share it on social media, speed-driven

journalism has been found to discourage investigative or in-depth reporting, especially in genres

such as civic, political, and crime news (Silverman, 2007).

Most of these studies, while rich in data and increasing our understanding of journalistic

practices in general, have focused on case studies in the Western hemisphere.

Rapid technological innovations and adoption of social media platforms by both news

organizations and the public have changed the essence of how news is sourced, shared, and

consumed. For example, the introduction of online news presented new challenges for the

gatekeeping process (Vos & Heinderyckx, 2015). Unlike print or television, the internet is not a

finite or concrete media form. Instead, its form is simultaneously fluid and global, and supremely

individualistic (Singer, 2014). Even if mainstream news organizations continue to maintain some

control over framing of posts and tweets on social media, the historical view of the journalist as

the all-powerful entity who decides what the public will get to know (Singer, 2014) has become

outdated.

Some scholars argue journalists around the world have responded to these challenges by

re-emphasizing traditional practices, such as pre-publication verifications and post-publication

accountability, and that despite technological changes, resource constraints and extra-

organizational pressures, journalists claim the cultural understandings informing their

occupational function as gatekeepers safeguard the credibility and quality of content they create.

Others have found some evidence to the contrary, that a definite shift can be seen in

mainstream media's gatekeeping practices with the advent of social media (Wang & & He,

2014), as new factors influence journalists' actions and they help audiences filter through useful,

credible, reliable, and important news. A 24-hour news cycle requires a never-ending supply of

news and updates on running stories. Since few stories breaking on social media may be as

detailed or comprehensive as needed for a news story, journalists are pressured to supply

speculation, leading questions, and their own analyses and commentary in place of documented

information (Bennett, 2004). These lead to some of the challenges mentioned earlier, such as

pressure to upload breaking stories with little information, along with the temptation to raise the

level of speculative intrigue in order to draw audiences (Ceron, 2015). The ratings-driven and

audience-driven nature of the news industry may mean news items that get more audience

attention and thereby rate higher on search engines, may often get priority over news that

journalists consider more newsworthy, relevant, timely, suitable for target audiences, or in sync

with their organizational values (e.g., Lee, Lewis, & Powers, 2014; Cushion, & Lewis, 2009; Al-

Rawi, 2016; Beckett, & Mansell, 2008; Gensler, Volckner, Thompkin, & Weitz, 2013).

How have these changes impacted journalism and what factors have the most powerful

influence in swaying newsroom gatekeeping decisions today? As mentioned earlier, few scholars

have studied the impact of social media on journalistic practices in large democracies outside of

the United States and Europe, such as India. Further, those that have examined journalists' social

media use and its effect on Gatekeeping practices have mostly studied use and sharing of

political news as the foundation for their study (e.g.   Lawrence, Molyneux, Coddington, &

Holton, 2014; Mourao, 2015; Mourão, Diehl, & Vasudevan, 2015; Rogstad, 2014). Breaking

news, especially news in the crime genre, have not been studied as much, even though news

about violence, terror, and various types of other crimes rank among the type of news consumers

are most likely to read, watch, and interact with. A 2007 Pew study found that news on war and

terrorism remained the most consumed items among people in the U.S. since 1986, as did items

on natural or manmade disasters (Brainard, 2007). More recent studies in psychology also

conclude people generally like reading about or watching true crime stories (Bonn, 2016).

Research on Journalism in India

Yet, research is sparse on how journalists source, select, and report crime news online

first, and how various factors influence their decisions to report such breaking or developing

news. Few works too have explored social media's effect on journalistic gatekeeping decisions

vis-à-vis crime news.

A handful of studies that have examined how news media report crime such as rape and sexual assault in India, have used ethnographic and social scientific tools. They explore how journalists frame crime news (e.g., Durham, 2015; Patil & Purakayastha, 2017; Fadnis, 2017), why they select and present information in a certain manner (Rao, 2014; Drache & Velagic, 2014; Ibrahim, 2015) and how social media impact the selection and sharing of, and engagement with, such news (Belair-Gagnon & Mishra, 2014). While the need to report news as it happens may have brought newer challenges for newsrooms, studies focused on India have found the "accountability provided by related technologies and the ability for more people to participate in discussions related to the news" (Belair-Gagnon & Mishra, 2014) have also helped create more effective and accurate journalism.

Selection and presentation of crime news such as rapes are also affected by factors such as nationality, gender, or job role of a journalist. Male and female journalists in India, for instance, seem to be differently influenced by organizational factors. Repressive working conditions for female journalists, and stereotyping of some news beats such as crime as male domains, influenced selection and presentation of rape news in Indian media (Fadnis, 2017). The gender (Fadnis, 2017) and nationality (Patil and Purkayastha, 2017) of the journalist also influenced type of sources used to write breaking or developing stories. Female journalists were more likely to use non-traditional sources such as activists and non-government officials to explore alternate angles of framing rape news, whereas male journalists were more likely to use traditional sources such as police and government officers to reinforce existing patriarchal styles of reporting such events. International journalists were more likely to be influenced by social perceptions about India in their reporting, while domestic journalists were more influenced by

patriarchal norms such as socio-economic status of victims and perpetrators when reporting

crime stories.

Another interesting finding in some studies was a perceptible decline of public trust in

mass media. Although Indian news media continue to enjoy a relatively higher level of public

trust than their Western counterparts, they are also experiencing challenges in urban centers

where digitally connected citizens are relying increasingly on aggregated content, social media

updates and blogs (The Economic Times, 2017).

Reporting crime news such as murders, frauds, rapes, and sexual assaults involve

information that is extremely sensitive in nature and often needs an extra degree of gatekeeping

to ensure people's reputations are not damaged, sensitivities not hurt, lives not put in danger, and

privacy protected. Unfortunately, there are few guidelines to help Indian journalists write crime

news, especially news about sexual assaults, rapes, and other gender-related crime (Rao, 2014).

Social media platforms often act as the first source of such news, where journalists find

eyewitnesses, quotes, and a space to share such news. These attributes of social media have made

news sourcing, selection and dissemination quicker and perhaps easier in some regards for

journalists, but also may have led to significant gatekeeping challenges (Lee, 2015). India and

Indian newsrooms, increasingly dependent on digital technology, are no exceptions to this trend.

Certain survey-based studies have shown that globally too, many news organizations are paying

more attention to speed than ever before (Thurman & Walters, 2013).

These new challenges suggest both professional journalists and media scholars have to

reflect afresh on Gatekeeping process in newsrooms and the type of factors that influence these

gatekeeping decisions in an online-first world (Singer, 2008). This is particularly relevant in

situations when the breaking news is in the crime genre when journalists may not have a lot of

time to verify information about an alleged sexual assault or racial attack that has been tweeted or posted on social media, before such news is uploaded to their news organization's official website. Journalistic practices of selecting news from social media or promoting news on the web (Vos & Finneman, 2016) in India's newsrooms provide interesting insights about journalism in India.

In case of political news, most news organizations have clear political leanings (Scherr & Baugut, 2015) or have unambiguous norms and conventions for selecting and framing political news. A Republican-leaning newspaper, for instance, will not carry an article in support of Hillary Clinton. A Left-leaning TV channel in India will not hail the election victory of India's current Prime Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi. However, when it comes to the crime genre and rape reportage, very few ethical, organizational or journalistic norms are specified by organizations or by the Press Council of India, apart from not naming a victim. How India's mainstream media sources, selects and reports such news therefore can have far-reaching effects on public attitude and behavior not only towards media but also towards fellow human beings and the world at large. The day-to-day, minute-by-minute news sourcing, selection and dissemination process of mainstream media therefore has never been as critical as today, with social media posts reaching millions of people every minute and the concept of "gatekeepers" becoming almost non-existent with several "gates" having no keepers.

Gatekeeping & Hierarchy of Influences in an Online-First Era

News organizations have increasingly become profit-oriented and dependent on market forces for their survival (Bagdikian, 2004; Champlin & Knoedler, 2002). As a result, the influence of social institutions such as PR firms, corporate advertisers and large advertisers as well as stock markets on news selection process has grown exponentially (McChesney, 2015).

With some of the largest business owners in their respective countries (such as the Ambani and

Birla families in India; Murdoch in the U.S.) or the largest business organizations (such as GE or

Media Corp in USA and the RPG Group or the Reliance Group in India) owning or managing

most news media organizations, organizational diktats have also become a key influencer on the

news selection process, often ranking above societal needs—making communication routines and

a journalist's own belief system or journalistic judgement subservient to organizational desires

and whims of market forces.

Often, at least in the genre of political and business news, the story selection process may

see social, institutional and organizational concerns at the top of the hierarchy of influences. But

few studies if any have applied the HOI model to examine factors influencing journalists' crime

news selection and dissemination decisions.

Historically, as members of a discipline of verification (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007) and

aspiring to objective reporting (Gans, 1979; Schudson, 1981; Tuchman, 1978), journalists have

always valued legwork as verification of information provided by sources (Allan, 2013; Zelizer

and Allan, 2010). However, increase in public consumption of news online-first as it breaks, has

increased the need for instant uploads where legwork has been replaced by finger-speed. Quite

simply there is often no time for legwork, at least at the point when the news is first disseminated

to the public. Much before TV crews, radio staff or print photographers reach the spot of a crime,

the first information report is up on news websites because someone, often a common citizen

who was at the spot, tweets the event, posts on Facebook or even uploads a video on YouTube.

Past studies have found evidence of decline of journalistic legwork (e.g., physically

reaching the spot of a crime, conducting face-to-face interviews etc.) in the digital age. Due to the

combination of a growing assortment of newsgathering technologies and growing workloads

(Witschge, 2012; Phillips, 2010: Phillips, 2012), journalists in many cases are found to have

developed deskbound, screen-bound or computer-bound work style of "mouse monkeys" (García

Avilés, León, Sanders, and Harrison, 2004), becoming heavy users of technology (Fenton, 2009)

and moderators of citizen journalism (Singer, Hermida, Domingo, Heinonen, Paulsen, Quandt,

Reich, and Vujnovic, 2011; Ali & Fahmy, 2013).

Investigation into journalistic practices in cultures other than in the United States, such as

in Israel, (Reich & Godler, 2016) found that less than 15% journalists did any legwork to verify a

story, and that factors such as the need to upload information quickly, lack of necessary human

resources and other organizational obligations often forced journalists to source and verify

information about breaking news stories from secondary sources, often social media posts from

sources they believed (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2007). The quest for speed, need to be seen as the

first to report a breaking news and related financial, organizational obligations therefore have

resulted in journalists sometimes not using strict journalistic routines such as verification, as

diligently as they did earlier.

Gatekeeping Theory may need to be more cognizant of such factors that have arisen from

the phenomenal rise of social media (Dubois & Gaffney, 2014). In fact, the metaphor of

gatekeeping itself may be worth a fresh look. Gatekeeping essentially described a process that

was based on print and later television media (Pearson & Kosicki, 2016). Today, journalists and

news organizations are reinventing themselves as news usually breaks more on social media and

is constantly uploaded and updated on online news websites as well as official social media

pages of news organizations.

Previous studies that have examined how journalists use social media for news selection

and promotion, indicate that in promoting a news online or on social media, journalists offer

verification, clarification, and elaboration by adhering to certain time-tested principles (Lasorsa, Lewis, & Holton, 2011). Recent studies show that while more and more people go on social media (and mobile platforms) first to get breaking news, they then click on links to mainstream media sites provided on those posts/tweets to seek elaboration, clarification and corroboration (Hermida, 2013; Singer, 2014).

Do journalists use social media as a promotional tool then, to share news and attract more audience to their organization's websites? Many previous studies, as noted earlier, have found journalists use social media not only to gather information about news, they also use it to share or promote their own news stories and build public opinion. With the available social media and online platforms, how do the five steps of the HOI model influence journalistic decisions to promote a breaking crime story such as a rape? Are there additional factors the HOI model does not cover? This study aims to address these understudied issues by interviewing senior editors across India about their perceptions and opinions on the issues. The study examines editors' perspectives about social media's effect on traditional gatekeeping practices and emerging challenges. The next chapter presents the theoretical framework employed in this study to examine these broad research questions.

Summary

The seven sections in this chapter analyze related literature and introduce the theoretical frameworks for this study. The first section introduces and explains origins and tenets of Gatekeeping Theory, how it has evolved into one of the most well-rounded, theoretical models to explain how journalists select and disseminate information, and how the emergence of social media may have disrupted some of the key concepts of gatekeeping.

The second section introduces and explains the Hierarchy of Influences Model and describes how each step (*individual factors, routine factors, organizational factors, social institutional factors, and social system factors*) can influence journalistic gatekeeping decisions, and the specific items within these factors than affect journalists' decisions to select or share breaking news. This section also analyzes existing literature on how different factors mentioned in the HOI Model influenced journalistic decisions in traditional newsrooms in the pre-digital, online-first era, and some recent studies that examine how social media's ability to break news may have altered how journalists now source, select, and share information.

The third section analyzes existing literature on journalists' use of social media, their perceptions of social media as a professional tool, and the relative lack of research on journalism in India in today's online-first, social media-driven era.

The fourth section discusses literature analyzing how and why journalists upload breaking and developing news online first, especially on their organization's websites. The following fifth section similarly analyzes literature on how and why journalists promote breaking news, especially crime news, on their organization's social media handles.

The sixth section takes cognizance of previous studies that explore how social media has affected the news industry as a whole, in terms of potential benefits that aid journalistic work such as the ability to reach and engage with a wider audience and track trends, as well as emerging challenges and concerns such as the rise of fake news, lack of time to verify information, and need for speed.

The seventh section specifically evaluates studies that focus on journalism in India, and more specifically on studies that examine how journalists select and frame crime news such as rapes, murders, and stories of sexual abuse, and the key findings of these studies. This is done to

also identify existing knowledge gaps, such as lack of studies examining journalists' perceptions about social media, their social media usage patterns for professional reasons, and factors that influence their online-first gatekeeping decisions.

The eighth and final section introduces recent literature that question and re-examine both the relevance of gatekeeping theory in a digital-first era, and the changing hierarchy of influences on journalists in an era when news is often found first on, sourced from, and shared on social media platforms.

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Journalists are influenced by a wide variety of factors when sourcing, selecting and

disseminating news. Shoemaker & Reese (1996) first categorized these factors into the Hierarchy

of Influences Model. Over the years, while other models of studying how journalists source,

select, and disseminate news have existed, the Hierarchy of Influences (HOI) Model has been the

most popular and accepted lens through which how journalists work have been studied. Since

Shoemaker & Reese's landmark study, multiple other projects have found evidence of one or

more of these HOI levels affecting journalistic decisions both in legacy media as well as in new

media organizations—mainly in the context of American and European newsrooms (e.g.,

Donsbach, 2004; Reese, 2001; Kepplinger & Ehmig, 2006; Zhong & Newhagen, 2009).

Surprisingly, even transnational or multi-country projects that examined effects of emerging

media platforms or news consumption patterns on journalistic decision making (e.g., Donsbach,

& Klett, 1993; Hanitzsch & Mellado, 2011) have mostly ignored India—the world's most

populous democracy with one of the largest news media industries across the globe. Further, a

majority of recent studies that specifically examined social media's effect on journalism and the

image of news media, have focused on audience perception of journalists' usage of social media

(e.g., Lee, 2015; Tandoc & Vos, 2016) instead of examining how journalists self-report their

behavior, what challenges they see, and how they feel emerging challenges posed by the advent

of social media as a platform for breaking news, can be addressed.

In this study therefore, the researcher uses Shoemaker & Reese's Hierarchy of Influences

Model (1996; 2016) to explain how different factors influence journalistic decisions to source,

select or share breaking news, and compare the similarities and differences between the use of

social media and traditional news sources in legacy news media. It also examines the credibility

of social media messages to journalists and assesses journalists' perceived usefulness of social

media. A visual summary showing the variables and framework of the study is shown in Figure 1

and 2.

Figure 1: Factors Influencing Journalistic Gatekeeping Decisions on Websites

Uploading Breaking Crime News on Websites (DV)

Five Levels of Hierarchy of Influences (IV)

Perceived Usefulness & Credibility of Social Media (IV)

Sex and Rank of Journalist
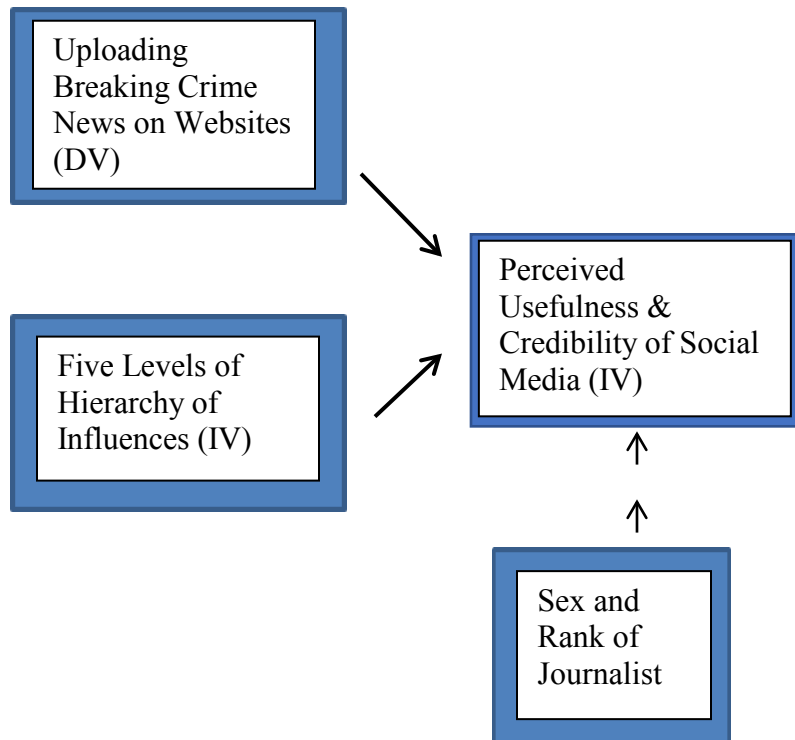
Figure 2: Factors Influencing Journalistic Gatekeeping Decisions on Social Media
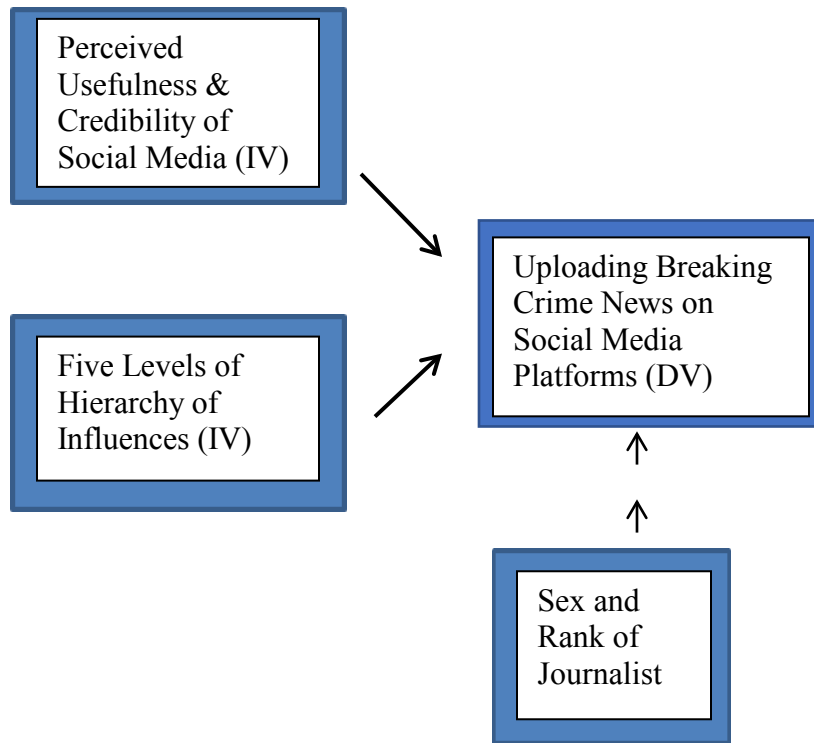
As shown in Figure 1 & 2, the independent variables of this study are journalists' perceived usefulness and credibility of social media, the five stages of the hierarchy of influences, and demographic variables of journalists such as gender and rank. The two dependent variables are 1) posting breaking crime news online first on the news media's website prior to publishing or broadcasting in legacy media (figure 1), and 2) using social media to promote the news first (figure 2).

Influences on Journalists' Decisions to Upload Breaking News on Websites

The central issue this research seeks to address is to understand how journalists' gatekeeping decisions are affected by different factors or influences, and the resultant challenges

for journalism in India with the advent/growth of social media and need to be online first. The researcher therefore used Shoemaker & Reese's (1996; 2016) Hierarchy of Influences Model as the central framework of his study. Reese and Shoemaker (2016) argued that "the hierarchical influences can still consider new realignments of media and other forces. Emerging spaces in the network public sphere may not fit as easily into the once familiar professional, organizational, and institutional containers, but the new media configurations supporting these spaces must still be understood with reference to a larger framework of power" (p. 390).

They, and other scholars (e.g., Anderson, Bell, and Shirkey, 2015), argue further that at the legacy or mainstream news industry level, there is a growing realization among journalists and news organizations about the need to become more collaborative. They argue that journalism can "no longer be easily understood within organizational containers but extends across traditional boundaries in unpredictable ways" (p. 394). Others such as Vos and Heinderyckx (2015) have examined Gatekeeping practices across all five levels in the U.S. context, to understand the forces at each level that shape news decisions in an online-driven world of news. The collective findings of these studies indicate that much of media work continues to occur in organized, institutionalized settings.

The five levels in the HOI Model are *Individuals, Routines, Organization, Social Institutions*, and *Social Systems*.

Figure 3: Hierarchy of Influences Model
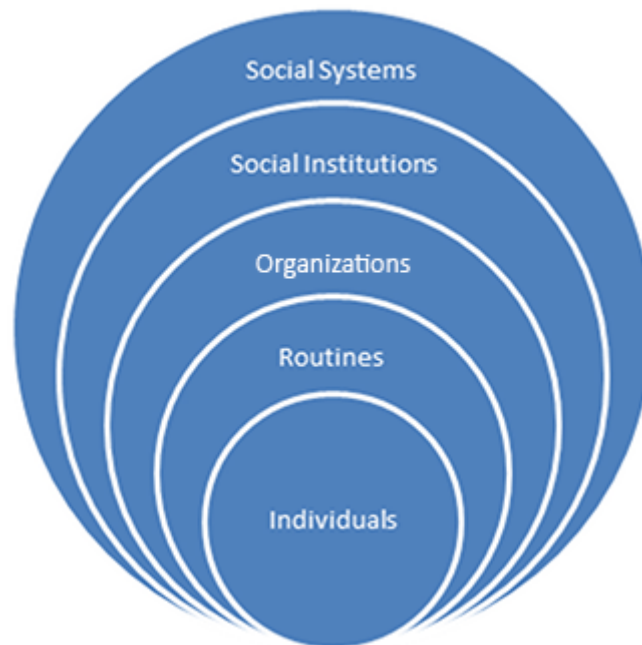
(Source: Shoemaker & Reese, 2014; cf. Anderson, 2017)

Individual Factors. Reese & Shoemaker (2014) argued that individual factors play a role in influencing journalistic decisions when sourcing, selecting or disseminating news. According to them, individual factors include personal traits of news workers, news values they adhere to, professional roles they take on, and other demographic features such as gender, race, education and class. They argued that in spite of the traditional notion of professional "objective" detachment, certain individual biases affect journalists' decisions. Thus, this level of analysis "considers the relative autonomy of individuals, how they are shaped by, contribute to, and identify with their surrounding organizations" (p. 398).

Routine Factors. Reese & Shoemaker found the routines level concerns specific ways of working in newsrooms that have become established practice, including some "unstated rules and ritualized enactments that are not always made explicit" (p. 399). These routines are not necessarily diktats from the organization leadership but a pattern of practice that control the

workflow and give news selection a meaningful structure. Journalistic routines include timeliness of news, including deadline and space requirements, a perception of balanced news, perceived relevance of a news for the target audience, and verification of news (Wardle, 2015). Reese & Shoemaker (2016) and others argue that some of these routines "have been unsettled, as news media adapt to digital flows" (p. 399). One study provides an example: journalists need to develop new routines of screening breaking news constantly on digital platforms, monitoring what types of stories drive audience traffic, and find ways to appropriately verify this second-hand story-telling (Coddington, 2015).

Organization Factors. Journalists are part of media organizations and these organizations in turn are part of a larger structure in the news ecology. Therefore, there exist tensions at the organizational level that are manifest in different ways. Lee and Chan's (2008) study showed how despite Hong Kong's strong tradition of journalistic professionalism, government pressure is increasingly forcing media owners to try and minimize conflict and set conventions for journalists.

Other studies (e.g., Boczkowski, 2010) examined how technology affects newsroom organization and practice, and how traditional media cling on to news production practices of old, even as they adapt to the digital world. Shoemaker & Reese (2016) argued that organizational influences include organizational policy (often unstated), focus areas of a specific news media organization, perceived likes and dislikes of bosses, and organization structure. .

Social Institutional Factors. Reese and Shoemaker claimed that at this level, journalists are influenced by concerns beyond any single organization. In other words, various organizations doing media work cohere into a larger institution, and newsrooms and journalists are affected by

this "structured dependency relationships with other major systemic players including the state,

public relations, and advertising" (p. 402) as they give shape to a final news product.

Social System Factors. Social system is a macro level factor that refers to how local,

national, and global forces, including politics and religion shape journalistic decisions. As Reese

(1990; 2001) averred, media professionals police their boundaries and defend professional

prerogatives as they engage in a process of repair and maintenance of the journalistic paradigm.

In short, this level explains how the media project ideas and meaning as they try to please

different power centers, such as audiences, the larger social milieu, political forces etc. It

recognizes that media institutions "function within a larger social system and these systems

increasingly span national boundaries" (Reese, 2001, p. 406).

Web Uploading on Online-First. News is meant to be read. "The audience is the

ultimate consumer of the media product—the end of the news process" (Shoemaker and Reese,

2013, p. 177). Therefore, in understanding the construction of news, one cannot divorce

journalism from its audience (Tandoc, 2014). Journalists upload breaking news online for a

variety of reasons. Tandoc found journalists consider audiences to be most important when

uploading or posting breaking news online first; they also perceive higher audience engagement

with online news is directly related to higher revenues from advertisements. Lee and Tandoc

(2017) also found that audience feedback online affects topic selection and story placement by

journalists. For instance, topics that have attracted a lot of clicks (number of times consumers

have checked a news story on a website) tend to be covered more often (Welbers, van Atteveldt,

Kleinnijenhuis, Ruigrok, & Schaper, 2016). Further, since stories with photos or videos draw

more clicks, editors may upload stories with visual complements online first (Tandoc, 2014).

However, other factors such as authenticity and verifiability of a news item also affect these

decisions, and in the case of breaking crime news such as rapes, the need to protect privacy of the

victim, ensuring all sources and participants are correctly depicted in the report, are other factors

that may affect decisions to upload on the web.

One aspect that needs further investigation is how different factors of the HOI model

affect journalistic gatekeeping decisions, and how significant each of these factors may be in the

decision-making process. Further, while some previous studies have examined audience (or even

journalists') perceptions beyond the United States (e.g. Tandoc, 2014; Lee & Tandoc, 2017), they

have not explored this phenomenon in a large democracy outside of the U.S. such as India. Do

journalists in all democracies think alike? Or are there differences between cultures that affect

how different levels of influences are understood and affect journalistic decision-making

processes?

Research Hypotheses (H1a-e)

Based on findings of previous studies and the HOI model, the following hypotheses are

posed:

*H1a***:** Individual factors will influence journalists' decision to upload breaking crime news on

their organization's news website.

*H1b***:** Journalistic Routine factors will influence journalists' decision to upload breaking crime

news on their organization's news website.

*H1c***:** Organizational factors will influence journalists' decision to upload breaking crime news

on their organization's news website.

*H1d***:** Institutional factors will influence journalists' decision to upload breaking crime news on

their organization's news website.

H1e: Ideological factors will influence journalists' decision to upload breaking crime news on their organization's news website.

Influences on Journalists' Decisions to Promote Breaking News on Social Media

      Similar to examining the effects of the HOI model on web posting decisions, this study also examines how HOI factors affect journalists' social media promotion decisions. Previous studies such as ones by Tandoc & Vos (2016), and Lasorsa, Lewis, & Holton (2012) have found journalists post breaking news on social media to engage with audiences, share links, get quotes, increase public participation in the news process, and drive more traffic to their organization's website. To that end, the following hypotheses are posed:

Research Hypotheses (H2a-e)

H2a: Individual factors will influence journalists' decision to promote breaking crime news on their organization's social media platforms

H2b: Journalistic Routine factors will influence journalists' decision to promote breaking crime news on their organization's social media platforms

H2c: Organizational factors will influence journalists' decision to promote breaking crime news on their organization's social media platforms

H2d: Institutional factors will influence journalists' decision to promote breaking crime news on their organization's social media platforms

H2e: Ideological factors will influence journalists' decision to promote breaking crime news on their organization's social media platforms

Research Questions

      Usefulness of Social Media as a Professional Tool. Although HOI may help explain the factors that journalists consider in selecting news to post online, it does not address social media

as a professional tool for journalists which influence their practices. Hence, we need to know how journalists, especially Indian journalists in this study, use social media and perceive the usefulness of social media to their work. Santana & Hopp's (2016) research measured social media's value as a reporting tool for journalists by understanding it as an instrument for accessing personal data. They conducted a survey of reporters at multiple large and midsize U.S. newspapers. Their key conclusions were that journalists placed more value on Twitter than Facebook when it came to professional practice. Further, while "Facebook's value was tied to its use for querying friends and conducting research", "Twitter's value was significantly tied to the platform's use for querying followers, performing research, and activities associated with contacting sources" (p. 385). Similarly, Weaver & Willnat's (2016) recent study of U.S. journalists' social media use found journalists find social media extremely useful for checking on what other news organizations are doing and to look for breaking news events. They also found most journalists "use social media to find ideas for stories, keep in touch with their readers and viewers, and find additional information" (p. 844).

Both studies on social media use were conducted in the United States. Similar studies have till date not been conducted in India, where the news media market is at least as large, if not larger, than that of USA. Usefulness of any artifact, object or tool is culture and context specific, and perceptions about such a tool could differ significantly between cultures. How journalists in the world's most populous democracy too perceive social media as a professional, will add to the growing body of knowledge about how newer digital tools are being perceived and used across newsrooms, and what the similarities and differences in usage and perceptions indicate about challenges facing legacy media newsrooms and journalism in general today.

Santana & Hopp (2016) used broad questions to ask journalists their perceptions of social media, such as: "Overall, how important do you consider Facebook as a tool for the collection and dissemination of the news you produce", and "Overall, how important do you consider Twitter as a tool for the collection and dissemination of the news you produce" (p.394). Twitter's mean professional value was higher at 3.49 compared to Facebook's mean professional value at 2.93. Facebook was more used by journalists to query friends, find sources, gather story ideas, and conduct research, while Twitter was found to be more useful to query followers, find sources, gather story ideas, and conduct research. Weaver and Willnat (2016) found the main usefulness of social media for journalists lay in finding information, looking for breaking news, engaging with audiences, and gathering story ideas. The final five-item scale was based on items from two previous studies and adapted for this study. They were reworded, and respondents were asked how useful they thought social media platforms were in matters of gathering information, sharing links for audiences, checking for breaking news, verifying information, and monitoring public opinion.

The concepts of usefulness were based largely on Western assumptions. Since this researcher found a relative lack of prior similar studies in the Indian context, no relational hypotheses regarding usefulness of social media as a professional tool could be developed. The first research question of this study is formulated as follows:

RQ1: How do journalists in India perceive the usefulness of social media as a professional tool?

Credibility of Social Media as a Source of Breaking News. Some scholars have argued that much like consumers, journalists' perceptions about the credibility of a source is "related to how much they use those sources in the news coverage" (Yoon, 2005, p. 283). Older studies that examined journalists' assessment of source credibility argued that journalists simply view some

sources as more credible than others, based on how regularly they interact with those sources, and their past track record as providers of accurate information, and use that categorization in news selection (Gaziano, 1986; Anderson, 1991). Other previous studies indicate journalists' perceptions of source credibility are related to the quality aspect of news coverage such as regularity and valence (Schlesinger, 1990).

In some cultures, journalists may also perceive their own experience as more credible than that of any other human agent, and "tend to stick with sources they perceive as more credible, granting them more ready acceptance" (Reich, 2011, p. 51). Then again, these are not generalizable trends since many journalists and news organizations also seem to give substantial news space to "even the least credible sources" (p. 51) without any cross-checking. As early as 2000, studies conducted in the U.S. that focused on journalists' perceived source credibility of online sources, found journalists largely agreed that using online sources led to problems with verification of facts, "dealing with unreliable or badly sourced information" (Garrison, 2000, p. 500), and an overall lack of source credibility.

While at the core, source credibility has always been a contentious issue in journalism, the very nature of the source is often different now—a virtual source in a virtual realm. This may have altered the way journalists perceive sources and source credibility today.

