#AMIC2025@SNDTWU

31ST AMIC ANNUAL CONFERENCE

9 -11 OCTOBER 2025 I MUMBAI INDIA

31st AMIC Annual Conference

Theme: *Navigating Digital Transformation in Media, Public Relations, and Advertising*

9-11 OCTOBER 2025, MUMBAI, INDIA

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

Asian Media Information and Communication Centre

31st AMIC Annual Conference

Navigating Digital Transformation in Media, Public Relations, and Advertising

9-11 OCTOBER 2025, MUMBAI, INDIA

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

Asian Media Information and Communication Centre

Shreemati Nathibai Damodar Thackersey Women's University

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The Asian Media Information and Communication Centre (AMIC) is a non-profit mass communication organization serving Asia and the Pacific. AMIC is engaged in communication research, documentation, training, consultancy services, institutional development and publication. Membership is open to individuals and institutions involved and interested in the study and practice of mass communication.

For details, please contact the Asian Media Information and Communication Centre at info@amic.asia and website: www.amic.asia.

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Preface

Over the years, AMIC has produced the Book of Abstracts as a compendium of paper abstracts presented at the annual conference. It gives readers a preview of the key discussion points at the conference, enabling them to fully understand the objectives behind each annual gathering of communication and media scholars.

Today, this compilation is no longer just an accumulation of abstracts; it is now serving as a vital resource for research scholars, academicians, and media practitioners who are working on studies aimed at enhancing Asian communication and media practice. At the same time, the Book features interest areas that Asian higher education institutions can explore for their research agenda.

We encourage readers to maximize the 2025 Book of Abstracts. This is an opportunity to reach out to the authors of the paper abstracts to pursue further collaboration to fill the gaps or enrich existing literature on the ever-evolving ecosystem of communication and media development that we are experiencing now.

RAMON R. TUAZON
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*as of October 11, 2025

Program

31st AMIC Annual Conference

Navigating Digital Transformation in Media, Public Relations, and Advertising

9-11 October 2025, Mumbi, India

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

Day 1, 09 October 2025 (Thursday)

7:30 – 8:30 a.m.	**Registration**
9:00 – 9:45 a.m.	**OPENING PROGRAMME**
	SNDT Hymn
	AMIC Hymn
	Cultural Presentation
	Lighting of Lamp
	WELCOME MESSAGES **PROF. MIRA K DESAI, PhD** Senior Professor & Head University Department of Extension & Communication SNDT Women's University **PROF. JOSE MARIA G. CARLOS** Chairperson, AMIC Board of Management **DR. CRISPIN C. MASLOG** *(on video)* Chairperson, AMIC Board of Directors
	KEYNOTE MESSAGES **DR. BAMBANG BRODJONEGORO** *(on video)* Dean and Chief Executive Officer Asian Development Bank Institute **MR. GUILHERME CANELA** *(on video)* Director, UNESCO Division for Digital Inclusion and Policies and Digital Transformation and Secretariat of the Information for All Programme
9:45 – 10:00 a.m.	**CONFERENCE OVERVIEW** **MR. RAMON R. TUAZON** AMIC Secretary-General **MARCO M. POLO, PhD** AMIC Vice Chairperson, Board of Management
10:00 – 10:30am	**Coffee / Tea Break**

10:45 am – 12nn	**PLENARY SESSION 1: Creative and Innovative Strategic Communication, PR and Advertising Strategies with Digital Transformation** **RON JABAL, DBA, APR** Multi-awarded Communication Executive Chairman and CEO, PAGEONE Group **MR. KRISHNAN SUBRAMANIAN** Disruption Consulting **MR. BHARATENDU KABI** Executive Vice President & Group Head, Media and Communications, JSW Group **Moderator:** **DR. SUNITHA CHITRAPU** Independent Researcher, Mumbai
12:00nn – 12:10nn	**PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS** **PROF. (DR.) UJWALA CHAKRADEO** Honorable Vice Chancellor SNDT Women's University, Mumbai
12:15nn – 12:30nn	**CONFERMENT OF 2025 AMIC ASIA COMMUNICATION AWARDS** **PROF. (DR.) UJWALA CHAKRADEO** Honorable Vice Chancellor SNDT Women's University, Mumbai **PROF. JOSE MARIA G. CARLOS** Chairperson, AMIC Board of Management **PROF. MIRA K DESAI, PhD** AMIC Representative for India **MR. RAMON R. TUAZON** AMIC Secretary-General **MS. MA'ALY HAZZAZ** Advisor for Communication and Information for South Asia UNESCO Regional Office in New Delhi **DR. KARLYGA MYSSAYEVA** Associate Professor Chairman of the Dissertation Council Al-Farabi Kazakh National University
12:30nn – 12:45nn	**RESPONSE FROM DR. KARLYGA MYSSAYEVA**
12:45nn – 1:00pm	**AMIC COMMUNITY PHOTO OPPORTUNITY**
1:00 – 1:30pm	**Lunch Break**
1:30 – 3:00 p.m.	**PLENARY SESSION 2: UNESCO Emeritus Dialogue: Policy Options and Challenges in Navigating Digital Transformation in Asia *(in partnership with UNESCO and Internet for Trust Knowledge Network)*** **DR. CHRISTOPHE GAUTHIER** Internet for Trust Knowledge Ops Team Paris, France **DR. CHANDRABHANU PATTANAYAK** Centurion University of Technology and Management Khurda, Odisha, India **DR. WIJAYANTO** Vice Rector for Research, Innovation, Collaboration and Public Communication and Associate Professor in Digital Politics and Democracy Universitas Diponegoro **Moderator:** **MS. MA'ALY HAZZAZ** Advisor for Communication and Information for South Asia UNESCO Regional Office in New Delhi

3:00 – 3:15 p.m.	**Coffee / Tea Break**
3:15 – 5:15 p.m.	**PARALLEL SESSIONS** A. Harnessing Digital Transformation to Drive Creative and Innovative Campaign Strategies B. Convergence of Media and Creative Industries C. Ethical Issues and Concerns in Going Digital D. Planning / Managing Digital Transformation of Media, PR, and Advertising Companies E1. Media, Information, and Digital Literacy
5:30 – 6:30 p.m.	**MASTER CLASSES:** **Reputation 5.0: Building Trust in the Age of Digital Transformation** **RON JABAL DBA, APR** Multi-awarded Communication Executive Chairman and CEO, PAGEONE Group **Artificial Intelligence for International Publication** **DR. KAMOLRAT INTARATAT** Assoc. Prof., School of Communication Arts CCDKM, Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University **DR. HUSSAPORN THONGDEANG** Lecturer, School of Communication Arts Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University

Day 2, 10 October 2025 (Friday)

8:30 – 10:00 a.m.	**PLENARY SESSION 3: Redefining Communication Competencies in Today's Digital Ecosystem: Rewriting the Communication Curricula** **DR. KARLYGA MYSSAYEVA** Associate Professor Chairman of the Dissertation Council al-Farabi Kazakh National University **PROF. PASCAL GUENEE** *(on video)* Head, Paris Dauphine-PSL Journalism School (IPJ) Chairman, World Journalism Education Council (WJEC) Steering Committee **DR. MARIA DIOSA V. LABISTE** Dean, College of Media and Communication University of the Philippines **DR. NOZIMA MURATOVA** Vice Rector Journalism and Mass Communications University of Uzbekistan **Moderator:** **PROF. MIRA K DESAI, PhD** Senior Professor & Head University Department of Extension & Communication SNDT Women's University
10:00 – 10:15 a.m.	**Coffee / Tea Break**

10:15 a.m. – 12 noon	**PARALLEL SESSIONS** E2. Media, Information, and Digital Literacy F1. Evolution of Journalism Practices in the Digital News Media F2. Evolution of Journalism Practices in the Digital News Media G. Redefining Communication Competencies: Rewriting the Communication/Journalism Curricula H. AI-Driven PR and Advertising: Unlocking New Opportunities for Campaign Success
12:00 nn – 1:30 p.m.	**Lunch Break**
1:30 – 3:00 p.m.	**PLENARY SESSION 4: India-China Communication Dialogue** *(in partnership with the Indian Communication Congress and Chinese International Communication Association)* **DR. PADMA RANI** Professor Manipal Institute of Communication Manipal Academy of Higher Education **M P ASOKA DIAS** Director – Maharaja TV & Radio, Sri Lanka **PROF. BIPLAB LOHO-CHOUDHURY** *(online)* Chairman and Mg. Trustee, Indian Communication Congress Professor, Centre for Journalism & Mass Communication Visva-Bharati University **PROF. K.G SURESH** *(online)* Vice Chairman, Indian Communication Congress Director, India Habitat Centre **PROF. WANG XIANGWEI** *(online)* Associate Professor Hong Kong Baptist University **PROF. JI LI** *(on video)* Vice President, China International Communication Association Wuhan University **Moderator:** **DR. KALINGA SENEVIRATNE** Research Fellow, Shinawatra International University, Thailand
3:00 – 3:15 p.m.	**Coffee / Tea Break**
3:15 – 5:15 p.m.	**PARALLEL SESSIONS** I. Regulatory Ecosystem in a Digital Setting/Successful (and Not Too Successful) Digital Transformation of Asian Media Companies J. Updating Communication/Media Research Methods and Tools K. Health, Global, Cultural, Migrant, and Other Forms of Inclusive Communication L1. Navigating AI, Digital Marketing, Social Media, and Governance

5:30 – 6:30 p.m.	**MASTER CLASSES** **Indices in Measuring Quality of Academic Journals** **DR. DANILO A. ARAO** Professor, Journalism Department College of Media and Communication University of the Philippines Editor, *Media Asia* **Special Session:** **AMIC Higher Education Quality Management Accreditation Service** **DR. JUDE WILLIAM R. GENILO** Pro Vice Chancellor University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh **Revisiting the Art of Storytelling in the Digital Era** **SHALINI RAGHAVIAH** Communications Coach, Development Research Specialist Award-winning filmmaker Founder and Proprietor, Pro Maximus Academy

Day 3, 11 October 2025 (Saturday)

8:30 – 10:00 a.m.	**PLENARY SESSION 5: The Digital Newsroom: Exploring Policies, Practices, and Innovative Tools** **PROF. MIRA K DESAI, PhD** Senior Professor & Head University Department of Extension & Communication SNDT Women's University **DR. DANILO A. ARAO** Professor, Journalism Department College of Media and Communication University of the Philippines Editor, Media Asia **DR. JESSADA SALATHONG** Assistant Professor, Faculty of Communication Arts Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand **DR. V. VIJAY KUMAR** Dean, School of Communications XIM University, Odisha, India **Moderator:** **MR. LAXMAN DATT PANT** Executive Director, Media Action Nepal Adjunct Professor, Tbilisi State University
10:00 – 10:15 a.m.	**Coffee / Tea Break**
10:15 a.m. – 12nn	**PARALLEL SESSIONS** L2. Navigating AI, Digital Marketing, Social Media, and Governance M. SPECIAL SESSION: Multi-Language Abstracts N. SPECIAL SESSION: Digital Maddham Aani Samaj Parivartan
12nn – 1:30 p.m.	**Lunch Break**

1:30 – 3:00 p.m.	**Book Launch** **DR. PADMA RANI** *Digital Inequality in Media Education in South Asia* **DR. V. VIJAY KUMAR** *Media and Marginality: Inclusion, Exclusion, and Representation* **PROF. JOSE MARIA G. CARLOS** *'On Air Na': Pinoy News Anchors LIVE!* **DR. KALINGA SENEVIRATNE** *Geopolitics and the Media in Asia and the Pacific* *Myth of 'Free Media' and 'Fake News' in the Post-Truth Era* *Global News Media: Countering Western Hegemony in International News* **DR. JUDE WILLIAM R. GENILO** *Crystallizing Public Opinion: 100th Anniversary Edition* *Reshaping Cinema Narratives* *Conference Proceedings, 2nd Dhaka Media Summit, 13-14 October 2023* **DR. CHERIAN GEORGE** *Fighting Polarisation: Shared Communicative Spaces in Divided Democracies*
	AMIC General Assembly
3:00 – 3:15 p.m.	**Coffee / Tea Break**
3:15 – 4:15 p.m.	**CLOSING CEREMONY** **2025 AMIC Mumbai Conference Declaration** *Shaping Asia's Digital Future with Integrity and Inclusion* **CLOSING MESSAGES** **PROF. RUBY OJHA** Pro Vice Chancellor SNDT Women's University **PROF. JOSE MARIA G. CARLOS** Chairperson, AMIC Board of Management **Conference Delegation's Photo Opportunity**

NOTHING FOLLOWS

Day 1

PARALLEL SESSIONS

PARALLEL SESSION A:

HARNESSING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION TO DRIVE CREATIVE AND INNOVATIVE CAMPAIGN STRATEGIES

CREATIVE AND INNOVATIVE STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION - PR, ADVERTISING STRATEGIES WITH DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Anu Sinha
Manipal Institute of Communication, MAHE

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the transformation of strategic advertizing communication in response to the digital engagement patterns of millennial consumers. Through a systematic literature review, it integrates theoretical models such as the Postmodern Consumer Model, Relationship Marketing, and the Experience Economy. The study synthesizes empirical findings and industry practices to propose a comprehensive framework for effective millennial engagement in digital advertising. Key themes include interactivity, personalization, emotional resonance, and participatory media cultures. The findings underscore the need for advertisers to adapt to fragmented digital landscapes and value-driven consumption behaviors.

Keywords: *Strategic communication, digital transformation, theoretical models, effective millennial engagement, value-driven consumption behaviors - interactive, personalized, participatory*

PUBLIC RELATIONS FOR INCLUSIVE E/M- GOVERNANCE: A STUDY ON THE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT'S DIGITALIZATION INITIATIVES IN KERALA

Rishna K K, Dr. Rajesh Kumar B M
Department of Communication and Journalism, University of Kerala

ABSTRACT

The effective deployment of digital tools and techniques for hyper-local communication in decentralized governance necessitates a versatile and multi-dimensional approach to public relations. The improved digital technology and access to smartphones demands for a shift in the decentralized rural e/m- governance models through the adoption of diverse platforms for communication and service delivery. This further emphasizes the need for efficient IEC campaigns to raise the public awareness of digitalization and participation. This study analyzes the public relations and communication activities of local governments on the transformational and experimental initiatives of digitalization programs undertaken by the state of Kerala, India. Kerala re-engages the communication between public and the government by empowering the citizen to utilize the digitalized service delivery. This excludes the intermediaries like representatives and minimizes the office visits. The local governments in Kerala have adopted various digital platforms such as The Citizen portal, ILGMS website, Community Whatsapp groups, social media pages and K Smart application for the last five years. The study adopts a qualitative case study approach with mixed methods for data collection to investigate the public relations processes and practices employed in the digital governance initiatives of Kerala's 941 village panchayats between 2020 and 2025. It combines participant observation of campaign activities with interviews conducted with trainers, technical assistants in village panchayats, and elected local body representatives. In addition, project and policy documents were analyzed to gain insights into both general and specific strategies used to engage the public. Anchored in the theoretical framework of Information and Communication Technologies for Development (ICT4D), the study specifically draws on concepts from social capital theory to understand how networks of trust, participation, and collaboration were mobilized in the localization of digitalization. Within the broader context of the State Ministry of Local Governments' initiatives, the research explores how public relations activities supported citizen awareness and participation in e-governance and m-governance services. This study highlights the communication strategies of state and local governments to promote decentralized digital service delivery. The approach combines localized, inclusive efforts—such as village-level interactions—with broader campaigns promoting "digital happiness." The data reveal that the state organized extensive training sessions for elected representatives, administrative staff in the local government institutions, and technical assistants for the e/m-governance sensitization. Using a cascading model, the program delivers primary training to citizens via village assemblies supported by ICT tools. This paper further finds that the methods of public relations to enhance e/m-governance through active public participation--through relationships and trust-based communication—is as important as the message itself.

