

Journalism and content creation: A comprehensive overview of Indian Youth & News in the Ecosystem of Streaming Media

Dr Atashi Bhattacharya, State Aided College Teacher – I, Department of Journalism & Mass Communication, Surendranath College for Women, University of Calcutta, West Bengal

Dr. Jhumur Datta Gupta, Assistant Professor, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Sister Nivedita University, Kolkata, West Bengal

Abstract

Journalism is no longer the core business of journalists; it is now the area of content creators.(Goyanes & Gil de Zuniga 2021)It is interesting how the term 'prosumer' is helping to blur the lines between the traditionally separate uses of urban space. The present research paper maps the overlapping ecosystem of the news industry in India. Legacy media and independent content creators and how the youth are reacting to this ecosystem and how they educate themselves in the context of misinformation-misinformation and disinformation. The researchers employ a mixed-method research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative survey among 100 undergraduate students followed by thematic analysis of in-depth interview of 10 content creators were conducted. This study demonstrates that the Indian news ecosystem is undergoing a fundamental transformation shaped by streaming media, digital platforms, and the active participation of youth as both consumers and prosumers of news.

Keywords : *Legacy media, Digital media, Content creators, News ecosystem, Digital Journalism*

Introduction

Journalism has changed its characteristics in the streaming era. The inner core of the digital platform has changed the eco system. Journalism is no longer the core business of journalists; it is now the area of content creators. (Goyanes & Gil de Zuniga 2021) Since the emergence and growing popularity of digital technologies and social media platforms, the relationship between professional and citizen journalism has been challenging. In recent years, however, this critical relationship has de-escalated due to a growing collaboration in shaping a complementally news repertoire. Social media use for news and traditional media consumption are explored as additive moderators over the relationship of users' perceptions on professional journalism on citizens' news content creation, showing a positive significant effect.

(Hayes et al., 2007) Over the years, the Internet has changed dramatically as a vehicle for journalism. It has evolved from a shaky experiment by a relative handful of enterprising news organizations in the 1990s to an increasingly dominant news source for majority and a news production platform not only for journalists but also for millions of other people around the country and the world.

(Harlow Summer, 2024) In today's digital age, influencers and content creators dominate the global information landscape, reshaping how we consume and share ideas. As traditional media channels lose their influence, particularly among younger audiences, these modern communicators are increasingly becoming the primary sources of information. With the power to reach millions of followers and engage niche communities, influencers play a crucial role in shaping public discourse. Ensuring that they provide ethical, credible and professional content is essential to addressing misinformation, disinformation, and hate speech on digital platforms (Harlow Summer, 2024).

Digital content creators, are gaining an increasingly large foothold in the newsSphere. The Democratic National Convention (DNC) in the United States gave more than 200 creators media credentials to cover Kamala Harris' presidential nomination. The journalism industry is on high alert as news audiences continue to migrate away from legacy media to social media, and many young people place more trust in TikTokers, Podcasters than in journalists working at storied news outlets. According to the 2024 Digital News Report from the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, more than half of TikTok, Snapchat, and Instagram users get their news from "personalities" on social media, as opposed to mainstream outlets and journalists.

Ecosystem of Streaming Media

In May 2024, the World Press Freedom Day Conference in Santiago, Chile, became the laboratory for a groundbreaking experiment that reshape the future of environmental reporting -the idea that TikTok influencers would work alongside professional journalists to cover the environmental crisis might have seemed far-fetched. Charlotte BrumBezié, known to her 880,000. TikTok and Instagram followers as @noseaswaste said, It's a really interesting paradigm shift. She added that her presence at the 31st World Press Freedom Day Conference would be part of a revolutionary approach to information dissemination.

(Nic Newman Nic et al., 2025) India has the world's largest YouTube audience with close to 491m users and it is the most important network for independent creators along with Instagram. Rising data, smartphone and social media use, combined with the large potential audience help to explain the popularity of news creators, influencers, and big personality journalists in India. The diversity of Indian influencers is hard to represent in a report as a significant amount of content is consumed in local languages, with many of the top influencers often switching between Hindi and English.