Appelman & Sundar (2015) proposed a new definition of message credibility in the new media environment because the news source may not be known and the message itself may be the only object in assessing credibility. As they argued: "Message credibility is an individual's judgement of the veracity of the content of communication" (p. 63). This study used the same definition for message credibility. However, since the site is different and similar studies have not been done in India—either with members of the audience or with journalists—some items in

Appelman & Sundar's scale were renamed to suit cultural differences. Further, the authors measured perceived credibility of messages from a news consumer or audience point of view. Journalists are the subject of study in this research. Even so, when journalists take decisions regarding the veracity or credibility of a social media message, they enact the role of an audience member or an information consumer. Therefore, Appelman & Sundar's scale was considered most suitable to examine RQ2.

In the concluding section of their work, Appelman and Sundar pointed to a possible limitation of the study: "Message credibility may not be important when source credibility is high. On the other hand, if a reader perceives the message to be of low accuracy, authenticity, and believability, it could even hurt their evaluations of source credibility" (p. 75). They argued that future research on interaction effects of different types of credibility can benefit by employing their message credibility scale. The researcher chose this scale therefore to examine how journalists perceived the credibility of social media messages as a source of breaking news.

Although previous studies have examined message credibility among news consumers in Western nations, how concepts of social media message credibility work in a different cultural setting such as India, and among those who deal with media messages every day of their lives, is not known. Thus, the second research question is also exploratory in nature:

RQ2: How do journalists in India perceive the credibility of social media as a source of breaking news?

Usefulness, Credibility & Influences on Web Uploading Decisions. In the proposed research framework of this study, the effect of perceived usefulness and credibility of social media on web posting decisions are measured by using the usefulness and credibility scales as the framework. Previous studies that surveyed and interviewed journalists found that journalists tend

to believe the credibility of a source is central to story selection, and that journalistic decisions are often influenced most by the accuracy of information, and therefore by source credibility (e.g., Shapiro, Brin, Bédard-Brûlé, & Mychajlowycz, 2013; Kovach, and Rosenstiel, 2007). Usefulness of a source is also central to gatekeeping decisions. As early as 2000, scholars had found evidence that journalists considered digital media, including more social interaction platforms, useful for sourcing information including scoops (Pavlik, 2000). Over the years, different studies have concluded that news reporters find platforms such as Twitter extremely useful as reporting tools "that allows them to get in touch with possible sources or obtain information about ongoing events" (Broersma, & Graham, 2012, p. 404). Cassidy's (2007) survey of 655 American journalists discovered that most journalists viewed Internet news information as moderately credible, but that those who identified as online journalists rated digital sources such as social media as significantly more credible than print newspaper journalists.

So, while it may be said with some degree of certainty that reporters find social media useful for sourcing information, whether this perception influences journalists' decisions to use information available on social media to write stories that can be uploaded on to their organizational websites, is an area that remains relatively understudied. Therefore, RQ3a is posed.

RQ3a: To what extent do credibility of social media as a source of breaking news and usefulness of social media as a professional tool, influence journalists' decisions to upload breaking crime news on their organization's website?

Usefulness, Credibility & Influences on Social Media Promotion Decisions. The next research question examines to what extent does (if at all) journalists' perceptions of social media

as a useful and credible news source, affect their decision to use stories that break on social

media, to create news feed and updates to be posted on their organization's official social media

handles.

RQ3b: To what extent do credibility of social media as a source of breaking news and usefulness

of social media as a professional tool, influence journalists' decision to promote breaking crime

news on their organization's social media platforms?

Rank & Sex of Journalists. Previous research has found significant differences between

how male and female journalists perceive, seek out, and report information (e.g. Fadnis, 2017;

Kim, Lehto & Morrison, 2007; Craft & Wanta, 2004; Kian & Hardin, 2009). Fadnis found that in

India, female journalists are likely to use alternate sources and be more influenced by the nature

of the crime in gender-based crime stories (e.g., rapes) compared to male journalists, who are

likely to use traditional official sources such as police reports, and report sex crimes based on

factors such as the social status of the perpetrator and victim, their age, and similar factors. Kian

and Hardin (2009) found gender of the journalist also determines what topics or whom they write

about, and how male and female characters re framed in news stories.

Studies have also found that rank, age or designation of a journalist may influence their

attitude toward specific news content (e.g. Gade, 2004; Coulson & Lacy, 1996). This study

proposes to examine if sex and rank of a journalist influence their decision to share breaking

crime news on their organizational websites and official social media handles first. To that end,

two research questions on the influence of sex and rank on posting breaking news on

organization websites and promoting news on social media are posed:

RQ4a: Does biological sex and rank of journalists influence their decision to post breaking crime

news on their organization's news website?

RQ4b: Does the biological sex and rank of journalists influence their decision to promote

breaking crime news on their organization's social media platforms?

Social Media's Effect on Journalism. Many previous studies have studied possible

effects of new technology on newsroom gatekeeping practices (e.g., Lee & Tandoc, 2017), and

factors that influence such gatekeeping decisions (e.g. Bro & Wallberg, 2015). However, many of

these studies have been conducted in the United States, Europe, or other developed nations. This

research study explores what some of the most experienced editors in the world's most populous

democracy, who work across multiple news platforms, think about social media's effect on

journalism.

With growing concern over issues such as fake news and alternative facts, and with trust

in legacy mass media showing a steady decline over the past few years, recent scholarship has

examined how journalists use social media (e.g., Schifferes, Newman, Thurman, Corney, Göker,

& Martin, 2014; Paulussen & Harder, 2014; Larsen, 2017; Carlson, 2017), how social media

trends affect gatekeeping decisions, (e.g., Weaver & Willnat, 2016; Brandtzaeg, Lüders,

Spangenberg, Rath-Wiggins, & Følstad, 2016; Adornato, 2016) and also attempted to analyze

reasons for falling public trust in mass media (e.g. Tsfati, & Ariely, 2014; Turcotte, York, Irving,

Scholl, & Pingree, 2015). However, relatively fewer studies have examined what journalists

themselves think about social media's effects on journalistic practices, and what these mean for

journalism. Given the comparative lack of research on Indian news media, specifically on social

media's effect on Indian journalism and studies that seek to engage journalists such as editors to

understand this phenomenon, RQ5 is an open-ended inquiry of journalists' views of how social

media have affected journalism in India.

RQ5: How have social media affected journalism in India?

Emerging Challenges for Indian Journalism. Social media's advent as a platform for breaking news has led to multiple media effects and gatekeeping studies examining how social media have affected journalism. Martin & Comm (2014), for example, found that identifying and verifying new information quickly were key issues for journalists who used social media. Lee (2014) also argued that new media technology has altered many aspects of mass communication processes, one of the most profound changes being the rise of speed-driven journalism. Lee's study involving multiple interviews with journalists and experiments with news consumers concludes that most journalists believe speed harms news credibility but boosts news use.

Other studies based in Europe (e.g., Brandtzaeg, Spangenberg, Rath-Wiggins, & Følstad, 2016) have found that journalists' use of social media as a primary source can lead to challenges of verification. Weaver (2013) opined that many journalists consider social media to have a positive impact on their work, including a belief that social media make journalism more accountable to the public. However, overall less than a third of the journalists in his study felt that social media had a positive influence on the journalistic profession overall. One of the most common negative perceptions, he found, was that social media journalism has sacrificed accuracy for speed. Therefore, while journalists see the benefits of social media, few are convinced that speed-driven journalism will benefit journalistic professionalism.

It is important to understand what media leaders such as editors themselves think of this phenomenon. Editors run newspapers, TV channels and websites; collectively, the senior editors in an organization decide policy, strategies and directions for their organizations as also how each story or event is framed. It is critical to understand not just how they perceive social media's effect on journalism, but what issues they see as challenges and concerns that may affect public trust in mass media. Given the relative lack of studies that engage media leaders such as editors

to gain an insider's perspective on this issue, the sixth question is also an open-ended inquiry of emerging challenges for journalism in India due to social media's advent as a major source and platform for breaking news.

RQ 6: What challenges and concerns do these effects pose for journalism in India?

Sustainable Strategies to Address Emerging Challenges. Trust in media is rapidly declining around the world, especially trust in traditional news media platforms such as print, radio, and television. At the same time, more and more people are consuming news not only on mobile platforms, but through social media applications such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp. Several studies mentioned earlier have shown how journalists and news organizations are some of the most frequent users of these social media platforms to both source and disseminate information. Technology will only make information travel faster in the future, making life and work more complex for journalists. The present study therefore asks a final exploratory question to senior editors and media leaders from India across multiple platforms. This last research question is as follows:

RQ7: What sustainable strategies can be developed to address these emerging challenges?

Summary

Chapter III discusses the theoretical frameworks and elaborates on the research questions. Based on Appelman & Sundar's Message Credibility Scale (RQ2), and on items from Santana & Hopp, as well as Willnat & Weaver's studies on journalists perceived professional usefulness of social media (RQ1), the present study develops the first two research questions to explore how journalists in India perceive the usefulness and credibility of digital platforms, especially social media. The study then uses Shoemaker & Reese's Hierarchy of Influences Model and the Gatekeeping Theory as foundations to formulate two sets of hypotheses and examine the

perceived effect on different levels of the HOI model on journalistic gatekeeping process on

websites (H1 a-e) and social media (H2 a-e). Further research questions examine the influence of

perceived usefulness and credibility (RQ3a and RQ 3b), Possible influence of journalists' age,

rank, and sex (RQ4a, and RQ4b) on their gatekeeping decisions. The above-mentioned research

questions and hypotheses were examined by using the online survey instrument as a research

tool.

  For an in-depth understanding of how social media has affected journalism in India,

resultant concerns and challenges, and possible strategies to address these challenges—three

other research questions (RQ5, RQ6, and RQ7) are designed to qualitatively explore and

understand the insights and perspectives of senior media leaders such as editors of newspapers,

magazines, TV channels and websites across India. This chapter also explains the rationale for

the research questions and hypotheses by showing key findings from previous literature.

CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The previous chapter discussed the theoretical frameworks, research questions and hypotheses of this study. This chapter introduces the research methods and data collection procedure in detail. A mixed method of both quantitative and qualitative research methods was applied for this study. By using surveys and interviews, this study triangulates data to analyze social media's effect on journalistic practices in India, explore emerging challenges to journalism, and seek strategic solutions to address those challenges. Specifically, the study looks at how journalists upload breaking crime news on their organizational websites and social media handles, what factors influence their decisions, what challenges such practices pose for Indian journalism, and possible strategies to address those challenges.

Rationale for Mixing Methods

Social science researchers, especially scholars in media and communication studies, have sometimes argued that quantitative and qualitative research methods are incompatible with each other (Beatty, 2009), and that they should not be combined within the same study since the core assumptions, beliefs and approaches of the two methods belong to different paradigms. However, there are times when mixing methods is possibly the best solution—especially when the research questions seek both a degree of generalizability, and an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon (Sechrest & Sidana, 1995; Sale, Lohfeld, & Brazil, 2002). Pragmatic considerations need to override epistemological and ontological conflicts between paradigms in such instances, for the greater benefit of scholarship and society (Buchanan, 1992; Duffy, 1987; Creswell et al., 2003). This dissertation uses a Mixed Method approach to answer the central research questions and hypotheses, since a combination of methods is the best way to examine observable patterns and

trends among the journalist community across India, as also to delve deeper and understand

social, cultural, and other possible localized factors that may influence specific behaviors.

There are a few considerations to keep in mind when designing a mixed method study.

For instance, the researcher has to decide if quantitative and qualitative data will be collected

simultaneously or sequentially (Morgan, 1998), and if one of the methods will have a dominant

role in the study or both methods given equal importance. Further considerations could include

questions about the reason for data integration—such as triangulation, explanation, or

exploration (Creswell, et al., 2003; Greene et al., 1989) and being clear about the stage of the

study when the two methods would be mixed (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). As noted by Greene

et al. (1989), there are five major purposes or rationales for conducting mixed methods research.

They two methods used here are *triangulation*, where one seeks corroboration of results from

different methods while studying the same phenomenon, and *complementarity* where a study

seeks elaboration, enhancement, and clarification (Bryman, 2006).

Design Typology. A Partially Mixed Sequential Equal Status typology (Creswell, et al.,

2003) was selected for this study. In this typology, quantitative and qualitative phases occur one

after the other, with both phases being given approximately equal weight and mixing occurring at

the data interpretation or discussion stage (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009). For this project, the

survey was conducted first, and its findings informed the in-depth qualitative interviews

conducted later. In other words, the sequential design was broken into two distinct phases. In the

first phase, the researcher collected and analyzed quantitative or numeric data. The findings

helped the researcher frame questions for the qualitative phase of study. Data from the qualitative

phase was collected and analyzed second in the sequence and helped "explain or elaborate on the

quantitative results obtained in the first phase" (Ivankova, Creswell, & Stick, 2006, p. 5). The

findings from the two phases were then analyzed in depth in the discussion and conclusion section.

The rationale for this approach is that the findings of the first phase provides a better understanding of the research problem and the second, sequential phase then refines and explains the numbers by exploring participants' views on the phenomenon (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998; Creswell, 2003). This typology offers the researcher an opportunity to investigate the phenomenon both as a trend and in depth, to answer the "so what" question. It is also useful if new, interesting or even unexpected results arise from the first phase (Morse, 2007).

Approach. Broadly speaking, there are five categories that determine the purpose for mixing approaches. The type that reflects the intentions of this study best is *complementarity* (Collins & O'cathian, 2009). A mixed method study that provides a rationale of complementarity, essentially seeks elaboration, enhancement, illustration, and clarification of the results from one method with results from the other method (Greene et al., 1989, p. 259). This study examined the phenomenon of journalists' gatekeeping challenges in a digital era and how they think it can be tackled best. In the quantitative phase, the survey measured journalistic perceptions of social media, and how those perceptions influenced their online journalism decisions—looking also at possible differences between sex, rank, and age group. The qualitative phase sought elaboration and enhancement, by using the findings of the survey to frame questions for experienced print, visual, and online editors, and understand the nature of emerging challenges for journalism in an online-first era, and possible sustainable strategic solutions. This across-method triangulation process (Zelditch, 1962) helped seek convergent validity; in other words, to understand if there was a convergence in the findings (Rossman & Wilson, 1985), and the possible implications of such convergence for journalism and media studies.

Phase 1: Survey

Time and financial constraints are common in dissertation projects and this study was no exception. Given the shortage of time and resources, an online survey was selected as the most suitable method to examine Indian journalists' perceptions about social media's usefulness and credibility as a professional tool, and how they felt social media had affected traditional journalistic practices. The survey method is one of the most appropriate ways to arrive at a generalizable accurate picture of respondents' perceptions and ideas. Especially if the intention of a study is to clarify patterns or trends through fieldwork such as interviews, then the survey method is the best way to gain that initial data (Brannen, 2017). The internet's ability to reach people who may live far and wide and ensure speedy delivery of responses make online surveys very popular and efficient means of collecting data. An online survey was therefore chosen as the appropriate tool to answer the research questions and hypotheses in this phase. Such surveys are easy to administer and cost-effective. Further, they have a comparatively "low cost, economies of scale" (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014, p. 301) and access to large databases. The increasing use of mobile devices and internet has further enhanced chances of people responding more readily to online surveys. Another advantage of online surveys is that respondents can answer a question without feeling pressurized as may be the case in a face-to-face or telephone survey (Stacks & Hocking, 1992). Given the physical distance between India and Bowling Green, USA an online survey was also considered more feasible in terms of reaching the target population in a short span of time (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 2000).

Population Definition and Sampling Frame

The population of the study is journalists across India. The sampling frame for this study was individual and institutional member roster of Kolkata Press Club, Mumbai Press Club and

Hyderabad Press Club. The researcher was an active member of the Kolkata Press Club during his tenure as a senior journalist, and a part of Mumbai Press Club activities as well. However, past membership to a press club was not the main reason why these organizations were chosen. Invitation request emails to take part in the survey were sent out to five of India's largest Press Clubs—the three mentioned above, as well as the Bengaluru Press Club and the Press Club of India in New Delhi. In the end, while the other two clubs did not respond to the email invites, Kolkata, Mumbai, and Hyderabad press clubs agreed to be part of the survey process. With close to 3,000 journalist members between them, Mumbai, Kolkata and Hyderabad press clubs are three of the largest in India. The three clubs are also situated in three different corners of India— Kolkata in the East, Mumbai in the West, and Hyderabad in the South—accounting for a very linguistically and culturally diverse sample of journalists. Their members are spread across the length and breadth of the country, as was evident when analyzing the survey results. Together they are a representative sample of journalists in India.

To be a member of press club in at least the major metropolitan centers such as Kolkata, Delhi, Mumbai, and Hyderabad, one needs to be a journalist for at least three years in the same city as the press club to which he or she is applying for membership. Each application needs to have a letter of recommendation from an existing ordinary or life member. Applicants for ordinary or full membership status also need to show proof of being employed by a news media organization such as a newspaper group, a magazine, a TV channel, a news agency, a news website, or a radio station. Applications are reviewed periodically by the executive committee of the concerned press club and if approved by a majority vote, membership is granted to an individual. Each member pays an initial membership fee. Memberships are renewable annually on payment of the membership fee. Membership status of a member can be reviewed at any time

and continued membership is usually dependent on continued status as a journalist, and payment of all dues. Ordinary or full members have voting rights, while associate members can avail of most recreational benefits but are not eligible to vote. Associate members usually include freelance journalists, new journalists who have not yet completed three years in the profession, as well as those in the public relations or advertising fields.

All participants of this study are journalists based in India. Journalists around India, irrespective of their club membership, share common missions and similar objectives of delivering fair, timely, and accurate information to their audiences. The three press clubs have similar criteria for membership such as being full-time journalists and residents of the club's base city at the time of applying for membership. The three clubs also have similar membership numbers as far as journalists are concerned, with nearly 700 in Bengaluru, a little over 800 in Kolkata, and over 1,200 in Mumbai.

A purposive sample was used to recruit respondents for the survey. In other words, a group of people, in this case all members of the Kolkata Press Club, Mumbai Press Club, and Bengaluru Press Club, were recruited for the survey because they represented one or more criteria (they are journalists from one of the three mainstream forms of media in the two targeted cities). There is no single authoritative list or database of all journalists in India. No organization exists that lists all professional journalists by name, email address or any other identifiable means. It is also extremely difficult to send a link of the survey to each newspaper, magazine, television station and website office across India. The press clubs are by far the most authoritative database for working journalists. The Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Kolkata press clubs are among the largest press clubs in India. Members of these clubs do not necessarily work in these three cities alone but could be based anywhere in India, in any city or town. Once they become members, they can

retain their membership by paying a nominal annual fee, irrespective of where in India they are

working. A significant number of members of each of these press clubs today work in locations

outside of these three cities. However, since these are the three oldest, largest and perhaps the

most prestigious press clubs to be a member of, many journalists continue their memberships

even when they are no longer working in that city. The database of these three press clubs

therefore, may be the most diverse database of Indian journalists available at present.

For the sequential interview phase, a Critical Case Theory-based sample (Onwuegbuzie &

Collins, 2007) was selected. This is a type of purposive sample that chooses settings, groups or

individuals based on specific characteristics because their inclusion provides the researcher with

"compelling insight about a phenomenon of interest" (p. 285). Morse (2007) stresses that for

qualitative interviews, especially when the aim of the study is to develop grounded theory,

participants "must be experts in the experience or the phenomena under investigation" (p. 231).

The researcher ensured that all interviewees are editors or senior editors with at least 10 years of

experience in one or more media platforms (print, audio-visual, or online). In other words, these

were informant interviews (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011).

There are between 700 and 1,200 journalist members at each of the three press clubs. The

total population of journalists at the three clubs taken together is around 2,700. It was aimed to

get responses from around 380 participants to achieve a 95% confidence level and a 5% error rate

(Stacks & Hocking, 1999). Journalists are busy individuals and are often inundated with varied

requests through the week. Considering their busy schedule and a possible resultant low response

rate, the researcher requested the press clubs to send out the survey to all journalist members on

his behalf, and to send a reminder email as well. The clubs, in addition to sending the

questionnaire to individual members, also sent it to email IDs of institutional members such as

newspaper offices and television channel offices. This resulted in an initial response from 363 individual media professionals.

For the qualitative in-depth interviews that sought complementarity, elaboration, and development, Creswell (2007) suggests between 15-25 interviews. For this phase therefore, 25 senior editors of television channels, newspapers, news websites and magazines were invited to be part of the project—editors with a minimum of 10 years' experience. After a series of emailed and telephonic interactions, 18 editors agreed to being interviewed.

Pretest

After developing the questionnaire, the researcher conducted a pretest by sending the survey questionnaire to 14 former journalists from India. This was done to eliminate or correct items or questions that were repetitive, ambiguous, and considered unsuitable for the study. Some participants, for example, felt the focus on crime news such as rapes was not explained in the informed consent sheet preceding survey questions. This issue was rectified before the final updated questionnaire was sent to the Institutional Research Board (IRB) for approval.

Language was another factor in the survey. Almost all journalists in India are college graduates and since English is used in most official documents in India, journalists all have a working knowledge of English. However, since press club members represent all types of journalists across language groups, survey respondents must have included those who worked in English language media as also those journalists who worked in vernacular media. Pretest respondents therefore were selected carefully, to ensure some of them had previous experience in non-English news media. Their feedback was helpful in simplifying the language of some items and deleting some items altogether. Once the pretest respondents all agreed that questions in the updated format would be clearly understood by Indian journalists irrespective of where they

worked, the final online survey questionnaire was emailed to the president and secretaries of all

three press clubs. Two other press clubs—the Press Club of India in Delhi, and the Bengaluru

Press Club—were also sent requests to be part of the survey, but authorities at these

organizations did not respond to the requests.

The survey questions contained six parts, organized in the following order: Part A

contained 16 questions that analyze participant profile. Questions in this part sought to

understand a participant's age, location, rank, experience levels, and familiarity with social media

and digital technology. Part B assessed journalists' perceived usefulness of social media as a

professional tool. The five items in Part B were adapted from Santana & Hopp's (2016) scale

measuring journalists' different uses of social media. Part C questions aimed to understand the

factors that influence journalists' decision-making strategies. This section used items from

Shoemaker & Reese's (2013) Hierarchy of Influences Model to examine how individual, routine,

organizational, social institution and social system level factors influence journalists'

gatekeeping decisions in an online-first era. Eight items measured the importance of individual

factors, six items measured routine factors, six other items measured organizational factors,

seven items measured social institutional factors, and five items measured social system level

factors. Part D used a 10-item questionnaire based on findings of previous literature, to assess

respondents' perceptions about why and how journalists upload breaking crime news on their

organization's website. Similarly, Part E used eight items from Lasorsa, Lewis, & Holton's

(2012) and Tandoc & Vos's (2016) previous studies on social media and journalism, to assess

respondents' perceptions about why and how journalists upload breaking crime news on their

organization's social media handles. Finally, Part F adapted Appelman and Sundar's (2015)

Message Credibility Scale to assess respondents' perceptions about social media as a credible

tool for news sourcing, selection, and dissemination.

All items, barring questions that sought to understand respondent profile (Part A), asked

respondents to indicate how much they disagree or agree with each statement on a 5-point Likert

scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The researcher estimated, based on feedback

from pretest participants, that the questionnaire would take between 10 and 15 minutes to

complete (for questionnaire, see Appendix E). Participants who clicked on the survey link on the

Qualtrics platform where it was hosted, were first led to the informed consent sheet that

explained the risks and benefits of taking part in the survey. Once they agreed and clicked on the

'continue' button, they were taken to the main survey page.

After the data collection phase was complete and numeric data entered into the computer,

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows was used for final data analysis. The

following section contains detailed descriptions and examples of the questionnaire.

Demographic Information & Respondent Profile. Demographic and profile items were

designed to suit the needs and goals of the present study, including age, sex, press club

membership status, work experience, rank, location, media type, social media usage behavior,

and digital technology usage patterns.

Usefulness of Social Media. Usefulness of social media was measured on a five-item

scale. On all items, a high score indicates respondents' view of that function as a very important

professional one for journalists. For example, questions were framed as: "Social media such

Facebook and Twitter are useful for gathering information". Respondents were asked to rank

each item on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1= not important and 5= very important. *Gathering*

information referred to the act of sourcing breaking or developing news by a journalist; *sharing*

links referred to the practice of journalists posting breaking news on their organization's social

media platforms; *checking for breaking news* referred to the journalistic practice of constant

tracking and monitoring of events happening around the world for newsworthy events. *Verifying*

information referred to the journalistic practice of crosschecking or confirming the authenticity of

a breaking or developing story; and *monitoring public opinion* referred to the act of constant

scouring of social media platforms by journalists to gauge if a breaking story was gaining in

popularity among audience members.

      Hierarchy of Influences. Each of the five factors that comprise the Hierarchy of

Influences (Shoemaker & Reese, 2013; Reese & Shoemaker, 2016) were measured to understand

respondents' perceptions about the relative importance about each factor, and within it, each item

as influencers in the gatekeeping process. The items were adapted from Shoemaker & Reese's

seminal work because one of the purposes of this study is to test the model to understand how it

functions in an intercultural and international context. While Shoemaker and Reese did not

specifically mention each item as part of a "scale", the HOI model uses the following terms to

define each stage: Gender, race, religious and political background, personal attitude and values

such as ethical values, professional roles, and education as part of *individual* factors (Shoemaker

& Reese, 2014); audiences, organizations, and suppliers of content-driven routines such as

timeliness, authenticity, newsworthiness of information as *routine* factors; larger organizational

and occupational context such as organizational policy, occupational roles, and how the media

enterprise itself is structured as *organizational* factors; how media organizations combine into

larger institutions that depend on each other such as advertisers, stock markets, public relation

firms, and government agencies as *extra-media* or social *institutional factors*; and the ideological

forces that shape and influence media content, such as target readership, perceived aptness of a

story for audiences etc. as *social system* factors. Multiple readings of Shoemaker & Reese's

works (1996; 2014; 2016) were conducted by the researcher to make sure all items mentioned

were used in his questionnaire.

Respondents were asked to rank each item on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1= strongly disagree

and 5= strongly agree. *Individual factors* referred to personal biases and philosophies of

journalists when selecting a crime news story breaking on social media as the basis for a news

story. The eight items measuring *Individual factors* included a respondent's religious beliefs,

political beliefs, personal attitudes and values, education, ethical values, ethnicity, and job role.

Routine factors referred to time-tested journalistic practices for news selection. The six items

measuring this factor asked respondents their level of agreement with the following statements:

"When stories such as rape news break on social media, the decision to use the contents of a

social media post for a developing story will depend on…" (a) timeliness of story, (b)

unusualness of story, (c) controversial nature of story, (d) local relevance of story, (e) interesting

nature of story, and (f) balance of story. *Organizational factors* referred to organizational rules,

diktats, and structural components. The six items asked respondents to rate on a scale of 1 to 5

(1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree) their agreement with statements about relative

importance of organizational policy, focus, structure, and likes and dislikes of owners on their

gatekeeping decisions. *Social Institutional factors* referred to how forces outside the organization

were perceived as influencers. This seven-item sub-section asked respondents to rate the relative

influence of news sources, interest groups, government officials, advertisers, PR firms, other

media houses, and stock markets in the news selection process. *Social System factors* represented

factors such as social relevance of a story, aptness for target audience, and a story's connection

with social realities facing target audiences. This level focused on how ideological forces shape

and influence media content. Respondents were asked how important they thought items such as the following were in influencing the news section process: a (breaking crime) story's perceived effect on larger community, consumers, and crime victims.

Web Uploading Decisions. Web uploading decisions refers to how journalists decide to select a specific breaking story (in the case of this study, specifically crime stories) over another story, and the factors that influence such decisions to go online-first. To assess respondents' perceptions about why breaking crime news is uploaded first on organizational websites, respondents were asked to rate 10 statements of possible reasons on a scale of 1 to 5 (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly; agree). Examples of the questions were: "The audience needs to see breaking stories such as rape news up on my organization's website as fast as possible", and "Uploading breaking stories such as rape news on my organization's website first increases the credibility of my organization as a provider of latest news". These questions applied to both those working as part of legacy media platforms as well as those journalists working for/on online native news sites that had no offline counterparts.

Social Media Promotion Decisions. Social media promotion decisions refer to how journalists decide to select a specific breaking story (in the case of this study, specifically crime stories) over another story to post on their organization's social media handles (e.g., Facebook or Twitter), and the factors that influence such decisions to go online-first. In this part, the questions aimed to assess respondents' perceptions about why breaking crime news is promoted on organizational social media handles. The eight questions in this sub-section asked respondents to rate statements of possible reasons on a scale of 1 to 5 (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly; agree). Examples of the questions were: "When a story such as a rape news breaks, it is promoted on my organization's official Twitter or Facebook page to provide information about the news", and

"When a story such as a rape news breaks, it is promoted on my organization's official Twitter or Facebook page to drive traffic to our website".

      Credibility of Social Media Messages. Credibility of social media messages was measured using seven of the 13 original items from Appelman & Sundar's (2015) Message Credibility Scale. This is a recently developed scale and tests consumers' perceptions of online news messages. This scale was therefore considered more relevant than some earlier scales that essentially examined credibility of legacy media messages such as print/newspaper reports. Appelman & Sundar measured perceived credibility of media messages by using audience members as subjects. In the present study, journalists also play the role of audience members when they search social media platforms to decide which breaking story to believe, and which to reject. This scale therefore was found to be most suitable by the researcher. The authors of the original scale concluded that "10 indicators capture important aspects of message credibility: complete, concise, consistent, well-presented, objective, representative, no spin, expert, will have impact, professional, whereas three indicators best reflect message credibility: accurate, authentic, believable" (Appelman & Sundar, 2015, p. 74).

      The researcher used seven items from the original scale. These included all three items that measure message credibility (accurate, authentic, and believable) and four aspects of message credibility that showed the highest item correlation score (objective, experts, complete, representative). While the original items were measured on a seven-point scale (1=describes very poorly, 7=describes very well), the researcher used a more conventional five-point Likert Scale and used slightly different language for this study, asking respondents to rate each item on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1= strongly disagree and 5= strongly agree. The seven items thus were: *Mostly accurate*, referring to the perception that social media posts are mostly precise with their

information; *mostly objective*, referring to the perception that social media posts are largely

neutral in their outlook; *mostly from experts*, referring to the perception that such posts are

usually uploaded by those with high subject knowledge, those who can be trusted; *mostly*

believable, referring to the perception that such posts can be considered reliable; *mostly*

authentic, referring to the perception that such posts are pre-verified and are genuine news;

mostly complete, referring to the perception that such posts mention all relevant facts about the

breaking news; and finally, *mostly representative*, referring to the perception that such posts are

largely descriptive and indicative of authentic breaking news.

Procedures of the Study

The survey was conducted after receiving approval from the BGSU IRB (Appendix A).

The online survey was sent out to over 2,500 individual members and all institutional members

such as the editorial teams in newspaper offices and television channels. The survey was first

sent out via email to journalist members on May 1, 2017 requesting all recipients to ideally

answer the survey by July 20, 2017 if they chose to do so. On clicking the online survey link on

Qualtrics platform, recipients were guided to the consent form page (Appendix B) that explained

the purpose, benefits and risks of the study. Once they signed the consent form online,

respondents could begin answering the survey questions. The consent letter stated clearly that

responses would be treated in strict confidence, and that there were no '*right*' or '*wrong*' answers

to the questions. The voluntary nature of the survey was also clearly explained.

Press Club leaderships were requested to send a second reminder to members around

June 15, 2017.

It is important to be aware here of the one big weakness of online surveys—low response

rates. One of the reasons for such low response rates is the lack of motivation or incentives to

finish long surveys that can take up to 20 or even 30 minutes to complete. Another reason could be access to fast internet connections (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014). Dillman (2007) argues that while mixed-mode surveys (a combination of online and mail surveys) may yield a better response rate, the difference in visual layouts of the two surveys may affect how respondents answer the same questions. While this survey only took between 12 to 15 minutes during the pretests, to counter the possibility of some respondent becoming demotivated or distracted, respondents who completed the survey offered a chance to win one of 25 gift cards worth Rupees 325 (roughly $5) if they consented to provide a correct email address where the gift cards/coupons could be mailed. A total of 25 randomly selected respondents received gift coupons. Further, at the end of the survey, respondents were asked if they want to receive an executive summary of the results of the survey after data analysis had been completed. Those who answered in the affirmative received an executive summary in March 2018, hopefully helping them understand their own industry and work process better. This was an additional incentive to encourage participation and to create a buzz about the project among journalists in India's news media industry.

All questions in the survey were on a five-point Likert-type scale unless otherwise mentioned in the questionnaire. Respondents chose the answer that best corresponded with their view about each statement. The answer options range from strongly disagree (1), somewhat disagree (2), neither agree, nor disagree (3), somewhat agree (4), and strongly agree (5).

Measures

For this survey, the researcher used existing field-tested measures and scales such as Appelman & Sundar's (2016) Message Credibility Scale, and Shoemaker & Reese's (1996; 2013) Hierarchy of Influences Model. The researcher also adopted items from Santana & Hopp's

(2016) study on journalistic use of social media for professional reasons, and from Lasorsa,

Lewis, & Holton (2012) and Tandoc & Vos's (2016) previous studies on social media and

journalism to complete the research questionnaire design.