Keywords: *Public relations strategies, localizing digitalization, decentralization, local governance in Kerala, communication for social change, e-governance*

UNDERSTANDING STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND BEHAVIORAL DRIVERS FOR EFFECTIVE CONSERVATION

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School of Communications, XIM University

ABSTRACT

This research delves deep into the complex relationship between human behavior and environmental conservation. Digital transformation can lead to impactful conservation strategies that trigger psychological, social and behavioral shifts. Despite increasing conservation awareness, a considerable gap exists between humanity's intentions and its involvement in conservation. Synthesized with the Systematic Literature Review (SLR), followed by the PRISMA 2020 methodology, provided a hybrid approach and ensured a rigorous study. This comprehensive review of 144 research articles finds the key drivers influencing sustainable decision-making, including consumer and stakeholders' perceptions, key conservation strategies, participation in digital platforms and local environmental transactions. The research paper also provides a clear concept of various themes that are associated with creating innovative strategic conservation activity. The study is further backed up by Communication for Development (C4D) framework and Diffusion of Innovation theory to evaluate communication strategies and digital tools that help in behavioral and social change. The research highlights the effect of digital engagement, which reveals how online platforms and technological innovations can promote knowledge-sharing, advocacy and behavioral change. Digital media play a significant role that drives conservation efforts and creates pro-environmental individuals through varied campaign strategies. With significant growth in online users, it also provides a platform for strategic information dissemination and bridges the gap between action and awareness. The process of encouraging conservation should have a multidimensional perspective that incorporates behavioral insights and digital outreach. Supporting conservation initiatives through education and technological solutions can boost engagement and long-term commitment to environmentally responsible measures. This study gives scope for policymakers and environmental advocates to understand various matters to advocate for conservation more efficiently. Integrating community centric policy design for conservation and bridging policy and psychology gap by the policymakers can help to advocate for conservation more efficiently. Investigating core processes that drive human behavior, this study contributes to developing methods that encourage large-scale adoption of sustainable lifestyles and lead to a culture of environmental responsibility.

Keywords: *Digital transformation, environmental conservation, psychological, conservation behavior, strategic communication*

HARNESSING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION FOR CREATIVE PR STRATEGIES IN INDIAN TOURISM

Anup Latnekar
Independent PR Consultant

ABSTRACT

India's tourism sector is undergoing rapid digital transformation and public relations (PR) is emerging as a key driver of this change. This research paper examines how digital tools and platforms are being harnessed to design creative and innovative PR campaigns that position Indian destinations more competitively in the global marketplace.

Using a mixed-methods approach, the study draws on industry trends, campaign data and case examples to illustrate how tourism stakeholders are embracing digital channels. The analysis highlights three key areas of innovation: government-led initiatives, state-level campaigns and the use of emerging technologies. The Incredible India Content Hub and digital portal have centralized multimedia resources and improved global visibility by making high-quality promotional materials widely accessible. Kerala Tourism has pioneered the use of chatbots and gamification with its 'Holiday Heist' campaign, which engaged thousands of participants and generated millions of impressions at low cost. Goa Tourism has invested in digital platforms such as 'Let's Goa' to integrate booking, planning and cultural content into a seamless user experience.

Beyond these institutional efforts, private and collaborative initiatives are also reshaping the tourism PR landscape. The rise of AI-driven travel influencers, immersive virtual and augmented reality tours and regionally focused influencer campaigns, demonstrate the sector's ability to experiment with new storytelling formats. These innovations have delivered measurable outcomes including expanded reach, higher engagement and international recognition. At the same time, the study acknowledges challenges such as the digital divide, language diversity, and privacy concerns that can limit inclusivity and long-term effectiveness. Addressing these requires an integrated approach that combines creative storytelling with robust infrastructure, multilingual content strategies and continuous monitoring of digital engagement. The findings suggest that digital transformation is not only modernizing campaign execution but also redefining the role of PR in tourism promotion. By blending technology with creativity, Indian tourism campaigns are building stronger destination brands, enhancing visitor engagement and setting new benchmarks for innovation in public relations.

Keywords: *Digital transformation, public relations, tourism campaign, India, chatbot, influencer, AI, case study*

UNLOCKING SUCCESS: ESSENTIAL METRICS FOR EMPOWERING SOCIAL CONTENT CREATORS WITH INSIGHTFUL ANALYSIS

Neema Gupta, Beula Anthony, Himanshi Saini, Manisha Nainani, Priyadarshini Mukherjee, Sajal Maji, Soma Katiyar, Sonal Chaudhari, Tej Prakash Yadav, and Varinder Gambhir
BBC Media Action

ABSTRACT

Digital landscape is dynamic and social media campaign creators are under increasing pressure to produce a continuous stream of engaging and high-impact content. The approach presents a framework that unites the art of storytelling with the science of data analytics, offering a practical, scalable solution for content performance evaluation—particularly within the realm of social and behaviour change communication. Additionally, the approach is designed to evolve with the available data/log frames from social media platforms. Moving beyond conventional social media metrics such as reach and engagement, the study introduces a replicable, structured approach to assess and engineer empathetic storytelling that drives impact. The key objective of the research is to develop a framework that leverages both quantitative and qualitative performance indicators, enabling communicators to identify content strategies that bring about deeper audience connection and behavior change. The framework includes assessment of 32 reels created for Invaluables.Bengaluru page on Instagram, speaking about the challenges related to waste management and waste pickers. The approach maps patterns of high-performing content by analyzing how emotional and thematic elements shape audience response, thereby enabling communicators to design content with intentionality—anchored in both evidence and emotion. To put this into practice, each asset was evaluated through a Weighted Composite Score that integrated both quantitative and qualitative measures. The quantitative dimensions included Reach Quality, calculated from overall reach and non-follower reach; Engagement, measured through likes, comments, shares, and saves; and Watch Behavior, assessed via play time and watch ratio. Complementing these, a Qualitative Score captured deeper audience responses, factoring in memorability, comprehension, relevance, actionability, and the extent to which the content connected with waste pickers. What sets this approach apart is its validation of the principle that effective content can be engineered to provide feedback for future content creation—not through formulaic repetition, but through an informed balance of creative intuition and analytical insight. Mapping of the patterns among the content is assessed using indicators such as quality of reach, engagement rates, viewing patterns, and qualitative audience feedback. The framework enables pre-testing of designed assets, transforming content development from a gamble into a guided and iterative process. Campaign strategists and content creators alike can use these insights to scale up what works, refine what doesn't, and maintain the authenticity of their message. Ultimately, it contributes to the growing body of evidence that performance and purpose can—and must—coexist in the creation of content that inspires action and drives change.

Keywords: *Social media campaign, evaluation matrix, scalable solution, social media analytics, in-depth interviews*

'WASH THE DABBA- A SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN TO DRIVE THE RECYCLING MOVEMENT IN BENGALURU'

Neema Gupta, Beula Anthony, Himanshi Saini, Manisha Nainani, Priyadarshini Mukherjee, Sajal Maji, Soma Katiyar, Sonal Chaudhari, Tej Prakash Yadav, and Varinder Gambhir
BBC Media Action

ABSTRACT

Wash the Dabba begins with a modest request—empty, rinse, and dry your food containers before throwing them out. From there it grew into a city-wide movement that not only influenced public behavior but also nudged the existing systems. Judith Butler's Frames of War (2009) and Nancy Fraser's work on recognition (2000) provide useful lenses on how waste pickers are socially framed—moving from invisibility and abjection to being acknowledged as subjects worthy of care and respect. This theoretical framing connects directly with the campaign's grounding in the often-unseen realities of waste pickers' work, marked by hidden labour, health hazards, and a persistent struggle for dignity. Cleaning leftover food in containers infested with worms and bacteria, making the task hazardous and unpleasant for waste pickers, putting them at risk. The campaign takes a creative leap: food came alive and got a voice- leftover Idlis and Biryani began speaking from inside discarded, grimy boxes—lamenting their fate. The tone was playful, the visuals relatable and the message hard to ignore. The innovative approach generated deep audience engagement, mapping of the comments against the campaign showed a predominant alignment with dependency on waste pickers (54%) and awareness of the work they do (38%), confirming the campaign's strategic focus on fostering associations between the CTA and recognition for waste pickers. Primary research, conducted through a mixed-method approach with 25–34-year-old Bengaluru social media users, compared exposed and unexposed audiences. Findings indicate that 60% of respondents discussed Wash the Dabba with family and friends, while 48% discussed waste pickers more broadly demonstrating that the campaign spurred offline conversations. Message recall of 'Wash The Dabba' was notably high—93% total recall the message— underscoring retention. Importantly, 60% of audiences reported adopting the CTA, a finding corroborated by anecdotal evidence collected from Dry Waste Collection Centres (DWCCs), where managers and sorters observed a 30–40% increase in clean dabbas post-campaign. The results indicate that Wash the Dabba has grown beyond a public awareness effort into a movement, integrating behavior change into daily routines. While anecdotal backend tracking highlighted promising adoption rates, the campaign has since incorporated mechanisms to systematically monitor future waste-handling behaviours, including a new system for managing textile waste. The evidence demonstrates a strong alignment between strategy, audience engagement, and real-world impact.

Keywords: *Social media campaign, evaluation matrix, scalable solution, social media analytics, in-depth interviews*

DIGITAL MEDIA AS POLITICAL ACTORS

Dr. Arindam Gupta
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ABSTRACT

Since the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, India has witnessed a significant surge in political communication via social media, particularly on the microblogging platform X (formerly Twitter). Politicians increasingly use digital media to micro-target diverse demographics, reshape narratives, and consolidate support. This paper examines the evolving dynamics of political communication through a region-specific case study of Assam Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma, who commands a substantial digital presence with over 2.2 million followers on X as of December 2023. The study spans eight months from December 2023 to July 2024 and conducts a detailed content analysis of his posts, analysed through the prism of the Actor-Network Theory (ANT) framework, which considers both human and technological elements as active participants in communication networks. The researcher went through the X handles of Chief Ministers of all Indian states and assessed the data of followers of the respective Chief Ministers and found that Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma was the ninth most followed Chief Minister in the country as of January 2024. This paper aims to study how a regional leader with national aspirations and influence used the digital platforms for strategic communication, public engagement, and ideological projection in a culturally diverse and politically sensitive region. The paper investigates how Dr Sarma, as a regional leader, uses X for political image branding. It aims to unravel how Dr Sarma uses the digital tool not just for communication, but for constructing a politically charged digital ecosystem that influences public discourse. This research contributes to the broader field of digital political communication by highlighting the intricate interplay of networks, narratives, and regional identity in shaping political outcomes in North East India, and offers a critical lens to explore how social media platforms serve as arenas for contemporary political negotiation and representation.

Keywords: *Digital media, political actors, political communication, social media campaigns, North East India*

EXPLORING THE CREATIVE PROCESS OF PARTICIPATORY SCREENWRITING IN THE INDIAN CONTEXT: A PRACTICE-BASED RESEARCH

Pereanayagam S, Dr. V. Vijay Kumar
School of Communications, XIM University

ABSTRACT

This study explores the production process of Participatory Screenwriting (PS) in the Indian context by employing a practice-based research methodology, rooted in an Art- Based/Aesthetic research paradigm. Using criterion sampling and opportunistic sampling (purposive sampling types), the research drew 25 participants comprising rural women, social work animators, village leaders, and youth from rural communities in the Jashpur district of Chhattisgarh, India. The research practice was primarily of writing a screenplay for a feature-length film. This collective process of art creation through participatory screenwriting practice generated primary data through a screenplay, video recordings of the practice and the researcher-practitioner's notes. The study reveals that the process of PS is collective, communitarian, spontaneous and participatory in nature. It has the potential to mine shared life experiences, leading to a unified collective expression. The study reveals that the story and dialogue spontaneously flowed from intrapersonal and interpersonal lived experiences of Indian rural folk, pointing to a common collective lived experience of reality prevalent in the society, setting the momentum for social transformation and community welfare. The study reaffirms creative practice methodology as a transformative tool and a creative space for participants to articulate their identity, issues and aspirations. This study also extends the transformative potential of creative practice as a method for engaging with participants from multiple socio-ethnic backgrounds.

Keywords: *Participatory screenwriting, creative process, creative practice methodology, artefacts, research practice*

ON 'ADVER-TEASE-MENTS': A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF TAGLINES

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ABSTRACT

The advent of digital communication platforms and innovative linguistic strategies has ushered in a new era for advertising. A key element across diverse advertisements throughout decades is the tagline, a feature readily noticeable to consumers. This pragmatic study examines the language of taglines used by Philippine house brands, contrasting their deployment in traditional and digital media. Framed by Searle's Speech Act Theory and Jakobson's Model of Language Functions, this study analyzed 100 English and Tagalog taglines from the year 2022 to the year 2025. The analysis identified four illocutionary act types—representatives, directives, commissives, and expressives—along with cognitive, emotive, and conative language functions. While digital advertising leverages dynamic elements to enhance the presentation of taglines, the core types of illocutionary acts employed remained consistent with those found in traditional media. However, the prevalence of specific acts and functions differed significantly across platforms. This variation reveals a strategic adaptation by advertisers, who tailor their message to the specific audience and communicative norms of each platform. For instance, social media platforms like Facebook utilized taglines carrying representative and commissive forces, while short-form video platforms like TikTok favored those with directive illocutions. Traditional advertising taglines were predominantly compact and consistent through time, employing representative illocutions to serve a primarily conative and cognitive function. Conversely, digital advertising demonstrated a more fluid and iterative approach. Results of this study suggest that house brands have acknowledged the temporary 'attractiveness' of a single tagline, frequently deploying new and varied mini-taglines that cater to trending topics and mass audiences before culminating in the main tagline. These digital advertisements contained multiple taglines in a single unit, featured directives most prominently, and often integrated conative, expressive, and cognitive functions simultaneously. This shift demonstrates a move from consistency to complex, elaborate expressions designed for rapid engagement. This study illuminates how illocutionary acts interact with inherent language functions to achieve advertising objectives across different media, highlighting the advertisers' adaptive strategies and the distinct yet effective persuasive mechanisms within the evolving advertising landscape.