(Nic Newman Nic et al., 2025) The influencer ecosystem is both politically influential and fraught. Ahead of India's last national elections in 2024, Prime Minister Narendra Modi created and attended a National Creators Award where some of the country's top social media influencers were felicitated by him; a nod to their reach and influence with India's younger voters. In a significant August 2025 directive, India's apex court urged the government to include penalties for misconduct by social media influencers in its social media guidelines. India's Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has also indicated it will soon outline steps to curb platforms and influencers allegedly disseminating content that may incite violence.

This research paper maps the overlapping ecosystem of the news industry in India. Legacy media and independent content creators and how the youth are reacting to this ecosystem and how they educate themselves in the context of information disorder.

Theoretical Analysis:

Marshall McLuhan's concept 'the medium is the message' focuses on communication technologies' societal impact.(What is media ecology?," 2025)

Media Ecology

As per NeilPostman, Media ecology looks into the matter of how media of communication affect human perception, understanding, feeling, and value; and how our interaction with media facilitates or impedes our chances of survival. The word ecology implies the study of environments: their structure, content, and impact on people. It is a complex message system which imposes on human beings certain ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving.

(Lee Sarah, 2025) Media ecologists know, generally, what it is they are interested in—the interactions of communications media, technology, technique and processes with human feeling, thought, value, and behavior. But media ecologists do not, as yet, have a coherentframework in which to organize their subject matter or their questions.Media ecology is, in short, a preparadigmatic science.

Prosumer Theory

Regarding the Prosumer Theory, the term ‘prosumer’ was first introduced by Alvin Toffler in his 1980 book, *The Third Wave*, and explores the idea that as society shifts towards the post-industrial age, the producer and the consumer amalgamate into the prosumer. The prosumer actively works to produce the services and goods that they buy and consume. For example, self-checkouts at the supermarket, DIY furniture from Ikea, automated ticket machines at train stations, or online order and delivery services such as ‘eBay or ‘Amazon.’

It is interesting how the term 'prosumer' is helping to blur the lines between the traditionally separate uses of urban space. At one time, grocers or shop owners would have lived in the space above their stores, but since commercialism boomed in the 1950s, a clear distinction between areas has been established (e.g. neighbourhoods vs. factory spaces). The introduction of prosumption has led to a lack of distinction between where work and home life begin and end. This raises questions about the effect that technology will have on the urban landscape in future years.

In this research paper, the researchers seek to map audience behavior and their use of matrix after the digital revolution. From the perspective of Prosumer Theory, the consumer becomes the creator or producer of the content also. The receiver and sender of this watertight segment have changed, and the receiver has become the creator instantly.

Literature Review

(Pereira Divina, 2021) Algorithms can undertake decisions such as prioritizing, classifying, associating, and filtering content, which usually requires editorial insight in news media organizations (Diakopolous, 2019; van Dijck et al., 2018). With the right context, algorithms can sift through content quite easily; however, when it comes to sensitive material, as is often the case with news, the information may get filtered out by platforms deeming it inappropriate for consumption and/or only make similar content visible to the viewers (Cohen, 2019; Diakopolous,

2019). In the same vein, depending on the social and ideological norms of the person and/or the organization setting the algorithms, certain information can be rendered invisible or certain information may be valued over others, which may also result in algorithmic bias (Diakopolous, 2019).

(Nic Newman Nic et al., 2025) Cheap mobile data, rising smartphone and social media use, and the large potential audience help explain the popularity of news creators, influencers, and big personality journalists in India. Our data, along with the very high follower counts, indicate that the names at the top of this list have significant reach and influence, at least with our more educated, English-speaking, urban Indian sample.

(Stephen Monica et al.) Mobile technology allows stories to be circulated at a rapid speed, reaching global audiences in real time. The overabundance of information has emerged as one of the most pressing issues today and may be best illustrated in the 2019 Coronavirus (COVID-19) disease outbreak. Misinformation about COVID-19 exploded, leading World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus to call attention to the “infodemic” in addition to the pandemic itself. The term “infodemic” was popularized by David Rothkopf (2003), who highlighted the large amount of information accompanying the SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) epidemic.