Based on items in the Message Credibility Scale (Appelman & Sundar, 2015), the

Hierarchy of Influences Model (Shoemaker & Reese, 2016) and items that tested Usefulness of

Social Media (Santana & Hopp, 2016), a self-administered online questionnaire was devised for

this research. Other items in the questionnaire that examined variables such as Desire to Upload

Breaking Crime News on Web, and Social Media Promotion of Breaking Crime News were

adapted from multiple previous studies. To encourage respondents to participate in the survey

and to avoid a time-consuming process, the questionnaire mostly consisted of close-ended

questions. Questions measured journalists' perceptions of social media's usefulness as a

professional tool, social media's credibility as a source of breaking news, their perceptions about

factors that influenced their and their colleagues' decisions to upload breaking crime news on

organizational websites and on official social media handles of their organizations. For example,

participants were asked to rate social media's usefulness as a tool for gathering information,

sharing links, checking breaking news, verifying information, and monitoring public opinion on a

scale of 1 to 5, with 5 measuring the highest level of usefulness.

Independent Variables

Professional Usefulness of Social Network Sites

Conceptual Definition: Professional usefulness refers to the utility and practical worth or

applicability of an item. In this context, it refers to journalists' perceptions about work-related

utility, applicability and worth of social media such as Facebook and Twitter.

Operational Definition: To measure journalists perceived professional usefulness of social media, respondents were asked how they perceive social media such as Facebook and Twitter as useful tools for (a) gathering information (Santana & Hopp, 2016), (b) sharing links (Santana & Hopp, 2016), (c) checking breaking news (Santana & Hopp, 2016), (d) verifying information (Willnat & Weaver, 2014) and (e) monitoring public opinion (Willnat & Weaver, 2014). Respondents were asked to choose the best option for each statement on a five-point Likert-type scale with choices ranging from 1=not at all important, to 5= very important.

Message Credibility of Social Media Messages

Conceptual Definition: Message credibility is a term commonly used to imply the positive characteristics of a message that affect the receiver's acceptance of a message (Ohanian, 1990). Social media messages refer to information posted on online platforms where people share content, opinions, insights, experiences, perspectives, and media themselves such as Facebook and Twitter.

Operational Definition: Journalists' credibility of social media messages as a source of breaking news was measured by asking respondents if breaking crime news posts on social media such as Facebook or Twitter are: (i) mostly accurate, (ii) mostly objective, (iii) mostly from experts, (iv) mostly believable, (v) mostly authentic, (vi) mostly complete, and (vii) mostly representative. Appelman and Sundar's (2016) Message Credibility Scale was adapted to examine this question. Respondents were asked to choose the best option for each statement on a five-point Likert-type scale with choices ranging from 1=strongly disagree, to 5=strongly agree.

Hierarchy of Influences

Conceptual Definition: Hierarchy of Influences refers to the five steps of the HOI Model—factors that influence journalists' decision making during the news gathering process (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; 2016). More specifically, they are:

Individual factors refer to as journalists' values and beliefs such as religious, ethical or political beliefs, attitudes, ethical values etc.

Routine factors refer to traditional practices to select a story such as timeliness, authenticity, or relevance of the story

Organizational factors refer to structural norms and diktats such as likes and dislikes of owners, organizational rules, and the structure of a media house etc.

Social institutional media factors refer to extra-media influences such as advertisers, government officials, stock markets, or interest groups

Social system factors refer to ideological level influences such as how a story may affect readers and its suitability or aptness for audiences.

Crime news is a specific genre of news that deals with crimes such as murder, robbery, rape or other acts of violence. Rape news specifically refers to a specific type of news in the crime genre that reports incidents of sexual assault and battery.

Operational Definition: To measure the influence of each of the five steps on journalists' selection of crime news such as rapes, respondents were asked to state their position on statements such as: "When a rape news breaks on social media such as Twitter or Facebook, my decision to select a post's content for a story will depend on *my* religious beliefs" (example of individual factors), or "timeliness of a story" (example of routine factors), "how my bosses like this story" (example of organizational factors) "how important sources may view the story" (example of social institutional factors), and "how the story may affect the larger community"

(example of social system factors). Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert-type scale

ranging from 1 to 5 (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly disagree). All items were adapted from

Shoemaker & Reese's (2013; 2016) Hierarchy of Influences Model.

Dependent Variables

Uploading Breaking Crime News on Websites

Conceptual Definition: Online-first refers to the common practice in news organizations

of uploading and sharing a news or information on the organization's news website on a real-

time basis, prior to their being printed or broadcast. Crime news is a specific genre of news that

deals with crimes such as murder, robbery, rape or other acts of violence. Rape news specifically

refers to a specific type of news in the crime genre that reports incidents of sexual assault and

battery.

Operational Definition: To measure journalists' perceptions about why breaking crime

news is uploaded on news websites first, respondents were asked how strongly they agree or

disagree on a scale of 1 to 5 (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree) on the following statements:

(a) "My organization immediately uploads breaking rape stories on its website", (b) "Breaking

rape stories have to be verified before uploading on our website", (c) "Our target audience needs

to see breaking rape stories up on the website as fast as possible", (d) "Since errors can be

corrected within minutes, uploading breaking rape stories on our website first is fine", (e)

"Uploading breaking rape stories on our website first is important for increasing audience

loyalty", (f) "Uploading breaking rape stories on our website first increases credibility of my

organization as a provider of latest news", (g) "Uploading breaking rape stories on our website

first is an important way to engage with the audience", (h) "If breaking rape stories are not

uploaded on our website first, our audience may go to competitors", (i) "A victim's interests are

protected while uploading breaking rape stories on our website", and (j) "Attribution of responsibility for the crime is reported while uploading breaking rape stories on our website".

Promoting Breaking Crime News on Social Media

Conceptual Definition: Promotion refers to the process by which journalists communicate information (breaking crime news in this case) to the public, making them aware of a specific news or event (Economic Times, 2016). Decision making refers to the reasons or justifications journalists use to promote breaking news on social media.

Operational Definition: To measure why journalists decide to promote breaking crime news such as rapes on social media, respondents were asked to choose the level of importance they attribute to the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree: "When a story such as a rape news breaks, it is promoted on my organization's official Twitter or Facebook page to: (a) provide information about the news, (b) provide an opinion about the news, (c) share other people's opinion about the news by sharing their posts/tweets, (d) provide a link to a more detailed story on our website, (e) start a public discussion on the topic, (f) let public participate in news production. (g) Increase page views of my story on our website (h) drive traffic to our website". All items in this section were adapted from Lasorsa, Lewis, & Holton's (2012) seminal study on journalists' usage of social media as a promotional tool and Tandoc & Vos's (2016) study of journalists' usage of social media to market news.

Control Variables

Biological Sex

Conceptual Definition: Biological sex refers to the identification of a person as female or male. It is determined by a person's sexual anatomy, chromosomes, and hormones

(Muehlenhard, & Peterson, 2011). In other words, biological sex refers to the gender of the respondent at birth. It is often simply referred to as 'sex'.

Operational Definition: To measure biological sex, respondents were asked to choose one option between "male" and "female" when asked to state their sex.

Rank

Conceptual Definition: Rank refers to an official position within a social organization such as a newsroom, specifically the job title or current designation of the respondent e.g. editor, news anchor, reporter, content provider.

Operational Definition: To measure rank, respondents were asked the following open-ended question: "What is your current job title?"

Validity and Reliability

To test the validity of the questions in the questionnaire, the researcher requested a review of the questions by two professors specializing in quantitative research to determine whether the items were representative, and whether the survey is measuring what it intends to measure. This ensured face validity of the questions. Items that could not be classified into specific categories, were found to be ambiguous or overlapping in nature, were dropped.

To assess the reliability of this study, reliability tests were run on SPSS on each of the dependent and independent measures. Cronbach's Coefficient Alphas (1951) were used to test the reliability of each measure. Scales with reliability of .700 and above are usually considered good in social sciences, while reliability of .650 and above are considered adequate. The internal consistency coefficients of items in the questionnaire are presented in Table 4.1.

TABLE 1: Reliability of Scales

Variables	Cronbach's α
SNS Usefulness	.670
SNS Credibility	.926
HOI* Individual	.809
HOI* Routine	.826
HOI* Organization	.826
HOI* Social Institutions	.885
HOI* Social System	.756
Website Uploading	.726
Social Media Promotion	.787

HOI = Hierarchy of Influences Model

Statistical Analyses

The survey data were analyzed using basic descriptive statistics, and a series of regression

analyses run with SPSS. Since there are two dependent variables—Web Uploading of Breaking

Crime News, and Social Media Promotion of Breaking Crime News—two separate multiple

regression analyses were conducted. In each regression analysis, each of the two dependent

variables were measured against the three independent variables, namely the Hierarchy of

Influences Model (Model 1), Usefulness of Social Media as a Professional Tool, and Credibility

of Social Media Messages (Model 2), and control variables of Sex and Rank of respondents

(Model 3). Since respondents' age-related information was included in the survey, age was added

(Model 4) as another variable to understand the effect of age in the decision-making process.

Frequencies were first run for all variables, and demographic information.

Phase 2: In-Depth Interviews

To answer the second set of research questions 18 editors of newspapers, news channels

and news websites across India were recruited for in-depth interviews during Phase 2 of the

study. All interviewees were contacted directly by the study author and their permission for

interviews sought. Each respondent was asked to sign an informed consent form explaining both

the voluntary nature of the interview as well as potential risks and benefits. The editors were

chosen based on a minimum of 10years experience in the industry across multiple platforms and

those who are conversant with online and social media professionally. The researcher worked as

a journalist and editor in four different Indian cities and knew several editors, executive editors,

crime editors, online editors, news producers, and channel news directors personally. However,

personal rapport and networking has its limitations. Understanding this, the researcher reached

out to nearly 30 senior-level editors working in newspapers, websites and television channels

across India, requesting their consent for in-depth interviews.

To further increase chances of recruiting interviewees, each editor was asked if they

wanted to receive an executive summary of the findings of the online survey, so that they could

gain a better perspective of social media's effects on journalistic practices in India.

Semi-structured interviews were employed as the most apt tool for the interviews. Semi-

structured interviews have an open framework allowing a conversation to take place in a natural

dialogue format. The researcher followed a set of three broad questions, based on the three

research questions that were posed to all interviewees, but thereafter was able to open the

discussion based on answers provided by each respondent. Not all questions therefore were

designed and phrased ahead of time. In fact, many questions resulted from earlier responses

during the interview, allowing both interviewer and interviewee the flexibility to speak openly.

By their very nature, in-depth interviews are different from quantitative surveys.

Qualitative tools such as interviews aim to provide rich data, a deeper understanding of a

phenomenon, explaining reasons for a specific phenomenon from the point of view of an

informed source. Such interviews do not aim to provide the generalizability that online surveys

do. In this case, although the online survey provided significant understanding of how journalists perceived social media as a tool, how they used it for news sourcing, selection, and dissemination, and in what ways their journalistic decisions seemed to be affected by social media's ability to break news first—the reasons for their responses could not be explained by the results of the survey, since there is no scope for follow-up questions in an online survey. Further, this study's aim is to understand what challenges and concerns emerge for Indian journalism because of these effects, and finally, what strategies can be utilized to address these emerging challenges. Semi-structured interviews with editors helped complement, elaborate, and develop the findings of the online survey results, and provided a leadership level explanation and perspective of the phenomenon. The design of the semi-structured interview questions was not entirely standardized (unlike survey questions) and encouraged interviewees to tell their stories and explain their perspectives (Taylor & Trujillo, 2001).

Since the purpose of this phase was to understand the perspective of media leaders, the semi-structured interviews were also ideally suited since they explored attitudes, values, beliefs, and strategies (Barriball, & While, 1994), and facilitated comparability by ensuring that the basic broad questions were answered by each respondent (Bailey 1987) without influence from others. These interviews therefore, apart from confirming what was already known from the survey, provided an opportunity for the researcher to learn more about why certain events were taking place—not just the answers but even the reasons for the answers.

All the initial questions for the semi-structured interviews were approved by the Institutional Review Board at the researcher's university.

Participation in the interviews was voluntary, and each respondent was provided an informed consent form that they had to digitally or physically sign prior to the interview. Each

interview lasted between 30 and 60 minutes and was conducted either face-to-face or over Skype.

All interviews were recorded with permission of the respondents. Once the interviews were

transcribed, the data, including the written documents and the audio files, were stored digitally on

the author's personal computer. This data was not, and will not, be shared with any other person.

The time frame for data collection was a three-month period in the summer of 2017, beginning

May. Once both quantitative and qualitative data was collected, they were analyzed separately

before integration at the discussion stage.

Interview Instrument Design

The content of the in-depth interviews includes three sets of open-ended questions,

preceded by a short demographic questionnaire—all of which were designed based on the

specific purposes of this research. In this phase, the researcher had three broad questions:

RQ5: How have social media affected journalism in India?

RQ 6: What challenges and concerns do these effects pose for journalism in India?

RQ7: What sustainable strategies can be developed to address these emerging challenges?

Based on the questions above and after consulting previous related research, the interview

questions were designed for this phase of the study. The first series of questions related to the

demographics of the interviewee such as: "Please indicate your name, designation, location,

gender, the years of experience in journalism, and the type of media you work in". These

questions helped the researcher familiarize himself with the interviewee's profile.

The first set of actual open-ended questions aimed to understand editors' perceptions

about social media's effects on journalism. These answers provided *complementarity* or

confirmed the findings of the survey. The questions asked at this stage were: "How does the

newsroom process work from the time news breaks to the moment it is shared with audiences

first? What measures do newsrooms and editors take before a breaking crime news reaches the

audience? How has the advent of Twitter, Facebook, and other mobile apps as news breakers,

affected journalism practice?"

The second set of open-ended questions aimed to understand the nature of concerns and

challenges for journalists and journalism because of social media becoming a source and

platform for breaking news. Questions in this series were: "How has social media affected

journalism? What advantages and disadvantages do you see? Which emerging issues do you see

as concerns or challenges to good journalism and to the future of journalism in India?" This

section aimed to provide *elaboration*. In other words, the interview data would provide meaning,

or explain the findings of the survey in terms of why journalists and editors believed some of the

effects of social media on journalism were harmful or posed challenges to good journalism.

The third set of open questions was: "What do you think journalists need to do to address

the challenges and concerns you mentioned? How can media organizations successfully

implement some of these plans you mention?" These questions sought to *develop* on the findings

of the quantitative study and the earlier two qualitative questions—asking editors to speak about

strategies and plans they felt could successfully tackle or address some of the challenges and

concerns confirmed by survey and interview findings.

Theme Analysis

The theme analysis—an interpretive method—was used in this research. In a theme

analysis, the researcher repeatedly reads and gathers information from his interviews to

determine the major emerging themes and develop a structure for data analysis. The emerging

categories and themes are then constantly compared with the document.

A theme may be defined as a significant issue, a concept, an opinion, or a question that is frequently mentioned or referred to by interviewees. In this study words, phrases or ideas and concepts frequently mentioned were first coded as categories and then categories were taken together to form a theme (Glesne, & Peshkin, 1992). In fact, once all 18 interviews had been transcribed into 169 pages of single-spaced (Times New Roman 12) data, the researcher read the transcripts multiple times to find such broad themes based on experiences, job roles and perceptions of the interviewed editors. At least three interviewees had to refer to an idea or concept for it to be coded as a theme.

Initially on re-reading the transcripts, the researcher looked for specific words and phrases that could be coded into a category (e.g., social media as a great networking tool; social media as a destroyer of good practices). Several such categories made up one theme. Throughout the thematic analysis process, the researcher remained cognizant of the three qualitative research questions this data sought to answer. Emerging themes therefore were largely consistent with the demands of the research questions.

To remain open to the emergence of theory requires the researcher to enter the field with no preconceived beliefs. Instead, the researcher remains open to "exploring an area and allow the concerns of those actively engaged in the phenomena to guide the emergence of the core issue" (Holton, 2007, p. 270). Therefore, open coding of each line of the rich data was conducted. By comparing the opinions and explanations provided in each set of texts, reflective questions were asked such as 'what this data is a study of?', 'what category does this statement indicate?', 'what is actually happening?', 'what is the main concern being faced by the participants?', and 'how do they plan to resolve the problem?' (p. 275). Themes that emerged from the analysis of rich data answer RQs 5, 6 and 7.

During thematic analysis, researchers aim to triangulate data to arrive at conclusions, especially when different methodological approaches are applied to the same project (Reinard, 2001). Triangulation refers to conducting research with different methodology that may not share the same disadvantages, making findings of a study more robust. For instance, audiotaping all interviews allowed records of exact quotes—thereby authenticating the sources.

Finally, at the integration stage, findings from the quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed together in the discussion section that follows. The combination of qualitative and quantitative data provides both depth and generalizability to increase scholarly understanding of how journalists go about their day-to-day work of gathering and disseminating news in an online-first era, emerging challenges and strategies to address those challenges.

Summary

Chapter IV describes the research methods and research procedures, including the survey questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. For the survey, consideration was given to methodological implications of testing the scales and theories in a cultural and national context that was potentially different from the United States or Western Europe. The pretest, the sample, and process for obtaining results are presented in this chapter. In addition, description of the nature and development of the various measuring instruments is detailed. The Appelman & Sundar (2015) Message Credibility Scale was adapted to examine the credibility of social media messages. The Shoemaker & Reese (2016) Hierarchy of Influences Model was adapted to examine the relative significance of different factors that influence journalists' decisions to upload breaking crime stories on their websites or promote them on organizational social media handles. A formative scale based on previous studies by Santana & Hopp (2014) and Willnat & Weaver (2012) was created to measure journalists' perceived usefulness of social media as a

professional tool. Recurring ideas and items from previous studies (e.g., Tandoc & Johnson, 2016; Robinson, 2011; Adornato, 2016; Berkowitz, 1990; Shoemaker & Vos, 2009) were adapted and used to measure journalists' web uploading behavior. Finally, journalists' social media news promotion behavior was measured by using eight items based on previous studies on journalists' social media promotion behavior (e.g. Lee, 2015; Thurman, & Walters, 2016; Hermida, 2013; Farhi, 2009; Hindman & Thomas, 2013). The nature of specific statistical analyses and descriptive tests conducted to answer each research question and hypotheses are explained thereafter.

The next sub-section explains the semi-structured interview process in detail, including its advantages and disadvantages, reasons for using this tool, as well as the definition of subjects, procedure, and interview instrument design. To conclude the chapter, the benefits of triangulating data or using multiple methods to seek answers to specific questions are explained. Specifically, this final section of the chapter reiterates how triangulating data offers both breadth (through the online survey that describes how journalists perceive their work and emerging challenges in a digital-first environment), and depth (through in-depth interviews that provide explanations, and perspectives of informant or expert respondents)—thereby giving the research findings more validity and trustworthiness.

CHAPTER V: RESULTS

The results of this study, which were based on the online survey and in-depth interviews are presented in this chapter. As previously explained, to search for answers to the research questions and confirm the hypotheses in this study, the Hierarchy of Influences Model (Shoemaker, & Reese, 1996; 2016) and Gatekeeping Theory (Shoemaker, 1991; Shoemaker & Vos, 2009) have been used as theoretical frameworks. The quantitative data was analyzed with the computer statistics program SPSS, and the qualitative data via thematic analysis. While the survey questionnaire was considered most apt as a research tool to examine some of the general perceptions, trends, and ideas among Indian journalists, in-depth interviews with editors of different newspapers, magazines, TV channels and websites provided insightful descriptions, explanations, and solutions—complementing the findings of the survey, as well as offering elaboration and clarification.

Phase 1 – Survey

Respondent Profile. The online survey was sent out to roughly 2,700 journalists through three press clubs. The three press clubs were Kolkata Press Club, Mumbai Press Club, and Hyderabad Press Club. Each Press Club had a membership of between 750 and 1,200 journalists. However, because the clubs may have sent the survey to not just all their general or ordinary members but also to institutional members such as news organizations, many journalists who responded to the survey were not necessarily press club members, but journalists nonetheless. A total of 367 media professionals responded to the request to complete the survey. However, after carefully reading all survey responses manually, it was found that 93 respondents either left the survey halfway or were not journalists any longer. These responses were removed from the final study sample. For example, a respondent who said he was a journalist for 15 years but had

become a journalism professor for the past four years, or another person who was a journalist till recently but had now joined a PR firm, were not included in the final sample. The final sample of 274 journalists constituted roughly 10.96% of the target population to whom the survey was initially sent out. The response rate was low, but not completely unexpected, considering journalists are extremely busy with day-to-day writing and seldom find time to respond to surveys. For instance, despite being a well-established survey that is conducted every decade since the 1970s, the National Study of U.S. Journalists conducted by leading media scholars at the Indiana University only received responses of 1,080 journalists from the over 3,500 (response rate 32%) invited via email, when it was last conducted in 2013. This number was reached only after each journalist had received four email reminders, and a personal phone call from renowned scholars at Indiana (Willnat & Weaver, 2014).

Few such nationwide surveys of Indian journalists in a systematic, scientific manner have been conducted earlier. This perception was corroborated by most of editors who were interviewed later for this study. If indeed this was the case, then 274 completed responses from journalists is a good number. The demographic characteristics of the sampled journalists are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Profile of Sampled Journalists

Sample total	(n = 274)*	100%
Sex		
Male	139	50.7
Female	135	49.3
Age		
Below 30	85	31.1
31-40	108	39.6
41-50	61	22.3
51-60	14	5.2
Above 60	5	1.4
Missing	1	.4
Experience		
1-5 Years	60	22
6-10 Years	67	24.5
11-15 Years	51	18.7
16-20 Years	59	21.6
21-25 Years	18	6.6
Above 25 Years	18	6.2
Missing	1	.4
Rank		
	98	35.8
Senior (*e.g., editor, online editor, exec. producer*)		
	70	22.5
Middle (*e.g., assistant editor, producer, sr. anchor, bureau chief, photo editor*)		
	86	31.4
Junior (*e.g., senior correspondent, copy editor, videographer, content editor*)		
	20	7.3
Freelance		
Area of Expertise		

General News	156	56.9
Sports	11	4.0
Lifestyle	42	15.3
Business	34	12.4
Entertainment	24	8.8
Missing	7	2.6

Type of Media Platform**

Newspaper	137	50
Magazines	26	9.5
TV Channel	40	14.6
Website	88	32.1
Radio	3	1.1
Freelance	38	13.9

Press Club Membership

Yes	116	42.3
No	156	56.9
Not Sure	2	.8

*363 Respondents completed the survey. Out of this number, 89 were non-journalist media professionals and therefore, excluded from the final sample
**Many respondents reported that they were working on more than one media platform

Table 2 shows that the number of male respondents (139) was marginally higher (50.7%) than female respondents (135 at 49.3%). The almost equal number of male and female respondents was an interesting outcome, especially since the complete database of journalist members of the three press clubs showed an overwhelming majority of members are male (over 90%). However, the press clubs sent out the survey not only to individual journalist members on their database, but to organizational members as well such as media organizations. This meant accredited and/or full-time journalists who were employees of different news organizations but not necessarily press club members as individuals, also received the survey as institutional members.

As a result, many female (and male) journalists, who were not individual press club members, completed the survey. This may be the reason for the high number of female respondents despite press club individual membership being predominantly male. Across different sections of the newsroom, the male: female ratio varies widely. For instance, lifestyle or features teams and copy desks in newspapers, many magazine teams, and television production teams have more female journalists than males. Further, previous studies show women generally tend to answer surveys more than men (e.g., Smith 2008; Sax, Gilmartin, & Bryant, 2003; Keevil, Clifton, Tanton, McDowell, Copas, Lee, & Mercer, 2017). Hence, it is not entirely surprising that even though a significant majority of journalists in India are male, the response rate was higher among female journalists, leading to a near-even split between male and female respondents for this survey.

Both the young and the old, newcomers and veteran journalists, responded to the survey. The most number of respondents were in the age group of 31-40 years (108 respondents, 39.6%), with a mean age 36. However, younger and older journalists also took the survey. For instance, a little over 31% respondents were under 30 years old, a further 22.3% were in the 41-50 age group, while 19 respondents or a little over 5% were above 50.

Respondents' experience as journalists also varied widely, between one (1) and 37 years (mean = 12.5). Almost an equal number of respondents reported an experience of 1 to 5 years (60 respondents or 22%), 6-10 years (67 or 24.5%), 11-15 years (51 or 18.7%) and 16-20 years (59 or 21.6%). Predictably therefore, their rank or designations too were split almost equally. Most respondents identified as belonging to a senior rank (98 respondents or 35.8%). Senior ranks included designations such as editor, chief editor, deputy editor, design director, photo director,

executive editor, senior editor, online editor, executive producer, channel head etc. A further 70

respondents (25.5%) were in the middle ranks category.

Those who identified as assistant editor, special correspondent, chief sub-editor, senior

producer, shift-head of online, photo editor, chief of bureau, news anchor, city editor etc., were

designated as middle ranks. As many as 86 respondents (31.4%) identified as belonging to

relatively junior ranks such as sub-editor, senior sub-editor, senior correspondent, reporter,

content editor, uploader, senior photographer, photographer, videographer, etc. Finally, 20

respondents said they were freelancers or part-time journalists.

It is necessary at this point to explain ranks and designations in newsrooms in India. A

journalist on most platforms begins as a reporter/correspondent or a copy editor/sub-editor/junior

producer/content provider. The first promotion is usually to the level of senior

correspondent/senior sub-editor/senior content provider etc. "Senior" here implies they are no

longer beginners. However, a senior correspondent or senior sub-editor is still a relatively junior

position. Reporters usually move up the ladder by becoming a principal correspondent, chief

reporter, special correspondent or assistant editor, before moving to the leadership team as an

associate editor, senior editor, executive editor, managing editor, and finally editor. In TV

channels they may alternatively take the producer, senior producer, executive producer route.

Many journalists (156 respondents, or 56.9% of the total respondents) identified as belonging to

a "general news" team when asked which area of the newsroom they most identified with. Other

areas respondents chose were sports, lifestyle, business, and entertainment.

Given that the print platform is still growing in India, it was not so surprising that 50% of

the respondents (137), said they were newspaper journalists, while 88 or 32.1% said they worked

for websites. One should remember that some respondents reported they worked for multiple

platforms in their current jobs. For instance, 40 respondents (14.6%) said they were involved

across two platforms, four reported working on three platforms, and one person they worked with

four different platforms.

Table 3: Geographical Spread of Sample

Location	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Ahmedabad	5	1.8
Bengaluru	10	3.6
Bhopal	1	.4
Chandigarh	2	.7
Chennai	4	1.5
Hyderabad	2	.7
Indore	3	1.1
Jalandhar	1	.4
Kolkata	76	27.7
Mumbai	107	39.1
Nagpur	6	2.2
New Delhi	45	16.4
Noida	6	2.2
Pune	6	2.2
Total	**274**	**100%**

Table 3 shows the geographical distribution of respondents. The survey questionnaire was

sent through three press clubs in Kolkata, Mumbai, and Hyderabad. However, as mentioned

earlier, membership of a specific press club does not mean the member continues to reside in that

city. For instance, a journalist can be a member of Kolkata Press Club but may have later moved

to another city. That journalist can continue to remain a member of the Kolkata Press Club, as

long as they continue to be a full-time journalist. Further, once some press clubs sent out the

survey questionnaire to organizational members, the survey could be accessed and answered by a

journalist of a member organization based anywhere in India.

As a result, the survey was completed by journalists from 14 Indian cities, and their

geographical locations were quite evenly spread across the five regions of India—four cities from

northern India (Chandigarh, Jalandhar, Noida, and New Delhi), three cities from western India

(Mumbai, Pune, Ahmedabad), one city from Eastern India (Kolkata), three cities from southern

India (Chennai, Hyderabad, and Bengaluru), and three cities from central India (Nagpur, Indore,

and Bhopal).

Table 4: Journalists' Social Media Usage

Usage	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Use Facebook	268	97.8
Use Twitter	254	92.7
Purpose of Usage		
Facebook		
Personal	251	91.6
Journalistic	156	56.9
Other Work	82	29.9
Don't Use	6	2.2
Twitter		
Personal	155	56.6
Journalistic	201	73.4
Other Work	104	38.0
Don't Use	26	9.5

Respondents were asked if they used social media tools, especially Facebook and Twitter,

and for what purpose they used these platforms. Journalists predictably reported that they used

both platforms for more than one purpose (personal, journalistic, other work). As many as 268

respondents (97.8%) acknowledged that they were familiar with Facebook and used it as a means

of communication. Slightly fewer respondents said they used Twitter—only 254 or 92.7% said

they used the microblogging site. However, the two platforms showed different usage patterns.

While 251 respondents said they found Facebook more useful for personal purposes, only 155

said they used Twitter to pursue personal matters. When it came to journalistic work however,

more journalists said they primarily used Twitter (201, 73.4%) than Facebook (156, 56.9%) for

professional matters.

Data Analysis

Perceived Usefulness of Social Media (SNS) for Journalists

RQ1: How do journalists in India perceive the usefulness of social media as a professional tool?

Table 5: Usefulness of Social Media as a Journalistic Tool

Variable	Mean	SD	Range	*N*
Gathering Information	4.45	.73	3	274
Sharing Links	4.69	.65	4	272
Check Breaking News	4.56	.77	4	272
Verifying Information	3.35	1.27	4	272
Monitoring Public Opinion	4.42	.75	4	270
Added up SNS Usefulness	21.45			

Cronbach's Alpha for the Scale: .670; **Overall Mean: 4.29**

The first research question sought to understand how journalists who use social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter, perceive the usefulness of these sites for professional purposes such as sourcing news, news selection, and news sharing or dissemination. The usefulness scale is a formative one. The scale was primarily based on Santana & Hopp's (2016) scale to measure news usefulness. However, no existing scale measures how journalists perceive the usefulness of a news source or a news sharing platform. Therefore, items to this scale were also added based on findings of previous studies. Since this is a formative scale, the item scores were added up to measure overall usefulness of social network sites as professional tools. The descriptive statistics also showed that overall, journalists found social media platforms, especially Facebook and Twitter, to be extremely useful as professional tools with the overall

mean score of 21.45 (SD=2.81) out of a possible total of 25, indicating that 4 out of 5 items or

purposes mentioned were considered highly useful by journalists. The only item that scored

lower on the usefulness scale was "verifying information" (mean = 3.35). Otherwise Indian

journalists considered social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to be very useful for

gathering information (mean = 4.45), sharing links (mean = 4.69), checking breaking news (mean

= 4.56), and monitoring public opinion (mean = 4.42)

Perceived Credibility of Social Media as a News Source

RQ2: How do journalists in India perceive the credibility of social media as a source of breaking

news?

To examine RQ2, the researcher calculated and compared inter-item correlation scores of

each item of the credibility scale and examined the overall inter-item correlation scores to

understand how journalists viewed or perceived social media platforms such as Facebook and

Twitter as credible platforms to source, select or share news. Further a descriptive statistical

analysis measured journalists' perceptions of social media as a credible source.

Overall the Message Credibility Scale, with items adapted from Appelman & Sundar's

(2016) scale by the same name, showed a very high reliability (Cronbach's α of .926) score.

Individually, most of the items showed a high inter-item correlation score. The overall inter-item

correlation score was .640 ((min = .376; max = .812; range = .436). Inter-item correlations are an

essential element in conducting an item analysis of a set of survey questions.

Inter-item correlations examine the extent to which scores on one item are related to scores

on all other items in a scale. It provides an assessment of item redundancy: the extent to which

items on a scale are assessing the same content (Swerdlik & Cohen, 2005).

A high inter-item correlation score for a set of items suggest that while the items are reasonably homogenous, they contain sufficiently unique variance to not be isomorphic with each other. Inter-item correlations address issues relating to a scale's fidelity of measurement, and how well the instrument is measuring some construct.

While some items recorded a high correlation score (between .760 and .869), two items scored relatively lower (Mostly from Experts, and Mostly Representative).

The analysis indicated that journalists perceived social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter as having moderately credibility as a source of breaking news. Journalists rated it 18.3 out of a possible total of 35. In other words, journalists, while acknowledging that social media was extremely useful, felt social media scored relatively low on credibility.

Table 6: Item Scores of Credibility of Social Media Messages (n=274)

Variable	Mean	SD	Range
Mostly Accurate	2.87	1.198	4
Mostly Objective	2.65	1.175	4
Mostly from Experts	2.26	1.256	4
Mostly Believable	2.80	1.188	4
Mostly Authentic	2.57	1.148	4
Mostly Complete	2.25	1.097	4
Mostly Representative	3.01	1.207	4

Cronbach's Alpha for scale: .926; Added up Mean: 18.3; Overall Mean: 2.63

The next series of tests examined the extent to which journalists perceived usefulness and credibility of social media as a source of breaking news, their biological sex, and rank, and the five stages of the Hierarchy of Influences Model influenced their decisions to promote breaking crime stories on their organizational websites. To this end, a series of regression analyses were run in SPSS. According to George & Mallery (2006), multiple regression analysis is one of the most common approaches to show the influence of two or more variables on the dependent

variable. To predict the effect of the HOI model (Model 1), Usefulness and Credibility (Model

2), Sex and Rank (Model 3) on Web uploading practices, separate multiple regression analyses

were conducted—with the three above-mentioned independent variables, and decision to

promote on the web (web promotion) as the dependent variable. The first set of research

hypotheses are restated below:

Hierarchy of Influences Model & Web Uploading

Web uploading refers to the relatively recent practice where journalists post a breaking

news online first, usually on the website of their news organization. This formative scale

included 10 items that examined journalists' perceptions of why and how they upload breaking

crime news on their organization's websites.