Keywords: *Advertisement, pragmatic analysis, taglines, language function, illocutionary acts, Philippines*

HOW DIGITALIZATION IS TRANSFORMING ADVERTISING'S CREATIVE LANDSCAPE

Shalini Raghaviah
Pro Maximus Academy

ABSTRACT

Within the broader context of digital transformation, the creative aspects and processes of advertising have undergone a profound evolution. From being traditionally rooted in the grammar of cinema, theatre, and printed media with high production paraphernalia, it is now diversified and decentralized. The rise of digital platforms has decentralized and diversified not only who creates content but also how content is created. The explosion of formats—short videos, GIFs, memes, 6-second bumper ads, reels, stories, interactive banners, and AR lenses—has led to an ecosystem where brevity, interactivity, and visual immediacy drive ideation. The nature of storytelling has changed. It is now part of a series of shorts and optimized for algorithms. Cinematography, once influenced by mainstream Bollywood or documentary realism, has shifted to agile, handheld styles, mobile shoots, and vertical framing to suit platforms like Instagram and Moj. Lighting and color grading have adapted to mobile-first viewing, favoring naturalistic lighting for relatability or high-saturation hues for scroll-stopping impact. Editing timelines is tighter. The use of sound has evolved from background music or jingles to platform-native audio cues, trending sounds, and user-generated sonic elements that aid virality. This digital wave has democratized creative production. With smartphones, editing apps, and collaborative cloud-based tools, creative output is no longer confined to big studios. Freelancers, boutique agencies, and creators from Tier 2 and 3 cities now contribute meaningfully to brand narratives. Digital transformation has also impacted creative strategy, shifting it from brand monologue to dialogue. Ultimately, this transformation has not only changed what we create but also how we think about creativity. The focus has moved from polished perfection to contextual relevance, from fixed narratives to adaptive storytelling, and from hierarchical production to participatory co-creation. This paper explores this ongoing metamorphosis of India's advertising creative landscape, where tradition meets tech.The sources that will be referred to in this paper include existing published material, voices and insights from industry professionals, and experiences from the author's journey as a creative professional. Case studies and real examples shall be shared for inference and conclusion.

Keywords: *Creative process, advertising, decentralized media, co-creation, digitalization*

GENDERED DIGITAL ACCESS AND DISASTER COMMUNICATION: UNDERSTANDING RISK PERCEPTION AND RESPONSE AMONG FARMERS AND FISHERFOLK DURING TYPHOON ODETTE IN SOUTHERN LEYTE

Jeanie Rose S. Deluza-Palma
Visayas State University, Philippines

ABSTRACT

As disasters increasingly intersect with digital communication platforms, equitable access to risk information becomes a critical determinant of survival and resilience. This study examines how gender dynamics shape digital access, risk perception, and disaster response among rural farmers and fisherfolk during Typhoon Odette (Rai) in Southern Leyte, Philippines. Guided by Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, this study aimed to determine the relationship between gender and access to disaster information, risk perception, preparedness, and response among farmers and fisherfolk in the municipalities of Silago and Hinunangan, Southern Leyte. By applying a gendered lens to digital transformation, the study investigates how mobile alerts, television, radio, and social media influenced preparedness behaviors in two severely affected communities. Employing a mixed-methods approach, data were gathered through structured surveys of 100 respondents (50 male, 50 female) and supported by group discussions with local residents. Findings show that women reported greater access to digital disaster information, primarily through home-based channels like SMS alerts, Facebook posts, and televised broadcasts. In contrast, men—often away in the fields or sea—relied more on interpersonal or barangay-level communication and were slower to act on disaster warnings. Women consistently demonstrated higher levels of risk perception and timely evacuation, especially when they had digital access and were actively engaged in household decision-making and financial planning. While tools such as alerts from the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (NDRRMC) proved useful, structural limitations—such as shared device use, digital illiteracy, and inconsistent mobile signals—impeded equitable information flow, particularly among men. These insights point to a gendered structural gap in current digital disaster communication strategies. The study calls for policy interventions that enhance ICT infrastructure in remote communities and advocate for cross-platform public communication campaigns that integrate both traditional and digital channels. Institutionalizing gender analysis in disaster communication planning is critical in ensuring that no one is left behind in the digital era.

Keywords: *Digital communication, gender and disaster, disaster information access, risk perception, media use*

DIGITAL LEISURE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE: THE RISE OF VIDEO STREAMING PLATFORMS IN INDIA AND ITS IMPACT ON THE AGING POPULATION

Dr. V. Vijay Kumar
School of Communications, XIM University

ABSTRACT

The rapid expansion of video streaming platforms has reshaped digital leisure, particularly in regional language landscapes such as the Tamil cinema of India. While these platforms have increased accessibility and diversified content consumption, they have also deepened digital divides, particularly among aging populations. This study explores how the rise of video streaming platforms in Tamil cinema intersects with issues of inclusion, exclusion, and social justice for older audiences. Drawing on qualitative interviews and ethnographic engagement with elderly Tamil cinema viewers, this research examines barriers to digital access, including technological literacy, economic constraints, language preferences, and cultural shifts in entertainment consumption, with the help of a theoretical framework based on Cultural Gerontology, Platformization of Culture, and the Theory of Digital Leisure. It interrogates how aging populations negotiate their relationship with digital leisure, especially in a media ecosystem where traditional cinema-viewing experiences like theatres and satellite television are being disrupted. The study also considers how the shift to digital platforms affects their sense of social belonging, nostalgia, and leisure autonomy. Additionally, this research highlights policy implications and inclusive design strategies that can enhance digital access for older generations, ensuring equitable participation in the evolving leisure landscape. By positioning digital leisure within broader debates on ageism, digital justice, and media accessibility, the study underscores how access to meaningful leisure directly impacts older adults' psychological well-being, sense of belonging, and emotional resilience. In doing so, it contributes to advancing leisure studies by foregrounding the links between digital leisure, social justice, and mental health equity in later life.

Keywords: *Digital leisure, aging population, mental well-being, video streaming platforms, leisure justice, social inclusion*

DE-STRESSING COMMUNICATION IN THE DIGITAL AGE: CONTENT ANALYSIS OF MOBILE GAMING APPS THROUGH THE LENS OF USES AND GRATIFICATIONS THEORY

Mansi Singh
Department of Communication and Journalism, University of Mumbai

ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of the global mobile gaming industry generating over US$90 billion in 2023 and accounting for nearly half of global video game revenues (Wired, 2024) reflects its central role in digital transformation and creative communication strategies. Mobile games now serve as interactive platforms that merge information, education, and entertainment while influencing user well-being. Research shows casual games can significantly reduce stress, lower tension, and improve mood by altering brain wave activity and autonomic responses (Russoniello, O'Brien, & Parks, 2009).

Guided by the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) (Ruggiero, 2000), this study conducts a quantitative content analysis of 32 top-ranked in Google Play Store gaming apps. It examined them through the lens of UGT, many of the measurable factors including app size, ratings, downloads, cost, developer type, communication modes, interactivity, and calming design elements. Findings reveal that 59% of games prioritize entertainment over information or education, while 45% incorporate features linked to relaxation, such as calming media, simple mechanics, and pause functions. The study underscores the potential of mobile games as innovative, user-driven communication channels that combine creative engagement with stress reduction. It recommends integrating calming and light educational features into various game genres to enhance mental well-being while maintaining entertainment value offering actionable insights for developers, educators, and mental health practitioners in leveraging digital transformation for positive societal impact.

Keywords: *Mobile gaming, content analysis, reduce stress, entertainment, education, information, uses and gratifications theory*

COMMUNICATING DEVELOPMENT THROUGH BROADCAST AND INTERACTIVE MEDIA BY STATE UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES IN BICOL, PHILIPPINES

Sharon Kay Julaton
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ABSTRACT

Beyond instruction and research, higher education institutions (HEIs) in the Philippines are mandated to actively engage in community outreach programs as part of their extension activities. As such, in recent years, HEIs have highly utilized the media as tools in promoting development programs and facilitating knowledge transfer, especially in rural communities. Camarines Sur Polytechnic Colleges (CSPC) is one of the state colleges in Bicol that has a broadcast station on its campus in Nabua, Camarines Sur. Using the case of the college's extension program titled "Trabaho, Negosyo, at Konsyumer", which focuses on consumer rights, employment opportunities, and entrepreneurship, the researcher examined the reception behavior of the development program's target audiences. The study used Stuart Hall's Audience Theory as its framework for investigating the respondents' media consumption habits. Additionally, guided by the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), which posits that audiences utilize various media platforms based on their personal needs and satisfaction, the study also analyzed the factors influencing audience reception to draw meaningful implications. Furthermore, this study employed a mixed-methods approach to gain substantial and comprehensive data from the results. The researcher interviewed ten participants and used thematic analysis for the qualitative data. For the quantitative method, a total of 200 respondents were surveyed using purposive sampling, and the data gathered were analyzed using frequency, percentage, and ranking. Findings reveal how the increasing audience fragmentation affects the media consumption behavior of audiences, particularly among younger demographics who use mobile phones as their primary device for accessing media content and development programs. Although radio remains a significant broadcast medium among older populations, many younger audiences prefer digital platforms that make the development programs more interactive, engaging, and accessible. Given the changing audience landscape, the study recommends that CSPC employ hybrid media strategies by strengthening its radio signal coverage to cater to older demographics while integrating content adaptation in social media platforms such as podcasts, infographics, YouTube videos, and Facebook pages to reach younger audiences. Consequently, this study highlights the need to communicate development that is reflective of and sensitive to the local context of audiences. In other words, for development communication programs to be effective, their content, style, and delivery must be responsive and relevant to the needs of rural communities.

RECEPTION BEHAVIOR OF AUDIENCES ON DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS IN THE RURAL COMMUNITIES IN BICOL REGION, PHILIPPINES

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ABSTRACT

Development communication serves as a strategic tool in empowering rural communities by encouraging inclusive participation, facilitating access to essential information, and supporting sustainable development goals. In regions with limited infrastructure, such as many rural areas in the Philippines, government-led media initiatives are critical in bridging communication gaps. With the innovative communication strategies, academic and technical expertise, state universities are expected to align programs with global goals to reduce the digital divide and improve public service, particularly in underdeveloped areas (UNESCO, 2022). This study examined the reception behavior of the target audiences of the development programs of Dr. Emilio B. Espinosa Sr. Memorial State College of Agriculture and Technology, a state-owned university in Masbate, an island province in the Bicol Region. Using Stuart Hall's Audience Theory as its framework, this investigates the evolving media consumption patterns and the factors influencing the effectiveness of programs produced through radio and interactive media. This also utilized Uses and Gratifications Theory which examined how audiences engage with media based on their personal needs and satisfaction. This employed a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative interviews with ten participants, analyzed through thematic analysis and a quantitative survey of 200 purposively selected respondents. Findings indicate that even in rural communities, audiences are no longer monolithic in accessing information but increasingly fragmented across traditional and rapidly expanding digital platforms. Mobile phones are the primary devices used for accessing media and public service content, particularly among younger demographics. Although radio remains relevant, its usage is limited due to poor signal reception, making online streaming a growing alternative. Most respondents consume media for less than an hour, suggesting the need for shorter, more engaging formats. They also recommended improving radio signal coverage, using locally understood languages, and focusing on relevant topics such as health, livelihood, and agriculture. The study concludes that public communication planners should adopt hybrid innovative approaches by utilizing mobile and online platforms to reach digitally connected users while retaining radio's reach and familiarity to serve older and digitally underserved populations. As media landscapes continue to transform, government programs must remain inclusive and responsive to the diverse needs of their audiences.

Keywords: *Audience fragmentation, development communication, rural communities, traditional media, digital platforms*

DIGITAL SUSTAINABILITY OR DIGITAL GREENWASHING? BRANDING, CONSUMER CULTURE, AND THE POLITICS OF ECO-ADVERTISING IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

In the contemporary Indian advertising setting, the digital transformation of branding has fuelled an explosion of "green" campaigns from corporate sustainability pledges to eco-themed influencer endorsements optimized for social media reach. On the contrary, beneath the lush imagery of forests and the soothing pastels of minimalism remains a more complex narrative: one where environmental responsibility often operates less as a corporate ethic and more as a platform-driven marketing strategy. This study interrogates the thin line between digital sustainability and digital greenwashing, situating Indian eco-advertising within the broader frameworks of consumer culture, brand activism, and environmental representation. It questions the politics of digital eco-advertising and asks: Are brands genuinely nurturing sustainable practices, or are they repackaging consumerism with a green veneer? Drawing on theoretical frameworks from critical consumer culture studies and postcolonial perspectives, this research situates greenwashing within the broader logics of neoliberal capitalism, where environmental responsibility is commodified and traded as a lifestyle aspiration. Critical Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) underscores how consumption is intertwined with such aspirational identities and moral economies embedded in social and cultural practices. Whereas, postcolonial critique positions ethnic and indigenous aesthetics in Indian advertising within Global South asymmetries, rallied for global markets, often devoid of ecological specificity. Together, using these frameworks, it critically examines how digital platforms amplify these narratives through targeted advertising, influencer collaborations, and immersive brand storytelling, thereby normalizing "sustainable consumption" as a virtuous act, while obscuring the ecological and ethical costs of production. Through qualitative content analysis of 12 purposively selected Indian brand campaigns in the fashion, FMCG, service and technology sectors from the past five years (between 2020 and 2024), the study identifies recurring discursive strategies: moral appeals, nature metaphors, recycled aesthetic minimalism, and selective disclosure of sustainability claims. By combining semiotic analysis with theoretical critiques of brand activism, it argues that digital sustainability in India operates within a contested ideological space, mobilizing environmental awareness while perpetuating patterns of overconsumption. Therefore, ironically, the aesthetics of minimalism, often marketed as an antidote to overconsumption, become yet another commodity, perpetuating the very systems they claim to resist. By situating these findings within the broader shifts brought about by the digital transformation of advertising in India, the paper demonstrates how platform-driven creative strategies both enable and complicate sustainability communication in the contemporary media landscape.

Keywords: *Digital sustainability, greenwashing, eco-advertising, consumer culture, environmental communication*

WHEN UNIVERSITY OFFICIAL ACCOUNTS BECOME "INFLUENCERS": PUBLIC COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN THE SHORT VIDEO ERA

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, short video platforms such as WeChat Channels, Xiaohongshu, and Douyin have become key arenas for public communication in China. Universities, traditionally reliant on formal and top-down publicity methods, are now actively adapting to the vernacular, emotional, and interactive logic of digital platforms. Official accounts are adopting influencer-like tactics—embracing popular formats, casual language, and visual storytelling—to connect more effectively with students and the broader public. This shift reflects a broader trend of "self-mediatization" within public institutions, where organizations must now navigate both institutional goals and platform dynamics. This study focuses on how Chinese universities manage this transformation and explores the emerging tensions between institutional identity and influencer logic. It applies a three-level analytical framework encompassing organizational communication strategies, platform governance mechanisms, and user interaction dynamics. Key research questions include: How do universities alter their messaging and content to fit the expectations of short video platforms? What internal systems are in place to monitor, approve, and respond to content and comments? And how does this new mode of digital visibility reshape public trust and the symbolic authority of higher education institutions? Methodologically, the study adopts a mixed-methods approach. It includes content analysis of 10 representative university accounts across major short video platforms, alongside semi-structured interviews with communication officers and account managers. Findings reveal three dominant strategic orientations: image-centered publicity, emotionally resonant storytelling, and trend-responsive content production. While these strategies have improved reach and engagement, they have also led to challenges related to content moderation, platform dependency, and loss of institutional voice. The paper argues that university official accounts are becoming hybrid communicative actors—straddling the roles of public institution and social media influencer. This transformation is not merely a communication tactic but a structural adaptation to the platformized environment. By situating university communication within digital governance discourse, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how public-sector actors are being reshaped by algorithmic culture and participatory media logic.