(Sahi Rahul, 2025) The recent death hoax of the famous actor Dharmendra is a perfect illustration of how the monster of falsehoods rises, conquers the world, and does damage before the mechanisms of correction have a chance to operate. In the first week of November 2025, the first wave of reports from different social media accounts and even some online news outlets claimed that Dharmendra had died at the age of 89. The news travelled like wildfire, causing confusion, grief, and emotional suffering in large circles of fans, one could say the whole world. This case is not a single event. This is part of a cycle of misinformation that goes through the stages from one unverified claim to the next due to emotional value, the virality of platforms, and accelerating online engagement.

(Robertson Maya, 2025) India has cemented its position as the world’s largest digital consumer market, with Indians spending a staggering 1.13 trillion hours on digital platforms in 2024, according to an Ernst & Young report published in partnership with the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry. This unprecedented engagement surpasses all other global markets, highlighting the immense potential of advertisers and digital businesses. India’s digital population surged to 524 million, driven by widespread smartphone adoption, which reached 480 million users in year. The total minutes spent online skyrocketed to 2,389 billion, reflecting a deepening dependence on digital ecosystems for entertainment, shopping, and social interactions.

(“Youth avoiding news, says Reuters study,” 2022) According to the 2022 Reuters Institute Digital News Report, an annual study that tracks how news is consumed in different countries, trust in news is falling, with much of the public, especially the younger age groups, increasingly turning away from news. The study, based on a survey conducted in 46 markets through online questionnaires, finds that “the connection between journalism and much of the public may be fraying.” Noting that people are trusting news content less and less, the report states that consumption of traditional news media declined in nearly all the countries surveyed, with online and social consumption of news not compensating for it. Furthermore, the proportion of news consumers who say that they “avoid

news” has risen sharply across countries, with the report describing the phenomenon as “selective avoidance.”

Research Gap

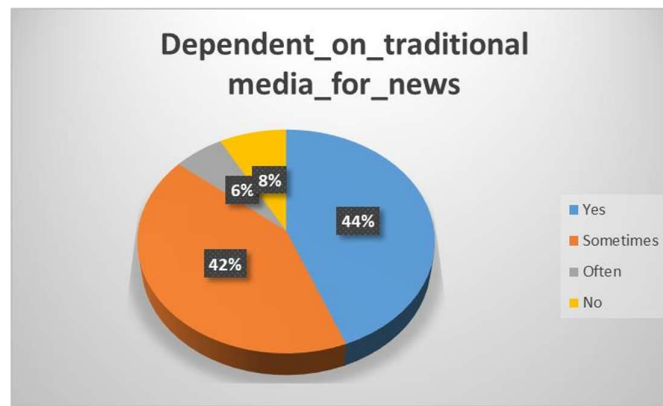
The literature review does not adequately discuss the relationship between the emerging news ecosystem and Indian youth. Although a few previous studies indicate that young audiences are more inclined toward news-oriented content produced outside legacy media, the specific formats that most attract them remain underexplored. Furthermore, while digital media and misinformation are closely intertwined, the literature does not explain the mechanisms through which content creators attempt to counter misinformation. The rationale behind the creators’ choice to pursue this role is also insufficiently addressed. Another gap concerns the extent to which Indian youth have distanced themselves from the tone and conventions of legacy media. Do they truly disengage from traditional news outlets and rely exclusively on independent digital news creators?

Objectives

1. To examine the relationship between the emerging digital news ecosystem and Indian youth
2. To identify which formats of digital news content (e.g., reels, podcasts, long-form videos, infographics, live discussions) most attract Indian youth
3. To analyze the link between digital media consumption and exposure to misinformation among youth.
4. To investigate the strategies and mechanisms employed by independent content creators to counter misinformation.
5. To explore the motivations behind content creators’ choice to position themselves as alternative news sources.
6. To assess the extent to which Indian youth have disengaged from legacy media and determine whether they are consuming a hybrid mix of mainstream and independent sources.