Table 7: Item scores of Web Uploading Practices

Variable	Mean	SD	N
Immediately upload	3.56	1.240	258
Verify before uploading	4.85	.545	258
Audience needs to see as fast as possible	3.51	1.361	258
Easy to correct unverified rape news	2.06	1.328	258
Increase audience loyalty	2.57	1.324	258
Increases organization credibility	3.00	1.369	258
Way to engage audience	3.01	1.231	258
Retain subscribers	2.87	1.281	258
Victim's interest must be considered	4.78	.631	258

Attribution of responsibility must	3.71	1.197	258

Cronbach's Alpha: 780; Overall Mean: 3.39

H1a: Individual factors will influence journalists' decision to promote breaking crime news on their organization's news website.

Table 8: Item Scores of HOI Individual Level

Variable	Mean	SD	N
My religious beliefs	1.33	.829	255
My political beliefs	1.68	1.137	255
My personal attitudes	2.62	1.505	255
My personal values	3.29	1.448	255
My education	3.36	1.418	255
My ethical values	4.04	1.324	255
My ethnicity	1.79	1.273	255
My job role	3.81	1.275	255

Cronbach's Alpha: .812; Overall Mean: 2.74

H1b: Journalistic Routine factors will influence journalists' decision to promote breaking crime news on their organization's news website.

Table 9: Item Scores of HOI Routine Level

Variable	Mean	SD	N
Timeliness of story	3.96	1.151	254
How unusual the story	3.44	1.255	254
How controversial	3.11	1.267	254
Local relevance	3.96	1.036	254
How interesting	3.49	1.290	254
How balanced	4.27	.968	254

Cronbach's Alpha: .827; Overall Mean: 3.70

H1c: Organizational factors will influence journalists' decision to promote breaking crime news on their organization's news website.

Table 10: Item Scores of HOI Organizational Level

Variable	Mean	SD	N
Organization policy	4.03	1.192	259
Organization's focus	3.99	1.163	259
How org. is structured	3.21	1.319	259
Boss' likes & dislikes	2.57	1.336	259
Advertising revenues	1.87	1.178	259
Increase readership	2.98	1.458	259
Cronbach's Alpha: .824; Overall Mean: 3.10			

H1d: Social Institutional factors will influence journalists' decision to promote breaking

crime news on their organization's news website.

Table 11: Item Scores of HOI Social Institution Level

Variable	Mean	SD	N
Important sources	3.37	1.342	254
Interest Groups	3.00	1.339	254
Government officials	2.80	1.357	254
Advertisers	1.93	1.172	254
PR firms	1.72	1.142	254
Other media houses	2.80	1.368	254
Markets/Businesses	1.91	1.162	254
Cronbach's Alpha: .882; Overall Mean: 2.50			

H1e: Social Ideological factors will influence journalists' decision to promote breaking

crime news on their organization's news website.

Table 12: Item Scores of HOI Social System Level

Variable	Mean	SD	N
Affect larger community	4.27	1.021	260
Affect consumers	3.78	1.263	260
Protects victim privacy	4.78	.649	260
Suitable for consumers	3.89	1.200	260
Agreement with ideology of target audience	3.01	1.297	260
Cronbach's Alpha: .750; Average Mean: 3.94			

To measure the extent to which the five steps of the HOI Model influences journalists' web promotion decisions, a hierarchical regression analysis was run on SPSS. In the following regression analyses, the researcher used standardized coefficient (β) to show the relative importance of predictor variables in predicting web promotion decisions and unstandardized coefficients (B) to examine the relationship between predictor variables and web promotion decisions in original raw units.

Model 1. As shown in Table 13, the first model examined the extent to which each step or factor in the HOI Model predicts journalists' online-first behavior. In other words, Model 1 noted the extent to which individual, routine, organizational, social institutional, and social system factors can explain what influences journalists' decisions to upload a breaking crime news on their organizational website as soon as it breaks and as it develops. The dependent variable was web uploading decisions. The give independent variables were Individual Factors, Routine Factors, Organizational Factors, Social Institutional Factors, and Social System Factors—the five established steps in the HOI Model.

Table 13: Hierarchical Regression Predicting Journalists' Website Uploading Decisions

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	B	$SE\ B$	β	B	$SE\ B$	β	B	$SE\ B$	β	B	$SE\ B$	β
HOI Individual	.203	.071	.192**	.150	.070	.142*	.135	.070	.128*	.169	.068	.160*
HOI Routine	.002	.111	.001	-.038	.108	-.028	-.032	.107	-.024	-.012	.103	-.009
HOI Organizational	.217	.109	.174*	.177	.106	.142	.164	.105	.132	.110	.103	.088
HOI Institution	.301	.085	.284**	.274	.084	.258**	.250	.085	.236**	.281	.082	.265**
HOI Social System	-.012	.134	-.006	-.061	.131	-.034	-.034	.130	-.019	-.105	.127	-.057
SNS Credibility				.171	.070	.163*	.165	.070	.158*	.189	.068	.180**
SNS Usefulness				.442	.164	.168**	.398	.164	.152*	.341	.159	.130*
Sex							.903	.828	.066	.049	.832	.004
Rank							.855	.437	.119	.038	.474	.005
Age										-.212	.056	.261***
N		205			205			205			205	
Adjusted R²		**.254**			**.302**			**.316**			**.360**	
F for change in *R²*		*14.864****			*7.940****			*3.011**			*14.441****	

*p< .05; **p< .01; ***p< .001

In this model, Individual factors (β = .192, p< .01), and Social Institutional factors (β = .284, p< .01), also known as Extra-Media factors, were the most significant predictors of journalists' website promotion behavior. Organizational factors (β = .174, p< .05) were also a significant predictor of journalists' web promotion behavior.

Individual Factors. This means when a crime news story breaks on a social media platform such as Facebook or Twitter, for every unit increase in individual factors, there was a .192 unit increase in journalists' decisions to promote that breaking news on their organizational website. Individual factors that influence a journalist's decision to upload breaking crime news on the website could include a journalist's professional, ethical, and personal values, beliefs, and

attitudes, and how the journalist perceives a news story through these individual lenses. In other words, Model 1 shows that individual factors were likely to influence journalists' decisions to promote breaking crime news on their organizational websites.

Social Institutional or Extra-Media Factors. This means when there is a breaking crime news story, for every unit increase in institutional factors, there was a .284 unit increase in journalists' decisions to promote that breaking news on their organizational website. Social Institutional factors that influence journalists' decisions could be perceptions as to how important news sources, government officials, public relation agencies, advertisers, stock markets would view the breaking crime story. In other words, Model 1 shows that social institutional factors were likely to influence journalists' decisions to promote breaking crime news on their organizational websites, because the regression coefficient was positive and significant at a .01 level.

Organizational Factors. This means when there is a breaking crime news story, for every unit increase in organizational factors, there was a .174 unit increase in journalists' decisions to upload the news on their organizational website. Organizational factors that influence journalists' decisions to upload breaking crime stories on the website could be organization focus, policies, and structure, likes and dislikes of bosses, and perceptions about the story's effect on advertising revenues. Model 1 shows that organizational factors were likely to influence journalists' decisions to upload breaking crime news on their official websites.

However, in Model 1 there was no significant relationship between journalistic routines (e.g. journalist's perceptions about a story's timeliness, relevance, potential impact, accuracy) and social system factors (e.g. perceived effect on audiences, perceived value of story to target readership, appropriateness of news for target audience etc.) because both these variables showed

insignificant correlation with web promotion. According to the adjusted R^2 statistics, Model 1 of

Table 13 explains about 25.4% of the variance in how HOI factors influenced journalists' web

promotion decisions. Using F statistics for interpretation of data is critical because the change on

R^2 in each model reflects the changes in overall predictive fit with the changes in addition or

deletion of variables.

The results of Model 1 show that H1a, H1c, and H1d were supported, while H1b and H1e

were rejected.

Social Media Usefulness, Credibility, and Web Uploading Decisions

RQ 3A: To what extent do credibility of social media as a source of breaking news and

usefulness of social media as a professional tool, influence journalists' decisions to upload

breaking crime news on their organization's website?

Model 2. In Model 2 of Table 13, two new independent variables were added: Perceived

Usefulness of social media, and Perceived Credibility of social media as a source of breaking

crime news. In this model the added variables somewhat affected the predictive powers of the

variables of HOI Model on web uploading decisions. For example, the standardized coefficient

of Individual Factors decreased from .192 (p< .01) to .142 (p<.05). The standardized coefficient

of Organizational Factors decreased significantly sharply from .174 (p< .05) to .142 (p< .1). The

standardized coefficient for Social Institutional Factors also decreased marginally from .284 to

.258, though it did not affect the significance level (p< .01). Thus, the new variables: Usefulness

(β = .168, p< .01) and Credibility (β = 163, p< .05) have a significant effect on the variables that

exist in Model 1. Overall, Model 2 accounted for 30.2% of the variance in predicting what

factors influence journalists' web promotion decisions. Model 2 is a significantly better model

than Model 1 (adjusted R^2= .302 > .254 in Model 1, R^2 change of .054, F = 7.94, p < 0.01).

Influence of Sex and Rank of Journalists on Web Uploading Decisions

RQ4a: Does biological sex and rank of a journalist influence their decision to upload breaking

crime news on their organization's news website?

Model 3. In Model 3 of Table 13 two new control variables were included: Biological

Sex (Male = 1, Female =2) and Rank of journalists. The variable *Sex* was coded to *Male = 1,*

Female = 2; and the variable Rank was coded to *Senior = 1, Middle = 2, Junior = 3*, and

Freelance = 4. In this model, the added control variables were not significant predictors of

journalists' web uploading decisions. Further, the added variables only marginally affected the

predictive power of the independent variables on web promotion decisions. For example, the

standardized coefficient of Individual Factors decreased slightly from .142 ($p<.05$) to .128 ($p<$

.05), and the standardized coefficient for Social Institutional Factors also marginally decreased

from .258 to .236, though it did not affect the significance level ($p< .01$). Further, the

standardized coefficient for Usefulness (.168, $p< .01$ to .152, $p< .05$) and Credibility (.163, $p<$

.05 to.158, $p< .05$) also decreased marginally. Thus, we can conclude these added control

variables did not have any major effects on web promotion decisions in Model 2. Overall, Model

3 explains about 31.6% of the variance in expecting journalists' web uploading decisions to be

influenced by HOI Model factors and their perceived usefulness and credibility of social media as

a source of breaking crime news. Model 3 is marginally better than Model 2 (adjusted $R^2 = .316$

> .302, R^2 change .020, F=3.01, $p <0.05$)).

Model 4. While this was not part of the original research questions or hypotheses, one

interesting finding was that age of a journalist was a significant predictor of their web uploading

behavior. When age was added as a new independent variable in Model 4, this variable

significantly affected the overall model. For example, the standardized coefficient of Individual

Factors increased from .128(p< .05) to .160 (p<.05) as did the standardized coefficient of Social

Institutional Factors from .236 to .265, though it did not affect the significance level (p< .01) in

this case. Further, the standardized coefficient for Usefulness (.152, p< .05 to .130, p< .05)

decreased marginally while Credibility (.158, p< .05 to .180, p< .01) decreased. Sex and Rank

continued to have no significant effect on web uploading decisions. However, Age (β =

-.261, p< .001) was shown to be a highly significant predictor of journalists' decision to promote

breaking crime news on their official websites when combined with perceived usefulness,

credibility, and the HOI Model. Overall, Model 4 explains about 36% of the variance in

journalists' web promotion decisions. Model 4 is significantly better than Model 3 (adjusted R^2=

.360 > .316. R^2 change .045). The coefficient was negative and significant at the p<.0001 level.

This means that the younger the journalists are, the more likely they are to upload crime news on

their organizational websites.

Promoting Breaking Crime News on Social Media

To examine factors that influence journalists' decisions to promote or share breaking crime

news on their organization's social media platforms, a series of regression tests were conducted.

Promoting breaking crime news on social media refers to the relatively recent practice

where journalists post a breaking news on the official social media handles of their news

organization. This formative scale included 8 items that examined journalists' perceptions of

why and how they upload breaking crime news on their organization's Facebook, Twitter or

other official handles (see table 14).

Table 14: Item Scores of Promoting Breaking Crime News on Social Media

Variable	Mean	SD	N
Provide information	4.39	1.026	254
Provide opinion	3.11	1.336	254
Share others' views	3.39	1.177	254
Provide link to story	4.39	.895	254
Start public discussion	3.59	1.143	254
Let public add information	3.11	1.312	254
Increase page views	3.57	1.263	254
Drive traffic to website	3.60	1.322	254

Cronbach's Alpha: .784; Overall Mean: 3.64

The table below measures the extent to which journalists' perceived usefulness and credibility of social media as a source of breaking news, their biological sex and rank, and the five stages of the Hierarchy of Influences Model influenced their decisions to promote breaking crime stories on their organization's social media platforms. To predict the effect of the HOI model (Model 1), Usefulness and Credibility (Model 2), and Sex and Rank (Model 3) on Social Media promotion decisions, separate multiple regression analyses were conducted with the three above mentioned independent variables, and Decision to Promote on Social Media Platforms as a dependent variable.

Table 15: Journalists' News Promotion Decisions on Social Media

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	B	*SE B*	□	*B*	*SE B*	□	*B*	*SE B*	□	*B*	*SE B*	□
HOI Individual	.123	.063	.134	.091	.064	.099	.085	.064	.093	.089	.069	.097
HOI Routine	.139	.099	.117	.118	.099	.099	.118	.098	.100	.121	.099	.102
HOI Organizational	.113	.096	.116	.082	.096	.077	.076	.096	.071	.071	.097	.066
HOI Social Institution	.108	.076	.118	.090	.077	.099	.080	.078	.088	.084	.078	.092
HOI Social System	.255	.121	.158*	.217	.120	.135[+]	.230	.120	.143[+]	.221	.132	.138
SNS Credibility				.092	.064	.102	.095	.064	.105	.094	.066	.106
SNS Usefulness				.342	.150	.149*	.322	.152	.142*	.320	.153	.139*
Sex							.299	.758	.025	.205	.789	.017
Rank							.379	.401	.060	.295	.444	.047
Age										-.023	.052	-.033
n	211			211			211			211		
Adjusted R^2	.200			.225			.222			.219		
F for change in R^2	11.485***			4.388*			.613			.197		

*ρ< .05; **ρ< .01; ***ρ< .001

Hierarchy of Influences Model & Social Media Promotion

H2a: Individual factors will influence journalists' decision to promote breaking crime news on their organization's social media platforms.

H2b: Journalistic Routine factors will influence journalists' decision to promote breaking crime news on their organization's social media platforms.

H2c: Organizational factors will influence journalists' decision to promote breaking crime news on their organization's social media platforms.

H2d: Social Institutional factors will influence journalists' decision to promote breaking crime news on their organization's social media platforms.

H2e: Social Ideological factors will influence journalists' decision to promote breaking

crime news on their organization's social media platforms.

To measure the extent to which the five steps of the HOI Model influence journalists'

decisions to promote breaking crime news on social media platforms, a hierarchical regression

analysis was run on SPSS. In the following regression analyses, the researcher used standardized

coefficient (β) to explain the relative importance of the predictor variables in predicting Social

Media Promotion decisions, and unstandardized coefficients (B) to examine the relationship

between predictor variables and social media promotion decisions.

Model 1 (HOI). As shown in Table 15, the first model examined the extent to which each

step or factor in the HOI Model predicted journalists' decisions to promote or share breaking

crime stories on social media. In other words, Model 1 clarified the extent to which individual,

routine, organizational, social institutional, and social system factors can explain why journalists'

upload breaking crime news on their organization's social media as soon as it breaks. This model

has *Social Media Promotion* as the dependent variable. Model 1 consisted of these independent

variables: Individual Factors, Routine Factors, Organizational Factors, Social Institutional

Factors, and Social System Factors—the five steps in the HOI Model.

It was found that only Individual factors (β = .134, p< .1) and Social System factors (β =

.158, p< .05), were the most significant predictors of journalists' social media promotion

behavior. Other levels, namely routine, organizational, and social institutional factors had no

significant relationship to posting breaking crime news on social media.

Individual Level Factors. This means when a crime news story breaks on a social media

platform such as Facebook or Twitter, for every unit increase in individual factors, there was a

.134 unit increase in journalists' decisions to share that breaking news immediately on their

organization's Facebook or Twitter page. Individual level factors that influence decisions to

upload breaking crime news on Facebook or Twitter could include a journalist's professional,

ethical, and personal values, beliefs, and attitudes, and how the journalist perceives a news story

through these individual lenses. In other words, Model 1 shows that individual factors were

marginally likely to influence journalists' decisions to promote a breaking crime news on their

organization's social media pages, because the regression coefficient was positive and s

significant at a .053 level (marginally significant).

Social System Level Factors. This means when a crime news story breaks on a social media

platform such as Facebook or Twitter, for every unit increase in social system level factors, there

was a .158 unit increase in journalists' decisions to promote that breaking news on their

organization's social media pages. Social System level factors that influence journalists'

decisions could be journalists' perceptions of a specific story's effect on audiences, perceived

value of that story to target readership, appropriateness of news for target audience etc. Model 1

therefore shows that social system level factors were likely to influence journalists' decisions to

promote breaking crime news on their organization's social media pages.

However, in Model 1 there was no significant relationship between Journalistic Routines

(e.g. journalist's perceptions about a story's timeliness, relevance, potential impact, accuracy

etc.), Social Institutional Level factors (e.g. advertisers, government officials, important sources,

stock market, PR agencies etc.) or Organizational Level factors because all three variables

showed insignificant correlation with Social Media Promotion. According to the adjusted R^2

square statistics, Model 1 of Table 15 explained 20% of the variance in how HOI factors

influence journalists' Social Media Promotion decisions. The results of Model 1 showed that

H1a is partially supported, H1e is supported, while H1b, H1c, and H1d are rejected. This means

the only significant factor that journalists considered when they share breaking crime news

stories on their organization's social media pages in real time, were social system level factors

such as appropriateness of the story for target audiences, how it may affect the larger community,

and victim protection and privacy issues. The decisions were somewhat influenced also by

individual level factors such as their personal beliefs, values, and ethical standards.

Social Media's Perceived Usefulness, Credibility, & Social Media Promotion

RQ 3B: To what extent do credibility of social media as a source of breaking news and

usefulness of social media as a professional tool influence journalists' decision to promote

breaking crime news on their organization's social media pages?

      Model 2. In Model 2 of Table 15, two new independent variables were included/added:

Perceived Usefulness of Social Media and Perceived Credibility of Social Media—as a source of

breaking crime news. In this model, the added variables adversely affected the predictive powers

of HOI on Social Media Promotion decisions. For example, the standardized coefficient of

Individual Factors decreased from .134 ($p < .1$) to .099. Similarly, the standardized coefficient of

Social System level factors decreased significantly from .158 ($p < .05$) to .135 ($p < .1$). Among the

new variables, Usefulness ($\beta = .149$, $p < .05$), had a significant effect on the variables that exist in

Model 1, while Credibility ($\beta = .102$) had no statistically significant effect. Overall, Model 2

accounted for 22.5% of the variance in predicting what factors influence journalists' Social

Media Promotion decisions. Model 2 is a better model than Model 1 (adjusted $R^2 = .225 > .200$ in

Model 1, R^2 change of .032).

Influence of Sex and Rank of Journalists on Social Media Promotion

RQ4B: Does biological sex and rank of a journalist influence their decision to promote breaking crime news on their organization's social media pages?

Model 3. In Model 3 of Table 15 two new control variables were included: Biological Sex (*Male = 1, Female = 2)* and Rank of journalist (*Senior = 1*, *Middle = 2*, *Junior = 3*, and *Freelance =* 4).

In this model, the added control variables were not significant predictors of journalists' social media promotion decisions. Also, the added variables only very marginally affected the predictive powers of the independent variables on Social Media Promotion decisions. For example, the standardized coefficient of Social System level factors increased marginally from .135 (p<.1) to .143 (p< .1). Further, the standardized coefficient for Usefulness (.149, p< .05 to .142, p< .05) decreased slightly. Thus, we can conclude that these added control variables had no significant effects on the Social Media Promotion decisions in Model 3. Overall, Model 3 explains about 22.2% of the variance in expecting journalists' Social Media Promotion decisions. Model 3 is worse than Model 2 (adjusted R^2= .222 of Model 3 < .225 of Model 2; R^2 change .005). Model 2 therefore explains factors that influence journalists' decisions to promote breaking crime news stories on their organization's social media pages better than Model 1 or 3.

The findings indicate that perceived usefulness of social media, and to a lesser extent some social system level concerns, were the only two factors that had any influence on journalists' decision to post breaking crime stories on their organization's social media pages.

Model 4: Role of Age as an Influencing Factor. Unlike when it comes to web promotion, the age of a journalist is not a significant predictor of Social Media Promotion behavior (Model 4: β. -.033). Overall Model 4 explains only 21.9% of the total variances and is an inferior model

compared to Model 2 (Adjusted R^2 of .219 of Model 4 < .225 of Model 2; R^2 change= .001).

Model 2 therefore is the best model that explains journalists' social media promotion behavior.

Additional Findings

Social Media & Web Promotion: Online Vs Mainstream Journalists

The findings of the survey led the researcher to explore further and seek additional

information of journalists' online behavior. Specifically, the researcher examined if affiliation to

specific news platforms such as print or online, affected journalists' social media promotion and

web uploading decisions. The findings indicated that different factors influence journalists'

decisions to upload breaking stories on websites and on social media pages, and the level of

influence also varies significantly. However, it was unclear if there is a significant difference

between how different types of journalists upload news on websites and on social media

platforms. For instance, do those who work in legacy media platforms such as print, TV and

radio respond differently than those who are online journalists? Independent sample t-tests were

applied to check the difference between the two groups. The results are shown in Table 5.10.

Table 16: T-Test Results of Online Vs Mainstream Media Journalists

Variable	Mainstream ($n = 169$)		Online ($n = 90$)				
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t	df	p
Social Media Promotion	29.9	5.58	29.38	6.79	-.368	252	.713
Web Uploading	34.49	6.98	32.83	6.57	1.85	2.56	.060

Note: Mean scores are based on a 5-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)

The table above shows that there were no significant differences between online and

mainstream media journalists as far as their online gatekeeping behavior is concerned. While

there were no differences at all in how mainstream and online journalists behave when promoting

breaking news on social media, when it comes to uploading breaking stories on websites

however, there was a marginal difference between the two types of journalists ($t = 1.85$, $df = 256$, $p = .60$).

Based on a sample of 259 journalists and a 95% confidence level, it can be concluded that there was a marginal difference between mainstream and online journalists' web uploading behavior and factors that influence their online-first practices. Mainstream journalists demonstrated a higher mean score (mean = 34.49) than online journalists (mean = 32.83) for web promotion. This finding indicates that traditional or mainstream media journalists were more likely to emphasize on web uploading breaking crime news than online journalists.

Other Factors that Influence Journalists' Website Uploading Decisions

The findings of the regression analyses show that journalists were influenced by individual, organizational, and social institutional factors to upload and promote breaking news on their organizational websites, and that their perceptions of social media's usefulness and credibility as a news source, as well as their age, were additional factors that influenced their web promotion decisions. But when they uploaded breaking crime news on the websites, what specific focus did they have? When they uploaded such news were they thinking more about reaching out to more people, retaining subscriptions and brand loyalty, or were they more concerned with accuracy, victim protection and other issues?

To understand the focus of journalists when they post or upload breaking crime news on organizational websites, the researcher conducted an exploratory factor analysis (FA) of the Web Uploading variable. The FA of the 10 items in the scale resulted in two different factors that were named Audience Focus, and Ethics Focus. Six items loaded together in Factor 1. These included items such as "my organization immediately uploads breaking stories such as a rape on its website", and "uploading breaking stories such as rape news on the website first is important to

increase audience loyalty to my organization". They loaded together and were renamed as a new

variable *Audience Focus*. Four remaining items loaded together as Factor 2 and were renamed

Ethics Focus. The items included: "breaking stories such as rape news must be verified before

uploading on my organization's website", "a victim's interests must be considered before

uploading breaking stories such as rape news on my organization's website", and "attribution of

responsibility for the crime must be reported before uploading breaking stories such as rape news

on my organization's website." The table below examines the relative importance of the two

focus areas of web uploading among the journalists.

Table 17: Journalists' Rating of Importance of Influences on Web Uploading (n = 263)

Variable	Mean	SD	Avg. Score
Audience Focus			3.09
Immediately Uploads	3.57	1.23	
Audience Needs	3.53	1.35	
Audience Loyalty	2.57	1.32	
Speed = Credibility	3.01	1.36	
Engage Audience	3.02	1.22	
Fear of Loss	2.87	1.27	
Ethics Focus			3.83
Must be Verified	4.85	.539	
Ease of Correction	2.06	1.32	
Victim Protection	4.73	.656	
Responsibility Attribution	3.71	1.20	

A mean score comparison showed that items that measured ethical focus of journalists had a higher mean score than items that measured decisions that were more audience focused. For instance, the highest mean score among items measuring audience focus was the perceived need to "immediately upload" breaking crime news on websites (m = 3.57).

Three of the four items that measured ethical concerns that influenced journalists' web promotion decisions, had a mean score higher than 3.57: need for verification (must be verified – mean = 4.85), keeping in mind the victim's interests (victim protection – mean = 4.73), and attribution of responsibility (mean = 3.71). Overall, the average mean score for items measuring audience focus was 3.09, while items measuring ethics focus had a significantly higher average mean score of 3.83.

The scores were calculated on a 5-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The results indicated that journalists were more influenced by ethics focused concerns than audience focused ones, when deciding to upload and share breaking crime news on their organization's website.

Other Factors that Influence Journalists' Social Media Promotion Decisions

The findings of the regression analyses show that the only significant factor that influenced journalists' decisions to promote breaking news on social media, was social system level forces. Individual factors had a marginal influence. But when they promoted breaking crime news on Facebook or Twitter, what specific focus did they have? To examine what specific items influenced journalists more than others, the researcher conducted an exploratory factor analysis (FA) of the Social Media Promotion variable.

The FA of the eight items in the scale resulted in two different factors that were named *Audience Focus* and *Business Focus*. Five items loaded together in Factor 1. These included:

"When a story such as a rape news breaks, it is promoted on my organization's official Twitter or Facebook page to provide information about the news", "When a story such as a rape news breaks, it is promoted on my organization's official Twitter or Facebook page to share other people's views on the news", and "When a story such as a rape news breaks, it is promoted on my organization's official Twitter or Facebook page to start a public discussion on the topic". These were renamed as *Audience Focus*.

Three other items loaded together in Factor 2. They included: "When a story such as a rape news breaks, it is promoted on my organization's official Twitter or Facebook page to provide a link to a more detailed story on my organization's website", "When a story such as a rape news breaks, it is promoted on my organization's official Twitter or Facebook page to increase page views of that specific story on our website", and "When a story such as a rape news breaks, it is promoted on my organization's official Twitter or Facebook page to drive traffic to our website." These were renamed *Business Focus*. Mean comparison was calculated to examine the relative importance of the two focus areas of social media promotion.

Table 18: Journalists' Ratings of Focus Areas in Social Media Promotion

Variable	Mean	SD	Av. Score
Audience Focus	--	--	**3.51**
Provide information	4.37	1.06	
Share other people's views	3.39	1.18	
Start a discussion	3.59	1.15	
Let public add info	3.11	1.30	
Provide opinion	3.12	1.34	
Business Focus	-	-	**3.84**
Link to my org. website	4.37	.927	
Increase our page views	3.56	1.26	
Drive traffic to website	3.60	1.31	

Results of the mean comparison showed that items that measured *business focus* of journalists had a marginally higher mean score than items that measured decisions that were more *audience focused*. For example, the three highest mean scores among items measuring audience focus were *provide information* (mean = 4.37), *share other people's views* (mean = 3.39), and *start a discussion* (mean = 3.59). The mean scores were very similar for items measuring business focus (items that measured how business concerns are perceived), with the top three mean scores being: *linking news to my organization website* (mean = 4.37), *increase our page views* (mean = 3.56), and *drive traffic to website* (mean = 3.60). The average scores for the two variables were also similar (3.84 for business focus, and 3.51 for audience focus). The results indicate that journalists considered audiences and business concerns equally important when uploading breaking crime stories on their organization's social media pages.

Phase 2: In-Depth Interviews

Using the Equal Status Sequential Mixed Method (Creswell, et al., 2003) in this study consisted of two distinct phases, where both the quantitative and qualitative phases carried approximately equal weight or importance. In this section, the findings of the qualitative phase were analyzed to understand how senior multiplatform editors across Indian cities explained the effects of social media on journalistic practices, the resultant challenges and concerns for journalism in India, and the strategies they think will address some of the emerging challenges. For this phase, results from the survey were used to frame interview questions for 18 Indian editors. Data were collected in a sequential manner with the findings of the quantitative phase informing the qualitative phase. While the qualitative and quantitative results are being reported separately, the discussion section analyses the findings together (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009) to seek development, expansion, and complementarity (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007).

Unlike in the natural sciences, where total objectivity in relation to a study is highly valued, and where research tools are unobtrusive, qualitative scholars believe that evidence is not a given, fixed reality. After obtaining the general patterns shown in the survey, the qualitative phase therefore offered a more nuanced view of emerging trends, and themes to provide explanations and elaborations of journalistic responses obtained through the survey (Xu & Storr, 2012).

Further, when using qualitative methods, the researcher is the primarily research tool, using his or her observation skills and interview techniques to collect and interpret data. Qualitative results therefore are sometimes written in first person (Lindlof, & Taylor, 2011), unlike quantitative findings that are written in third person. In other words, as the researcher my identity, biases, physical presence, and worldview shapes how I frame, collect, and interpret information.

Research Questions

To better understand why journalists responded to the survey in the way they did, and delve deeper to explore how breaking news on social media has affected journalistic practices, I therefore conducted in-depth interviews with 18 senior print, online, and audio-visual platform editors, to explore the three qualitative research questions:

RQ5: How have social media affected journalism in India?

RQ 6: What challenges and concerns do these effects pose for journalism in India?

RQ7: What sustainable strategies can be developed to address these emerging challenges?

The qualitative data collection allowed media managers such as senior editors, content heads and those in leadership positions across India's newsrooms to voice their opinion, and elaborate, clarify, and develop the research findings. The 18 senior editors interviewed included

14 males and four (4) female editors from five Indian cities: Kolkata, Mumbai, New Delhi, Bengaluru, and Pune.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted either face-to-face or on Skype. All interviewees were asked the same broad questions. However, follow-up questions differed based on their responses and in that sense the interviews were customized. To begin with, they were asked a set of structured questions on certain issues. In accordance with humanistic interview traditions, the researcher also acquiesced to keep the same order of questions and the same wordings during open conversation to obtain more information about interviewees' own experiences and perceptions. The interviews were audiotaped with permission of interviewees to record the details and exact words, as well as to ensure that transcriptions would be accurate. Every interview was preceded by asking each respondent to expressly state their consent to being interviewed after they were briefed about the risks and benefits of the project, and their rights. Each interview was conducted at a time and place suitable to the interviewee and lasted between 30 and 60 minutes.

After the interviews were completed, each interview was transcribed word-by-word resulting in 269 pages of single-spaced (Times New Roman, 12 font) rich data. The text was then read multiple times in keeping with the norms of a thematic analysis approach, to determine the themes that would enable me to best answer the research questions. The emerging themes were constantly compared with the theoretical frameworks to derive conclusion of this study. The goal of analyzing the interview data was to both explain the concepts revealed in the statistical analysis (elaborate, clarify), and to find solutions to the emerging concerns (develop, and expand).

Sampling and Participants

The participants for this study were recruited based on a critical case sample. In Critical

Case sampling, a relatively small number of important cases (participants) are selected based on

the criteria that they are likely to "yield the most information and have the greatest impact on the

development of knowledge" (Patton, 2002, p. 236). In this case, the editors were chosen because

they either had leadership experience across different platforms, or had worked in different

regions of India, and had a minimum of 12 years' experience as full-time professional journalists.

Of the 18 editors who met the selection criteria and were interviewed, 14 were male and

four were female. Admittedly, the gender numbers are skewed but this also probably reflects the

gender imbalance in newsrooms, especially in senior leadership positions. The interviewees were

spread across different media types, geographical locations, and reported varied experience levels

in journalism, as well as different ranks/designations.

Eight interviewees worked in senior leadership positions in print platforms (newspapers,

magazines) at the time of interviewing, three were in the audio-visual industry (television,

online-visual news) and seven led website operations (standalone websites, or web operations of

newspapers and magazines). Industry experience of the interviewees ranged from 12 years to

over 30 years as full-time journalists.