Keywords: *University communication, self- media, short video platforms, digital governance, platformization*

TELLING STORIES WITH TECH: HUMAN-CENTRED CAMPAIGNS IN A DIGITALLY TRANSFORMED WORLD

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ABSTRACT

In a world increasingly shaped by digital transformation, where algorithms dictate attention and pixels narrate identity, This paper analyzes the role of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and visual intelligence in enabling emotionally resonant, human-centred campaigns that reinterpret historical design languages in a context increasingly shaped by digital transformation. The study investigates the evolution of typography from ancient scripts to the digital age, focusing on the trajectory of the Art Deco typography movement in early 20th-century Mumbai. This movement, which was most popular in the 1930s, is a unique mix of modern Western styles and Indian cultural elements. The study looks at the diverse types of typography used on Mumbai's famous Art Deco buildings, monuments, and public spaces. These letterforms, which are commonly constructed of stone, metal, and neon, improve the environment's look and represent what the city wanted to achieve before it became independent. In Mumbai, Liberty Cinema features large, geometric signage, while Eros Cinema showcases elegant, streamlined typography that incorporates both Latin and Devanagari fonts, along with traditional Indian motifs such as peacocks and lotus flowers. These typographic qualities inspired the architecture of the era and reflected the growing nature of culture and innovation. The research utilizes a qualitative, humanistic method, integrating visual motif analysis, archival research, and digital ethnography to establish the importance, origins, and present usage of these typographic shapes. The paper asserts that Mumbai's Art Deco font is a hybrid visual language that continues to impact digital narrative and design, drawing on principles from visual culture theory, urban semiotics, and postcolonial media studies. The digital revival of Mumbai's Art Deco font exemplifies the capacity of technology to bridge historical and contemporary realms. Immersive media, social media, and AI-driven design tools are facilitating innovative applications of traditional typography for contemporary audiences. This approach preserves culture while simultaneously allowing individuals to explore new experiences. This digital influence not only preserves the visual history of the past but also provides media professionals, designers, and communicators with the essential tools to develop narratives that are inclusive and emotionally compelling, engaging audiences of all ages and backgrounds.

Keywords: *Human-centred design, art deco typography, digital storytelling, cultural identity, media transformation*

PARALLEL SESSION B:

CONVERGENCE OF MEDIA AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

LEGAL JUSTICE IN THE DIGITAL AGE: REPRESENTING MARGINALIZED VOICES IN TAMIL CINEMA

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ABSTRACT

This study examines Jai Bhim (2021) as a case study and the intersections of caste, tribe, and gender in Tamil cinema and its streaming distribution. This examination uses Stuart Hall's (1997) theory of representation, Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1989, 2013) intersectionality, and Nancy Fraser's (1990) subaltern counterpublics to examine how the film conveys systemic injustice, engages digital communities, and addresses contradictions of platform capitalism. Through textual, paratextual, and contextual analysis, the research found that Jai Bhim distinguishes itself from Tamil cinema's common narratives, which address the lived experience of oppression through a tribal woman, while also signaling the ongoing validation of hierarchy by elite control. Its streaming release on Amazon Prime opened the texts for a global audience and created emotional counterpublics who were vulnerable to trolling, algorithmic bias, and data exploitation. The research results illustrate cinema's ability to engage and disrupt dominant narratives as well as mobilize audiences, but do so under structural inequality and its restorative role that exists in commercial digital systems. Ultimately, the author concludes that politically conscious cinema during the era of streaming is more of a continual negotiation around marginalization than a solution, illuminating opportunities and limits for representation, distribution, and resistance.

Keywords: *Jai Bhim, Tamil cinema, intersectionality, subaltern counterpublics, OTT platforms, politically conscious cinema*

CINEMA AS SOCIO-CULTURAL MEMORY: THE SASE OF KAZAKH NEW WAVE CINEMA

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ABSTRACT

During the late 1980s and the dissolution of the USSR in 1991, Kazakh cinema underwent a profound transformation--from serving as an instrument of Soviet ideological control to becoming a medium for cultural self-expression and national reflection. Independent filmmakers, particularly those of the Kazakh New Wave, engaged with themes of time, space, and identity, responding to the postcolonial realities and socio-political shifts of Kazakhstan. This research examines how films produced between 1988 and 2002 function as repositories of socio-cultural memory, mediating between tradition and modernity, and between personal and collective narratives. Through textual, aesthetic, and contextual analysis, the study demonstrates how cinema both constructs and critiques national identity, while reflecting the aspirations and anxieties of a society in transition. The results obtained contribute to the broader research areas of the post-colonial period in Central Eurasia following the collapse of the USSR, positioning Kazakh cinema as a platform for exploring socio-cultural memory of society within the context of global film discourse.

Keywords: *Cinema, Kazakh new wave, sociocultural memory, Central Eurasia, communications*

BEGINNING A PRECARIOUS JOURNEY: NEW ENTRANTS' ACCESS TO DIGITAL VIDEO PRODUCTION WORK IN MUMBAI

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ABSTRACT

This paper uses the theoretical frameworks of the political economy and production studies approaches to understand the context within which media products are created, by examining new entrants' access to freelance work in the digital video production industry in Mumbai. Since freelance work involves project-wise professional contracts rather than salaried employment of skilled media labor, access to such work demands a constant effort. The research question guiding this study asks, 'How do new entrants find work in Mumbai's digital video production industry?' To answer this, in-depth interviews were conducted with a volunteer sample of nine assistant directors, both male and female, who have entered the industry in the last two years. While new entrants accepted that entrepreneurialism was a part of their identity, they were unable to self-brand or promote themselves on social media like other creative workers, because the work performed by assistant directors is invisible. Thus they had heavily rely on their personal networks to get access to work, adding to the precarity of their earnings.

Keywords: *Gig workers, media labor, creative industries, precarity, access to work*

MAPPING MEDIA CONVERGENCE AND USER ACCEPTANCE IN A RELIGIOUS MEGA EVENT: A CASE STUDY OF MAHAKUMBH 2025

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ABSTRACT

Kumbh Mela, recognized by UNESCO as an element of Intangible Cultural Heritage, is the world's largest religious gathering. The 2025 Maha Kumbh, held in Prayagraj after 12 years due to a rare celestial alignment, attracted global attention. For the first time, it witnessed innovative approaches to heritage preservation, dissemination through media convergence and the creative industry. This study explores how Artificial Intelligence (AI), Virtual Reality (VR), and Augmented Reality (AR) were utilized to promote and preserve the rituals and mythologies of the Maha Kumbh, assess their impact, and propose future directions for the use of media convergence in intangible heritage, using the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) as a framework. While existing research on cultural heritage and emerging technologies largely centers on tangible heritage, there is limited focus on intangible aspects, particularly religious events. Addressing this gap, the study employs a qualitative approach, incorporating surveys, field observations, and document analysis. A total of 150 participants were selected through volunteer sampling. Findings show that the Mahakumbh was extensively promoted via mobile apps and experience centers, showcasing media convergence. The 'Digital Kumbh Experience Centre' used AI to narrate mythological stories, while immersive technologies like VR enabled participation in virtual rituals such as Deepdaan, Samudra Manthan scenes, and virtual boat rides enhancing cultural understanding. There is a strong acceptance of digital tools in cultural heritage dissemination. Key TAM factors, 'perceived usefulness' and 'ease of use' are evident through comments on 'easy visuals' and 'faster learning,' 'easy to understand'. While majority of respondents supported the use of AR/VR for intangible heritage, trust issues and awareness (reported by 33.58 %) highlight the need for inclusive, mobile-based or hybrid solutions for all age groups. Out of 29 documents analyzed, 19 contained terms and topics related to technology, indicating a growing use of new media technologies in events involving intangible cultural heritage, such as the Kumbh Mela. Furthermore, field observations suggest that these new technologies enhance social engagement within the context of cultural heritage. And the impact of these technologies on the general public depends on factors such as emotional state. The findings of the study can strengthen policies for integrating emerging technologies into heritage practices and contribute to academic discourse by providing a foundation for future research on digital heritage, immersive technologies, and media convergence in preserving intangible cultural traditions.

Keywords: *Mahakumbh, intangible cultural heritage, media convergence, digital storytelling, virtual reality (VR), artificial intelligence (AI), India, technology acceptance model (TAM)*

SHARING LIFE, STRENGTHENING BONDS: MICRO-INFLUENCERS IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Being home to numerous languages and cultures, India has been embracing a transitioned trend in the influencer market. With multilingual social media platforms, users prefer consuming content in their native languages and cultural backgrounds. A report published by Media Brief (India Influencer June 2025) states that 51 percent of the marketers expressed intent to collaborate with niche micro influencers in 2025. This was indicative of more 'community-driven' and 'interest-based influence' needs. While there is a sharp trend on such a reliance among brands and product manufacturers in India, such content is relatable, delving into real-life situations and experiences with a touch of emotional connections, thus encouraging source credibility and parasocial interactions. These influencers also promote products as regular users with a testimonial effect, becoming 'cultural brokers' (Bhatia et.al., 2025). The following research delves into understanding how Instagram micro-influencers are engaging users with niche content oriented towards personal choices, a slice of real life on reel, and commonality. With the relevance of Hovelands's source credibility theory, the study seeks to know how and why such niche content develops engaging users and connectivity. The study will include semi-structured interviews with 25 micro-influencers across India through purposive sampling to understand how thought processes, content creation intentions, and niche influencing tactics position them among their followers. Despite cultural diversity and varied languages, this methodology will help in probing deeper to understand individual patterns of slice-of-life representations, reflecting cultural heterogeneity with niche content resonating among diverse groups. The responses from these interviews will then be thematically analyzed (based on Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis) to understand various patterns of the above-mentioned elements that drive followers to enjoy such content. The thematic analysis serves as a beneficial inductive method to foster deeper interpretations through the categorization of themes that evolve, and add credibility to the establishment of findings.

Keywords: *Micro-influencers; slice of life; source credibility; Instagram; influencers*

THE ROLE OF INSTAGRAM FOOD INFLUENCERS IN SHAPING EATING HABITS AND FOOD CULTURAL EXPLORATION

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ABSTRACT

In the contemporary digital environment, social media platforms, particularly Instagram, serve as influential spaces for shaping lifestyle choices, with food-related content occupying a central role. This study examines the short-term effects of Instagram Food Influencers (IFIs) on users' eating habits and culinary exploration in Karnataka, focusing on the urban centers of cosmopolitan city Bengaluru and corporation city Mysuru. The research is fastened in Social Cognitive Theory, which emphasizes observational learning, imitation, and the role of mediated models in shaping behavior. Within this framework, IFIs act as symbolic models whose visual cues, lifestyle narratives, and perceived expertise influence audience members' attitudes and practices. Adopting a descriptive quantitative research design, data was collected through a survey method using structured questionnaires, distributed to 302 Instagram users 151 from each city selected through purposive sampling. The questionnaire was pre-tested for reliability, and statistical analyses, including Independent Sample T-tests and Mann–Whitney U tests, were conducted to examine variations in responses. Findings aligned with the research objectives reveal the following: 1) Visual aesthetics and creative presentation in IFI content strongly motivate users to try new dishes and cuisines. 2) Visiting eateries featured by influencers significantly influences users' eating behavior and broadens their food choices. 3) Gender-based differences were observed, with female users showing greater responsiveness to IFI content compared to male users. 5) Bengaluru users reported higher levels of influence from IFIs than those in Mysuru, particularly in exploring new food outlets and trends. The study's scope is limited to Instagram, excluding other influential platforms like YouTube or Facebook, which narrows the broader view of digital influence. These findings contribute to understanding the role of IFIs in shaping consumer food behaviors in the short term, highlighting the need for strategic and responsible influencer-led marketing tailored to specific demographic and regional contexts.

Keywords: *Instagram, food influencers, eating behavior, food culture, social media*

MEITEI FOLK MUSIC IN THE AGE OF MEDIA CONVERGENCE: HOW INDIGENOUS THEMES ARE SHARED AND RECEIVED

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ABSTRACT

Media convergence has transformed the way media texts are encoded, disseminated and interpreted within a digital media environment. The paper explores the reinvention and reception of Meitei (Manipur) folk music (performance) videos, embedded with indigenous and cultural themes such as ecological cosmologies, warrior tales, ancient love stories, sylvan worship and ecofeminist symbolism with contemporary storytelling techniques in online spaces. The research uses Media Convergence theory as its foundational lens to study the transmission of oral traditions into digital spaces and combines other theoretical perspectives for deeper insights. Media Ecology theory is employed to examine the affordances of platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook in reshaping the circulation and perception of traditional information ingrained in modern folk music content and how its meaning gets transformed in the process. The encoding/decoding model and participatory culture theory are collectively applied to study how content with inherent traditional motifs is recreated and encoded online and how audiences decode, recontextualize, and repurpose the same. The study adopts qualitative interpretive analysis of selected contemporary Meitei folk music videos on YouTube, tracing their cross-platform circulation and reinterpretation on Instagram and Facebook. Through critical discourse analysis theory, the study was conducted thematically, coding audience comments, shares, and engagement of the aforementioned content. This approach helped uncover how power influences the rearticulation of cultural knowledge and determines which meanings are more accepted or overlooked in digital discussions. Findings reveal that audiences primarily resonated with themes of cultural pride, aesthetics, recognition of artistic performance and entertainment value, followed by appreciation of musical concepts, visual imagery, cinematography, cross-cultural recognition, etc. Beyond passive appreciation, audiences actively repurposed the content by sharing it across platforms to highlight indigenous landscapes, rituals, festivals, and artifacts and further reused it by creating adaptations that situated the music in new cultural contexts. While ecological consciousness was less explicitly acknowledged, ecofeminist undercurrents emerged in some discourses that celebrated feminine energy as a symbol of cultural and natural continuity. The multi-theoretical approach to the study reveals how traditions not only survive but also adapt and transform in today's online realms.

Keywords: *Media convergence, media ecology, encoding/decoding, participatory culture, critical discourse analysis, reinvented Meitei folk music, indigenous and cultural knowledge, digital storytelling*

COMMUNITY RADIO AND MEDIA CONVERGENCE: EXPLORING THE DIGITAL LANDSCAPE AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

Community radio serves as a hyperlocal medium for information and communication, aiming to enhance development by reaching remote and underserved communities. Its purpose is to facilitate connections between these communities and the mainstream society. Despite operating with limited resources and smaller bandwidth, community radio continues to strive for effective outcomes. However, the advent of digital media presents significant challenges, particularly in engaging a broader audience, notably the younger generation, which has increasingly shifted its focus towards digital and social media platforms. In this context, community radio is actively enhancing its influence within the alternative landscape of information and communication. By embracing innovative media convergence techniques, it not only expands its reach but also enriches the quality and accessibility of its content. This evolution allows community radio to engage with listeners in more dynamic and interactive ways, fostering a sense of belonging and participation that is essential in today's digital age. The implementation of new media techniques, including the Mixlr app and an active digital presence on social media platforms, is enabling community radio stations to engage with broader audiences effectively. The community members living in outstations can connect to their roots through these media apps. This article endeavors to analyze the myriad challenges faced by community radio in the context of multimedia environments and digital transformations. This study aims to identify the emerging technologies and communication strategies that community radio has implemented to navigate these challenges effectively. This research has employed a qualitative ethnographic approach to gain a comprehensive understanding of the working patterns, communication strategies, and utilization of media convergence as a parallel system of engagement with community members. The study focuses on two community radio stations located in Uttarakhand, namely 'Mandakini ki Awaaz' (90.8 MHz) in Bhanaj Village, Rudraprayag District, and 'Henvalvani' (90.4 MHz) in Chamba, Tehri District, Uttarakhand. Based on the Conceptual framework of Paulo Freire's dialogic pedagogy and participatory approach of communication, this study deals with communication strategies and their impact on the respective audiences or listeners. The study uses semi-structured interviews with core team members, including station directors, program producers, reporters, and program managers, as well as audience interviews for community radios.