Research Methodology

This research paper employs a mixed-method research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to thoroughly examine the restructuring of Indian News media due to the increasing popularity of streaming media and digital platforms. A quantitative survey was conducted among 100 undergraduate students in Kolkata using a 9-item structured online questionnaire that included demographic questions and questions on platform preferences, engagement, and attitude towards online content creation. Participants were chosen using non-probability convenience sampling from undergraduate classes and student communities. The data thus collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Qualitative in-depth interviews were also conducted with ten (10) news content creators working in various domains of digital journalism. Codes were developed inductively from the interview transcript and later divided into broader themes, such as audience engagement, audience behaviour, technological adoption, ethical considerations, and others, for thematic analysis.

Data Analysis**1: Frequency Distribution of Dependence on Traditional Media for News**

The above figure shows the frequency distribution of the dependence of undergraduate students on traditional media for news 44 % of the participants said that they still rely completely on traditional media for news, followed by 6% who responded as often relying on traditional media. There were 42 % participants who referred to traditional media only in some cases, while 8% participants did not depend on traditional media at all for news

Relationship between dependency on legacy media for news consumption and trust in digital platforms

Dependent on Legacy media for news	Trust in digital platforms for news				Total
		Yes, I trust digital media 100% for news	I trust digital media for news in about 50% of cases	I never trust digital platforms for news	
	Yes	6	38	0	44
		6.0%	38.0%	.0%	44.0%
	Often	1	4	1	6
		1.0%	4.0%	1.0%	6.0%
	Sometimes	4	33	5	42
		4.0%	33.0%	5.0%	42.0%
	No	1	7	0	8

		1.0%	7.0%	.0%	8.0%
Total		12	82	6	100
		12.0%	82.0%	6.0%	100.0%

The above table highlights the relationship between the dependency of participants on legacy media for news consumption and the trust they have in digital platforms creating news content. The highest percentage of participants (38 %) who responded that they completely rely on traditional media for news also opined that they trust digital platforms for news only in 50 % of the cases, followed by 33 % of participants who sometimes consume news on legacy media but trust digital platforms only in about 50 % of the cases. There were 7 participants (7 %), who, although do not depend on legacy media for news yet, trust digital platforms in 50 % of cases. There were only 12 participants (12 %) who agreed to trust digital platforms for news entirely.

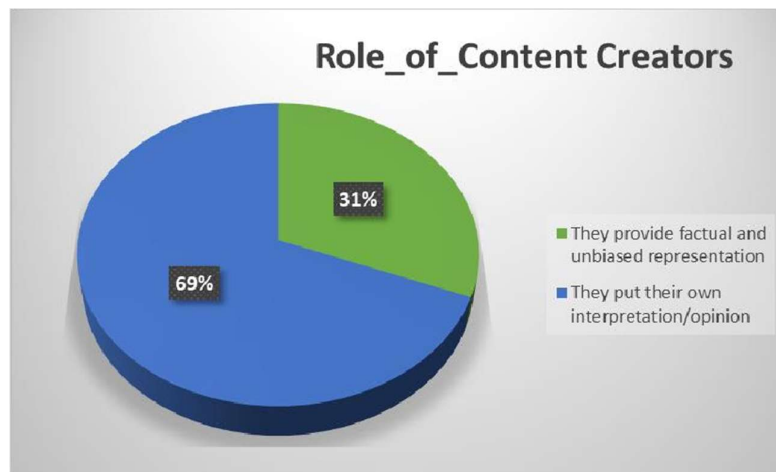
Cross tabulation between Dependency on digital media for news and news sources

News sources on digital media							Total
Dependent On digital Media for news		Established news content creators from a non-journalistic background	Renowned news brands on YouTube / digital news portals	Random news content creators/channels providing news content	Renowned journalists who create digital content	Others	
	Yes	1	10	20	8	0	39
		1.0%	10.0%	20.0%	8.0%	.0%	39.0%
	Often	1	2	3	1	0	7
		1.0%	2.0%	3.0%	1.0%	.0%	7.0%
	Sometimes	1	7	14	6	0	28
		1.0%	7.0%	14.0%	6.0%	.0%	28.0%
	No	1	1	17	5	2	26
		1.0%	1.0%	17.0%	5.0%	2.0%	26.0%

The above outlines the relationship between participants' dependency on digital media for news and the news sources on digital media from which they consume news. The highest percentage of

participants (20 %) who responded that they completely rely on digital media for news also said that they follow news from random news content creators or channels providing news content, followed by 17 % of participants who sometimes consume news on digital media but follow news from random news content creators or channels providing news content. There were 5 participants (5 %) who do not depend on digital media for news, but follow renowned journalists who create digital content. There were only 4 participants (4 %) who agreed to follow news on digital media only through established news content creators from a non-journalistic background.