Many of the interviewees had multiplatform experience. For instance, two of the three

audio-visual industry editors/leaders had extensive leadership experience in newspaper and

magazine brands. Similarly, five of the seven online editors had previously worked in the

editorial section of print or television brands, while at least three of the current print platform

editors/leaders had significant experience in radio, PR, or online platforms. Three of them were

based in Kolkata, 12 in Mumbai, one in Pune, one in Bengaluru, and one in New Delhi. Their

ages ranged from 34 to 56 years.

Table 19: In-Depth Interview Participant Demographics

Name	Sex	Media Type	Designation	Location
Nuzhat Aziz	Female	Print & Online	Editor	Pune
Soumitro Bose	Male	Print & Online	National Sports Editor	New Delhi
Shiboli Chatterjee	Female	News Features Editor	Print	Mumbai
Anirban Chowdhury	Male	Editor	TV	Kolkata
Somnath Dasgupta	Male	Editor	Online	Kolkata
Naresh Fernandez	Male	Editor	Online	Mumbai
Sachin Kalbag	Male	Executive Editor	Print	Mumbai
Suman Layak	Male	Senior Editor	Print	Mumbai
Vinod Menon	Male	Investigations Editor	Print	Mumbai
Tanmoy Mitra	Male	Editorial Head	Online	Mumbai
Bhupen Patel	Male	Crime Editor	Print	Mumbai
Venkat Rao	Male	Editor	Online	Mumbai
Ayan Roy	Male	Sr. News Editor	Online	Mumbai
Janhvi Samant	Female	Ent. Editor	Print	Mumbai
Sunando Sarkar	Male	Resident Editor	Print	Kolkata
Priyanka Sehgal	Female	VP Content & Strategy	TV & Online	Mumbai
R. Sridharan	Male	Editor-in-Chief	TV & Video App	Bengaluru
Nandish Thaker	Male	Deputy Editor	Online	Mumbai

As stated earlier, the interviews constituted phase 2 of this sequential study. In the first

period of the interview, respondents spoke about effects of social media on journalistic practices

(complementarity). Interviewees were informed roughly halfway through the interview about the

findings of the survey, and then asked what they thought about those (clarify, elaborate). Finally,

they were asked what they thought were sustainable ideas to tackle the emerging concerns

(develop, elaborate). Some of the editors and media leaders requested their comments and

opinions not be directly attributed to them for legal or organizational reasons. Others mentioned

they were speaking as veteran journalists and editors, and not as spokespersons of the

organization where they worked. Therefore, in keeping with a variety of requests, each editor was

assigned a code number, with no other identifying markers. Each editor was assigned a number

such as ED1, ED2, ED3, based on the order in which they were interviewed for this study—an

information that only the researcher is aware of.

Research Findings

The editors who were interviewed for this study concurred with each other as well as with

the findings of the survey on many key issues though, expectedly, also disagreed on some issues

and had disparate opinions. When the 18 transcripts were put through an NVivo 'text search' to

create a word cloud of the top 50 most frequently used words and terms, the findings were

interesting.

When running the search, only those words that were at least four letters-long were

considered. After the first round of findings, certain commonly used word such as *kind, type,*

room etc., were removed. Predictably, the three most frequently used words were *News*, *Media*,

and *Social*. However, given that these are words the editors would obviously use in any answer,

they were removed too, and a fresh word cloud test conducted.

The most frequently used words were *Twitter* (n = 117), *Print* (n = 102). *Breaking* (n =

101), *Verification/Verify* (n = 99), *Credibility* (n = 80), *Facts* (n = 76), *Speed/Fast* (n =75), and

Trust (n = 72).

Figure: 4: Word Cloud of Most Frequently Used Words by Editors

Word clouds, however, merely indicate the frequency with which certain words or

phrases were uttered by the editors. They do not provide the necessary explanations or reasons

for such frequent utterance of certain phrases, in what contexts, or indeed what message they

explicitly or implicitly meant to convey. In-depth interviews, on the other hand, allow researchers

to probe deeper, to understand why certain phenomena take place, and how different stakeholders

view an event. For thematic analysis, the complete transcriptions of all interviews were re-read

multiple times and word-by-word, to interpret and make meaning of responses. The quotes (sentences/paragraphs) were then grouped into different categories to answer specific research questions. For instance, if an editor spoke about how Twitter enabled journalists to contact celebrities or famous people quickly and get their comments on a topic—that response was categorized under the theme 'Social Media as Extremely Useful', a theme that answered part of RQ5. Similarly, if an editor mentioned how even verified Twitter handles could be a source of fake or inaccurate news, and that it was difficult to spot fake news, the text was categorized under the theme 'Social Media as a Negative Influence'. For instance, many editors believed social media platforms were useful tools for gauging public mood, examining trends, connecting with sources, networking, sharing information, engaging with audiences, and increasing public trust by being transparent. Others highlighted some of the dangers of social media platforms, including the low credibility of a platform where anyone could post news, and how the break-neck speed of such platforms was forcing journalists to abandon certain time-tested journalistic norms and values. Still others spoke about how the process of news flow had changed over the past decade—not necessarily for good or bad—because of social media's advent as a news source and sharing platform. These responses were analyzed together to answer RQ5.

How Have Social Media Affected Journalism in India?

Multiple readings of the transcripts of the 18 in-depth interviews led to the emergence of three broad themes that reflected how respondents felt journalists, and journalism in general, had been affected by the advent of social media as a professional tool for journalists. The three themes were labelled thus: 1) Useful Tool for Journalists, 2) Negatively Influences News Industry, and 3) Has Changed News Dissemination Process. When editors described positive usages of social media platforms, they were grouped under three sub-categories, namely: a)

Useful as a source of information, (b) Useful for engagement & reach, and (c) Useful for better-researched news stories. Similarly, their negative factors about social media platforms were grouped under three sub-categories, namely: (a) Affects some journalistic values, (b) Not a credible news source, and (c) Accuracy is sacrificed at the altar of speed. Editors also spoke about a third, separate theme, explaining how the news sharing or dissemination process had been affected by the advent of social media as a breaking news source.

Useful Tool for Journalists

Most editors acknowledged that democratization of news and the consequent ability of common citizens to break news on social media platforms had made life easier for journalists in many ways especially in matters of sourcing news, getting access to people, improving efficiency, and helping media managers.

Useful as a Source of Information. The first category of usefulness that editors highlighted, was social media's usefulness as a source of information. Many editors, for instance, said the ability of an eye-witness or a person sitting in on an important meeting to upload a tweet, a Facebook video or a WhatsApp message and share a breaking news in real time had come as a boon to journalists, who now scoured social media platforms on a 24/7 basis to track breaking and/or developing news stories. At least seven of the editors said sourcing information had become a lot easier because of ready access to Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp, and other platforms. For instance, ED1, a veteran of the print and television industry for nearly three decades, said:

> For TV, social media has become a huge, huge thing. It has opened different, different avenues of getting news, apart from getting the quotes. So, we are also getting new news sources from them.

Another respondent, a Mumbai-based senior editor of a newspaper, concurred that social media platforms were fast becoming the default first source of information for news breaks: "Yes, it happens. For instance, if there is an earthquake in Delhi, I will inevitably get my first information from Facebook or WhatsApp," he said.

Others such as ED 12, and ED 16, again senior journalists who have worked in the print and online industries, agreed with ED1. As one of them said:

Social media gives me greater access, and quicker access to news without running around to 20 places. I see that as an advantage, because I am a news organization. If my access to news has increased, what should I be complaining about?

How exactly does a social medium become a useful tool for journalists when a crime news such as a terrorist attack or an incident of rape breaks, and needs to be acted upon immediately? ED5, a senior editor/media leader with nearly 20 years' experience in the television and online news industry recalled a recent incident when terrorists attacked a passenger train in northern India and blew up several coaches, killing many passengers and injuring others:

During the Samjhauta Express train blast there were people who were traveling on that train who had mobile phones with 3G, 4G connections. People uploaded (photographs, tweets) immediately. They started using hashtags; it became viral. And I think what it does to journalists in a situation like that is while TV will immediately spring into action, get reporters out there, and try and get locals for a byte, in online platforms that information is retweeted, and reposted on official handles of our organization while TV is still trying to get someone to talk to. The reach of digital is so vast, so huge, that in this case, many people who lived close to the attack site read those messages or saw those images. As a journalist in the newsroom I read the Tweet and I sent it to a colleague who

is based near the site of the blast, and they immediately searched for local sources to tap.

This ability of almost any citizen to be a source of information on social media, helps a

lot of news websites to connect with local contacts and pull out information. That is a

positive.

Similar examples were provided by others too, such as ED4:

So, when there was the recent student movement in Jadavpur University, social media

was full of stories. And when we went through it, we could really feel that thousands of

folks were really following the hashtag #HokKolorob meaning 'let there be noise'.

Others, such as some parents were worried that their sons and daughters were part of such

a huge protest. Being able to see the speed at which the hashtag was trending gave me an

idea that this story was going to be very relevant. And I could also source quotes and

reactions so easily from Twitter and Facebook Messenger.

At least eight editors said their organizations had set up multiple WhatsApp groups

among different categories of journalists (e.g. separate groups for copy desk personnel, city

reporters, national correspondents etc.), and had designated staff members monitoring not just the

organization's own social media handles/pages, but also checking for latest trending news. ED8,

a media veteran, who has worked across multiple platforms in India and abroad explained how

the news sourcing mechanism had become very social media-dependent:

We have a staff of about 65 and we do a variety of things. We have one section which is

called the latest, which is breaking news. We have correspondents all over the country, so

once something happens, our first instinct is to immediately upload or post it on our

internal 'wire', ready to be verified by the networked group of our correspondents. Once

we verify, then we look at other sources who have reported it. So, if it is a chopper crash, and we can see visuals on Facebook or TV, then that is something we would go by.

Most respondents (editors) agreed that social media platforms were very useful as (a) a source of information for breaking stories including those in the crime genre, and (b) as a tool that could be used to get quotes and information from important sources such as eye-witnesses, government officials, celebrities, or even fellow journalists. As ED10 recalled:

Thank God for social media as a source of information. It is a huge advantage. Suppose there is a border issue between India and Pakistan. Now in 10 minutes I have Pakistan government's and some famous Pakistani nationals' reactions, I have reactions from the Indian side, and I have photos. Earlier this was impossible. Only the reporter on the beat would have the contact numbers of relevant sources and could get us the information. Today depending on my understanding and maturity level, I can quickly assemble the news, without depending on that sole beat reporter or expert.

Another editor (ED12) who deals with a lot of photographs and videos pointed out:

We can get a visual very easily these days. That was not possible at that time. Eye-witnesses upload videos, and still images on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, or even on WhatsApp groups and within minutes one of our team, or a friend has forwarded it to me or one of my colleagues. We can get dozens of great images of a crime scene within minutes of the incident these days, even as we may be writing the copy to upload on our website.

Even trolling, a feature common on social media platforms, was perceived by some editors as a useful addition that helps journalist's source news better. Trolling refers to the act of making a deliberately offensive or provocative online post with the aim of upsetting someone or

eliciting an angry response from them. However, as ED7 mentioned: "Trolls sometimes actually have information that the reporter doesn't have, either genuinely or through oversight. So, we do use trolls as sources sometimes, to see if any genuine information is hidden there."

Useful for Engagement and Reach. The second category of usefulness that emerged referred to social media's usefulness as means to reach a wider audience, and as a tool for greater engagement with multiple stakeholders. ED 11 argued how social media platforms such as Twitter were helping journalists receive 24/7 real time feedback on their work, while also creating a new pathway to reach out to, and engage with, audiences:

> I am getting spontaneous reaction from public for all news. Also, you can hook your readers and you can keep on hooking them with more, latest updates. So, the emphasis is to have at least a para or two of the incident that happened so that people get hooked to it, and you also put a remark down saying something like, you know, 'please come back to the page once it is updated'. It keeps readers interested.

Acknowledging the extensive, almost viral reach of social media, a newspaper editor (ED13) explained how some legacy media newsrooms have adapted new practices of news selection in their organizations:

> The thing with print is, you can only offer an apology the next day, by which time it may have done a lot of damage. With digital platforms and social media, you can instantly apologize, and those erring facts or articles can be removed from the site. You cannot do that in print.

A Kolkata-based editor (ED9) recalled a recent incident that exemplified this changing newsroom practice:

Initially when they thought the exam results were out, they put it up. But the moment they realized this news was wrong, the moment consumers engaged with them and highlighted their error, they took it out and the next morning there was nothing in any newspaper about that news. Can you imagine such a thing even a decade back?

Another significant effect of social media's emergence as a platform for engagement between journalists and consumers was on the field of gatekeeping decision-making, where consumers with large fan followings on social media, or trending hashtags created by common citizens, often influenced journalists' perceptions about the newsworthiness of an event, including crime stories such as rapes or sexual assaults. "A time was when editors would essentially set the agenda for social discourse. Print editors and TV editors could guide the course of public chatter. But now it is the public chatter that is deciding the course of news in most organizations," felt ED11, while ED 14 provided a specific example of this effect: "What is happening is, when you go for your editorial meeting, one of the first questions that most editors ask, or are asked, is, 'so what is trending today on social media?' This is as reality today."

Not all editors perceived this as a change for the better or a positive effect on journalism however. As ED 16 argued:

All editors now cater basically to what consumers want as opposed to earlier when the editor would decide in his wisdom what was important. The picture has completely changed. So, in some sense it is the tail that is now wagging the dog.

Most editors, however, perceived this as a change that is good for democracy, even if it poses a challenge to traditional journalistic practices. ED 3 pointed out with a touch of humor: "We knew the pulse of the people, we were sure this is the way it is. Then suddenly we are now seeing that no, when they (the public) have a tool in their hand, they can out-talk us. Right?"

ED3's colleague ED10 added: "They are just quietly shunting you out. But that is a problem that we professionals are facing. It's not democracy's problem. For democracy, this is phenomenal."

Social media platforms have not just encouraged and enabled journalists to connect with audiences. Engagement with influential sources, and the ability to quickly reach out to important institutions such as government offices, has had significant effects on some journalistic practices such as news verification, and information gathering. As one editor (ED4) pointed out: "Twitter is very important in the communication between politicians, governments, government agencies, and us. We are taking full advantage of this phenomenon by tweeting them our questions and using their tweets as official answers."

Useful for Constructing Better News Stories. Many editors (e.g., ED1, ED2, ED9, ED15) believed that digital platforms allowed journalists a lot more space to elaborate on their findings and write more in-depth news stories. They said this new factor, coupled with social media's ability to engage with audience members who in turn could provide real-time feedback on their work, had resulted in journalists being more aware, wary and therefore responsible with information that they shared. One respondent (ED15) said:

> The interesting part of social media is that space is not a constraint. In print this is an issue because I may get only a 350-word slot in the paper based on space and needs. But social media platforms with their vast collection of story links, live quotes, eye-witness images, and videos from the spot, have ensured that I can now put in my connected documentary evidences, additional images, even links to relevant information, along with the most recent developing story, and connect better with my readers.

The realization that consumers could easily research information online and challenge, even 'troll' (criticize in a harsh manner) them if they provided inaccurate or incomplete information about a breaking news such as a sexual assault investigation against a leading politician, may also have resulted in many journalists being very rigorous in ensuring a news item was comprehensive and accurate. One of the editors (ED 2) who has worked in multiple Indian cities, said:

> On social media we immediately get to know the mood of the people, which is number one. Number two, for many people if they have something to say, earlier they used to write to the editor and the editor at his own whim, could decide to publish or trash the letter. And it stopped there. Today if a reporter publishes something wrong, he or she is challenged almost immediately. This is making many journalists more careful about putting out unchecked information.

Editors also felt this 24/7 trial by the public may have led many journalists feeling the heat and thinking twice before sensationalizing news to attract more eyeballs. ED8 said:

> I represent a national daily, so naturally when I or my team puts out something on the website, we need to be careful. If I am publishing something as breaking news or something sensational, I should not go overboard. I tend to follow certain checks.

> Some editors felt social media had also improved the quality of breaking and developing news reporting by making newsrooms more technically efficient. A Mumbai-based editor (ED 10) noted:

Yeah, with social media, and everything breaking on social, I don't have to have a substantial reporting force. In office, five people looking at the entire social media. It has disrupted classical news selection, and reporting structures, but it has also made reporting easier and efficient.

Others such as ED13 and ED14 agreed. "This is the positive aspect of it. Now I can do with a smaller team, what I couldn't with a larger team earlier. My newsgathering is happening almost on its own," ED13 reflected, while ED14 said:

It is a very measurable kind of thing. If a crime has happened, say a rape or a murder, I know how that story is being received and whether it is trending on social media. So, I can prepare early on how to report it on TV or the newspaper. In that sense news reporting has benefited from social media.

Social media's role in creating smart newsrooms or at least more efficient newsrooms was also acknowledged by other respondents such as this editor (ED5):

In early days of the web, you didn't have too many articles on the net to help you with your research. You would have to go out on the field and find out. Today if I want to do a story, because of effective SEO, you can just type one word and you get a million articles out there and collect information. And that's it, you have all the background you need.

Editors also said they and many of their team members were thankful to social media platforms for providing them real time alerts about breaking news. "Right now, because of social media reporters working in print or even television platforms are alerted to a breaking story—whether it be a crime or a political development—on a real time basis," ED10 said. A senior editor who cut his teeth on the crime beat (ED8) agreed:

It's a drastic change. Earlier we had one telephone or maybe two or three phone lines a team of 10-12 people. Today, there is WhatsApp on each phone. So, you know, word spreads much faster. That is a change, like you know, it has completely changed how we get news, and how we process news. It has changed entire journalism.

For those working in television, radio or online platforms, social media tools such as WhatsApp are playing a significant role in changing reporting dynamics. An editor (ED5) who had just executed a news story on a case of arson and religious rioting recalled:

My reporter was on the spot, but she had no camera person with her. Imagine this scenario 10 years ago. We would able to provide nothing but audio commentary. Today, my reporter had video and WhatsApp on her smartphone. She shot and edited a 12-15 second clip on the smartphone. She saw a bus going up in flames and some people trapped. She shot it all on the smartphone and sent it to office through WhatsApp within five minutes. We could break the news even before the fire tenders reached the spot.

Another editor (ED2) provided a different example, from the genre of higher education news reporting, of how the school board exam results were relayed to thousands of television viewers within minutes of the results being declared:

Today is the day when the Madhyamik (School Board Exams) results were declared. The challenge was to show the name of exam toppers before our rivals. We scored because we spread out in a more efficient manner. On WhatsApp, we created a Madhyamik group of reporters. This group of reporters was out there. One of them was attending the press conference and he took a photograph of the topper list and circulated it among the WhatsApp group within seconds. Before other media organizations could call up families of toppers, or reach out to their schools, our other reporters had reached relevant schools,

or residences of these toppers and were interviewing them and their families or teachers.

Today we scored. Tomorrow one of our rivals will act faster than we did today.

Finally, editors also pointed to an ironic effect of the speed-driven world of social media. Social and digital media's ability to alert journalists to breaking or developing stories, and its usefulness as a treasure trove for sources, quotes and background information, had in fact given legacy media journalists a lot more time than earlier to research, and write their news stories— thereby often improving the overall quality of breaking news stories. ED16 illustrated this point succinctly:

> Previously if the news of a fire, a murder, a sex crime, broke in the afternoon reporters had two, maybe three hours to write the copy before it reached the editing desk. Now thanks to digital technology, specifically social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, or WhatsApp, journalists get more than 10 hours to write the same story. They get the news early, they find sources quicker, get back-up information in a more efficient manner. This gives reporters more scope to churn out a better written, well-researched story, and give more perspectives to the consumer.

Negative Effects

While a majority of editors acknowledged that the reach, speed, and multiple functions of different social media platforms had a beneficial effect on many journalistic and newsrooms practices, they felt concerned about a possible overdependence on such platforms and related adverse effects on some journalistic practices, as well as a breakdown in gatekeeping norms they blamed on the fast-paced nature of social media as a communication tool.

Negative Effects on Specific Practices. Some editors felt the art of networking with sources, relationship building, and the art of face-to-face interviews were all under threat, since

many journalists were increasingly depending on social media to conduct interviews, connect with sources, and build virtual relationships. ED7 said:

> When I was younger, I would have to make friends with technicians and costume designer on a movie set to find out news or inside information about actors, or a film. For instance, whoever is doing an actresses hair… I would do one story on the tantrums and behavior of a start. Or a casting person would tell me about a budding affair between two actors. I would also build contacts with actors, and directors. They would know me by face, acknowledge me at public gatherings. In a virtual world, they may be emailing or WhatsApp-ing me every week, but they don't really know what I look like, who I really am, or would care to engage with me face-to-face. And if such intimate personal rapport is not there, journalism will suffer. It is suffering.

Relationships with important sources are a big part of being a successful reporter, editors felt. One editor recalled how a movie actor had once given her information about aspiring actresses being sexually abused by directors or casting agents in exchange for small roles in movies. The actor trusted her with the information because they had built a relationship of faith over the years. The editor (she was a reporter then) collaborated with her colleague in the crime beat—who in turn had a great network of sources among junior and mid-level police officers—to write a series of breaking stories that blew the lid off a sex racket. Such proactive news reporting, the editor (ED11) argued, was almost impossible in an era when journalists depended so heavily on social media to collect information and get source quotes. "Which source is going to trust a faceless journalist with classified information?" she said.

Other editors too held similar views. ED18 felt following a source or a celebrity on social media—being on his or her Facebook friend or Twitter follower—was not quite the same as

being a real-life friend. "A government official, or a sports start may add you on their Facebook or Instagram. But they may have thousands of such followers or friends. Do they really *know* you?" Another editor (ED4), speaking on the same theme, added: "I can follow, but I can't interact. So, my interactivity suffers. Yesterday what I could ask at a press conference, I am not able to ask him today." Others such as ED11 concurred:

> Because of lack of face-to-face, or *real-life* relationships with sources, members of the audience, celebrities, and just about anyone, journalists are also struggling with news verification, some editors said. "The unfortunate truth is many of us are putting a news out online whether is right or wrong. Because there is not that much time for verification. That is an internal pressure, a pressure to deliver before others do, and with many young journalists not building source networks as before, verifying quickly is tough. That's a huge pressure that the audience will not be able to discern," (ED11).

Others felt that social media platforms were to blame for the decline in journalists' building real, face-to-face relationship with sources. These platforms had taken over as the new storehouse of sources. However, social media alone were not blamed for the decline in good journalistic practices, such as verifying a breaking crime story before uploading it on Twitter. The very nature of the beast, they felt, had led to what they termed lazy journalism. ED 9 said:

> We were more serious about what was going in print. We had to be doubly sure of the source; doubly sure about what was going in print. Now errors can be corrected in minutes and you can pretend you never did anything wrong. It is trial and error almost, and that is a dangerous journalistic practice when you are dealing with crime news—news of rapes, religious violence, or arson.

Technology Dictates Terms. One of the more serious concerns editors raised was that new

media platforms such as search engines, aggregators, and social media often directed the course

of news. Some editors said journalists often felt pressurized to select and promote those crime

news stories that were trending on Google, or going viral on Twitter, over other crime news. As

ED14 pointed out:

> Ultimately digital is measured by something called big news and you need to have those
>
> big news up on your site. So, your ethics go for a toss. What I put on the digital platform,
>
> on Twitter, and Facebook, need not find its way to print because print is more orthodox
>
> and subject to more filters.

> A similar opinion was echoed by ED8 who said: "We notice the trends, you know. If it is

viral on Twitter or Facebook, and other news organizations are firing it out, we follow the trend.

That is like an organizational diktat. If people are talking about a story, you better have it."

> While this herd mentality is a serious cause for concern, it is by no means the only way in

which technology has adversely affected journalism. With success being judged by click rates,

page views, likes, or retweets, news organizations are trying to improve their chances of being

visible online. One of the ways organizations try to maximize visibility, say editors, is by

flooding their websites and social media handles with hundreds, often thousands of stories,

several times more than the number they would show on their channels or print editions. ED15

said:

> Volume is a reality for us. The more you publish, the better the ranking in Google. So,
>
> from 100 to 200 to 300 to 400, now we are looking at uploading 500 stories in a day, with
>
> a staff of about 100. With lack of codes, and guidelines for how to write crime stories,
>
> very often breaking stories about rape or sexual assault are uploaded on a set template,

where assaults are referred to as 'allegations', and rapes as 'claims'. That is the

unfortunate truth.

Another editor (ED17) showed a series of emails sent to the organization's editorial

leadership by Search Engine Optimization (SEO) team. The emails were all daily lists of trending

news stories across different genres—crime, entertainment, politics, education, and sports.

"Whether I find them important or not as an editor does not matter. I am expected to push these

stories online and on social media because we will not appear in people's searches otherwise,"

the editor (ED17) said.

Need for Speed and Effect on Quality. While most editors agreed that social media's

advent as a source of breaking news and ready quotes had affected classical practices such as

networking with sources, relationship building, and spot reporting, what seemed to concern them

most was how accuracy of news and news verification processes had taken a backseat. Many

editors blamed this squarely on the need for speed that social media updates had ushered in. As

ED6 summed up:

> I mean the whole concept of getting news out first, actually verifying the whole thing, has
>
> changed. If somebody has the news and flashes it as breaking news, and I don't have
>
> information about it, my hands are tied. I need to quickly make some phone calls to some
>
> sources, flash the news on my website or official Twitter, and then start collecting more
>
> information. A lot of TV channels for instance are trying to outdo each other, sometimes
>
> with not very accurate information that they get from random Twitter feeds or Facebook
>
> posts. That's the problem of the business. When you get information, you tell the world
>
> quickly.

But why this need to tell the world quickly, instead of getting the correct information across? Another editor (ED12) explained why accuracy is often sacrificed at the altar of speed:

It's like a race, you know, you want to be there first, or you lose millions of eyeballs to a rival. The moment you put it out, your news is getting retweeted and you are talked about. Your success online depends on the number of hits and views you get. Our entire effort is to ensure news reaches our readers who are on social media, in real time. And it has affected accuracy. I get very hyper if somebody is taking a lot of time verifying. I am like just get it, there are three websites that have already put up the news.

Effect on News Dissemination Process

At a very fundamental level however, editors felt that the big change was in how the news sharing or dissemination process itself had been affected. "If you have a breaking story today, crime or politics, or whatever, you will break it on Twitter. Then comes your online website, then finally comes print. Even 10 years ago, a channel or a newspaper would break it, and other TV or print would follow up on it. Not so much anymore though." a senior editor (ED14) pointed out. Another editor, ED4, concurred: "I think the official social media accounts first, and then the website. I am talking of, like a breaking, breaking news", while talking about where breaking crime news would be shared first in his organization. Almost similar words were echoed by a third editor (ED11): "Today, as we speak, news breaks primarily on social media. So, quite naturally, when we get a breaking news, we obviously want to upload it on social media first, on our official Twitter handle."

Many others said the process of uploading online first allows journalists to test the waters or gauge public reaction to a story, helping them decide whether the news is important enough to cover in print, or broadcast on TV.

Another big difference that sharing breaking news on social media first had made, editors said, was in the usage of Twitter, Facebook, or websites as a dummy run for breaking stories, correcting errors and making updates on the run before sending it to print or TV. ED15 said:

> After I upload a story, if things change or another angle emerges, unlike in print, I can always change it online. That is my freedom. I know the focus of my organization is not to incite religious riots. Suppose there is a story on religious violence or a sexual assault with religious overtones. I can always change the story after seeing the reaction of not just readers, but also my bosses.

However, some editors believed that while the platform may have changed, processes or routines have not. One of them (ED2) said: "We try to confirm the news first whenever we come across a breaking news. After confirming, even if it is off-the-record, the reporter files the copy and he passes it to me. If there are inputs required, then I would ask the reporter to get back with the inputs. Only then will I send it to the online team, where they give the final touches and upload."

Both sets of editors agree though that news is mostly broken online first today, and not on legacy platforms. Online platforms, they argue, have allowed journalists to experiment with different ways of breaking news and, as a result, forced them to become more multi-skilled. ED16 who handles both print and online said: "We do live updates. Supposing we are at this spot where an incident happens. My reporter will email or phone in the report but also live tweet, and even do a Facebook Live." Another senior multiplatform editor (ED12) explained:

> You need to be comfortable with html; you must become more of a multimedia journalist, learn the tricks of the new trade, the multimedia journalism trade, and finally be able to handle a greater workload. You first file a copy for online and keep updating it as you get

more and more information. Then you add meat to the story as you get more and more

information, to file it for a newspaper, or a TV channel.

What Challenges and Concerns do these Effects Pose for Journalism in India?

Interviews with the 18 editors revealed three board themes for RQ6. They were labelled: 1)

Technology as untrustworthy, 2) *Hierarchy of influences—routines, norms, and values under*

threat, and 3) *Lack of knowledge among journalists*.

Technology as Untrustworthy

Line by line reading of the interview data revealed two specific editorial concerns for the first

theme: a) Technology as a source of false or fake news, and b) Technology as a supporter of

trivial or sensational news.

Technology as a Source of False News. Democratization of information sharing in a

virtually connected world means almost anyone today can post breaking news and be a source of

information about an event. Sometimes, when these informants spread misleading information—

deliberately or otherwise—chaos can prevail. As ED16 pointed out:

> The other day a website, I don't know what website it was, put out a news saying Shah
>
> Rukh Khan died in a plane accident in London. Yeah, it was on a website. I have the link,
>
> I can show you. I immediately sent it to my news head and he said, okay I will check. We
>
> checked the facts and it turned out that Shah Rukh was shooting somewhere in India
>
> when part of the studio's roof collapsed. He was unhurt, a crew member was injured.
>
> Somehow that news transformed in to Shah Rukh Khan dying!

Editors also said morphed or misleading photographs often posed a big challenge to good

journalism. "The biggest problem is not with verification from a handle but with pictures. There

are too many morphed or fake photographs in the market," explained ED13. At least three editors

spoke of instances when reporters had been led on a false trail by a trusted source putting up a

purported photograph of an event. In one case, an influential Twitter source uploaded the

photograph of a burning bridge as evidence of a Hindu-Muslim riot—only to discover that the

image was two years old, and from another part of India! The source had been forwarded the

image by one of his friends, who in turn claimed to have been misled. "We went with the story at

first because we trusted our source. It took us thirty minutes to put the photo on a reverse search

engine and discover that it was an old image. The damage had been done by then," said ED2.

Another editor (ED9) illustrated the point further: "Visuals don't tell everything. A helicopter

wobbling in the air could be anywhere. Images do not always tell the true story."

While journalists use Twitter or Facebook to break news of sexual assaults, murders or

riots to the public, a major source that they depend on apart from these two platforms, is

WhatsApp. WhatsApp is a free chat platform, used by close to a billion people in over 150

countries (WhatsApp.com, 2017) mainly to keep in touch with loved ones, but also increasingly

used to share information within and between specific groups. This platform is commonly used

by members of cultural or social groups to share a breaking or developing news among dozens,

often hundreds of people. The ability of WhatsApp to spread mass messages within seconds, can

cause serious challenges for journalists, when such information is spread with an intention to

incite, mislead, or confuse. "WhatsApp is sort of creating a mythical past and a mythical present.

A lot of religious tension, or rumors about events that have not happened or exaggerate, is spread

via WhatsApp," said ED1. This concern was emergent in other interviews too, like that of ED8,

who said:

The more tenacious sort of social media in India is WhatsApp. And WhatsApp is the

dangerous thing here because you have no idea of the source. WhatsApp is the reason

why every time there is trouble, the government cuts off internet access. It is not for

Twitter or Facebook, but because they are scared of misinformation spreading via

WhatsApp.

Across digital social media platforms however, the trust or credibility of information was

to be a major concern for editors—a concern that was also evident among the 274 journalists

who responded to the online survey. ED18 argued: "A lot of information on digital is not

monitored. And that kind of leaves us with a situation where some of it can be doctored, some of

it can be incorrect. We have very little chance of checking that when we are uploading breaking

news and it needs to be uploaded quickly."

Technology as a Supporter of Trivial or Sensational News. Most of the challenges and

concerns raised by editors were guided, predictably, by some of the negative effects they

mentioned during the interviews. Most editors felt news they considered trivial, titillating, or

sensational often found its way to their organization's website, news casts or the print editions

because journalists had allowed Google algorithm and Twitter trends to dictate terms. For

example, ED6 showed me an email from their organization's marketing team, requesting the

editorial team to carry a trending news on *Iranian women beauty secrets*. "Look at what is

trending. See how Google works, it is not even customer demand sometimes," ED 6 pointed out.

Further, as advertising revenues get determined by print readership numbers, subscription

numbers, online page views, and Television Rating Points (TRPs), newsrooms and journalists are

forced to upload or promote news that are being searched more, or that seem to be trending—

instead of news that seem more relevant, timely, or newsworthy. Similarly, ED11 said: "What

concerns me is that everything is super-exclusive breaking news. More and more triviality is

being pumped out as something that is unusual or newsy."

Others concurred: "You have so much information today, you have information overload. So, by the time a user is reading one story, before he or she grasps it or look at more updates on that, they are being forced to move to other sponsored articles or whatever else gets thrown up on their Facebook or Twitter feed. I think all of us are becoming very shallow, all of us, me included" (ED15).