Keywords: *Community radio, digital challenges, media convergence, social media, participatory communication*

ANALYZING THE IMPACT OF MEDIA ENVIRONMENT ON GENDER PERFORMANCE AND SOCIAL IDENTITY: A CASE STUDY OF MALE BEAUTY INDUSTRY KOLS

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ABSTRACT

Women entrepreneurs are critical drivers in innovation and sustainable socio-economic development worldwide, as they are highly educated in technology and have an impact on creating jobs for others. There are 35.7% of female entrepreneurs, equivalent to four women out of ten entrepreneurs in Macau, demanding digital literacy which is crucial for staying competitive, especially when AI use is widespread and radically impacting all aspects of human life. This case study aims to map the digital literacy of women entrepreneurs in the city of Macau from a gender perspective. Building on qualitative analysis of 20 in-depth interviews, the study found that there were limited debates on digital literacy from a gender lens in Macau's academic and public discourses even though the city is an open economic community with high levels of internet users and internet penetration (89.8%). Practical and policy efforts focusing on improving digital literacy in Macau are mostly oriented towards young people and the elderly. A gender perspective is missing in constructing knowledge of digital literacy at different levels and in practical settings. Although women entrepreneurs recognized the significance of digital literacy in promoting their professional growth, the study found a mismatch between their demands and available resources in increasing digital literacy. As a result, women entrepreneurs felt they had been left ill-prepared to utilize and critically engage with digital tools for their professional growth. This mismatch also raised concerns about privacy, cybersecurity, gender bias, and stereotypes. Moreover, this mismatch was growing as AI progressively transformed the women entrepreneurs' dedicated industries. The study also found that digital literacy was often understood instrumentally but not through a systematic approach. The study highlighted the crucial role of developing the digital literacy of women entrepreneurs in strengthening social inclusion in Macau. Civil society and government were suggested to integrate a gender perspective into efforts aimed at raising awareness about digital literacy and mobilizing resources.

Keywords: *digital literacy, gender, women entrepreneurs, Artificial Intelligence*

VISUAL RHETORIC IN AIGC-GENERATED CHINESE MYTHOLOGY VIDEOS: A PATHWAY FOR CULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND GLOBAL OUTREACH

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ABSTRACT

The rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence Generated Content (AIGC) is profoundly reshaping visual communication modalities and cross-cultural exchange mechanisms. In 2024, China Media Group (CMG) launched the text-to-image generative model-based micro-drama Chinese Myths, which disseminates Chinese culture through AI-driven visual imagery. This initiative stands as a significant case study of AIGC empowering the international communication of Chinese culture. Drawing on visual rhetoric theory and employing the Rhetorical Triangle model, this paper systematically examines the visual imagery strategies deployed in the drama. It aims to elucidate how AIGC-generated images reduce cultural discount, enhance emotional resonance, and thereby expand the pathways and mechanisms for AI-empowered international communication of Chinese culture. This study focuses on three dimensions of the Rhetorical Triangle—Subject Perspective, and Audience/Content. Representative AIGC-generated frames (10–30 per episode) depicting diverse scenes from Chinese Myths were selected, ensuring coverage of multiple themes, semiotic fields, and emotional trajectories. Visual details including composition, color, symbolism, and character postures within these frames were meticulously documented to capture features relevant to the three analytical dimensions. Subsequent analysis distilled overarching patterns, highlighting the pathways through which AI-generated visual imagery facilitates cultural communication. Key Findings: Subject: Chinese Myths engages in modern reinterpretations of traditional mythological motifs, integrating archetypal cultural imagery with contemporary values. This synthesis visually manifests China's spiritual lineage transcending ancient and modern times, generating meaning through mechanisms of visual metaphor. Perspective: The AI-generated visuals exhibit logical composition, coherent element distribution, and narrative continuity. This reflects the implementation of algorithm-driven precise matching and human-AI collaborative storytelling, thereby optimizing the logical organization and dissemination pathways of visual information to enhance persuasive impact and audience acceptance. Audience/Content: The AI-generated imagery achieves multimodal content fusion. It employs rhetorical devices such as iconic recurrence, chromatic metaphor, and inter-iconicity (in imagery, color, and human/object representation) to construct a "language-independent" pathway for cultural translation. This effectively stimulates emotional resonance and cultural identification among cross-cultural audiences. The study concludes that AIGC visual imagery has emerged as a vital pathway for the global dissemination of Chinese culture, characterized by technical precision, cultural depth, and communicative efficacy. Building upon the insights from this paradigmatic case and its demonstrated practices in visual rhetoric and cultural communication, capacity building for China's international cultural communication should prioritize the strategic utilization of AIGC- empowered visual media. This entails the continuous refinement of deployable visual rhetorical strategies tailored for the contemporary image-centric era.

REGISTERS OF LOCALIZATION IN THE INDIAN VOD BUSINESS

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ABSTRACT

Ideas of "localization" in the audio-visual industries vary with the incentives and compulsions faced by competing actors. Depending upon geographic, cultural, and linguistic areas of operation, competing actors differently view the relevance and devise localisation strategies, resulting in their conceptions ranging from the very broad to the more nuanced. The term commonly captures practices of 'translation', i.e., "any kind of media adaptation, such as format licensing, adaptations, transcreations and remakes" (Chaume 2020:320). Compared to this commercial register of localization, a more refined conception goes beyond aspects of translation, including related matters of language and dubbing. Significant here is the participation of domestic producers and talent. But this industrial register of localization may carry the risk of simply adapting globally successful program formats--as witnessed in the localization strategies of trans-national broadcasters in India 25 years ago (see Ganguly 2010, Sinclair & Harrison 2004:47). Consequently, we can further nuance the concept along its cultural register. This entails content created with domestic producers and talent drawing on representation and authorship from particular cultural traditions. We use the term substantive localization to capture, at once, the commercial, industrial and cultural registers of localization. In India's buoyant online video-on-demand market, we find two sets of actors pursuing radically contrasting renditions of localization. Trans-national platforms pursue commercial and industrial localization by investing in content catering to Indian audiences. This is motivated as much by reducing costs of producing original content (see Baladron & Rivero 2019:117) as by attracting slices of audience from numerous linguistic markets. Another rendition of localization is visible among 'homegrown' platforms. These relatively smaller, domestic platforms provide content that taps into stories and symbolism associated with particular linguistic cultures of India. This paper examines scripted web originals from two SVODs – a Bangla platform owned by an established actor in Bengal's cinema business (Hoichoi), and a new actor in India's audio-visual business, part of a global service (Netflix), with the data collected from the self declared catalogue on the platforms as well as websites like IMDb. We are curious to explore the nature of localization, at all three registers, refracted in the catalogue of these SVODs.

Keywords: *Video-on-demand platforms, trans-nationalization, localization, participation, representation*

REGIONALIZATION AND DIVERSITY IN INDIA'S VOD MARKET

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ABSTRACT

A key trait of the Indian media economy is the historical presence of multilingual markets (Parthasarathi 2018). Film producers rarely made films in more than one language, and dubbing across Indian languages has been uncommon, save that between Tamil and Telugu (Srinivas 2016). In broadcasting, a fistful of large, multilingual networks co-exist with numerous others that address audiences in a single language. Thus, what is often construed as 'Indian media' is actually an aggregation of geographically bound media markets that vary in their industrial, commercial, and organizational character. Despite a few notable compilations of regional experiences in broadcasting and cinema (see Desai 2021, Srinivas 2015), systematic comparisons between linguistic media markets remain scarce. Given the persistence of multilingual markets in the converged media economy, we are curious about the content offerings of regional language Video-on-demand (VOD) platforms. Exploring this will also broaden the scope of comparative studies on VOD platforms. For a fair amount of such scholarship is comparative, not just between countries (Lotz et al 2022) but between foreign and domestic platforms (Sein 2024), between platforms adopting different business models (Larroa 2019), or between experiences of a particular platform in multiple countries (Lobato 2019). That said, such scholarship largely looks at countries that comprise mono or bilingual media markets. This makes a comparative study of regional language VOD platforms within India empirically worthwhile and analytically pertinent. Non-Hindi regional language platforms are important because they chip off audiences that BVODs of multilingual Indian broadcasters and domestic and transnational SVODs seek to capture by dubbing their content. This paper explores content diversity across three regional language platforms, Klikk, Aha, and Planet Marathi, each owned by actors from the respective regional cinema business. We examine how their original content released between 2021 and 2024 stacks up against each other in terms of volume, typical genres and formats, and sources of such content (in-house or production houses if commissioned). Data was gathered from the platform websites and IMDB. Since the owners of these platforms are differently invested in the regional cinema business, we are also keen to know how this shapes their catalogues and supply of original content. The findings reveal that regional language platforms cater to the differing cultural preferences/tastes of their particular audiences, but by adopting different production strategies shaped by their owners' industrial linkages and strategic priorities in the regional cinema business.

Keywords: *Video-on-demand platforms, language markets, regionalization, diversity, comparative studies*

THE SUSTAINABLE SHIFT: WOMEN, TECHNOLOGY, AND THE CHANGING FACE OF REGIONAL CINEMA

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ABSTRACTS

Assamese cinema, ingrained in the cultural and linguistic identity of Assam, is experiencing a transformation with the emergence of digital technology and new modes of storytelling. This paper explores how iPhone-based mobile filmmaking and women-led creative teams are reshaping regional cinema, focusing on the Assamese feature film Emuthi Puthi (2022). Directed by Kulanandini Mahanta and awarded Best Feature Film (Assamese) at the 70th National Film Awards, Emuthi Puthi is the first Assamese film to be shot entirely on an iPhone. This pioneering case is selected not only for its critical recognition but also for its technological and cultural significance in introducing mobile filmmaking to Assam. The study has three key objectives: (1) to analyze the technical aspects of Emuthi Puthi through content analysis, assessing how mobile filmmaking influences production style, aesthetics, and narrative representation; (2) to explore the perspectives of the director, writer, producer, and actors through interviews, highlighting how women-led teams negotiate authorship, gendered storytelling, and technological innovation; and (3) to investigate how digital production practices contribute to sustainable filmmaking, focusing on resource efficiency, accessibility, and inclusivity. Interviews are designed to examine variables such as production workflow and decision-making (pre-production, shooting, post-production), equipment choices and technical setup (use of iPhone, accessories, apps), cost structure and resource efficiency (budget comparisons, savings), creative authorship and gender dynamics (roles, leadership, collaboration), and aesthetic decisions shaped by mobile filmmaking (shot composition, framing, mise-en-scène). While audience perspectives are not included at this stage, the rationale lies in the novelty of the practice; as this is the first instance of iPhone-based filmmaking in Assam, production-side insights are prioritized. Audience reception is planned as a follow-up study. The paper is framed by Feminist Film Theory, Media Convergence, and Digital Cinema studies, connecting technological intervention with gendered authorship and sustainability. It argues that Emuthi Puthi represents more than a technical innovation: it signals a cultural and industrial shift in Assamese cinema, one that makes filmmaking more inclusive, resource-efficient, and creatively agile.

Keywords: *Assamese cinema, digital cinema, mobile filmmaking, women filmmakers, media convergence, sustainable filmmaking, gendered storytelling*

VIRTUAL VOWS: SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCE ON THE GUWAHATI WEDDING CURATION AND CONVENTIONS

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ABSTRACTS

This paper examines the influence of social media on Assamese weddings, and how it reshapes the regional traditions, the mediating role of creators, and the broader social consequences of transforming intimate rituals into highly curated, performative, and widely consumed digital spectacles. The Assamese marriage reflects a blend of various cultural rites, reflecting the evolution of different social structures and numerous alterations in wedding practices. It is no longer an emotional affair, but rather celebrated with extravagance, made popular by Bollywood films and Social Media. Further, the study examines the choices, usage patterns, transitions, and applications of various social media platforms in the wedding. Purposive sampling method was employed and informed consent was obtained for the study from 300 (including wedding photo/videographer) samples who have access to and accounts on social media platforms, aged 18 and above, from Guwahati city. To understand the changing characteristics of weddings, an in-depth interview was conducted with ten wedding photo/videographer from Guwahati, focusing on the intersection of tradition, technology, and digital self-presentation. The paper rationalized its approach through the theoretical frameworks of Media Dependency Theory (MDT) and cultural imperialism to comprehend the trends in wedding photo/videographer in Guwahati city. MDT holds that the audience is the larger social structure, and the media are all interrelated. Cultural imperialism is applied to understand the influence of mainland India's conventional standards in visual contents and event representation, which normalizes particular cultural values, shaping aspirational practices while simultaneously marginalizing regional customs and reinforcing asymmetrical power relations in cultural production.

Keywords: *Wedding, photo/videographer, social media, traditions, customs*

PARALLEL SESSION C:

ETHICAL ISSUES AND CONCERNS IN GOING DIGITAL

FROM GATEKEEPERS TO INFLUENCERS: RETHINKING TRUST IN DIGITAL PUBLIC RELATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Public relations in India has rapidly evolved from being primarily media relations–driven to becoming a strategic, digitally integrated function influencing reputation, trust, and consumer behavior. As one of the world's largest and most diverse media markets, India provides a unique context where traditional practices coexist with fast-growing digital platforms. The traditional model of public relations relied heavily on third-party validation from credible media outlets, which functioned as gatekeepers ensuring accuracy, balance, and public trust. In today's digital-first environment, these safeguards are rapidly eroding. The proliferation of influencers, micro-celebrities, and branded content has created a new system where information often bypasses editorial scrutiny, relying instead on perceived authenticity and follower engagement. This study aims to (1) critically examine the decline of institutional gatekeeping in Indian public relations and its implications for trust; (2) investigate how influencer marketing functions as a substitute for traditional third-party validation; and (3) propose an ethical and professional framework for sustaining credibility in a digitally fragmented media landscape. The paper draws on gatekeeping theory and the PESO (Paid, Earned, Shared, Owned) model of media integration. Gatekeeping theory provides the analytical lens to understand how the flow of information has shifted from editors to digital influencers, while the PESO framework helps evaluate how communication strategies balance different media types in the absence of traditional validation. This is a practice-based study using a qualitative approach. It combines (a) focused group discussions with public relations practitioners, journalists, and communication students, and (b) case study analysis of Indian campaigns that relied primarily on influencer marketing. Data from classroom debates at NMIMS and professional experiences at Avignyata Inc. further support the findings. These methods ensure transparency and replicability and help establish the validity and reliability of the research.The study highlights opportunities such as expanded reach and personalization, while also exposing risks of misinformation, lack of accountability, and ethical blind spots. It proposes actionable steps for practitioners and educators to establish new standards of credibility and validation, balancing business imperatives with the ethical responsibility of sustaining public trust.