Frequency Distribution of the Role of Content Creators while creating news content



The above figure illustrates the frequency distribution of the role of digital content creators in creating news content, as perceived by the respondents. 69% of the respondents stated that when creating news content, digital content creators often include their own opinion or interpretation. However, 31 % respondents said that while creating news content, digital content creators provide only factual details and give an unbiased representation.

Cross tabulation of Dependency on digital media for news and the content format preferred by the participants

Dependent on digital media for news					
	Yes	Often	Sometimes	No	Total
Articles / blog-style news posts	5	0	1	3	9
	5.0%	.0%	1.0%	3.0%	9.0%
Long-form discussions by content creators	3	2	6	4	15
	3.0%	2.0%	6.0%	4.0%	15.0%
Short videos, Infographics / visual explainers	1	0	1	0	2
	1.0%	.0%	1.0%	.0%	2.0%
Podcasts	3	0	0	0	3
	3.0%	.0%	.0%	.0%	3.0%

Podcasts, Reels, Short videos, Infographics / visual explainers	8	4	8	10	30
	8.0%	4.0%	8.0%	10.0%	30.0%
Podcasts, Reels, Short videos, Long-form discussions by content creators, Infographics / visual explainers	0	0	0	1	1
	.0%	.0%	.0%	1.0%	1.0%
Podcasts, Reels, Short videos, Live streams	1	0	2	0	3
	1.0%	.0%	2.0%	.0%	3.0%
Reels	6	0	3	1	10
	6.0%	.0%	3.0%	1.0%	10.0%
Reels, Short videos	7	1	4	0	12
	7.0%	1.0%	4.0%	.0%	12.0%
Short videos	4	0	2	2	8
	4.0%	.0%	2.0%	2.0%	8.0%
Live streams	1	0	1	5	7
	1.0%	.0%	1.0%	5.0%	7.0%

The above table illustrates the relationship between participants' dependency on digital media for news and the content format preferred by the participants. The highest percentage of participants (20 %) who responded that they rely on digital media for news entirely, often or sometimes also said that they prefer content in form of Podcasts, Reels, Short videos and Infographics / visual explainers, followed by 10 % of participants who do not consume news on digital media but prefer content in form of Podcasts, Reels, Short videos and Infographics / visual explainers. There were 15 participants (15 %) who prefer Long-form discussions by content creators, while 20 % participants prefer reels and the short video format of content.

Thematic analysis

The recurring theme observed in the interviews was a shift in professional identity among the content creators. Many of them emphasized the fact that they must be considered as journalists who use content creation as a tool to disseminate information. They do not follow the influencer model, motivated solely by popularity, judged by the number of followers or subscribers. Many respondents deliberately negotiate a hybrid identity. Instead of a change in professional values, content creation was characterized as a form of expression. Some of the interviewees work independently as digital content creators while being associated with legacy media. The editorial independence, flexibility of content format, frequency of posts, absence of institutional restraint and direct connection with the audience are the features of digital journalism that drive them. The idea symbolises a larger shift in the Indian media landscape, with individual creators serving as micro-newsrooms.

When enquired about audience engagement and consumption patterns among the youth, all of them mentioned the 'shorter attention spans' and an increase in preference for 'visually-engaging

content'. Some of them also have seen a propensity for quicker updates among their followers and subscribers. But in the interviews, a dichotomy of audience behavior was highlighted. While some creators believed that audiences nowadays are attracted towards rumours and sensational stories, others opined that there is a growing popularity of authentic stories. People engage with narratives that they find more relatable. Creators are therefore constantly trying to maintain a balance between short-form and informational content. The fight between speed and depth of a story is evident in this fragmented audience ecosystem.