Routines, Norms, Practices Threatened

Three specific areas of concerns emerged within this category—*ethics under threat, social institutional threats*, and *accuracy under threat*. Editors were concerned that certain unethical practices such as plagiarism, using second-hand information sources, and desktop reporting instead of field reporting had become common in journalism as a direct fallout of some social media platforms being sources of news, easy quotes, and constant or updated information. They felt these ethical issues sometimes resulted in inaccurate information being shared on their organization's website or social media handles.

Ethics under Threat. One of the interviewees (ED1) provided a recent example from the crime beat:

In a communally (religiously) sensitive area, the reporter, out of excitement, mentioned that Hindus were attacking Muslims in one part of the state, based on several Twitter reports. We almost went on air before we found out it was inaccurate news. If the bullet had been fired, in the sense, if we had aired the news, it would have blown up. Many websites would have picked it up.

While some editors blamed such judgmental errors on the tremendous pressure journalists face to be fast, and first with any breaking news, other argued that lazy journalism, or lack of journalistic ethics was the culprit. Some editors illustrated just how the pressure to deliver more in less time posed serious challenges for good journalism:

In print one journalist would cover three, maybe four stories a day. In TV channels, maybe a little more. But on digital platforms, the same news organizations are mandated to put out at 1000 maybe 1200 stories a day. So, you have a problem—unless you have proportionate staff: journalists are stressing out, and there is a loosening of controls within. That is a real problem. The editing is loose, articles are in places they shouldn't be. (ED14)

Others (ED7, ED2, ED3) said the fact-checking that is mandatory in print or TV newsrooms, before putting something out, does not always happen in this fast-paced scenario. Some editors (such as ED6, ED12, ED15, and ED16) felt the newer crop of journalists were using social media for newsgathering purposes, adding to the challenges and concerns:

Social media has spoiled young journalists. Earlier, there was no choice, like we had to go to the spot, get details, and only then we could file stories. New reporters, well some of them at least, are over dependent on digital, and lose the essence of news gathering. Driven by search engines and key words, they feel we need to sensationalize all news and that we need to be there first. It is a scary space that we are in, the line is thin (ED15).

WhatsApp messages and social media poses some serious concerns for us editors. Many of the new generation of journalists are not as hardworking as the earlier journalists. Some of them do not think twice before using information they got from a Twitter source, as their own information. This is cheating, and that is a crime. Many reporters do not seem to be serious about issues of plagiarism. (ED12)

Other editors (ED3, ED9, ED10; ED17, ED18) spoke about how news selection for online and social media platforms could be an 'ethical nightmare', because of the speed at which decisions are made about each story.

A lot of stuff is forwarded on all kinds of social media. So, we have to be very careful about what we select and what we trust. And this is happening at such a pace that we have not been able to train ourselves to understand this. (ED18)

> The type of time that you get to put a story on paper, you don't get that type of time obviously, if you are going to put a story online. There is a lot of pressure. Not only the pressure of time, that I must beat the competition by putting out this news first, but also the pressure that goes on in the reporter's mind, whether what I am putting online is right or wrong. Because you don't have so much time for verification. (ED3).

> There is pressure of time. Then the ethics, morality things come into play when you don't know for sure whether this is right or wrong. But you are still pushed to putting something up online because you want to beat competition. (ED9)

Accuracy under Threat. The second concept within the challenges to values, norms and practices that editors spoke about referred to the challenge of delivering accurate information when the behavior of bosses, customers, advertisers, and even rival publications forced journalists to deliver news fast. Some editors (ED1, ED5, ED10, ED13, ED 17) acknowledged that supervisors and mentors were also to blame for failing to check the flow of inaccurate information being posted, uploaded, printed or broadcast. Others agreed.

> As supervisors we have not been able to put any kind of checks or balances in place. The basic thrust is to tweet first, and in doing that we are, you know, we are dragged in to very, you know, embarrassing things. I think it will take some time before journalists will say okay let's not do it so fast. But the priority right now is, let's do it now, as quickly as we can. (ED5)

I think because increasingly organizations are putting a lot of pressure on journalists to be in that space. A large part of their Key Result Areas (KRA) depends on how much is being delivered at what speed. I know I need to do my quota of five breaking stories today. So, let me just quickly do it. This is what I guess is affecting the quality of news that is going out on social media. It (digital media) is a space that if you use responsibly, we can use it for good. But unfortunately, the times that we are living in right now, it's a crazy space. You have incorrect news, doctored videos and false tweeting. (ED17).

Other editors too expressed similar concerns about how increasing pressure to deliver news at a rapid pace was taking its toll on journalists, and that accuracy was one of the biggest casualties.

There is an example from near where I work. There was a building collapse recently. There were a couple of buildings next to each other and the first building collapsed. The editor wanted more details for the web updates and to tweet out quickly. So, the reporter called up and said he had heard the second building had collapsed as well. We tweeted that out because the reporter said so. But it so happened that the second building did not collapse. We deleted that tweet, but it was too late. It was out there and had been retweeted many times. There was no way to wipe it out. I am not saying that in print or TV errors do not happen. But we would have waited longer to get visual conformation or a first-hand account from the reporter. (ED13)

They might have got their news from people like you who have not verified the information before putting it out. That's the first thing I tell my team, but we also want the news out first. That is dangerous. In that sense unfortunately, it's a very big challenge,

to keep guiding and monitoring reporters. You can't be there all the time, constantly

monitoring the tweets that they send out (ED5).

Extra Media Threats. Threats to journalistic values and practices were not just coming

from editors or owners demanding news at a faster pace from their reporters. One recurring

theme in the responses was the perception among editors that "the people" were growing

increasingly impatient and would switch channels, newspapers or websites quickly if they felt

they were not getting breaking news fast enough (ED3, ED8, ED10, ED14, ED17, ED18).

> The problem is that the consumer who is sitting in his office or home, doesn't realize that
>
> certain news such as an allegation of rape, takes time to confirm. We need police
>
> conformation, medical confirmation, at least those ones. But many people will
>
> immediately switch to some other website, or channel, which is giving them quicker
>
> news, even if with less accuracy. (ED14)

Editors also said since most online platforms of news media organizations were still not

profitable, media managers were becoming desperate to attract advertisement to their social

media handles and websites. "Advertisers put their money on sites with more readers/audience.

Everyone is trying to get readers to stay on their websites by attracting them with trending

stories—however trivial they may be, and by competing to give them breaking news in real

time," ED3 said. Many others agreed:

> Advertiser pressure, or perceived pressure to get eyeballs to get ads, will always be a big
>
> factor. The urge to have extra TRP, to have more eyeballs coming and sitting on your
>
> website will always come in the way of providing accurate information. The wrong things
>
> are influencing our decisions (ED8).

> If you take the same steps that you right now take before printing a news, zero chance of
>
> going wrong. Yet the nature of the medium is such that you must compete with other
>
> people, other media houses that are posting. So, it is the nature of the beast that is killing
>
> us. (ED10)

How to deal with impatient consumers and wealthy advertisers are serious challenges before

editors; some editors spoke of the demons within that needed to be slayed as well: inter-media

rivalry. As ED12 said: "I once spoke to a senior Intelligence Branch officer and he said, 'you

have bigger enemies between you'. The professional rivalry between media houses are becoming

so extreme that media managers will stoop to any level, including asking journalists to

exaggerate events, to get eyeballs and subscribers."

Lack of Guidelines & Knowledge

The third major challenge or concern that editors mentioned was the lack of knowledge—

poor understanding of digital media laws, lack of training in the use of journalistic language, and

failure of media houses and media schools to educate new journalists in social media journalism

skills. By lack of knowledge, almost all interviewed editors meant either the lack of training for

journalists, or that newsrooms lacked journalists with specific educational backgrounds. For

example, several editors spoke of incidents when lack of training in journalistic ethics had

resulted in crime reporters compromising the safety or identity of a sexual assault victim, an

accused, or their family members (ED15, ED2, ED7, ED14): One respondent (ED14) said in a

frustrated tone, "Reporters are not trained the way they need to be trained, and the way they used

to be trained. We can complain all the way to hell but that's how it is." Others explained what

lack of training meant to them in their individual experiences:

My online reporters know that we don't name a victim. But they might take a

quote of a rape victim on the smartphone and in taking the quote her face may become

visible. What if that video clip makes it to Twitter, and then on to websites, or TV

channels? Not long ago, I remember a channel showing a dead person with a mutilated

face. This is lack of basic training. We need a checks and balances system (ED15).

In a lot of places, you don't have any regular refresher course or constant training

of journalists so that they are updated with rules, terms, phrases. I won't be surprised if

you talk to five police beat reporters, and they can't identify officers of a specific branch

of police, or the weapons the police van is carrying (ED2).

Lack of training and knowledge of ethical-legal issues such as plagiarizing

photographs or text from others, using information from other sites or web pages without

permission—emerged as another big area of concern for editors. ED11, for instance, said:

"Plagiarism is my worry right now, because it is easy for someone to pick up a quote

from Twitter and paste it on a story because they are out there on social media. That

shows lack of ethical training. It is not your hard-earned quote, because you haven't

spoken to that person."

Respondents also spoke about the dearth of adequate workshops to train and educate

journalists, especially online journalists, about legal implications of inaccurate reporting on

digital media platforms including on social media:

Unfortunately, in India cyber cases or online cases have not been dealt with well.

Journalists need to understand that they cannot get away by simply uploading any news

on social media and then claiming innocence by deleting it later. Your story, your tweet,

your article, whatever you are trying to break out there, it can have serious consequences. There are provisions under the Information Technology Act. The unfortunate part though is media organizations have not taken this issue seriously till now. It probably needs someone to sue a media house for millions over a defamatory tweet. The provisions should be the same as they are for newspaper or magazines, under Section V of the Evidence Act (ED11).

Other editors (such as ED1, ED3, ED4, ED7, ED10, and ED16) felt while the growth of mass communication and journalism schools across India meant new recruits were far more technologically skilled and well-rounded in multiplatform skills compared to their predecessors, big concern areas lay in their lack of knowledge about *how to write* good news stories, as well as their command over Indian languages.

In India, you should remember that we have two problems: one is a problem of language which means if you are in English media, your English must be very fluent. Secondly, you need to translate from Bengali, Hindi, Tamil, or some other language to English. That is one problem, huge problem. That is why you will see weird use of English words on some websites, words that the minister or the police would never have uttered. (ED3)

We don't have an English news channel; we have a Hindi news channel, we have a Bengali news channel. But my paper is English. So, if I am watching a Hindi news channel, I have to translate it into English. So that's a problem. The challenge here is the lack of journalists in a team who, between them, can understand different language groups. (ED4)

What Sustainable Strategies can be developed to Address Emerging Challenges?

During the interviews, most editors sounded optimistic about the overall status of the news media industry in India, and despite acknowledging the emerging concerns and challenges that computerization has brought about, they felt digitization in general—and social media's role as a source and platform for breaking news in particular—had been more of a boon than a bane. Further, they argued most of the emerging challenges and concerns were solvable and strategies could be developed to tackle the concerns. Five themes emerged from multiple readings of the interview transcripts. Editors spoke about the need to a) have greater human and technological resources to combat fake news and social media onslaught, b) develop sustainable strategies to train, retrain, and educate journalists, especially those on speed-driven, web-based platforms in social media writing rules, c) invest in these strategic training opportunities to stress the importance of traditional journalistic practices when sourcing, and selecting news, d) accept reality and adapt old practices to the demand for greater speed, and e) support and provide input to researchers to come up with technological innovations that would slay the monsters that the need for speed and social media had created. These ideas were categorized under five subheads: *Training and education*; *Research & resources*; *Sticking to the basics*, *Adapting to change*, and *Innovate & hope.*

Training and Education

Editors acknowledged that one of the more serious challenges journalism in India is facing today is a dearth of constant training and education of journalists, and at the same time, sufficient opportunities to conduct media literacy sessions with consumers. Most respondents spoke of the need to update syllabi at mass communication institutes, the necessity of in-house workshops and refresher courses for journalists at every media organization, and finally, to create

more fora where journalists could interact with members of the public to make them more aware of issues such as fake news, media bias, and the need for cross-verification of news (ED1, ED2, ED4, ED5, ED7, ED8, ED9. ED13, ED14, ED16, ED17, ED18).

> Our job, if we can, irrespective of which news organization we belong to, is to train new journalists. Because people-training is very important. New recruits just come out of media schools where they don't learn anything, I tell you. So, when they come, they are bright young men and women, but they really don't know what they should and what they should not write or how they should write. And as soon as they enter the media organization, they are, it's a mad rush. They are into that rut. They are into that machine. So, they keep on revolving, one round after the other. And I am very sorry to say that we have not done for newcomers what our seniors did for us. The first copy we wrote, they were like what the hell have you written. They would hand-hold and teach. Sensitization of the staff through proper training, if we can do it, then there is some hope (ED1).

Many editors were more specific about the type of education and training they would want journalists to get. ED9, for example, said: "The need of the hour is a basic understanding of the law because journalists should understand that their article can have an impact—either it will help somebody, or it will damage somebody's reputation. We need annual legal workshops with both reporters and copy desk folks." Others spoke of the need for more basic education, such as learning to be more transparent with consumers as well as with colleagues: "I think there is a bit of catching up for us to do in terms of journalistic ethics—owning up to a particular story for instance. Journalists need to learn to say sorry" (ED4).

The proliferation of inaccurate information, fake news, and the inability of journalists to sometimes distinguish between genuine events and exaggerated or downright fake ones, also led

to many editors calling for the need to hold training sessions on fake news, and even teach such

topics in the classroom. One respondent (ED13) said:

> One of the things we can start right away is to have media awareness programs;
>
> journalists need to be trained to understand a fake story from a real story. To understand
>
> which press release is an agenda, which Tweets are manipulative, which photo is
>
> morphed; even as journalists we are not equipped or educated enough to deal with what
>
> technology is throwing up. This gap needs to be addressed now.

Other respondents (ED17, ED18, ED7) also spoke of the need to educate the masses,

make them more media literate—an idea they acknowledged was easier to float than to execute.

> I don't know, maybe teach media students and even social media influencers. Even to
>
> promote a breaking news, an influencer takes an informed decision, and understands what
>
> they are doing. Consumers need to learn the difference between an allegation and a
>
> conviction for instance. That *alleged* is an invisible word for them. 'Man allegedly
>
> commits murder' is 'man committed murder' for many (ED18).

Many other respondents argued for similar strategic needs. ED17 said: "In terms of

competing with fake news, I believe the only way to go about it is to create awareness, show

readers how mainstream media provides a certain degree of rigor, certain degree of routine,

before sharing it with the audience." On similar lines, ED7 added, "Ultimately the consumer

must be smart on social media. There is a lot of social media consumer education that is required.

What sort of news should you double-check, for example."

Research and Resources

Almost all editors spoke of a common concern—the lack of adequate resources to run online or social media divisions of their news organizations. Even editors of standalone web platforms agreed that companies needed to invest in more human resources if journalists had to win the war against fake news and not be dictated to by technology.

We need to have various levels of filters, like you know, more resources at every level till it reaches consumers. Until those filters, those resources that can verify, research, translate, or identify fake photos, are in place, we cannot hope to conform or verify a news in five minutes. And since we cannot, the credibility of a newspaper and the journalists are going to get affected. There is no option here – we need to invest if we want returns (ED3).

In print and on TV reporters have librarians and research teams that provide background information and context to an unfolding event. But on online and social media teams, there are no such teams. Ideally there should be a person or people on the copyediting desk whose only job is to fact-check, research background, or check dates: "We need more people in research teams, maybe create a research desk" (ED8). With several editors referring to WhatsApp as one of key sources of breaking news, as also a serious threat to accurate journalism, it was not surprising to hear them outlining the need to take this platform more seriously, monitor WhatsApp carefully, and even assign journalists to verify WhatsApp posts. One respondent (ED14) said:

Do you know what the good thing in India is? The good thing is that many people are still not on Twitter or Facebook. For them, WhatsApp is a major source of news since most folks use mobile phones. The challenge is that we need to bring some checks and balances on WhatsApp. If any story is emerging through WhatsApp, check and verify what the original source is. If needed use the same platform to warn audience of fake

news spreading. Newsrooms may want to create a database of all its thousands of regular

subscribers and send them mass WhatsApp messages in times of crises.

Still others spoke of technological resources that would help journalists be well-rounded

and provide greater evidence for their stories—thereby regaining public trust.

> You can do a video story, and obviously in a video you are showing certain things. And if
>
> you can establish, you can show where the event is happening by showing some landmark
>
> that is recognizable, you establish that this is where you are. It makes every story more
>
> credible. Video is going to be very big. Even if we don't want it, it is going to be very big.
>
> And we must have it even if we are a magazine, a newspaper or a website (ED16).

Stick to the Basics

Respondents felt investing in strategic training opportunities was critical to stress the

importance of traditional journalistic practices when sourcing and selecting news. In other words,

many of them felt journalists needed to stick to the ground rules of good journalism and follow

age-old routines, irrespective of which platform they were working on. Some editors provided

examples of rival organizations, such as a specific newspaper, that had retained loyal customers

mainly because it continued to print only news that was verified and confirmed, even at the cost

of being late or missing out on a sensational event.

> There are some papers that are known for their credibility. And if you see, they still have
>
> the most loyal readers, as compared to other newspapers or other news agencies. I think
>
> somewhere that loyalty is very tough to earn. So those newspapers survive in the longer
>
> run (ED9).

The editors were almost unanimous in their opinion that journalistic rules and practices

such as checking the newsworthiness or an event, or its perceived relevance to the target

audience should guide news selection, irrespective of whether that news was to be printed in a newspaper, broadcast on a TV channel or tweeted on the organization's official handle. As ED10 said: "Obviously whether it is social media or offline media, the rules are going to remain the same. You need to check every fact you bring out. I don't see how that changes just because you are on social media." Many others agreed. ED12 noted, "Go back to the basics. Go back to the fact that whether it is five minutes or one hour, there is due diligence. There is no substitute for that." ED14, a veteran multiplatform journalist with nearly 20 years in the profession, agreed: "I think you have to get back to the older ways of working. Write or broadcast a report, present the facts, get your numbers right, and make your audience think about it. Why? Because when they come back to you again and again, they will notice the difference, notice how honest, how authentic you are." ED16 concurred, "I argue that rather than do anything new, go back to your basics. Stick completely to what you learned in your school. Which is put everything through four or five sieves of verifications", as did ED11: "The rush to be first is too valued I think. I don't see a layman or anyone really remembering who put out a Tweet at 12:05 and trusting that over the organization that posted it at 12:10." Others such as ED4, spoke from their own experience of posting on social media and observing customer feedback:

> Generally, there is a perception that people read the first thing they get. But I prefer to do some checks even if I am late. I have seen that when our organization's Twitter followers follow us, they are not really benchmarking us against how fast five other sources have posted a news. Our readers at least prefer to wait for some time and get verified news, instead of believing anything they read.

Editors said it is this perception (of an intelligent, discerning audience), based on years of observing how readers, viewers, or subscribers behave that had led to their collective belief that there was no substitute for due diligence, transparency, and honesty, in the world of journalism.

> I think it is extremely important for editors or reporters to assess the veracity of the tweet. Let's say it has to do with the bombing and someone has tweeted pictures of injured people. The first thing you would do is call the local police to find out if such a thing has happened. Why? Because increasingly such stories are being manufactured. In India, lots of stories of religious issues are being used to create fake news, people getting lynched and all those things. That is becoming endemic. So, one needs to be extremely careful, verify and only then put it up. So, there are checks involved. To me there are only three things that matter when it comes to news: first is accuracy, second is accuracy, and third is accuracy (ED4).

Some editors acknowledged that their organization had experimented with the idea of grabbing eyeballs and increasing ad revenues by filling their websites and social media platforms with trending news—however trivial—but that they had now changed their focus, and reverted to the old method of selecting news based on its authenticity, relevance, aptness for target audience, timeliness and other factors, even if this meant not having trending news or viral stories on their websites, and being late in breaking a news. In ED1's office, a recent such transformation had taken place, with a positive outcome:

> Till recently we were carrying sensational things to attract more viewers. And many of us were getting very angry, because we—at one point of time, all the vernacular websites and channels stressed on erotic, sexually explicit stories in huge numbers. There are serious viewers who used to call us, and you know, really get angry. Afterwards we

reduced that section of news, though we have not have been able to cut it off entirely.

And believe me, we are getting dividends. We are focusing on more credible stories,

more socially relevant stories, and it is paying off. (ED1)

Adapt to Change

Editors, however, made it clear that 'sticking to basics' did not mean they were arguing

against adapting to change. On the contrary, most editors interviewed said journalists and

newsrooms in India would have to adapt to the need to deliver news at much faster pace than

ever before—if they were to survive. "Globally, people are more impatient than ever before.

Technology will always try to provide faster solutions so that people have more time for

relaxation or other work. We need to work within this reality," said ED2. Similarly, ED16 added:

"The challenge probably will be to do all due diligence, not over several hours, but over several

minutes." Their opinion was echoed by many others:

> The rules for print remain the same for web and social media. At the same time,
> we are in the digital space, and if we do not convert our work ethics, our speed to digital
> space demands, we cannot survive in the space (ED10).

> If a news organization wants to be part of social media space, and of course they
> all need to be, because survival is at stake, then they have to accept the need for speed and
> get into that space. You just do the same thing, but sharper, and quicker (ED12).

> Traditional journalists will have to make that leap of faith and co-exist with social
> media. What you follow in print, you should follow the same on social media. Just the
> pace quickens, you must think on your feet, and I think far more responsibly, because in
> print you have several hours to verify and be accurate, on social media, you do not (ED5).

Editors also argued that news organizations would have to step up and be far more vigilant about what their employees were saying in the social media space—even as individuals—if media houses were to regain public trust. One way of ensuring journalists were more responsible on social media was to make it mandatory that even personal social media handles of employees be tagged in a manner that made it apparent to the public that they belonged to a specific news organization. Editors provided the example of *The Times of India* and *The New York Times,* both of which had recently come out with a detailed social media policy for all employees. As one editor said:

> I think more and more organizations need to come up with a standard social media policy that all employees will follow. All journalists should add their organization's acronym such as NYT or TOI to their personal social media handles. That way the moment you have the tag of your organization, you know you will be perceived as representative of that brand (ED14).

Another editor (ED5) said how his organization already had a similar policy in place: "I have a Twitter which has the organization suffix at the end. Yes, it is my personal handle, but I am also an editor of the organization. Similarly, there is my personal Facebook page created by my organization. This is one where the organization is also one of the managers of the page, but I can post stuff as a journalist."

Innovation and Hope

Finally, many editors opined that the world was probably overreacting to social media, and the craze for speed as a problem that is here to stay. Like most other crazes, they were hopeful sanity would prevail soon. Some editors spoke of technological innovations "slaying the monster it had created", (ED3, ED16, ED18) while others pinned their hope on peoples' ability

to be a discerning audience (ED4, ED6, ED9, ED13). For instance, one editor said: "As social

media technology improves, the ability to spot fake news I think will come from technology, not

any other source. What created this monster is probably going to slay it as well—which is

technology" (ED3). Others hoped most audience members would learn to be more discerning

with time:

> If the audience decides, you know, this website gives me news early, but 99 percent of the
>
> news is wrong, and they switch off from the website, then I think every other website will
>
> take lessons from that and will give verified, credible news (ED6).

> I personally think people would rather trust someone who has a history of providing
>
> accurate information rather than providing quick information, then going back on it and
>
> retracting it (ED9).

> I have faith in people's discerning abilities. Twitter may be quick but may not always
>
> have the maximum impact other than spread a lot of panic. This craze for speed is a fad, it
>
> won't last too long. People have already started asking questions; they want to double-
>
> check. The moment they see something on WhatsApp, they are going to their primary
>
> source, maybe a trusted news organization's website (ED13).

In conclusion, the emerging themes suggested that most editors agreed on many issues,

but on some they chose to differ too. Most importantly, while a section of editors seemed to

embrace social media and believed its advantages outweigh the negative side effects, others

believed the easy availability of quotable sources, images, and even the developments on a

breaking news have all resulted in journalism and journalists becoming lazier, paying less

attention to time-tested norms, values, and practices on which the fourth estate's credibility was largely built. On the question of "social media's effect on journalism" therefore (RQ5) editors, not surprisingly perhaps, varied in their perspectives and opinions.

However, both those who embraced social media as a boon and those who felt it was more of a bane, agreed the need to be online first, and the resultant focus on speed-driven journalism had indeed led to some key concerns. The challenge of maintaining accuracy or verifying information within minutes was one that was universally acknowledged as a problem that journalists faced when sourcing or uploading breaking crime news on/from the organization's website or official social media handles.

Other challenges were reported by editors. While some were organizational, ownership-related challenges, owners and media managers keen to increase profit levels and grab more eyeballs, subscribers, and readers, others addressed challenges from readers. Editors said there was a common perception among journalists and newsrooms that unless breaking news was uploaded fast, customers would simple go away to other websites or Twitter pages that had more updates information, however inaccurate—a perception that they were trying to change. Another challenge they spoke of was the lack of proper guidelines or rules for online journalism, especially social media journalism.

Editors had different opinions about ways and means to address these concerns—opinions that while being different were not in conflict with one another except on one count. While some spoke of more resources to be used in training and retraining journalists both at media schools and after they had been hired, others spoke of creating research teams to help web journalists get accurate background information and quick confirmation when dealing with a developing story.

Still others, addressing the issue of crime news in specific, spoke of the need for greater gender and linguistic diversity in newsrooms.

Not all editors however, agreed on how legacy media wanted to handle social media's need for speed and the resultant challenges of speed-driven, often unverified journalism. Some editors believed speed-driven journalism was merely a passing fad, and that both consumers and media houses were now realizing the folly of believing the first information they received. They argued that accuracy would triumph over speed soon, and while social media would remain an enormously important journalistic tool, discerning audiences and visionary media leaders would ensure the return of journalism that was faster than before, yet grounded in the principles of being accurate, authentic, verified, and objective information.

Other editors however, felt journalist and newsrooms would do well to accept the reality that people wanted things fast and that social media had irrevocably taken news toward a faster path. They argued that journalists' decisions to select or reject a news would (and should) continue to be influenced by factors such as perceived timeliness and authenticity of a story, its consistency with organizational policies, and aptness for target audiences—but that such gatekeeping decisions would henceforth have to be taken within minutes, instead of the several hours that print or even TV media permitted them.

Table 20: Emerging Themes from RQ5, RQ6, and RQ7

RQ5: Effects	RQ6: Challenges	RQ7: Solutions
Useful Tool	**Technology as Untrustworthy**	Training & Knowledge
As source of information	a. Source of false news	
For engagement & reach	b. Privileges sensational news	
For constructing better stories		
Negative Effects	**HOI – Routines Under Threat**	Research & Resources
Negative effect on specific practices	a. Ethics under threat	
Technology dictates terms	b. Accuracy under threat	
Need for speed affects quality	c. Extra-media or external threats	
News Dissemination Process Change	**Lack of Guidelines & Knowledge**	Stick to Basics
		Adapt to Change
		Innovate & Hope

Summary

Chapter V reports both the quantitative and qualitative results of this study. For the

quantitative research results, this chapter presents descriptive statistics of the sample. This is

followed by the descriptive and exploratory statistical analyses of the responses obtained on all

measuring instruments of the total sample in accordance with relevant research questions and

hypotheses. Results show that respondents perceived social media to be an extremely useful

journalistic tool, especially for purposes of gathering information, checking breaking news,

verifying information, monitoring public opinion, and sharing links. However, they perceived

social media to be a largely unreliable tool, rating it low on credibility in terms of accuracy of

news, objectivity of news, authenticity of news, completeness of news, believability of news and

other factors.

Further regression analyses showed respondents thought journalists' decisions to upload

breaking crime news on their organizational websites were likely to be influenced by individual

factors (their personal beliefs and attitudes), organizational factors (type of stories they felt their

organization focuses on, their boss's likes and dislikes), and social institutional factors (how

advertisers, PR firms, sources etc. react to the story), and not so much by journalistic routines or

ideological factors. While gender or rank of a respondent did not seem to affect their perceptions

about why journalists upload breaking crime news on websites, age of respondent was a highly

significant predictor of their perceptions.

When uploading on social media handles, only individual factors (personal attitude,

beliefs about specific crime story or the type of crime stories in question) and ideological factors

(e.g., perceived aptness of story to target audience) were perceived as having any influence on

journalists' decisions to upload breaking crime news on official social media handles. Age, sex,

or rank of a respondent did not make a different to these perceptions.

In the sequential qualitative phase, different themes emerged for each of the three

research questions. Asked about effects of social media on journalism, three major themes

emerged: 1) Useful Tool for Journalists, 2) Adversely Influences News Industry, and 3) Has

Changed News Dissemination Process. When editors described positive usages of social media

platforms, they were grouped under three sub categories, namely: a) Useful as a source of

information, (b) Useful for engagement & reach, and (c) Useful for better-researched news

stories. Similarly, their reservations about social media platforms were grouped under three sub-

categories, namely: (a) Affects journalistic values, (b) Not a credible news source, and (c)

Accuracy is sacrificed at the altar of speed. Editors also spoke about a third, separate theme,

explaining how the news sharing or dissemination process had been affected by the advent of

social media as a breaking news source.

Asked about challenges and concerns these effects posed for journalism, three themes

emerged: Technology as untrustworthy; Routines, norms, and values under threat; and Lack of

knowledge among journalists. Finally, asked about strategies to address these emerging

challenges, five themes emerged: Training & education, Research & resources, Sticking to basic

rules of journalism, Adapt to change, and Innovation & hope.

CHAPTER VI: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The overarching purpose of this study was to examine how social media platforms affect newsroom gatekeeping practices in India, the emerging challenges, and possible sustainable strategies to help news organizations address those challenges while continuing to use social media as a professional tool. The findings of this sequential mixed method study will help both mass communication scholars and practitioners gain a deeper understanding of key challenges before Indian journalism that may be affecting public trust in mass media, including issues of fake news, and gatekeeping dilemmas.

Media scholars have largely looked at journalistic practices in news sourcing, selection and dissemination through the lens of Gatekeeping Theory (Singer, 1998; Singer, 2008; Shoemaker, Vos, & Reese, 2009; Shoemaker & Vos, 2009; Vos & Heinderyckx, 2015; Vos & Finneman, 2016). The findings indicate that structural foundations of mainstream news media have undergone tremendous changes in the past decade (Vos & Heinderyckx, 2015). Gatekeeping Theory and the Hierarchy of Influences Model, while still extremely relevant to mass media studies, must keep up with these radical changes and examine what new factors can better explain journalistic decision making. Any new model will have to be especially cognizant of differences that exist between media systems in different nations, news dissemination via multiple platforms and how socio-cultural, political, and economic situations affect journalistic practices because of such differences.

Methodologically, the present research adds a qualitative approach to the study of journalistic perceptions because online surveys are relatively inflexible (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). The qualitative in-depth interviews in this study confirm, clarify and elaborate on responses obtained from the survey. This approach offers a new perspective in measuring and explaining

journalistic decision making and aims to provide a holistic idea about social media's effect on journalism in India.

Finally, this study offers a measure of the actual practice of journalistic decision making regarding sourcing and selection of crime news when it breaks on social media, online-first practices of journalists, how they use social media to promote news, and how they view social media's usefulness as a professional tool. Till date, scholarly knowledge on this topic has been largely fragmented. This is particularly true of developing nations such as India where few studies have been conducted on the topic by media scholars. This study therefore, will hopefully help journalists and media managers understand how journalists in a non-Western democracy such as India are affected by social media, and offer insights into sustainable strategies to address emerging challenges.

Restating of Hypotheses & Research Questions

To recap, this study asked the following hypotheses on the influences on posting breaking crime news on a news organization's web site (H1) and promoting breaking crime news on a news organization's social media platforms (H2):

H1a: Individual factors will influence journalists' decision to promote breaking crime news on their organization's news website.

H1b: Journalistic Routine factors will influence journalists' decision to promote breaking crime news on their organization's news website.

H1c: Organizational factors will influence journalists' decision to promote breaking crime news on their organization's news website.

H1d: Institutional factors will influence journalists' decision to promote breaking crime news on their organization's news website.

H1e: Ideological factors will influence journalists' decision to promote breaking

H2a: Individual factors will influence journalists' decision to promote breaking crime news on their organization's social media platforms.

H2b: Journalistic Routine factors will influence journalists' decision to promote breaking crime news on their organization's social media platforms.

H2c: Organizational factors will influence journalists' decision to promote breaking crime news on their organization's social media platforms.

H2d: Institutional factors will influence journalists' decision to promote breaking crime news on their organization's social media platforms.

H2e: Ideological factors will influence journalists' decision to promote breaking crime news on their organization's social media platforms.

In addition, this dissertation study also investigated journalists' perceived usefulness and credibility of social media and how these two factors affect the uploading of breaking crime news on websites, and story promotion on social media. To that end, the following research questions were posed:

RQ1: How do journalists in India perceive the usefulness of social media as a professional tool?

*RQ2***:** How do journalists in India perceive the credibility of social media as a source of breaking news?