Keywords: *Gatekeeping, influencers, digital PR, trust, ethics*

REFLECTIONS ON REPRESENTATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN CONTEMPORARY OTT IN INDIA: CTRL, A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The representation of human rights in Indian cinema has evolved significantly, particularly with the rise of Over-The-Top (OTT) platforms during and after COVID-19, from 392.3 million in 2019 to 447.8 million in 2023 (OTT Video - India | Statista Market Forecast. (n.d.). Statista.). This research investigates the representation of human rights in contemporary Indian OTT films. The study analyses how OTT films address critical concerns of human rights by taking "CTRL" (2024) as its primary case study to shed light on digital privacy, human interest and AI. Through qualitative content analysis of "CTRL" and (other related films like "C U Soon" {2020}, "NET" {2021}), the research explores the thematic depth and narrative strategies employed to depict human rights concerns. The research also proposes to analyze the distinction between "human rights films," and "films depicting human rights." The paper will review how audience reception creates implications for social perception and affects normative patterns of human rights depiction in OTT films. The study will carefully analyze the thematic depth, narrative techniques, and ethical considerations incorporated into these films concerning digital privacy, human interest, and artificial intelligence through qualitative content analysis, making a distinction between "human rights films" and "films depicting human rights." The research also makes use of the Uses and Gratifications 2.0 (S. Sundar and Limperos ,2013), theoretical framework in order to comprehend the substantial significance of these depictions. In order to shed light on how audience reception actively shapes social perception and influences normative patterns of human rights depiction in the dynamic OTT landscape, this framework will direct an investigation into the reasons behind and rewards that viewers receive from consuming such content.

Keywords: *OTT, films, human rights, Indian cinema, narrativization, ethics, AI, human interest*

ACCOUNTABILITY OF MEDIA: A STUDY OF DIGITAL NEWS PORTALS OF ASSAM

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ABSTRACT

The evolution from print to digital media has not only transformed journalism but also brought new challenges to its ethical framework. Digital revolution has changed the media landscape in India. Assam, a culturally diverse and centrally located state in North East India, has also experienced rapid digitalization in its media sector. With increased internet penetration and smartphone use, digital news platforms have become the primary source of information for maximum number of people in Assam. While these platforms offer the advantage of immediacy, interactivity and accessibility, at the same time it faces the question of accountability. Misinformation, disinformation, propaganda, fake news have long been associated with news media. Perhaps every decade seems to witness a couple of distorted truth and the credibility of the news media remains a constant subject of debate. On March 18th , 2025, BJP president of Assam and a member of Lok Sabha, Mr. Dilip Saikia, urged the Central Government to establish a regulatory body to monitor digital news portals across the country. In his speech in Parliament, Mr Saikia stated, "Allowing certain rogue digital platforms to spread deceitful narratives without accountability poses a direct threat to our democracy." Fake news is not a new phenomenon. According to data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) in 2017, a total of 170 cases of fake news were reported on social media across the country, out of which Assam recorded maximum number of fake cases. This paper seeks to understand how accountable are the digital media of Assam in terms of journalistic norms. It also examines how digital news platforms address misinformation and engage in fact checking. Additionally, the paper also aims to study audience perception of the credibility of these platforms. A mixed methods approach has been adopted for this research. The researcher will conduct a content analysis of selected digital media platforms in Assam. To investigate how digital news platforms operate, structured interviews with professionals working in Assam's digital media sector will be done. Furthermore, to understand public perception of the credibility of digital news portals, a survey will be administered using a structured questionnaire.

Keywords: *Accountability, credibility, digital news portals, public, Assam*

THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF ART IN THE AGE OF AI-ASSISTED RECREATION: CASE ANALYSIS OF THE USE OF GHIBLI-STYLED ART FOR POLITICAL MOBILIZATION IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The democratization of the creative process in the creation of artwork with the assistance of tools that use artificial intelligence has heralded an era where artistic re-creation of once unique styles could be easily emulated through mere prompts. Walter Benjamin, in his time, had spoken of the mechanical reproduction of art and how it had altered the purpose of it, from ritual to political, which he regarded as communism's response to the aestheticization of art by fascists. Likewise, this paper, in its attempt to study AI generated artwork, reopens this discussion on the purpose of art in the current times. The access to enhanced artificial intelligence tools which are capable of recreating styled artistry, like the artworks known to be a creation of the Ghibli studios, which also became popular across South Asia, has indeed raised questions about the propriety of artistic style. In that sense, AI assisted recreations do adhere to the ideas of mechanical reproduction, but there are certain distinct divergences as well - ownership was clear in the case of mechanical reproduction, in AI assisted recreation, prompt engineering takes away the ownership of the art from the artist and in turn grants it to the individual engaged in the act of prompting. While the use of the Ghibli styled artworks became popular across South Asia, in India it was also used for political mobilization and as such, using the case study method, the paper looks at two specific instances, one, the destruction of forest ecosystems at the University of Hyderabad campus, which was met with vehement protests on and off social media and, two, the Murshidabad violence that happened in the state of West Bengal in India in 2025. The study uses Barthes' ideas of 'studium' and 'punctum' to do a semiotic analysis of purposively selected AI generated Ghibli styled recreations of artwork posted on various social media during the protests, against destruction of forest ecosystems in the University of Hyderabad and the violence that ensued in Murshidabad in protest against the WAQF act of 2025. This paper therefore attempts to delve into this discourse on the ownership of art in the age of AI assisted recreation, while also arguing that this technological disruption has further accentuated the politicization of art, which the age of mechanical reproduction had heralded.

Keywords: *Studium, Punctum, mechanical reproduction, Navarasa, Ghibli, generative-AI*

'WHERE IS EXPLOITATION?': MEDIA INTERNSHIPS AND THE NORMALIZATION OF DIGITAL LABOR

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ABSTRACT

The paper attempts to re-examine the classical Marxian ideas of work and labor in the digital era through the experiences of media students' internships in digital media organizations. The concepts of 'work' and 'labor' have changed in theoretical understanding and practical explorations. This paper is an outcome of the feedback from postgraduate students at Central University in Northern India who go for a compulsory media internship during their fourth semester. The paper argues that media internships are an ideological apparatus that prepares students to function as flexible/proto laborers. This study explores the positioning of media interns in platform journalism by undertaking three core research questions: What forms of labor do media students perform during their internship in digital media organizations? How do internship experiences shape their understanding of digital labor? How do students negotiate the tension between aspiration for professional growth and job insecurity? A qualitative research based on purposive sampling of 62 students who undertook internships in online news platforms informs the study. Data collection was done through semi-structured interviews and an analysis of their reflexive journal about their experiences in the internship. Thematic analysis of the data broadly under three categories – professional autonomy, labor adaptation, and emotional negotiation – was studied through the theoretical framework of digital labor, political economy of communication, and platform capitalism. Most students reported feeling a sense of pride in their ability to handle the media work pressure, balancing their personal boundaries and academic commitments. The agenda of neoliberal universities, 'learning by doing,' justified their overburden, performance pressure, and self-regulation. They adapted themselves to the 'labor tactics' of the media industry, prioritizing speed, virality and many other repetitive metric/algorithm-oriented tasks. However, students also expressed a growing awareness of the disconnect between academic ideals of journalism learnt in the classroom, vis-à-vis the commercial logic of the media workplace. The paper concludes by calling for critical pedagogies that equip students with tools to interrogate rather than reproduce neoliberal labor market values under the guise of experiential learning. Media educators and institutions need to reframe pedagogical approaches that account for the structural pressures of platform capitalism.

Keywords: *Digital labor, platform capitalism, media work, internships, playbor*

RAPE REPORTING IN THE DIGITAL NEWS MEDIA: A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF SEXIST-SENSATIONALISM AND DEHUMANIZATION

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ABSTRACT

On an average Indian day—according to the 2022 NCRB report—about 86 rape cases are registered (NCRB, 2023). If this count isn't staggering enough, an Indian National Family Health Survey informed that about 99 per cent of sexual violence goes unregistered in India (Bhattacharya & Kundu, 2018, April 24). Several studies have identified inbred sexism—that includes victim-blaming and shaming—and sexualization—that involves eroticization and romanticization of sexual violence—in the sensationalized news discourse on popular cases of (gang)rapes in India that aims to shock and awe the media audience, clamoring for clicks, shares and comments. This study uses feminist-critical discourse analysis to identify impressions in the news discourse that dehumanize sexual crime and demonize the perpetrators—arguing that such reporting could sensationalize and trivialize sexual crime, propagating a culture of rape. This study performs a manual content analysis of a sample of 250 digital news headlines published on popular cases of sexual violence against women in India, including the 2012 Delhi gangrape-murder, the 2019 Hyderabad gangrape-murder (of a veterinary doctor that sparked nationwide outrage and led to the extra-judicial killings of the accused), the 2020 Hathras gangrape-murder (of a teen who died two weeks after the assault and was allegedly cremated without the consent of her family), the 2023 Manipur case (in which two women belonging to a minority group were publicly, physically and sexually assaulted and their ordeal was publicised through a viral video) and the 2024 Kolkata rape-murder (of a female postgraduate trainee doctor). A purposive sampling technique extracted news headlines pertaining to popular rape cases using the Advanced Google News Search API and specific search parameters—including relevant keywords and publication date range to ensure relevance and prominence. Headlines were drawn from a range of national and regional English news platforms to include the diversity of media representations and to enable a nuanced discourse analysis of popular coverage to investigate sexist sensationalism as a recurring phenomenon. Study findings are used to discuss the editorial issues associated with covering sexual violence in India and their implications, suggesting the way forward.

Keywords: *Sexual violence, sexism, sensationalism, news discourse, news headlines*

DIGITAL MOURNING: ANALYZING ONLINE TRIBUTES FOR WOMEN VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE IN INDIA (2022–2024)

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ABSTRACT

The rise of social media has transformed mourning into a public, participatory and often political act. In India, cases of gender-based violence usually spark outpourings of grief and solidarity online. Global research on digital mourning explores networked grief in celebrity deaths or disasters. In India, studies focus more on the activism around gender violence, with limited attention to mourning discourse as a site of representation and mobilization. This paper examines digital mourning practices in India, with a focus on online tributes for women victims of gender-based violence between 2022 and 2024, foregrounding the R. G. Kar Medical College rape and murder case (2024) as a central case study. The research investigates how platforms such as Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), and Facebook have been used to express grief, mobilize protests, and demand justice, particularly through hashtags, memorial posts, and digital vigils. The study is anchored in Judith Butler's (2004) concepts of precarious life and grievability, which question whose lives are publicly mourned and why. Building on emerging literature on the politics of grief in the digital age, the paper explores how public mourning for women victims can act as a site of feminist resistance while also being shaped by gendered media narratives. By extending the discourse beyond digital activism to the politics of mourning, this study offers one of the first systematic analyses of mediated grief in India. The study adopts a qualitative content analysis of 200 purposively sampled social media posts tagged with relevant hashtags (#JusticeForRGKarDoctor, #JusticeForManisha, #StopViolenceAgainstWomen) across Instagram and Facebook. Data will be collected over a period spanning the incident's occurrence to one month after peak online activity, supplemented with news articles, activist campaigns and visual materials related to major cases during the timeframe, complemented by semi-structured interviews with five feminist activists involved in online and offline campaigns for justice. Purposive sampling will consider diversity of caste, class and regional representation in digital discourse, while interviews will provide triangulation for deeper contextual insights. Preliminary observations suggest that Indian digital mourning often blends personal grief with political mobilization, amplifying voices against gender-based violence but also revealing selective patterns of grievability tied to class, caste, and media visibility. The paper also critically reflects on ethical concerns around visibility, consent and digital exploitation in online mourning practices. By situating these mourning practices within the evolving Indian socio-political and digital landscape and highlighting how platform affordances such as virality, hashtags and algorithms shape remembrance, the paper situates digital mourning within the broader transformations of mediated public grief in the algorithmic age. The paper aims to contribute to scholarship on digital activism, gender justice and mediated grief.

Keywords: *Digital mourning, gender-based violence, feminist activism, Judith Butler, grievability*

EXCLUSION AND INCLUSION OF INTERNAL MIGRANT WORKERS IN INDIA: INSIGHTS FROM FACEBOOK INTERACTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Migration has played a significant role in shaping societies, cultures, and economies. Labor migration often seeks better wages and living conditions. India witnesses large interstate labor movements, with states like Kerala emerging as key receivers of migrant workers from North Indian states. Migrants often face exclusionary practices or settlement issues in the host states. In India, state borders reflect not just administrative boundaries but also cultural, linguistic, and political divisions. While 'Unity in Diversity' is a national motto, it coexists with exclusionary tendencies against 'outsiders.' This study explores how exclusion and inclusion are reflected and evolve in Kerala's societal attitudes toward migrant workers. While literature addresses migrant issues, popularistic attitudes are underexplored. The study uses Facebook, a widely influential platform in India and especially Kerala, as a data source. Instead of producer-generated content like posts or memes, we focus on public comments, which reflect popular sentiments. The study draws from theoretical perspectives of social identity (ingroup-outgroup categorization), realistic group conflict theory, and scapegoat theory. We selected five leading news portal pages in Kerala which are: Manorama News TV, 24 News, Reporter Live, Media One TV, and Mathrubhumi News based on follower count. Using keywords like Adhithi and Anyasamsthana, we selected 5 posts per page and 10 comments per post, making a total of 200 comments. A four-step thematic analysis was conducted, categorizing data into sub-categories, categories, and themes. Seventeen themes emerged. Most common were political, social, linguistic, cultural, and economic exclusion, alongside social inclusion. Others included criminal stereotyping, administrative exclusion, legal exclusion, public insecurity, social criticism, reciprocity, and political stereotyping. While exclusionary narratives dominated, some comments promoted inclusiveness by countering divisive views and invoking global/national reciprocity. Migrants were portrayed as burdens, criminals, uncivilized, or parasites. The Kerala government was criticized for preferential treatment toward migrants, with some calls for their expulsion. Hostility was directed at inclusive terminology like "guest workers" (adhithi thozhilali), with 37 comments rejecting it. Discourses were largely polarized. While dominant views expressed fear of threats to local culture and welfare, inclusionary comments challenged hate and promoted coexistence. Similar trends may exist across India's migrant-dense and metropolitan regions. The study recommends policy interventions and community-media collaborations to foster harmony, as exclusionary sentiments increasingly manifest offline.

Keywords: *Migrant workers, Facebook, India, exclusion, inclusion*

FROM DEEPFAKES TO HEADLINES: THE ROLE OF AI AND MEDIA SENSATIONALISM IN MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE PAHALGAM INCIDENT

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ABSTRACT

The Pahalgam terror attack on April 22, 2025, was not only a brutal act of violence, but it also ushered in a new chapter in the rapidly evolving landscape of digital disinformation warfare. This study underscores the surge of AI-generated fake news and sensationalist media coverage that followed the attack, which quickly spread across social media platforms. The study has employed both Pakistani-Indian influencers and media outlets, using a qualitative content analysis approach; the study evaluates viral social media posts, independent fact-checking reports, influencer accounts, and mainstream media coverage to uncover the nature and pattern of disinformation that shaped public discourse in the aftermath. The paper examines the unprecedented rise of artificial intelligence (AI)-generated fake news that was strategically used to distort public perception, intensify communal tensions, and undermine the legitimacy of government responses and actions. It also examines how social media platforms were used not only to share content but also to shape narratives in real time. The social media influencers, in particular, played an influential role in this, often presenting misleading content alongside factual reports, thereby complicating efforts to detect and counter disinformation for both audiences and regulators to distinguish truth from fake. This study highlights the severe implications of synthetic media in conflict zones, where access to accurate and timely information can influence public perception, community safety, and policy response. As a result, the study emphasizes the urgent need to invest in advanced detection tools, ensure platform accountability, broaden discussions on ethical AI use, digital information security, journalistic and influencer responsibility, and promote public education on media literacy initiatives that can empower users to critically scrutinize and assess online content during social media warfare and sensitive conflict.