Participants reported the use of AI tools for transcription, ideation, with multimedia, data visualization, and personalization capabilities while creating their content. They take the help of platform analytics for understanding audience preferences. Social media, especially YouTube, has guided the content creators very well. Attractive thumbnails are used to attract the audience's attention towards the stories. Some of the digital creators mentioned that advanced editing applications and interactive graphics help simplify complex information. Live streaming tools, polls, and Q&A features are also often used to make the content more interactive and create a two-way communication channel. Although some of them agreed that passion and intent are more important than using technology but they have adopted technology as it helps refine the presentation. One of the content creators who has been associated with digital journalism for over 11 years and was once a part of legacy media stated that she focuses on understanding people, asking meaningful questions, and telling stories with emotion and clarity. Similarly, for many of them, technology supports the process—but passion drives it.

Whether the creator makes content on politics, social concerns, sports, culture, or entertainment, they recognize truth, authenticity, and accountability as critical to their work. The majority of them rejected sensationalism, click bait methods, and rumor-driven content, even though such content often generates more engagement. They stand united in the conviction that content creation, particularly in journalism, must serve a greater social purpose. When asked about the ethical considerations in the shifting ecosystem, some stated that they try to spread awareness and educate the masses, some strive to give a voice to the voiceless and encourage critical thinking, while others expressed a moral need to priorities society before personal branding. Ethical journalism rules the algorithm-driven digital landscape, reinforcing journalism's traditional public service role within a contemporary digital context.

Conclusion

The findings of the study clearly show that youth have not entirely given up on the legacy media for news consumption. Rather, there is a shift towards a hybrid model that combines mainstream sources with independent digital content providers. Because of this shift in audience consumption patterns, content creators are also reshaping journalism by adopting flexible content formats, technological tools, and audience-centric strategies while being cautious about the accuracy and social responsibility. Authenticity and integrity are still highly valued despite concerns about false information and sensationalism. Overall, the present study highlights that the present Indian news ecosystem is undergoing a transformation shaped by streaming media, digital platforms, and the active participation of youth as both consumers and prosumers of news.

References

1. Goyanes, M., & Gil de Zúñiga, H. (2021). Citizen news content creation: Perceptions about professional journalists and the additive double moderating role of social and traditional media. *E/ profesional de la información*. <https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2021.ene.01>
2. Harlow Summer. (2024). Content Creators and Journalists: Redefining News and Credibility in the Digital Age (1st ed.). Knight Center For Journalism.
3. Hayes, A. S., Singer, J. B., & Ceppos, J. (2007). Shifting roles, enduring values: The credible journalist in a digital age. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 22(4), 262-279. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08900520701583545>
 - a. <https://cyberpeace.org/resources/blogs/from-clicks-to-consequences-how-the-dharmendra-death-hoax-exposes-the-dangers-of-misinformation>
 - b. <https://mobilemarketingreads.com/indians-spent-1-1-trillion-hours-on-digital-platforms-in-2024/>
 - c. <https://www.media-ecology.org/What-Is-Media-Ecology>
4. Lee Sarah. (2025, May). *Understanding Media Ecology*. Media Ecology Association .
5. Nic Newman Nic, Arguedas Amy Ross, Mukherjee Mitali, & Fletcher Richard. (2025, October 28). *Mapping news creators and influencers in social and video networks*. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/news-creators-influencers/2025/India>
6. Pereira Divina. (2021). Algorithms and automation. In *Platformisation and the Indian news media* (pp. 9-10). Erasmus University Rotterdam.
7. Robertson Maya. (2025, March 28). *Indians spent 1.1 trillion hours on digital platforms in 2024, the most of any market worldwide*.
8. Sahi RAHUL. (2025, November 15). *From clicks to consequences: How the Dharmendra death hoax exposes the dangers of misinformation*. Uniting for Global Cyber Resilience | CyberPeace.
9. Stephens Monica, Poon J., & Tan Gordon. Misinformation in the Digital Age
10. *What is media ecology?* (2025). Media Ecology Association <https://www.media-ecology.org/What-Is-Media-Ecology>
11. *Youth avoiding news, says Reuters study*. (2022, June 15). The Hindu. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/youth-avoiding-news-says-reuters-study/article65527704.ece>