*RQ3a***:** To what extent do perceived credibility of social media as a source of breaking news and usefulness of social media as a professional tool, influence journalists' decisions to upload breaking crime news on their organization's website?

*RQ3b***:** To what extent do credibility of social media as a source of breaking news and usefulness of social media as a professional tool, influence journalists' decisions to promote breaking crime news on their organization's social media pages?

Furthermore, the researcher also examined whether biological sex and rank of journalists affect their decision to upload news on their organization's news website and promote the news on social media.

RQ4a: Do biological sex and rank of a journalist influence their decision to upload breaking crime news on their organization's news website?

RQ4b: Do biological sex and rank of a journalist influence their decision to promote breaking crime news on their organization's social media pages?

After obtaining the quantitative survey response, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with editors on the following three questions to gain insights about their views on social media's effect on journalism, emerging challenges, and strategies to address the challenges posed by social media:

*RQ5***:** How have social media affected journalism in India?

*RQ6***:** What challenges and concerns do these effects pose for journalism in India?

*RQ7***:** What sustainable strategies can be developed to address these emerging challenges?

The discussion section first analyzes the results on the two hypotheses and seven research questions in a holistic manner including contribution to theory building, and what it means or implications for journalism. Next, it addresses limitations of the research project. The concluding section includes a series of recommendations for journalists, media managers, and media scholars based on findings of the present study. It also proposes an agenda for future research on the topic.

Journalists' Online Gatekeeping Decisions and Emerging Challenges

The survey of journalists shows the Hierarchy of Influences Model, to a large extent, was mostly confirmed in the Indian setting and in online news and social media promotion decisions, as most of the hypotheses were supported. The only exception was promotion of crime news on social media. There are some nuances that are apparent from the results:

Influences on Web Uploading Decisions

Gatekeeping Driven by Fear of Negative Consequences. The findings indicate that individual, organizational, and social institutional factors were the most significant predictors of journalists' web uploading behavior when they were exposed to breaking news on social media platforms. Organizational factors included how journalists perceived their organization's focus on certain types of stories, and how they understood organizational diktats including their boss's likes and dislikes. Social institutional influences included advertisers, government agencies, public relations agencies, financial markets, and important sources. Therefore, the findings suggest that journalists' gatekeeping decisions or decisions whether to upload or reject a breaking crime story such as a murder, an act of rape, or a corporate fraud, are more likely to be influenced by how they feel the story will affect their bosses, important sources, or advertisers. In other words, decisions to source a breaking crime story from, say, Twitter and using it to upload a detailed story on the organization's website, are often influenced by concerns about job security, profits, and posting/uploading any news that seems to be trending and popular with social institutions.

Ethical Concerns Still Important. It was heartening to observe certain additional post-hoc findings gained through survey data and interview answers. They indicated that when uploading breaking crime stories on the web, journalists were more concerned about ethical issues such as

privacy, victim protection, and attribution of blame, compared to audience-centered factors such as the need to upload before rivals at any cost, and the need to increase page views. This finding offers a ray of hope for the future of Indian mass media. Although journalists work under increasing time pressure these days, as well as pressure from their organizations to upload breaking stories in real time, they still seem to be giving due importance to ethical matters when posting sensitive crime stories such as rapes and murders.

Younger Journalists Lack Online Journalism Training. The findings indicate that younger journalists were far more likely to upload breaking crime news from social media on to the web. Young age was a significant predictor of likelihood to post news online first and use social media to promote crime news. Yet, during the interviews, many editors said they were concerned about the lack of adequate training in social and online journalism rules among the new crop of journalists joining the profession. Even many older journalists, editors said, continued to resist change and fostered a hostile attitude towards social media. The findings suggest an immediate need to train and sensitize journalists both young and old, especially in the use of language and legalese when uploading sensitive crime stories such as rapes. Younger journalists are technology-savvy, but editors said many are not well-conversed in journalistic ethics and writing norms, especially on issues such as sex crimes or gender-related news stories.

Influences on Social Media Promotion Decisions

Social System Factors Interpreted Differently by Journalists. The survey findings show that social system factors and the perceived usefulness of platforms, were the only two significant predictors of journalists' social media promotion behavior. Social System or Ideological Factors are the highest level in the Hierarchy of Influences Model. It suggests that at the broadest level, journalists are influenced by ideological factors such as the social milieu of

their target audience, and the aptness of a story for that audience, and the felt need to convey specific information to the audience. How do journalists in India understand social system factors though? The results of the post-hoc analysis or the additional findings offered some insight into this. Why they felt they needed to upload breaking crime news on organizational social media handles could be divided into two areas: decisions that were influenced by concerns about their target audience, and those that were driven by business-related issues.

The average or mean score for the 5 items that showed audience focus was 3.51 (e.g., provide information, share other people's views, start discussion on topic). In comparison, the mean score for the 3 business focus items was 3.84 (e.g., link story to organizational website, increase page views, drives traffic to website). Even the audience-focus items could be interpreted as means to encourage the public to engage with a story so that they would visit the website, await the next news bulletin on TV, or the deeper analysis in next morning's newspaper, as a result of finding information on the brand's social media pages. In other words, gatekeeping decisions may be significantly influenced by a combination of what the audience wants, what will attract more visitors to a website, TV channel or newspaper, and consequently, what will bring in more revenues.

There is nothing fundamentally wrong about using multiple platforms to maximize profit in news organizations. After all, news organizations are also business organizations that need to stay profitable. However, what might be of greater concern is if increasing short-term viewership and consequent short-term profitability is coming at the cost of newsworthiness being sacrificed for stories that are sensational, will encourage chatter, and drive more viewers to a website or TV station. Whether such strategies—that many organizations seem to have employed for the past few years—are reasons for mainstream media gradually losing public trust and long-term

credibility, is a matter of debate. In other words, media managers will have to decide whether

they want to continue to use social media as a bait to bring the public back to their newspapers,

TV channels, and websites, and if this is the best long-term social media strategy they will

employ. If not, then they may want to investigate if focusing on profitability and increasing

viewership/readership in the short run is affecting public trust in journalism.

Online-First: Crime Stories and Need for Stricter Gatekeeping

This study specifically asked journalists how crime stories that broke first on social media

platforms, were selected for uploading on their organization's websites and social media handles.

Some journalists expressed surprise (in the comments section of the survey) as to why only crime

stories were mentioned in the questionnaire. They felt all news stories were equally verified by

journalists—not just crime stories. Since there was no way of asking surveyed journalists if they

felt crime stories needed stricter filters, in-depth interviews were used to seek clarification and

elaboration on the issue. Some editors acknowledged that crime stories such as rapes demand

strict scrutiny to ensure a victim's privacy is protected, or facts cross-checked. Others said since

gatekeeping norms were already strong in their organizations, crime stories did not need a higher

level of gatekeeping than existing norms. Overall, some editors indicated crime stories did not

need any special gatekeeping steps that are different from how political, sports, or business

stories are checked and verified. However, at least nine editors out of 18 interviewed

acknowledged the need for stricter filters when dealing with specific crime news such as rapes,

sexual harassment or gender-related crime stories.

There are a few issues to consider here. Crime stories such as rapes, murders, frauds, hit-

and-run cases, gender violence cases, or religious riots usually involve the lives, reputations,

careers, and families of all the people involved. An 'alleged murderer' incompletely identified

could lead to other people by the same name facing serious consequences at their workplace or neighborhood. A rape victim's name may be withheld but by identifying her rapist and perhaps her family details, the lives of the victim and her family may be put at risk. A word out of place when reporting a religious riot could incite yet another religious riot. It is unlikely that an inaccuracy in the match report of a soccer game would lead to similar reputational damage, or that an error in a political story, unless a very major one, would impact the lives of those mentioned in the story as profoundly.

Further, editors mentioned the lack of sensitization of staff, lack of diversity in the newsroom, and lack of knowledge about how to write crime stories, as three major concern areas. When such issues are not addressed, stereotypes are likely to be reinforced as successive generations of journalists blindly follow how their predecessors wrote crime stories, thereby perpetuating race, gender, and ethnic stereotypes. That is why, perhaps, many Indian news organizations continue to use terms such as *alleged rape* and *the woman claimed she was raped*, even in stories where perpetrators have confessed their crime to the police or in court.

Theoretical Contributions of the Findings

Cultural Differences & Hierarchy of Influences. Consistent with findings of previous work, journalists in India too do not deny that the fourth estate continues to have a strong public presence, and acts as the main agency through which news reaches the public. Like their counterparts in many other nations, Indian journalists too "still act as gatekeepers and embrace their gatekeeping roles," (Vos, 2015, p.11), and largely believe in the continued importance of their role as providers of accurate, timely, and relevant news. However, many editors made it clear they did not like the term *gatekeeper*, since they felt it devalues the work they do. They felt a journalist's role was not limited to simply watching the gates. They said there was, in fact, a

growing need to ensure inaccurate, false, and unverified information did not filter out to the

public, and therefore the need for newsrooms to be mimic air-conditioners. Editors also

unanimously acknowledged that there were different levels of influences that conditioned or

determined their news selection and dissemination decisions. However, India is culturally very

different from the United States or any European nation, even though it is also a functional

democracy. Linguistic, cultural, socio-economic and political conditions make journalism's role

unique in the Indian sub-continent. However, consistent with the findings of other recent studies

(e.g. Santana & Hopp, 2016, Singer, 2014), journalists in India also seemed to be influenced by

social media's usefulness as a factor that determined their news selection decisions.

While obviously a hierarchy of influences impacted their news selection decisions,

different levels or stages of the established HOI model seemed to blur or merge into one. The

findings indicate, for example, that Indian journalists do not distinguish between organizational

factors such as organizational focus, structures, and likes and dislikes of owners, and social

institutional factors such as advertising revenues, political parties, and business houses.

This is because, they explained, almost all major media organizations in India (apart from

government-run agencies) are owned by large private business families (e.g. *The Times of India*

Group is owned by the Jains, *Network 18* by the Ambani family, *NDTV* by Prannoy Roy, the

Jagran Group by the Gupta family, the *ABP Group* by the Sircar family, *The Hindu* Group by N.

Ram & family, and so on). They are either owned by one family or by multiple families. Many of

these owners are affiliated with large political parties (e.g., *The Hindu* is closely affiliated with

the Communist Party of India - Marxist, members of the *Jagran Group* are closely associated

with the BJP, The *National Herald* is perceived as a pro-Congress news organization) and

sometimes some of their family members may also sit in the Indian parliament as representatives

of these parties (e.g. the *Pioneer* newspaper's co-owner is a BJP-nominated Member of

Parliament).

For many of these families, the news business is not their main business—they dabble in

iron & steel, power, information technology, and many other sectors (Mukesh Ambani, the owner

of CNN-IBN, Forbes India, CNBC, and the entire Network 18 Group, is the richest Indian with

interests in steel, telecom, textiles etc.; the R.P. Goenka Group that owns several media brands,

has interests in power, manufacturing etc.). Therefore, organizational factors such as structure,

focus, and diktats are often influenced by the political and business affiliations of the

organization's owners and board of directors.

Platform Type Influences Story Selection. The findings show that a significant predictor of

journalists' decisions to upload or post breaking crime news online-first, was the perceived

usefulness of a platform. This was true for both website uploading decisions (perceived

usefulness $\beta = .168$, p< .01) and social media promotion decisions ($\beta = .149$, p< .05). No model

can explain every aspect of a phenomenon. The current HOI Model, remarkably successful as it

is in explaining most journalistic news selection behavior, is no exception to this rule. Platform

type is not a factor that would necessarily influence story selection or the gatekeeping process in

legacy media newsrooms. Crime stories that were good for print platforms were usually good for

TV too, with perhaps a few exceptions. However, on websites and social media, some breaking

stories are perceived to be not just newsworthy and timely, but also potentially attractive enough

to grab more eyeballs, or in other words, viewers, and hopefully advertisers, and suited to the

medium more than others. At least among the surveyed and interviewed journalists from India,

usefulness of platform was clearly a factor that influenced their news selection and dissemination

decisions.

This is consistent with recent studies in the United States, which found that while the new crop of online journalists respects some legacy media practices, they have adapted new technology to existing newsroom practices and environments by forming fresh norms that include transparency, individualism and risk taking (Agarwal & Barthel, 2015).

This indicates the HOI Model must address the new reality of multi-platform news distribution with appropriate adjustment. A modified HOI Model may need to incorporate this platform factor and expectation in its fold.

Gatekeepers or News-Conditioners? The findings also imply that at least sometimes, major gatekeeping decisions were made based on what was trending on social media, need for speed, inter-media rivalry, gaining eyeballs and ad revenues, instead of newsworthiness, accuracy, and perhaps even aptness for a target audience. While journalists insisted they controlled many of these gates, further research may investigate who has power and agency over what passes these gates in the Indian media industry. Findings from the in-depth interviews strongly indicate that media managers such as editors see their role mimicking that of an air-conditioner instead of a gatekeeper or *gatewatcher* (Bruns, 2011; Bruns & Highfield, 2015). An air-conditioner cannot stop people from stepping outside and breathing polluted air. However, it can ensure that those who stay within its range inside a room are provided the most ambient, filtered and best air. Similarly, as many editors acknowledged, journalists are increasingly unable to monitor all the gates. The public have access to news both genuine and fake, as the number of news sources multiply. Journalists cannot stop them from breathing *polluted air*. However, credibility and trust come when a news source provides accurate, timely, unbiased, updated information consistently. The job of honest journalism and good journalists will be to continue to provide such information consistently to its audiences, instead of trying to compete to upload information before millions

of netizens who may post or share information every second. In other words, they need to be

trusted news-conditioners that the public continue to use because the information they consume

is considered accurate, relevant, timely and therefore trustworthy. Ensuring high quality

journalism is the best solution to the erosion of trust and most effective defense to fake news.

Journalists' Perceptions about Social Media's Usefulness & Credibility

      Usefulness. The first research question asked about journalists' perceived usefulness of

social media platforms as a professional tool. Based on the responses of 274 journalists across 15

Indian cities, it is evident that journalists perceived social media platforms such as Twitter and

Facebook to be extremely useful. On a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being extremely useful, journalists

found social media platforms to be extremely useful for gathering information (mean=4.45),

sharing links (mean=4.69), checking breaking news (mean=4.56), monitoring public opinion

(mean=4.42), and verifying information (mean=3.35). Overall, the 5-item scale showed that

social media platforms were perceived as highly useful (overall mean 21.45 out of 25, or 84%)

by India's journalists.

      This indicates that journalists in India are very likely to use social media such as Twitter,

Facebook or WhatsApp to track developing news—including news in the crime genre—and

gather information from people tweeting or posting about the event. They are equally likely to

also cross-check such information with people/sources who are present on social media and who

they trust, just as they are likely to be influenced by trending topics on social media when making

decisions on what story to select and reject. Finally, journalists are also likely to use social media

to promote the same news that they may have sourced from social media—adding hyperlinks to

more in-depth stories available on their organization's website or videos to attract attention. In

other words, they are using social media platforms as marketing tools to garner more eyeballs,

readers, and viewers for their organization's newspapers, magazines, television channels, radio channels, or websites.

Using social media as a source and promotion platform because of its perceived professional usefulness is perfectly understandable. However, findings of the survey and in-depth interviews suggest that journalists may want to take a deep, hard look at how this perceived usefulness is affecting journalism practices. Are social media such as Twitter useful in boosting good journalism, writing more credible stories, reaching a wider audience, and gaining greater public trust? Or are they adversely affecting public trust in journalism as journalists do less and less spot reporting, falter in verifying information, getting direct quotes, and fail to involve community people in their stories? As one editor mentioned during the in-depth interviews "Twitter journalism is devoid of real experiences, and fraught with risks of inaccurate information, fake eye-witness accounts, and sources whom we have not met, or spoken to" (ED11).

Many editors did acknowledge beneficial uses of social media as a news source, to reach and engage with more people and construct well-informed stories. At the same time, most of them also showed concern at how over-dependence on social media had adversely affected journalistic routines, led to social media determining story importance and placement, and affected quality of stories as journalists sacrificed news accuracy at the altar of speed.

Implications

Mis(use) of Social Media and Effect on Public Trust. Social media as a cause of lowering news media credibility has increasing become a major concern to the journalism industry. A recent nationwide study that examined reasons for falling trust in mainstream journalism in USA (Freelon, Lopez, Clark, & Jackson, 2018)) found that 75% of Black

Americans, almost an equal percentage of those who identified as feminists, and a significant

section of Asian-Americans did not trust traditional news organizations and felt that mainstream

news media seldom accurately reported about their communities. One of the reasons the report

mentions as a cause for lack of public trust in modern-day journalism, is the failure of many

journalists to seek permission of person(s) they quote when sourcing tweets, posts and

information from social media. While Twitter privacy laws do allow using such data, this

practice poses two potential problems: physical, reputational, and emotional hazards for those

quoted, and reputation risk for journalists. A person may post on social media to reach out to

their inner group or friend circle. They may not have intentions of their tweet or post going viral.

When journalists embed a person's tweets without permission, this could lead to that person

being trolled online, harassed, or physically attacked. Further, when journalists use social media

posts as sources, or use a quote in their story, they do not establish a real-life connection, nor do

they have evidence that they spoke to a real eyewitness to the event being written about. In other

words, the risk of using data that cannot be verified is ever present.

   While the findings of this study's survey indicate that India's journalists perceived social

media as a useful professional tool, they also acknowledged the low credibility of social media as

their news sources. In-depth interviews with editors suggest that uncontrolled and unmonitored

social media usage from journalists is also an area of concern. As mentioned in the findings,

some editors expressed concerns about erroneous as well as vitriolic posts that some senior

journalists posted on social media. This, they argued, was done with the intention of gaining

short-term attention and consumers, or with the intention of pleasing those consumers who

already believed in such extremist ideologies. For example, when a prominent student leader of

an Indian university was arrested on charges of raising "anti-India" slogans (he was later

acquitted in court), some prominent senior journalists not only tweeted their anger at the student

leader, but consistently posted tweets that called for physical punishment including police torture

for people who were found to harbor anti-national sentiments. Social media messages can go

viral and many Indian journalists have over one million followers on Twitter. Such social media

messages from journalists can incite violence, as it did in this instance. Other editors spoke of

how a journalist once tweeted that a building was on fire, when the fact was that a neighboring

building had caught fire. The tweet was picked up and shared by the journalist's organization,

leading to panic among residents of the area.

Rules of Social Media Engagement for Journalists. An idea that was repeated by many

editors during the interviews was the need to ensure journalists should use social media optimally

and efficiently. One solution may be to allow journalists to become better acquainted with how to

use social media in the most efficient and ethical manner. News organizations may consider

allowing reporters and editors more time to pursue meaningful digital and social media

engagement—engagement that may not immediately impact the organization's bottom line. For

example, reporters can develop a list of people to follow on Twitter by observing who offer

insightful comments or accurate information in their specific beat over a three-month period.

Similarly, editors can use social media such as Twitter, Facebook or even WhatsApp groups to

observe trends and understand how audiences are reacting to a developing crime story (or any

story for that matter).

Another strategy many editors spoke about, is a concept that is already being considered

by organizations such as the *Times of India* Group in India and the *New York Times* in the United

States. This involves setting specific guidelines of social media usage for journalists, and to link

social media behavior to performance review. By doing so, organizations can send a powerful

message to journalists about the importance of social media posts and remind them that what they post on social media affects public trust and perceptions about their organization.

Back in 2014, for instance, journalists of the *Times of India* Group (formally known as Bennett Coleman & Co.) were apparently requested to hand over their social media passwords to the company, so that the latter could monitor their posts (Kirkland, 2014; Sruthijit, 2014). While that plan did not quite work, the group now has many of its senior journalists' tweet or post any journalistic material only from their official accounts where they are easily identifiable as belonging to the Times of India (TOI), Economic Times (ET) etc. (e.g., @Name_TOI or @Name_ET). This way audiences know they are reading a journalist's tweets, and journalists know what they post also reflects on their organization's reputation (Sruthijit, 2014). In October 2017, the *New York Times* instituted a new social media policy that informed staff journalists not to "express partisan opinions, promote political views, endorse candidates, make offensive comments or do anything else that undercuts the Times's journalistic reputation" in their social media posts (New York Times, 2017). Journalists were further told that department heads would be responsible for making sure guidelines were followed by concerned journalists, and that any violations would have an adverse effect on performance reviews. The concerns raised by editors interviewed for this study also indicated the need for some such steps to ensure social media platforms are used more responsibly by journalists.

Credibility. The findings indicate that journalists by and large do not consider social media platforms as credible sources for information, even though they perceive such platforms as useful. The mean score for the 7-item scale was 18 out of 35, a low credibility score of just over 50%. On a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being very credible and 1 being not credible at all, only one item (mostly representative) had a mean score of 3.01. The mean scores were much lower for all six

other items where journalists were asked to rate social media messages in terms of accuracy

(2.87), objectivity (2.65), expertise (2.26), believability (2.80), authenticity (2.57), and

completeness (2.25). During the interviews, most editors concurred with the survey outcome,

confirming the finding that journalists are skeptical about trusting any news that appears on

social media, although such information is often used to post initial stories on social media or on

their websites, start investigating stories, and seek quotes from those who post about the topic on

social media.

Implications

    Interaction between Usefulness & Credibility. Journalists see social media as useful

but not credible. This sounds almost ironic. However, during the interviews editors elaborated

and clarified the distinction between the two perceptions. They argued that journalists find social

media useful to engage with audiences, attract them to more in-depth coverage on their legacy

platforms, as well as to find out the latest news, trending topics and events, and possible

witnesses to those events. At the same time, the editors felt most journalists acknowledge that

some information on social media could be inaccurate and inauthentic. For example, people can

pretend to be eyewitnesses or experts, or morph images to misinform others. Many of the editors

felt journalists by and large enforce strict gatekeeping norms, such as cross-checking and

verifying information before using social media posts as part of official social media posts, or

website updates.

    It remains an area of concern however, that journalists have low trust in what they read or

see on social media but continue to use the platform for both sourcing and sharing

breaking/developing information. The lack of credibility of social media posts is not limited to

journalists alone. Previous studies have shown that only to people whose media skepticism is

irrelevant to their motivation for news exposure, the source does not matter. Most others

consume news primarily from sources they trust (Tsfati, & Cappella, 2005). So, if trust in social

media posts is generally low, journalists must take additional steps to come across as bearers of

credible, accurate information when posting on Twitter, Facebook, or on their organization's

websites. These additional steps may include using social media posts to show transparency,

inform audiences about how they sourced a story, respond to audience feedback, even if the

feedback is negative, and use social media to tell untold anecdotes that did not find space in the

printed or televised version.

Overcoming Credibility Issues through Transparency, and Engagement. Recent

studies conducted in the United States (e.g., Freelon, Lopen, Clark, & Jackson, 2018) reiterate

the findings of the present study that journalists should acknowledge and be transparent about

how they have sourced a story. If a story is not based on spot reporting by a member of the staff

or written based on sources the reporter has spoken to directly, and instead is sourced from

various agencies including social media posts, then the tweet, Facebook post, or website story

should acknowledge that fact. This is a practice that some news organizations have already

started.

The Mumbai-based *Mid-Day* newspaper's website, for example, has the following

disclaimer at the end of any breaking/developing crime story that is based on third-party sources

(Mid-Day, 2018):

"This story has been sourced from a third-party syndicated feed, agencies. Mid-day

accepts no responsibility or liability for its dependability, trustworthiness, reliability and data of

the text. Mid-day management/mid-day.com reserves the sole right to alter, delete or remove

(without notice) the content in its absolute discretion for any reason whatsoever".

As some editors said, lack of trust and credibility in what is posted on social media, even when such posts are from journalists, is often because of lack of transparency from journalists. A Knight Foundation (2018) study that examined Twitter feeds of thousands of Americans belonging to different communities to understand why trust in journalism was declining, found that journalists were increasingly coming across as aloof, disconnected and opinionated, who were neither engaging with people nor being transparent about their stories on social media.

The message is clear: journalists need to come across as real people. Twitter or Facebook posts, or even blogs on news websites that detail their day and their emotions, often make them more human to the common reader.

Further, social media offers a wonderful opportunity to tell audiences anecdotes and stories that did not make it to the newspaper, larger web story or TV news. Journalists need to use social media more to tell readers additional information, extra knowledge about a breaking or developing story that TV viewers or newspaper readers may not have. At the same time, social media must be used for the purpose it was originally created: socialize and engage with others! Journalists should consider responding to public comments, even if those comments are negative or critical. Replying to a tweet or responding to a comment on a web story not only provides journalists with an opportunity to explain an error or clarify a point with readers, it helps build trust and credibility, as Jahng & Littau's (2015) experiment found more interaction enhances credibility of journalists to their audience.

Journalists also need to make sure the breaking or developing crime stories they post on social media platforms do not fall into the same category of 'less trusted' messages posted by some members of the public. One of the best ways to address this concern is to be more transparent about the story or information that is promoted or shared. If journalists used short

Facebook posts to share the story behind the story—how they worked to break a sexual

harassment story, the challenges they faced, and how they addressed those challenges—they

would come across as transparent, and therefore possibly more believable.

Sustainable Strategies to Address Emerging Challenges

Several common themes or strategic solutions emerged from the interviews with 18

editors. Editors spoke of training and sensitization of journalists, investing in research teams,

increasing diversity within the newsroom, and empowering journalists, at the same time setting

down ground rules for them to adapt to the changing speed-driven needs of modern online-first

journalism. Analyzing the suggestions and opinions of all 18 editors as well as the findings of

some very recent journalistic reports such as the Knight Foundation report (2018), and the *New

York Times* internal diversity report (2018), it is evident that Indian journalists and media

managers need to focus on four key areas.

Inclusivity: Need for Resources. News reporters and reporting teams across India's

newsrooms often have one common problem—they are heavily male dominated. This is

especially true of crime bureau or crime reporting teams. Much like the world of crime patrolling

where studies have shown that many police teams including campus police lack adequate female

officers and are heavily male dominated (Oehme, Stern, & Mennicke, 2015), crime reporting,

indeed most areas of the newsroom remain male domains (York, 2017; Vanasco, 2013; North,

2016). Newsrooms are also often the domain of those belonging to more privileged social

groups. Journalists from underrepresented sections of society such as from lower socio-economic

classes, minority groups, or castes, seldom find place in reporting teams. The percentage of

journalists from socio-economically backward or religious minority groups in any of India's

newsrooms will give a fair idea of the extent of this problem. The *New York Times* recently

showed courage in acknowledging some of their own diversity shortcomings in an extensive

report of their organizational diversity or the lack of it over the years (NYT, 2018). The report

showed how ethnic minorities continue to be greatly underrepresented in newsrooms, as do

women in leadership roles.

Lack of inclusion or diversity in the newsroom often means voices of many members of

the community are shunted out. Research has shown that communities or groups are less likely to

appreciate stories about them that are told by outsiders (e.g., Alcoff, 2008). When journalists

from privileged English-educated backgrounds in India visit poverty-stricken villages to cover

stories of malnutrition and hunger, members of rural communities often do not speak to those

reporters since they are perceived as outsiders. Such journalists are also less likely to understand

the challenges of living in rural India, a world far removed from their urban upbringing.

Similarly, it is difficult for members of one ethnic or religious group to understand the specific

issues of another community.

Therefore, while the perceived benefits of social media indicate that journalists should

continue to use Twitter and Facebook to source and share information and engage with a wider

audience, they should not do so at the cost of visiting the spot and talking to in-group members of

a community to include their perspectives in any story. At the same time, news organizations

need to be more inclusive within. A diverse workplace may lead to greater acceptance and trust

in a specific news brand since diverse workforces are likely to show more empathy for diverse

members of society.

Addressing Stereotypes: Need for Training & Education. Editors acknowledged that

journalists often create generalizable terms to define specific groups such as urban women,

millennials, teenagers, working women, single parents, etc. While there are some obvious factors

that may bind them together, there are bound to be significant differences between members of such communities. Social media presence often acts as a hindrance to in-depth investigative crime, civic, or health beat stories and leads to surface-skimming journalism. An inclusive newsroom does not always mean a representative newsroom. Some editors said their organizations needed to build on previous storied histories of a group, and not just rehash the same stereotype introduction to that community in every story. For news organizations, one of the best ways to address this concern would be by conducting regular training and sensitization sessions for both new and existing journalists.

  Acknowledging Social Media Sources: Stick to Legacy Media Rules. Journalists are heavy users of social media (Sylvie,2007; Brands, Graham, & Broersma, 2018). Both the survey results and interviews indicated that journalists also extensively use social media as a source of news and information (Heravi, & Harrower 2016; Paulussen, & Harder, 2014). This includes quoting sources, embedding tweets or Facebook posts, and using visuals uploaded by citizen users. Social media platforms give easy access to such information. However, journalists often do not acknowledge where they receive this information from (Freelon, Lopez, Clarck, & Jackson, 2018) or simply cite a handful of powerful influencers, ignoring others or using their contributions without acknowledging them (Broersma, & Graham, 2016). Studies that have examined declining public trust in mass media have found that one of the reasons is that social media-driven journalism is often bereft of proper source citations (Paulussen, & Harder, 2014). Perhaps when using a tweet or post, journalists should acknowledge the source, and seek permission before using that person's social media post in the story—much in the same way a journalist would seek permission to interview a person for a story. By seeking permission from the person who has posted on social media, journalists can conduct a form of verification, and

this act makes the respondent feel more included and invested in the story. Again, building such a culture within newsrooms will require news organizations to conduct regular social media etiquette sessions for their journalists, till higher education institutions include such topics in their mass communication curriculum.

   Privacy Concerns & Adapting to Changing Journalism. One of the issues or sub-themes that emerged from the interviews referred to concerns of privacy and source protection when sources were cited from social media. These were not comments that came from editors during the interviews, but implications that became obvious to the researcher as the interview data were analyzed.

   As extensive users of social media, journalists often cite social media sources by embedding tweets or using a Facebook post without a person's permission, assuming posts publicly available are free to use. On legacy platforms, journalists were/are aware of source protection and take necessary safeguards so that their trusted sources are not exposed to dangers. However, journalists seldom build similar relationships with online sources, where quotes are often randomly taken from pages of people who seem to be saying something relevant at the time, irrespective of whether they are an old source of not. In such cases, the source is unaware that he or she is being cited as an eyewitness in a crime story or as a commentator on a case of corporate fraud. This can create major privacy issues and risks for those being quoted. The sources are open to threat, physical harm, or at the very least being trolled online for a quote they did not know they were providing to a website or a news media organization. On traditional platforms, journalists often grant anonymity on requests by such sources when danger is anticipated. This is particularly true in case of crime stories. If post publication, the safety of a social media source is in danger, such tweets or posts can also be removed from online content.

In other words, consistent with the emerging theme of adapting to change, the findings of the study suggest that journalists may do well to adapt by modifying traditional sourcing and source protection practices to social media and online journalism.

Overall, a majority of the editors agreed on many key issues such as the need to increase diversity in newsrooms, provide more training for journalists especially in the crime beat, ensure better training and education at the university level by updating syllabi to include social media journalism, invest in online research teams, and the need to adapt to changing media ecology by modifying best practices to suit demands of high-speed journalism.

Limitations of Study

Assumptions. Two assumptions were made for this study. First, it was assumed that responses gathered from the individual interviews with editors were truthful and to the best of their knowledge, as their responses were self-reported. Second, it was assumed that the journalists who responded to the anonymous survey were also honest in their responses and answered to the best of their knowledge, since their responses too were self-reported.

Limitations. There are six limitations identified with this study. First, there is a limitation in the generalizability of this study as the survey was sent out through three press clubs. Even though these press clubs are some of the largest in India, the sample does not necessarily represent all Indian journalists.

Second, the timeline of data collection spanned about two months, and it is not known if any specific news items or controversies in any region of India may have affected the way in which survey respondents or interviewees responded. But at the national level, the researcher was not aware of any major incident that might affect the responses to the study.

Third, the survey results describe the process of news gathering, perceived usefulness and credibility of social network sites, and factors that journalists perceive as most influential in their news selection decisions. However, the survey was not able to reveal the reasons behind such perceptions. The in-depth interview offered some insights into why journalists or news organizations make their news selection decisions. However, specific journalists covering crime news were not interviewed so it is not known how well the editors' views aligned with those of journalists who were on the front line.

Fourth, the qualitative interviews were with a relatively small numbers of (18) editors and provided individual portraits. These are perhaps unique but not representative of the entire population of editors across India.

Fifth, both in the choice of interview questions and survey questions, it was difficult to completely keep out researcher bias. Further, interview notes were written through the researcher's own lens and may not always align with what the participants were thinking when providing their responses. These act as possible limitations to the study. The sample only consisted of English language elite news media. The practice of non-English popular press needs to be further studied.

Finally, while the survey questionnaire asked respondents to state their general area or area of work (e.g. news, features, business, sports), they were not asked about specific beats (e.g. crime, health, finance). Therefore, it is impossible to say how many of the respondents were crime reporters, or worked on crime stories on the news desk. However, most reporters work on different beats and change beats throughout their careers, especially those in the general news area. Also, even if they specialize in a different beat such as health, or sports, or business, reporters are very likely to have worked on more than one crime story that originated on their

beat (e.g. a sexual abuse investigation in a hospital, a sportsperson accused or murder, a company CEO accused of fraud). Further, news desk journalists or those who are not reporters (e.g., sub-editors, chief copy editors, producers, content managers) often work on a variety of stories including crime stories, Therefore, irrespective of their specialized area of interest, it can be assumed that a large number of respondents if not all of them, had some experience with crime news in their careers.