Keywords: *Pahalgam attack, AI-generated fake news, media sensationalism, disinformation, social media warfare, media literacy*

CREDIBILITY AND CONTENT: INVESTIGATING THE ROLE OF INDIAN INFLUENCERS IN YOUTH MEDIA ETHICS AND LITERACY

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ABSTRACT

In India's rapidly evolving digital ecosystem, social media influencers have become powerful cultural intermediaries shaping youth ethics, digital literacy, and trust in online information. While influencer research has primarily centred on branding and consumer behaviour, this study investigates the ethical dimensions of influencer culture and its impact on youth perceptions of credibility and moral awareness. Drawing on Bandura's Social Learning Theory and Hall's Encoding/Decoding Model, the study conceptualises influencers as informal educators who transmit behavioural and ethical cues through performative content. Employing a mixed-methods design, quantitative data were collected from 218 youth respondents in Delhi NCR and Jaipur through an online survey, and qualitative insights were drawn from interviews with six Indian influencers across lifestyle, entertainment, and commentary genres. Statistical tests, including Mann–Whitney U and Spearman's rho correlations, revealed moderate trust in influencers but high scepticism toward undisclosed sponsorships and misinformation. Youth demonstrated increasing ethical literacy, with over 60% reporting cross-checking influencer claims—indicating a shift from passive consumption to critical engagement. Interviews revealed that influencers equate authenticity with ethicality, yet often practise "performative transparency" constrained by algorithmic and commercial pressures. Findings show that while influencers significantly shape youth values and behaviour, transparency and regulatory awareness remain inconsistent. Ethical consciousness among youth strengthens with misinformation exposure, suggesting reactive moral learning. The study highlights the paradox of strong influence but weak transparency, emphasizing the emergence of informal digital literacy as a form of ethical learning within India's participatory media culture. By situating influencer ethics within Indian socio-cultural contexts, the research contributes to Asian communication scholarship on credibility, informal education, and digital moral agency.

Keywords: *Digital literacy, media ethics, Indian youth, influencer credibility, social media transparency*

RESPONSIBLE DIGITALIZATION: NAVIGATING ETHICAL CHALLENGES IN LIBRARY MEDIA AND PUBLIC RELATIONS - THE UPLB UNIVERSITY LIBRARY EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

As academic institutions embrace digital transformation, libraries are recognized globally as part of the Media and Information Literacy (MIL) ecosystem, and are increasingly redefining their role as memory institutions, alongside museums and archives. This paper positions the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) University Library within this evolving landscape, highlighting its proactive shift to digital platforms for public engagement, user services and institutional visibility. While digital initiatives such as social media campaigns, virtual exhibits and online reference services have broadened access and strengthened communication, they have also introduced ethical challenges that extend beyond the usual discourse in teaching and learning. These include concerns around data privacy, equitable representation, digital inclusion, and the ethical responsibilities of institutional communication. Despite these being critical issues, they are often overlooked in academic library discourse. This study explores how the UPLB University Library has addressed these ethical concerns through reflective analysis of its digital practices. Specifically, it aims to: (1) examine the ethical issues encountered in the library's digital outreach; (2) analyze how these were addressed through institutional policies and staff decision-making; and (3) develop a context-sensitive ethical communication framework to be grounded in the findings of the study and that may guide other libraries and academic institutions, particularly within the Asian context. The study will employ a qualitative case study approach. Key data will be collected through document analysis, including internal memos, social media content, campaign protocols, and policy documents and semi-structured interviews with key informants involved in the library's digital initiatives. Thematic analysis, guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) reflexive framework, will be used to code and interpret data, while ethical considerations will follow the recommendations of Bowen (2009) and Sixsmith & Murray (2001). By documenting the UPLB University Library's experience, the study contributes to expanding the conversation around responsible digital transformation in libraries. It underscores the critical role of memory institutions in modeling ethical, inclusive and accountable communication in the digital age.

Keywords: *Digital transformation, academic libraries, public relations ethics, inclusive media, data privacy, UPLB University Library, ethical communication, digital representation*

SOCIAL MEDIA AND CULTURAL SENSITIVITIES: A STUDY OF THE TEEP CONTROVERSY (2022) ON FACEBOOK IN BANGLADESH

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ABSTRACT

As Bangladesh undergoes its digital revolution, characterized by improved internet access and widespread smartphone usage, social media have become an integral part of the nation's social fabric. It has significantly influenced public opinion and shaped cultural narratives. Social media platforms have greatly impacted cultural identity, citizenship, belonging, and nationality, among other aspects. This study, examining the 2022 teep controversy in Bangladesh on Facebook, suggests that two groups of individuals engaged in conflicting arguments, neglecting the fact that a culture does not exist solely in a symbol. For example, one group invoked religion, claiming it contravened Muslim religious norms; the other opposed this, asserting that it represents the identity of the Bangalee as a whole. They ultimately engaged in discussions on cultural issues, enabling more people to participate in debates that profoundly affect their values, traditions, and identities. This research also contends that the teep debate demonstrates the complex relationships between traditional culture, religious ethics, and digital interaction in modern Bangladesh. The heated exchanges revealed deep societal divides over cultural practices and their religious significance. The study was analyzed through the theoretical frameworks of Tajfel & Turner's Social Identity Theory and Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory. Employing a qualitative methodology, it utilized content analysis as its primary research method. For data interpretation, critical discourse analysis was employed. This research used a purposive sample of 70 Facebook posts related to the teep issue. The findings argue that the debate uncovered significant divisions within Bangladeshi society on social media, with users polarized between liberal and conservative factions. Many Facebook users participated in these discussions without adhering to digital rights, freedom of expression, community guidelines, or the importance of respectful dissent. Both sides engaged in contentious exchanges, verbally altercating and displaying hostile behavior through vulgar language and aggression. Notably, female users faced severe online moral policing and experienced considerable digital harassment, including hate speech, threats, trolling, and character attacks. Based on these findings, the study recommends a set of ethical guidelines for both social media usage and media reporting that are considerate of Bangladesh's cultural context while upholding universal digital rights and standards.

Keywords: *Cultural sensitivities, social media, Teep Controversy, trolling, hate speech, Facebook community guidelines*

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN FILM RESTORATION: A STUDY ON FILM RESTORATION IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Film restoration plays a vital role in preserving the audio-visual heritage of nations. As cinema is not only a medium of entertainment but also a cultural artefact that documents social, political, and historical descriptions, its preservation becomes a substance of public memory and identity. However, the process of restoration is not merely technical, it is deeply ethical. Ethical considerations arise in decisions such as what version of a film to restore, how much to intervene digitally, how to preserve the filmmaker's original intent, and how to represent the socio-cultural context of the original time period without imposing contemporary sensibilities. This research explores the ethical dimensions of film restoration with a particular focus on the Indian context. India, with one of the world's largest and oldest film industries, faces significant challenges in preserving its cinematic legacy. Many films, particularly from the early and mid-20th century, have been lost due to poor storage, neglect, and climatic conditions. The National Film Heritage Mission (NFHM) by the Government of India, aims to acquire, preserve, digitize, and restore the country's film heritage. While this mission is technologically ambitious and globally aligned, it also brings forth key ethical dilemmas such as whose films get restored, what "authenticity" means in a multilingual, diverse society, and how to balance historical accuracy with present-day accessibility. Through a qualitative analysis of restoration projects under NFHM and a global literature review, this study highlights both international best practices and culturally specific ethical challenges. Case studies from India and abroad illustrate how decisions in restoration can shape public memory, historical understanding, and aesthetic appreciation. Ethical dilemmas surrounding censorship, lost footage, film colorization, audio mixing, and translation/subtitling also form part of this analysis. The research employs archival analysis, interviews with archivists and restoration experts, and a review of international scholarly works to uncover ethical frameworks, gaps, and practices. It critically examines the Indian archival landscape, including the role of the National Film Archive of India (NFAI) which is recently merged with National Film Development Corporation Limited (NFDC) and other regional archives in India, while offering a comparative look at restoration efforts in other countries. Eventually, the study advocates for the democratization of film heritage and the inclusion of diverse voices particularly filmmakers, historians, and communities in the ethics of restoration. As we transition into an era of digital archives and AI-assisted restoration, the ethical foundations we establish now will define how future generations understand their cinematic past.

Keywords: *Film restoration, ethical considerations, National Film Heritage Mission (NFHM), Indian cinema, cultural memory, archival ethics, film archives in India, digitization, restoration practices, audio-visual heritage*

AI-GENERATED DEEPFAKES IN INDIA: ETHICAL CHALLENGES, LEGAL VACUUMS, AND MENTAL HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

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ABSTRACT

The evolution of technology and the rise of AI-generated deepfakes present a complicated threat to media integrity, public perception, and psychological well-being in India. As the lines between fact and fiction become increasingly hazy due to synthetic content, legal and ethical frameworks are still largely undeveloped. This critical study investigates the intersection of deepfake technology, media ethics, and mental health impacts in India. It uses existing research, including court cases, policies, news articles, and psychological findings, to look at the regulatory vacuum, how digital news affects public narratives, and the psychosocial effects on people who are targeted or influenced by the synthetic media. The research reveals a serious lag between the technological advancement and slow institutional response, highlighting the urgent need for a multi-dimensional framework to combine legal reform, ethical accountability, and mental health support in the country. The study calls for a proactive strategy that safeguards both the free expression and the psychological well-being of people in the modern digital era.

Keywords: *Deepfakes, media ethics, artificial intelligence, mental health, digital journalism, India, legal framework*

COMPROMISED OBJECTIVITY IN DIGITAL JOURNALISM: ETHICAL CONCERNS IN JAPANESE MEDIA COVERAGE OF TOKYO 2020 OLYMPICS

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the ethical concerns surrounding journalistic objectivity and independence in digital journalism, with a specific focus on Japanese media coverage of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. The topic addresses a timely and significant issue within current Asian communication and media practices, notably the intersection between corporate sponsorship, advertising influence, and journalistic integrity. Major Japanese newspapers, including Asahi Shimbun, Yomiuri Shimbun, Mainichi Shimbun, and Nikkei, were simultaneously sponsors and primary reporters of the Tokyo Olympics, raising critical questions about conflicts of interest and compromised objectivity. Conceptually, the study is grounded in theories of media ethics, media ownership, and media capture, particularly within the context of the digital transformation of journalism. The research employs a quantitative content analysis method to systematically assess variations in reporting practices related to bribery and governance scandals involving Olympic officials. Specifically, the analysis compares the frequency and nature of full-name reporting of bribery suspects during and after sponsorship contracts, highlighting clear distinctions influenced by corporate ties. The findings reveal statistically significant discrepancies in the editorial treatment of sensitive issues, correlating directly with periods of financial affiliation with the Tokyo Organizing Committee and Dentsu, Japan's predominant advertising agency. These outcomes underscore the ethical vulnerabilities exacerbated by digital commercialization and cross-ownership structures prevalent in Asian media ecosystems. By critically analyzing these discrepancies, the paper contributes valuable empirical evidence toward understanding the dynamics and challenges of maintaining ethical journalism standards amid digital transformations and commercial pressures. This study has clear implications for enhancing the theoretical understanding of ethical journalism within Asian contexts and provides actionable insights for media practitioners and policymakers striving to uphold journalistic integrity. The methodological rigor, coherent theoretical foundation, and relevance to ongoing media trends reinforce the study's significance in addressing emerging ethical challenges in Asian digital journalism.

Keywords: *Ethical journalism, digital media ethics, press independence, Olympic sponsorship, conflict of interest, Japanese media, transparency, Tokyo 2020 Olympics, media accountability*

A STUDY ON THE INTEGRATION OF AI DRIVEN TOOLS IN SRI LANKAN HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The integration of AI has expanded the higher education learning processes in developing and developed countries, revolutionizing the teaching and learning processes, and creating an environment for the use of AI-driven innovative tools. This study aims to identify the AI-driven tools utilized by Sri Lankan students integrated into their pedagogies, assess the effectiveness of the used AI-driven tools, recognize the students' perceptions, and examine ethical considerations at policy level discussions while addressing a critical gap in the specific context. The study argues why Sri Lankan universities need to make policy level recommendations on utilizing AI-driven tools for learning procedures, as the students have already been utilizing AI-driven tools for their learning experiences in the current context. This study reveals that, Sri Lankan undergraduates use extensively ChatGPT and Bing AI for essay writing, Runway, Veed.io for video creation, Midijourney, Leonardo.ai for image generation, Sliders.ai, Decktopus for creating presentations, ChatPDF for research and Grammarly and QuillBot for improving writing skills. Drawing on the Technology Acceptance Model and Digital Literacy Framework, this study indicates that 78% of participants (n=75) believe AI tools enhance their academic task performance, particularly in terms of efficiency and effectiveness (cited by 85% of users). Also, results demonstrate exceptionally high adoption rates, with 96% of respondents (n=72) having used AI tools for learning purposes, leaving only 4% (n=3) as non-adopters. This adoption pattern significantly exceeds Rogers' typical diffusion curve, where laggards traditionally comprise 16% of the population, suggesting an accelerated diffusion process within this academic context. The study highlights that students' awareness of the ethical considerations of using AI-driven tools is insufficient. Hence, it has stressed the importance of providing policy-level guidelines at the national level on the literacy of AI-driven tools. This study follows a mixed-method research design, including qualitative and quantitative methods. Quantitative data was collected through structured online survey (Google from) (n=75) distributed to undergraduates across at the University of Colombo and the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka who were enrolled in the BA (Honours) degree programme in Communication and Creative Arts and Mass Communication. Data analysis involved statistical analysis of survey responses and thematic analysis of interview data. Preliminary findings of the study recommend that providing relevant training is required for the students to gain the positive impact and effectiveness of the AI-driven tools. Furthermore, it emphasizes the importance of policy level discussions on AI literacy for gaining its benefits across higher education institutions.

Keywords: *AI driven tools, undergraduates, pedagogies, learning*

PARALLEL SESSION D:

PLANNING / MANAGING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF MEDIA, PR, AND ADVERTISING COMPANIES

MEDIA CULTURE OF THE DIGITAL SOCIETY IN KAZAKHSTAN

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ABSTRACT

The development of network technologies and new media increases the information flow and improves the quality of socio-economic, spiritual, and cultural processes. The mass media are becoming a catalyst for the cultural development of modern society, which forms the civilization of the 21st century. Currently, they own the first place in the information impact on the individual and society. Mass media not only translate the existing system of values but also actively form a new information space in Kazakhstan. With the new media comes another media culture that changes our consciousness and our tastes, opens up new media opportunities, and expands horizons of the media sphere. The purpose of this article is to illustrate the development of media culture in Kazakhstan and modern trends in new media in the era of communication globalization. The article introduces the modern information landscape and new media in Kazakhstan in the period of globalization and the digital revolution, which are moving to a new level in the context of modernizing public consciousness in the republic and forming a new media culture of the information society. The main research methods are drawn from the principles of historical, complex and system analysis, the basic concepts of the development of digital media, generalization of socio-political and information-cultural phenomena that act as the main factors of mass communication processes that form the media culture of the 21st century. If technical problems of communication have international similarities, then questions of its social content differ depending on the country: the historical, economic and cultural development of society. The country has developed the State Program "Digital Kazakhstan." One of the important areas of the Digital Kazakhstan Program is the development of the Internet infrastructure in the republic. Protection of the information space and its impact on information security is associated with modern real-life challenges and threats. A program "Cyber Shield of Kazakhstan" is being created in Kazakhstan. Informational influence on values is a special way of existence and formation of society and culture. Media culture is part of the general culture of society, a powerful factor in the value orientation of society.