Recommendations for the Indian Journalism Industry

By collecting quantitative and qualitative data in a sequential manner, this study has attempted to advance the field of journalism in the sphere of gatekeeping practices and influences on such practices in an online-first era. Based on research findings, the following section presents some suggestions for journalists and media managers.

Suggestions for Journalists

Which Social Media Practices Adversely Affect Good Journalism: Indian journalists may want to take a deep, hard look at how perceived usefulness of social media platforms is affecting journalism practices such as sourcing information, citing sources, source protection, providing authentic and accurate information—since all these factors contribute to public trust in mass media. At the same time, they should be aware that they seem to be paying less attention to time-tested routines such as verification of information, spot reporting, and including real community voices (as opposed to tweets & posts) in their stories, and these practices are adversely affecting their credibility, or the credibility of information they are sharing with the public.

Spend Time Learning How to Utilize Social Media Efficiently: Journalists need to become better trained in social media etiquettes & rules. Studies conducted by Pew Research

Center (2018) and the Knight Foundation (2018) in the United States strongly recommend that

journalists spend more time on social media learning how to use it more efficiently (e.g., observe

for a month and make list of sources that consistently post authentic, accurate information in a

specific area such as crime, or politics). At the same time, journalists should also use social

media as a tool to show transparency, telling people how a story was sourced. Journalists should

also use social media to give readers additional information that those who watch their TV news

or newspaper report may not have since not all news can be fitted in television or print. Finally,

social media is a social tool and journalists should use it to engage with audience members and

respond to public comments, even when these are negative. As this researcher's study

(Chattopadhyay, 2017) has shown that people are likely to be less hostile to journalists if they

respond to negative comments and engage with their readers, journalists should use social media

not only to promote news but also to clarify misunderstandings and respond to pubic concerns.

Suggestions for Media Managers

   Allow Journalists to Get Acquainted with Social Media Usage*:* Social media are no

magical tools. Using social media as sourcing, sharing, and marketing tools may give news

organizations short-term gains, but not long-term ones. If journalists are to learn optimum usage

of social media, then media managers should allow reporters and editors more time to pursue

meaningful digital and social media engagement—engagement that may not immediately impact

the organization's bottom line.

   Link Social Media Behavior to Appraisal. In a recent report presented to its staff, the

New York Times (2018) set out clear rules of social media behavior for its journalists and

mentioned that their social media footprints would form part of their annual performance review.

In India, the *Times of India* has initiated a similar concept for its employees.

Indian media has often (and rightfully) argued in favor of self-governance when faced

with attempts by the government to crack down on media freedom. Self-governance was never as

necessary as it is in an era when journalists can share any opinion or information they want at the

click of a button. It is hard to blame journalists since very few rules or guidelines exist in social

media journalism. Organizations should come together under the umbrella of the Press Council

of India (PCI) and form a collective set of rules for social media and online journalism (akin to

the 111-page PCI guidelines for mainstream journalism). The alternative is that organizations

form their own guidelines and hold own journalists accountable for following those guidelines.

Even if journalists state on their Twitter handles that "retweets are not endorsements", and that

"views are personal"—members of the public are always likely to consume any such information

as reflecting that journalists' organization and brand. If journalists' performances are judged by

the quality of stories they write, edit, or design in a newspaper, or the stories they unearth for

their TV channel, then by the same yardstick, it is only fair that they also be judged by the quality

of their social media posts, and posts they write or edit for their organization's website.

Invest in Human Resources for Social Media Teams: Media managers cannot expect

journalists to show desired results unless they are ready to invest in online and social media

journalism. Social media and digital teams are notoriously lean in many media houses, with often

the web team also handling social media platforms—sometimes just one person handling all

social media at any given time. If social media are to be used optimally, not only do news

organizations need more people to work on those teams, but they need a significant research

team. In an era when fake news is rampant, as are morphed photographs and inaccurate

information—it is critical to have a strong online research team that can quickly research and

verify the authenticity of a breaking or developing news. Similar teams exist in television

channels. Unless media owners invest in similar resources for social and digital media platforms, returns and gains may only be short term, with disastrous longer-term consequences.

Correct Diversity Imbalance within Newsrooms: More diversity within organizations leads to greater empathy about others, and that in turn leads to more inclusive journalism—making a news organization more credible, trustworthy and successful in the long run. Media managers will urgently need to correct these imbalances. Of the 274 survey respondents, for instance, 135 were women. However, only 47 of them identified as general news journalists, e.g. working on political, crime, health, civic, legal, business, sports and other reporting beats, or on the general news desk. A majority identified as working in features, lifestyle, entertainment sections, or other areas. Even among those who identified as belonging to the news department, chances are a significant number belonged to the copy desk where they edited news copies, instead of being out in the field covering crime, health or other beats. Extant studies have shown religious minorities and members of economically disadvantaged groups and underdeveloped regions are underrepresented in newsrooms.

In the United States, both higher education institutions and mass media organizations are mandated to increase workforce diversity. Many academic programs in U.S. universities for instance, lose their accreditation if they do not fulfil workforce diversity standards. India is an equally diverse country, a land of multiple linguistic, ethnic, religious and cultural groups. Although there is no legal requirement on newsroom staff diversity, media organizations that fail to reflect this diversity in their workforce are already paying the price of gradually losing support from their readers and will probably pay a higher price in the days ahead as education levels and access to digital technology rises across the Indian heartland, and the once downtrodden and economically backward communities gain a voice.

Scope for Future Research

The findings of this study contribute significantly to the HOI Model in a different cultural context, and open new questions that may further enrich Gatekeeping Theory. However, like many other studies, there are many questions that remain unanswered in this study, creating opportunities for future studies in the area.

This study examines Indian journalists' perceptions about social media, the effects of those perceptions on their online gatekeeping behaviors, and the different factors that influence their gatekeeping decisions. A comparative study of Indian and American journalists, for example, could help media scholars and journalists understand how similarly or differently social media have affected news selection and dissemination practices in the world's two largest democracies. Similar studies can also be conducted in other developing nations, to examine how HOI plays out in different cultures and political climates, such as in non-democracies.

Another direction is to expand the effect of social media to other news genres. This study primarily examined the effects of social media on journalists breaking crime news selection and dissemination behavior. Previous studies have examined how social media have affected political reporting in European nations and North America. It would be interesting to see how social media have affected genres such as lifestyle journalism or sports journalism that depend a lot on the lives of and quotes from celebrities, sports stars, and the rich & famous—many of whom are hard to reach for face-to-face interactions but are highly accessible on social media.

The present study collected cross-sectional data. This means data was collected at a single point of time. It is not known if specific incidents such as a crime event, or a government announcement occurred at the time that influenced the responses of at least some journalists. A longitudinal study that examines social media's effect on journalism in India over different time

periods, may lead to a more nuanced understanding of how social media's ability to constantly be

the first to break news affects and influences journalists' online-first behavior, and track the

changes over time on social media practices of news organizations and journalists.

This study employed a mixed method approach. However, both surveys and in-depth

interviews are essentially self-reporting by respondents. Even when answering anonymous

surveys, respondents are known to answer in a manner that seem most politically correct. Further,

many interview respondents and survey respondents knew the researcher personally, and this too

could have affected their answers. A field observation study or a laboratory experiment where

journalists are observed as they source content from social media, upload on the web and

promote them on social media, may provide further validation for the findings of this study.

Similarly, a content analysis will be useful to compare journalists' actual social media reportage

habits with how they respond to a survey on sourcing habits, source attribution, and

responsiveness to reader feedback.

Finally, this study examined Indian journalists' perceptions of social media as a credible

tool and their perceptions about how influential such platforms are. Few studies have examined

to what extent the public in India trust information they receive from journalists or news

organizations via social media, and whether they find such information (that they read on news

organizations' social media handles) more or less credible than information they consume on

traditional platforms such as newspapers or television channels. Such audience perceptions will

validate assumptions of the journalism industry about audience expectations and understandings

of their social media practices and identify unmet needs of the audiences.

Summary

Chapter VI analyzes the research data in greater detail. The first section of Chapter VI analyzes the findings of the study, specifically the seven research questions and two hypotheses, in greater detail, and discusses implications of the findings for journalism. Among the seven research questions, the first four are quantitative ones. The findings indicate that social media was perceived as a very useful professional tool by journalists, even though they perceived social media's credibility to be low. The implications of this apparent irony are discussed, including (mis)use of social media and its effects, the need for training journalists in social media rules, and possible setting up of guidelines to aid journalists' use of social media more efficiently. Similarly, implications related to credibility issues are analyzed, such as the need for journalists to be more transparent and use social media as a tool to engage with audiences and be perceived as real people.

Influences or factors that influence journalists' news selection and dissemination decisions are analyzed next. The findings implied that gatekeeping decisions during web uploading were often driven by fear of organizational diktats, advertiser revenues, and profit margins—items that were directly related to salary concerns and job security concerns of journalists. Yet, ethical concerns were considered important by journalists when uploading breaking crime stories on websites. When uploading on social media handles however, only the perceived usefulness of the platform, and social system concerns influenced journalists' decisions. However, 'social system' level factors were perhaps interpreted by journalists as the posts being attractive to audiences, driving traffic back to websites or traditional platforms, starting conversations, and increasing page views.

The contribution of the findings to theory building is discussed next, such as the blurring of organizational and social institutional factors for Indian journalists since most Indian media houses are owned by large business magnates and their families who either belong to a political party or are closely associated with one. The implications of platform type or usefulness of a platform influencing story selection decisions is also discussed, along with how this affects the Hierarchy of Influence Model. The findings also suggest that journalists were not keen to be referred to as gatekeepers any longer, since there are many gatekeepers in today's world. They saw their role more as a filter, an air-conditioner that filters out polluted air and offers the most ambient air (news) to its audiences.

The final part of this section discusses implications of the strategic solutions offered by editors to address the emerging challenges mentioned earlier. They include making stories and newsrooms more inclusive by adding necessary human resources, conducting training and skill workshops to break stereotypes when reporting crime stories (o other types of stories), a return to core values of good journalism to address concerns regarding sourcing stories from social media, and finally, adapting to changing trends in journalism to ensure sources received the same level of protection they did in traditional platforms.

The second section discusses the limitations and assumptions of the study. Limitations include the lack of generalizability of findings, cross-sectional nature of the data, relatively small number of in-depth interviews, and presence of researcher bias. Assumptions include a belief that survey, and interview respondents had answered the questions truthfully and to the best of their knowledge. The final section offers suggestions for journalists and media managers and discusses future research opportunities for media scholars interested in the topic.

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APPENDIX A. IRB APPROVAL LETTER

BGSU.

BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY

Office of Research Compliance

DATE: February 17, 2017

TO: DHIMAN CHATTOPADHYAY
FROM: Bowling Green State University Institutional Review Board

PROJECT TITLE: [1010962-2] Journalistic Decision Making During Breaking Crime News in
                         Online-First Era: Effect of Social Media on News Sourcing & Dissemination in
                         India
SUBMISSION TYPE: Revision

ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: February 14, 2017
EXPIRATION DATE: January 25, 2018
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category # 7

Thank you for your submission of Revision materials for this project. The Bowling Green State University
Institutional Review Board has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate
risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be
conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

The final approved version of the consent document(s) is available as a published Board Document in
the Review Details page. You must use the approved version of the consent document when obtaining
consent from participants. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between
the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy
of the consent document.

Please note that you are responsible to conduct the study as approved by the IRB. If you seek to make
any changes in your project activities or procedures, those modifications must be approved by this
committee prior to initiation. Please use the modification request form for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED
adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS
regarding this project must also be reported promptly to this office.

This approval expires on January 25, 2018. You will receive a continuing review notice before your project
expires. If you wish to continue your work after the expiration date, your documentation for continuing
review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date.

Good luck with your work. If you have any questions, please contact the Office of Research Compliance
at 419-372-7716 or orc@bgsu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all
correspondence regarding this project.

APPENDIX B. SURVEY INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Online First: The Role of Social Media in Journalistic Decision-Making for Breaking Crime

News in India

Principal Investigator: Dhiman Chattopadhyay, PhD student

Academic Advisor: Louisa Ha, Professor

School of Media & Communication at Bowling Green State University

Informed Consent for all participants

Introduction: Thank you for expressing an interest in this study! As a researcher from the

School of Media and Communication at Bowling Green State University (BGSU), we are

interested in learning about the perspectives of professional journalists like you who are currently

working a newspaper, magazine, television channel or news website in India. Each participant

must be over 18 years of age.

Purpose: The purpose of this research is to explore how India's professional journalists go about

their day-to-day work of news sourcing, selection and dissemination, how they view social media

as a source of breaking news and as a tool for professional use to source, select and report news,

and finally how they understand the concept of uploading breaking news in online news websites

in real time.

Procedure: Participation in this study consists answering a 15-20 minute online survey where you will be asked to complete a questionnaire about yourself and your perceptions of the day-to-day work of journalists like you in today's environment. All participants who complete this survey and consent to provide their email address at the end of the survey automatically enter a lucky draw to win one of 25 gift cards worth Rs.325 (approximately USD 5) each. The odds of winning are approximately 1:20. Winners will be notified by email and the gift coupons delivered by post or email as desired. Further, all participants who give their email addresses will also receive an executive summary of the survey's findings.

The intention of the study is to understand how each of you source, select and disseminate news in an era when news is often uploaded online first and your views on social media, online uploading of news, news sourcing and selection processes used and issues that concern you in your profession today. The findings of this survey are likely to not only help all professional journalists understand how their colleagues and the industry as a whole functions today, but also help editors and future editors gain a deeper understanding of the complex nature of mainstream news media industry today.

Voluntary nature: Your participation is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time. You may decide to skip questions, avoid topics, or discontinue participation at any time. Deciding to participate or not will not affect your relationship with Bowling Green State University or the researcher.

Confidentiality Protection: All of your responses will be kept confidential on a secure online survey site; only the researcher and his adviser will have access to your specific responses. At the

end of the survey, you will be prompted to enter your name and email address in address in case

you want to be entered for the gift card/coupon drawing. After all the data is collected, the

principal investigator/researcher will download the master data spreadsheet from the secure

survey site. The will then remove all identifying information (e.g. names, contact information)

from the data spreadsheet, so your specific answers will not be linked to your personal identity.

The list of participants' names, and email addresses will be kept on a separate document titled

"confidential list of participants". This document will be kept on a secure, password-protected

computer; only the principal investigator/researcher will have access to this document. **The**

confidential list will be destroyed within one month after data is completely collected and

the lucky draw for the gift cards is conducted.

The cleaned data spreadsheet (i.e. that lacks any identifiable information) will be kept securely

on password protected computers by the principal investigator. As with all online surveys, we

encourage participants to complete this study using a personal computer, as some employers may

use tracking software; also please avoid leaving a survey open if using a public computer or a

computer that others may have access to. Finally, please make sure to clear your browser cache

and page history after completing the survey.

Risks: Participation in this study involves minimal risk. As mentioned above, we will work

diligently to safeguard your confidentiality and ensure your privacy. Any self-identifying

information provided through interview answers will be removed or replaced with pseudonyms

in the transcription process. For example, if you specify the name of a friend or a specific

organization, we will replace those names with pseudonyms to protect all parties' identities. If

you do experience any distress from your participation, we recommend contacting The LINK at

+1 419-352-1545 or http://www.behavioralconnections.org.

Contact information: If you have any questions about this research project, please contact

Dhiman Chattopadhyay, Principal Investigator, at dhimanc@bgsu.edu or by phone at +1-419-

819-1227. If your concern has not been satisfactory met, you may then contact the academic

advisor of the principal investigator, Dr. Louisa Ha at louisah@bgsu.edu / +1-419-372-9103 or

the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Board at + 1-419-372-7716 or hsrb@bgsu.edu. Thank

you for your time.

Indication of Consent:

I have been informed of the purposes, procedures, risks and benefits of this study. I have had the

opportunity to have all my questions answered and I have been informed that my participation is

completely voluntary. I am at least 18 years old.

_____

Participant's Printed Name   Signature   Date

_____

Researcher Team Member's Name   Signature   Date

_____

Principal Investigator's Signature

APPENDIX C. INTERVIEW INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Online First: The Role of Social Media in Journalistic Decision-Making for Breaking Crime

News in India

Principal Investigator: Dhiman Chattopadhyay, PhD student

Academic Advisor: Louisa Ha, Professor

School of Media & Communication at Bowling Green State University

<u>Informed Consent for all participants</u>

Introduction: Thank you for expressing an interest in this study! As a researcher from the

School of Media and Communication at Bowling Green State University (BGSU), we are

interested in interviewing senior editors working in India's newspapers, magazines and news

websites. Each participant must a current journalist in India with a minimum experience of 10

years as a journalist in India.

Purpose: The purpose of this research is to explore the perceptions of media leaders such as

editors about how professional journalists and mainstream news organizations source, select and

disseminate news, especially crime news that breaks on social media, for their online audiences.

Further, this phase of the study focuses on what media leaders such as senior editors feel are the

biggest concerns or challenges that news breaks on social media and the need to update news

instantly on organizational websites, pose for the news media industry and how they feel these

challenges can be best tackled.

Procedure: Participation in this study consists of answering a series of interview questions and a short questionnaire. Each interview will take approximately 30 to 60 minutes to complete. The interview will be conducted in a one-on-one setting with the principal research. Each interview will be completed in a professional and private environment, such as an office or conference room. Both the researcher and you must agree to the location of your interview session.

Voluntary nature: Your participation is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time. You may decide to skip questions, avoid topics, or discontinue participation at any time. Deciding to participate or not will not affect your relationship with Bowling Green State University or the researcher.

Confidentiality Protection: All of your responses will be kept confidential. Although your interview responses will be maintained on a digital audio recorder, you have the right to state whether you want your identity not to be revealed. If you choose that your real name not be used in the project, the researcher will give you a pseudonym during the interview session, thereby not linking any of your answers to your specific identity. All of your answers will be attached to this pseudonym, separating your unique name and identity from your responses.

Your real name will then be kept on a *separate* list in a locked file cabinet by the Principal Investigator. To maintain your confidentiality, the signed consent documents, digital audio recording, and pseudonym list will be kept in separate, secure locations by the Principal Investigator. Thus, the researcher will work diligently to maintain your confidentiality. If you choose not to remain anonymous, that decision too will be respected.

Risks: Participation in this study involves minimal risk. As mentioned above, we will work diligently to safeguard your confidentiality and ensure your privacy. If you choose to be anonymous, any self-identifying information provided through interview answers will be removed or replaced with pseudonyms in the transcription process. For example, if you specify the name of a friend or a specific organization, we will replace those names with pseudonyms to protect all parties' identities. If you do experience any distress from your participation, we recommend contacting The LINK at +1 419-352-1545 or http://www.behavioralconnections.org.

Contact information: If you have any questions about this research project, please contact Dhiman Chattopadhyay, Principal Investigator, at dhimanc@bgsu.edu or by phone at (419) 819-1227. If your concern has not been satisfactory met, you may then contact the academic advisor of the principal investigator, Dr. Louisa Ha at louisah@bgsu.edu / +1-419-372-9103 or the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Board at + 1-419-372-7716 or hsrb@bgsu.edu. Thank you for your time.

Indication of Consent:

I have been informed of the purposes, procedures, risks and benefits of this study. I have had the opportunity to have all my questions answered and I have been informed that my participation is completely voluntary. I am at least 18 years old.

Participant's Printed Name   Signature   Date

Researcher's Name   Signature   Date

Principal Investigator's Signature

APPENDIX D. SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

OPENING SCRIPT:

The following paragraph will be read by the researcher at the beginning of the interview session:

Thank you for participating in our interview project. In this research study we are trying to understand your experiences and opinion about four main issues: the practice of uploading breaking news in real time for online audiences; how you think social media is being used by your organization and your colleagues; what journalistic challenges face news organizations today in an age when much news breaks on social media first; and finally, what steps or actions you think should be taken to ensure that mainstream news media retains public trust as a source of accurate, authentic and believable news.

First I will ask you a series of interview questions. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions; I am simply interested in your thoughts, feelings and experiences. Second I will ask you to compete a short questionnaire.

Before we begin I will need you to read and sign a consent form that describes this research project and your rights as a participant. Here is the consent form. Please read it and let me know if you have any questions. The researcher will answer any questions the participant has, before proceeding. If you are comfortable with the terms on the form and would like to participate, please read t, sign the back page and give it back to me. The other copy is for you to keep. (If the participant refuses the sign the consent form, the researcher will end the session immediately. If the participant signs the form, then the researcher will continue).

As indicated in the consent form, you are free to skip any questions or topics in the interview and questionnaire. You may also terminate your participation at any time.

May I have your permission to record this interview? (If no, then the researcher will stop the session, thank the participant and provide him/her with the debriefing form. If yes, then continue.)

Do you agree to participate in the interview? (If no, then the researcher will stop the session, thank the participant and provide him/her with the debriefing form. If yes, then continue.)

Demographic Questionnaire

Instructions: Please provide information about yourself by answering the following questions. As noted in the consent form, all answers are voluntary. Therefore, you may skip questions if you do not feel comfortable answering them.

Please indicate your name:

Please indicate your gender: (you can put this yourself without asking) Male/Female

Please indicate your:

a.   Age: _____ years

b.   Designation:

c.   Organization:

d.   Years of experience in journalism:

e.   Experience in (choose all that apply): Newspapers/Magazines/Television/Online Platforms

1.   How do you think social media have impacted journalism in India today?

2.   How does the journalistic processes work from the time a crime news breaks, till you share that news with your audience?

3.   What measures do the your or your team take before it reaches the audience?

4.   Is the process similar for all types of news, or are they different for some types of

breaking news?

5.   What is your opinion on uploading breaking news on the organizational website in real

time?

6.   What is your opinion on uploading breaking news on organizational social media in real

time?

7.   What is your opinion of journalists using social media to source news?

8.   Are there any areas of concern or challenges for journalism in India that you feel need to

be addressed – given your wide range of experience?

9.   How are you or your colleagues in other news organizations addressing some of these

challenges?

10.   How do you think some of the challenges can be tackled in future?

11.   What role do you see professional journalists playing in years to come?

APPENDIX E. ONLINE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

This survey asks you a series of questions in order to understand how professional journalists in India's mainstream news media function today, how they source, select and share news in a changing newsroom and news consumption environment, as well as to understand how journalists use social media and online platforms for news gathering and sharing purposes. Your answers will greatly help both scholars and practitioners understand the dynamics of news gathering and sharing in the world's largest democracy that also boasts one of the world's fastest growing news industries! Please note that all questions (unless otherwise noted) will use the following Likert-style scales:

(1) Strongly agree/Very important (2) somewhat agree/somewhat important (3) neither agree nor disagree/neither important nor unimportant (4) somewhat disagree/somewhat unimportant (5) strongly disagree/not at all important. You may choose the most appropriate answer for each question. There are no right and wrong answers!

<u>Self-introduction</u>

1.   Are you a journalist?   Y/N

2.   What form of news media are you currently working in? (check all that apply)

   a.   Newspaper

   b.   Magazine

   c.   Television News Channel

   d.   News Website

   e.   Other (specify): _____

3.   Do you have a personal Facebook account? Y/N

4.   Do you have a personal Twitter account? Y/N

5.   Do you use Facebook for journalistic purposes? Y/N

6.   Do you use Twitter for journalistic purposes? Y/N

7.   Does your organization have a website? Y/N/Not sure

8.   Does your organization have an official Facebook page? Y/N/Not sure

9.   Does your organization have an official Twitter page? Y/N/Not sure

10.   Year of Birth: 19_ _

11.   **Sex: (**Male – Female**)**

12.   How many years of experience do you have as a journalist? _____ Years

13.   What is your current job title? _____ (e.g. special correspondent)

14.   **Credibility of social media messages as a source of breaking news** (Appleman & Sundar,

2016)

Breaking crime news on social media such as Facebook or Twitter are likely to be:

(1=strongly agree, 2=somewhat agree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=somewhat disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

i. Mostly accurate

ii. Mostly objective

iii. Mostly from experts

iv. Mostly believable

v. Mostly authentic

vi. Mostly complete

vii. Mostly representative

15. Usefulness of social media as a professional tool (Santana & Hopp, 2016; Willnat & Weaver, 2014)

(1=very important, 2=somewhat important, 3=neither important nor unimportant, 4=somewhat unimportant, 5=not at all important)

a. Social media such as Facebook and Twitter are useful for gathering information

b. Social media such as Facebook and Twitter are useful for sharing links

c. Social media such as Facebook and Twitter are useful for checking breaking news

d. Social media such as Facebook and Twitter are useful for verifying information

e. Social media such as Facebook and Twitter are useful for monitoring public opinion

16. **Influences on journalists' selection of breaking crime news** (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; 2013)

When crime news such as a rape story breaks on social media, my decision to use a post or tweet for a story will be influenced by:

(1=strongly agree, 2=somewhat agree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=somewhat disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

a) (Individual Level)

i. My religious beliefs

ii. My political beliefs

iii. My personal values

iv. My personal attitudes

v. My ethical values

vi. My educational background

vii. My ethnicity

viii. My job role

b) Routine Level

When crime news such as a rape story breaks on social media, my decision to use a post or tweet for a story will be influenced by:

i. Timeliness of story

ii. Unusualness of story

iii. Controversial-ness of story

iv. Local relevance of story

v. How interesting the story is

vi. How balanced the story is

c) Organizational level

When crime news such as a rape story breaks on social media, my decision to use a post or tweet for a story will be influenced by:

i. My organization's policy on such stories

ii. My organization's focus on such stories

iii. How my organization is structured

iv. The likes and dislikes of my organization's owners

v. If the story may bring in ad revenues

vi. If the story will increase circulation

a) Social Institutional level

When crime news such as a rape story breaks on social media, my decision to use a post or tweet for a story will be influenced by:

i. How important sources may view the story

ii. How interest groups may view the story

iii. How government officials may view the story

iv. How advertisers may view the story

v. How PR firms may view the story

vi. How other media houses may view the story

vii. How the stock markets/businesses may view the story

When crime news such as a rape story breaks on social media, my decision to use a post or tweet for a story will be influenced by:

i. How the story may affect the larger community

ii. How the story may affect our consumers

iii. How the story protects privacy of vulnerable people

iv. How the story is ideologically positioned

v. How suitable the story may be for our consumers

17. Decision-making to upload breaking crime news on website

How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

(1=strongly agree, 2=somewhat agree, 3=neither agree nor disagree, 4=somewhat disagree, 5=strongly disagree)

a) My organization immediately uploads breaking crime news such as a rape on its website

b) Breaking crime stories such as rape news must be verified before uploading on my news organization's website

c) My news organization's target audience needs to see breaking crime news such as rape news up on the website as fast as possible

d) The ease of correcting errors on the run makes it safe to upload unverified breaking crime news such as a rape news on my news organization's website.

e) Uploading breaking crime stories such as rape news on my news organization's website first is important for increasing audience loyalty to my organization

f) Uploading breaking crime stories such as rape news on my news organization's website first increases credibility of my organization as a provider of latest news

g) Uploading breaking crime stories such as a rape news on my news organization's website first is an important way to engage with the audience

h) If breaking crime stories such as rape news are not uploaded on my news organization's website instantly, our subscribers may go to competitors

i) A victim's interests must be considered before uploading breaking crime stories such as rape news on my news organization's website

j) Attribution of responsibility for the crime must be reported before uploading breaking crime stories such as rape news on my news organization's website

18. Decision to promote breaking crime news on social media (Lasorsa, Lewis and Holton, 2012; Tandoc & Vos, 2016)

(1=Very important, 2=somewhat important, 3=neither important nor unimportant, 4=somewhat unimportant, 5=not at all important)

When a crime news such as a rape breaks, the reason it is promoted on my organization's official Twitter or Facebook page is to:

i. Provide information about the news (Lasorsa, Lewis & Holton, 2012)

ii. Provide an opinion about the news (Lasorsa, Lewis & Holton, 2012)

iii. Share other people's opinion on the news by sharing their posts/tweets (Lasorsa, Lewis & Holton, 2012)

iv. Provide a link to a more detailed story on our website (Tandoc & Vos, 2016)

v. Start a public discussion on the topic (Lasorsa, Lewis & Holton, 2012)

vi. Let public participate in news production (Lasorsa, Lewis & Holton, 2012)

vii. Increase page views of my story on our website (Tandoc & Vos, 2016)

viii. Drive traffic to our website (Tandoc & Vos, 2016)

F.   Win a gift card worth Rs. 300 and receive an executive summary of the survey

If you wish to enter a lucky draw to win one of the 25 gift cards worth Rs. 300 up for grabs, and also receive a free executive summary of this survey's findings, please enter your valid email address below. Winners will be notified by email before June 30, 2017.

Email id:

This is completely voluntary. Enter your email id ONLY if you wish to enter the lucky draw and receive a free executive summary of the survey's findings.

APPENDIX F. SAMPLE OF SURVEY ACCEPTANCE LETTER FROM PRESS CLUB

Snehasis Sur <ssur62@gmail.com>

Thu 4/13/2017, 2:14 PM

Dhiman Chattopadhyay

Dear Dhiman,

How nice it is to get connected to you after such a long time. I have been getting information

regarding you from Dr. Uma Shankar Pandey, who might have met you in the US, couple of

years back. Definitely I shall be delighted to get it circulated among our members, as we

encourage Professional Work through the networking of the Press Club, Kolkata.

However, give me a week's time as I shall be going to Bhubaneswar tomorrow to cover the Prime

Minister of India's Programs there. Let me come back next week and surely I shall get it

circulated among our members.

With warmest personal regards and wishing you all success in your research,

Yours,

Snehasis

-------- Original message --------

From: Dhiman Chattopadhyay <dhimanc@bgsu.edu>

Date: 04/12/2017 13:20 (GMT-05:00)

To: ssur62@gmail.com

Subject: A request to Kolkata Press Club members to complete my survey of Indian journalists

for my PhD (Bowling Green University, USA)

Mr. Snehasis Sur

President, Kolkata Press Club

Dear Mr. Sur,

My name is Dhiman Chattopadhyay. I am a former journalist from India *(my last job was*

as Editor Mid-day.com and Editor Sunday Mid-Day but I am from Kolkata and spent a decade

as a journalist in Kolkata as well). I am currently working on my PhD from Bowling Green State

University, Ohio, USA.

For my PhD dissertation, I am examining how journalists and news organizations

in India source, select and share news, at a time when people are increasingly consuming news

online-first as well as via social media. **I am conducting a survey of journalists in India for**

this purpose. To this end, I would like to invite all members of the Kolkata Press Club to

participate in my study on *"Journalistic decision-making during news breaks in an online-first*

era: Social media, news sourcing and dissemination in India."

I would be delighted if members of Kolkata Press Club take part in my survey. If you agree,

May I request you to **kindly forward THIS survey link to your entire press club**

member database:https://bgsu.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cDg7Xk4Ftl0Auxf

All journalists who complete the survey and enter their email address at the end of the survey

will be eligible to win one of the 50 gift coupons worth Rs. 325 each. Further, all those who

complete the survey, and provide their email address, will also receive an executive summary of

the survey results. Entering email is completely voluntary. The findings of this study will help

you, your members as well as your organization's leadership better understand how journalists

across India work today to gather and share breaking news, the challenges they face and the

views they have on how news organizations use real-time uploads and social media.

Thank you for your consideration! If you have any questions, please contact principal

investigator Dhiman Chattopadhyay by email or phone or his academic advisor Dr. Louisa Ha

at louisah@bgsu.edu. If you have any questions about the rights of research participants, please

contact Bowling Green State University's Human Subjects Review Board at +1-419-372-7716 or

hsrb@bgsu.edu

Sincerely,

Dhiman Chattopadhyay, Principal Investigator   Dr. Louisa Ha, Academic Advisor

    Doctoral Candidate   Professor

    School of Media & Communication   School of Media & Communication

    Bowling Green State University   Bowling Green State University

    dhimanc@bgsu.edu   louisah@bgsu.edu

APPENDIX G. ZERO ORDER CORRELATION TABLE

Table: Correlations among Independent and Dependent Variables

Variables	HOI Individual	HOI Routine	HOI Organizational	HOI Social Institution	HOI Social System	Social Media Usefulness	Social Media Credibility	Sex	Rank	Web Uploading	Social Media Promotion
HOI Ind.		.377**	.370**	.420**	.277**	.228**	.362**	.098	.116	.364**	.319**
HOI Routine			600**	.467**	.546**	.293**	.329**	-.007	.084	.315**	.383**
HOI Org.			.	.625**	.435**	.299**	.305**	.020	.150**	.416**	.385**
HOI Inst.					.395**	.199**	.415**	-.017	.195**	.507**	.394**
HOI Syst.						.298**	.271**	-005	.026	.234**	.366**
Social Media Usefulness							.257**	.108	.039	.301**	.323**
Social Media Credibility								-023	.090	.404**	.294**
Sex									.181**	.112	.046
Rank										.223**	.137**
Web Uploading											.562**
Social Media Promotion											

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