Keywords: *Media culture, digital society, Kazakhstan*

DIGITAL PHILANTHROPY AND DONOR ENGAGEMENT IN PHILIPPINE HIGHER EDUCATION: INSIGHTS FOR STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND FUNDRAISING

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ABSTRACT

As digital transformation reshapes the landscape of media, public relations, and advertising, its influence on philanthropic behavior within private higher education institutions becomes increasingly significant. This study investigates how donor behavior manifests in a digitally evolving environment, where institutional identity, alumni affinity, and socio-cultural values intersect in the Philippine context. By examining the giving beliefs and practices of a private university, the research offers strategic insights for leveraging digital tools in fundraising and donor engagement. Guided by Sargeant and Woodliffe's (2007) model of donor behavior, the study identifies key predictors—such as emotional resonance, perceptual reactions, and feedback mechanisms—that influence charitable giving. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining an online survey of 425 respondents with two focused group discussions involving 15 participants from diverse sectors of the academic community. Findings reveal that donor motivation is driven by empathy, alignment with meaningful causes, trust in institutional integrity, and confidence in financial accountability. The academic community exhibits a robust culture of philanthropy, with frequent contributions supporting scholars and targeted initiatives, reflecting a deep commitment to social responsibility. In the context of digital transformation, the study recommends enhancing donor engagement through personalized digital communication strategies, expanding giving options via matching and planned gifts, and integrating accessible recurring donation platforms. The use of data analytics and user-friendly digital infrastructure can significantly improve fundraising outcomes. Addressing barriers such as limited access to information and engagement opportunities requires strategic alignment with institutional values and the exploration of digital volunteerism. This research underscores the critical role of digital media and strategic communication in shaping donor experiences and sustaining philanthropic culture. It provides practical recommendations for institutions navigating the digital shift in public relations and fundraising, emphasizing the need for adaptive, data-driven, and empathetic approaches to donor engagement.

Keywords: *Fundraising, donor relations, strategic communication, resource mobilization*

DISSECTING THE BUZZ: LISTENERSHIP ANALYSIS OF PRSP PODCAST SERIES

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ABSTRACT

In the evolving landscape of digital media, podcasts have emerged as a powerful tool for strategic communication and public engagement. This study investigates the listenership patterns and perceptions of AB Communication students toward the Breaking Down the Buzz podcast series produced by the Public Relations Society of the Philippines (PRSP). Anchored on the Uses and Gratifications Theory and the Elaboration Likelihood Model, the research explores how students engage with the podcast's content, format, and relevance to their academic and professional aspirations. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study surveyed 60 undergraduate students through structured questionnaires and follow-up interviews. Quantitative data provided insights into the frequency of listening, preferred episodes, and perceived credibility, while qualitative responses revealed deeper motivations and critiques of the podcast's messaging and production quality. Findings suggest that the podcast effectively fosters awareness of PR industry trends, though gaps remain in audience targeting and thematic depth. The study contributes to the discourse on digital transformation in public relations by highlighting the role of podcasting as an educational and professional development tool. It also offers recommendations for enhancing podcast design to better align with the expectations of emerging communication professionals in Asia.

Keywords: *Public relations, podcasting, digital media, student engagement, Uses and Gratifications Theory, communication education*

MANAGING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION: AN ANALYSIS OF REGIONAL MEDIA APPROACHES AND YOUTH CONSUMPTION TRENDS IN BARAK VALLEY OF SOUTHERN ASSAM, INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The research paper entitled "Navigating Digital Change: A Study of Localized Media Strategies and Youth Consumption Patterns in Barak Valley of Southern Assam in India" empirically examines the dynamic relationship between digital transformation and its effects on media consumption and advertising efficacy among the youth of Barak Valley. In Southern Assam, the Barak Valley is a culturally distinctive area that is currently seeing a boom in the digital economy. Digital platforms are drastically changing how young people engage with media and commercial content. As internet accessibility rises, a communication professional will encounter both opportunities and challenges nowadays. This study assesses how well region-specific digital marketing strategies—like influencer collaborations, targeted social media campaigns, and linguistically appropriate content—affect consumer behavior and brand attitudes in this new business environment in relation to the Stimulus-Response Model (SRM). This study used a mixed-methodology framework to collect empirical data from college students in the Cachar district of the Barak Valley through structured surveys and in-depth focus groups. The findings show that social media platforms are primarily used for product inquiries, with influencer content and locally designed video promotions showing high audience engagement. When compared to standardized campaigns, marketing content that uses regional linguistic elements (Bengali and Assamese) and cultural references showed noticeably higher recall. The entire digital adaptation process is still hampered by issues like low levels of digital literacy, reliability of online advertisements, and poor rural connectivity. The strategic significance of culturally enriched communication techniques for professionals navigating the digital transformation of Barak Valley is also highlighted in this research paper. The recommendations highlight the use of indigenous language components, community-oriented narrative techniques, and credibility-boosting messaging strategies. In addition, combining international digital trends with local sociocultural significance, this research paper moves forward with an academic discourse on equitable digital progression for providing pragmatic guidance for stakeholders seeking to optimize the digital environment in Northeast India.

Keywords: *Northeastern markets, Barak Valley Southern Assam India, youth media interaction, digital evolution, and regionalized marketing*

POLITICAL PR ON INSTAGRAM: A STUDY OF KARNATAKA POLITICAL LEADERS' DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT

In an era where political communication is rapidly evolving, social media platforms like Instagram have become indispensable tools for political leaders seeking to connect with a diverse and digitally engaged electorate. This study explores how selected political figures from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Indian National Congress (INC), and Janata Dal (Secular) [JD(S)] used Instagram during the 2024 General Elections in Karnataka to shape their campaign narratives, foster engagement, and influence voter perception. The research specifically analyzed the Instagram accounts of prominent and active leaders who were highly visible during the campaign period, chosen purposively based on their relevance, activity level, and audience engagement. Leaders included BJP's Tejasvi Surya, Basavaraj Bommai, and Yaduveer Wadiyar; INC's D.K. Shivakumar, Siddaramaiah, and D.K. Suresh; and JD(S)'s H.D. Kumaraswamy, Nikhil Kumaraswamy, and Prajwal Revanna. Focusing on the timeframe of March 26 to April 26, 2024—a period marked by intense electoral activity—the study examined reels, static images, campaign videos, and captions/comments shared by these leaders. Each content type was analyzed separately to capture its role in shaping campaign communication: for instance, reels were used for youth appeal and cultural outreach, static photos for rallies and symbolic messaging, long-form videos for speeches and behind-the-scenes moments, and captions for narrative framing, regional identity, and direct audience interaction. Behind-the-scenes moments were studied as a personal branding strategy, enhancing relatability, authenticity, and emotional connection with voters, particularly the youth. The study employed a mixed-method content analysis, combining quantitative engagement metrics (likes, shares, comments, follower growth) with qualitative thematic analysis (emotional appeals, youth targeting, algorithm use, regional outreach, and criticism/misinformation). By disaggregating data across different content formats, the analysis provides a nuanced picture of how political communication was crafted and received. The theoretical framework adopted for this study is Media Richness Theory (Daft & Lengel, 1986), which emphasizes that richer media allow for immediate feedback, multiple cues, natural language, and personalized communication. Instagram exemplifies a high-richness medium by blending visual, verbal, and interactive features through reels, images, captions, and real-time engagement. Political leaders strategically leveraged this richness to craft persuasive narratives, reinforce party ideologies, respond to opposition, and mobilize voters. The findings reveal that Instagram played a significant role not only in campaign visibility but also in shaping public discourse, reinforcing party narratives, and building emotional resonance with target demographics. However, potential drawbacks—such as curated realities and echo chambers—were also acknowledged. By focusing on Instagram's role in the 2024 Karnataka elections, this research fills a notable gap in Indian political communication studies, offering timely insights into how digital platforms are transforming electoral strategies and redefining the relationship between politicians and the public.

Keywords: *Political communication, Instagram campaigning, Karnataka elections, social media strategy, voter engagement, content analysis, digital political PR*

MAPPING INDIAN DIGITAL MARKETERS' AWARENESS, ATTITUDE, AND USAGE OF GENERATIVE AI IN VIDEO ADVERTISING WITH REFERENCE TO PERSONALIZATION, CREATIVITY, AND ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY

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ABSTRACT

India's digital marketing industry is increasingly dominated by video advertising, forecasted to reach USD 1.43 billion by 2025 with a CAGR of 5.75% until 2029, and generative AI is expected to cross the US$1.18 billion mark in 2025 (Statista, 2025), championing a new era in how brands ideate and deliver content. However, Midjourney, Adobe Firefly, and Runway are increasingly embraced by marketers. The challenge ahead is the development of a learning ecosystem that expresses strategic understanding, rather than trend-riding (Joshi et al.,2025). This study examines Indian marketers' perspectives on generative AI in video advertising, focusing on personalization, creativity, and ethics, to inform and support responsible adoption. Marketers are selected as the key audience because they are the decision-makers driving AI adoption in advertising strategy (Soni, 2023). Video advertising is the focus due to its high engagement, creative complexity, and expanding investment in India's digital marketing landscape. The findings suggest practical insights into responsible AI integration. AI-driven marketing is widely studied, but existing literature primarily focuses on consumer-facing applications such as deepfakes (Whittaker et al.,2021), personalization (Gao et al., 2023), and generative video ads (Kapoor & Kumar,2024), offering limited insight into marketers' perspectives. This study fills the gap by combining UTAUT2 (Venkatesh et al.,2012), Human–AI Collaboration (Frenette, 2024), and Applied AI Ethics (Vakkuri et al.,2019) into an integrated framework. For advertising, this needs an integrated view of why marketers use AI, how they work creatively, and how they deal with the ethical consequences. This synthesis indicates a holistic model suited for today's AI-driven advertising landscape. Base onthe post-positivist paradigm, a survey of 100* Indian digital marketers enrolled through snowball sampling conducted using the Google form platform. Non-parametric and inferential analysis of data reveals the moderating role of AI Literacy and Training in awareness, attitude, and usage w.r.t adoption, collaboration, and ethical patterns in generative AI–driven video advertising. This study contributes both theoretically and practically by offering a comprehensive framework to understand how marketers adopt, use, and ethically evaluate generative AI in video advertising and offering responsible innovation and enhancing creative strategy in the evolving intersection of marketing, communication, and AI.

Keywords: *Generative AI, AI ethics, AI-driven video advertising, digital transformation, personalization in advertising*

SCROLLING THROUGH SUSTAINABILITY: A CRITICAL STUDY OF GREEN ADVERTISING AND AUDIENCE INTERACTION ON INSTAGRAM

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ABSTRACT

Advertising has evolved into a strategic tool for advancing green marketing, as companies emphasize environmental accountability (Li, 2025; Ktisti et al., 2022). Rising public concern over pollution, climate change, and resource depletion has led consumers to demand greater transparency and environmental awareness (Rana & Rana, 2024). Hence, companies deliberately include eco-friendly themes in their advertising, especially on social media platforms. Fundamental principles such as reducing carbon emissions, ethical procurement, conservation, and enduring sustainability are frequently emphasized (Nekmahmud et al., 2022). This shift reflects an evolving branding strategy shaped by consumer demographics, notably Generation Z and Millennials, who expect companies to undertake authentic sustainability initiatives. By using eco-centric language and imagery, companies not only strengthen their environmental narrative but also fulfil a green claim: the assertion that their products or practices contribute meaningfully to environmental well-being (Zervoudi et al., 2025). When substantiated, such claims enhance credibility and resonate deeply with conscious consumers. As per the Forbes India report published on 27 January 2025, the top 10 Indian companies with the highest CSR spending in FY 2022-23 green Instagram advertisements or posts between 2020 and 2025 will be examined from a variety of angles in this study. It seeks to pinpoint the most prevalent verbal and visual components—such as eco-claims, tone, hashtags, and imagery—used in ads with a green theme. The study looks at how these strategies have changed over time in several industries, including banking, technology, fashion, energy, automotive, and fast-moving consumer goods, and assesses whether the social media posts support the firm's stated sustainability and corporate social responsibility objectives. Along with sector-specific differences, it also looks into how much user interaction these posts get in the form of likes, shares, and comments. Sentiment analysis is used in the study to better identify the emotional tone and themes in user replies, such as charges of greenwashing, skepticism, or good reception. The study's ultimate goal is to comprehend how Indian consumers perceive and respond to eco-centric branding in order to provide a comprehensive assessment of the efficacy and legitimacy of green advertising in India's online public space. Because of its visual focus and expanding role in brand communication, Instagram—which Statista (2023) has identified as one of the most influential marketing platforms—is selected for primary data collection. This mixed-method approach offers insightful information about how the digital public sphere in India is changing in terms of green advertising. It builds upon the framework of Kwon et al. (2023) while focusing on India's unique socio-environmental context.

Keywords: *Environmental accountability, sustainability communication, social media marketing, Instagram, green claims, eco-friendly branding*

BEYOND OUTREACH: HOW INDIAN SCIENCE COUNCILS USE (AND UNDERUSE) DIGITAL MEDIA FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Science and Technology (S&T) councils in India are crucial in fostering scientific literacy, innovation, and linking research with grassroots/community development. Their effectiveness in public engagement depends on how strategically they utilize digital platforms in conjunction with offline outreach. Guided by the two-step flow model of communication, this study examined how state science councils act as mediators of scientific knowledge and whether their communication strategies foster dialogue, inclusivity, and impact. The study analyzed the digital presence and communication strategies employed by the science councils of States and union territories in India to achieve the research objectives, including assessing the type and frequency of online content, evaluating audience engagement, and identifying gaps between online and offline outreach. A qualitative content analysis was conducted between January and December 2024, through the official websites of councils and social media handles. Data included information regarding the frequency of content updates, thematic categories, and interaction metrics such as likes, shares, and comments. Offline engagement mapping was done using the council's reports, success stories, and documented initiatives. The study also considered how social media algorithms shape visibility and audience interaction, often amplifying event posts while limiting sustained dialogue. By accounting for this, the analysis attempts to provide an accurate and fair understanding of the digital presence of councils. The findings revealed a variety of digital engagement. Some councils vigorously use social media, yet most websites remain static or barely updated, usually containing only statements about the council's mission and its organizational objectives. Social media posts were overwhelmed mainly by event-based announcements, but hardly with the documentation of sustained dialogue or impact-driven narratives. The findings emphasize the need for digital communication capacity building with the formulation of regular updates featuring interactive content along with a multilingual message integrated into the local context. Harmonizing the online and offline strategies will further build visibility, accountability, and continuous public engagement for S&T councils spread nationwide.

Keywords: *Science communication, outreach, stakeholder engagement, media transformation, communication gaps, PR*

MILLENNIALS, MEDIA, AND THE MESSAGE: ADOPTION OF VIDEO-CENTRIC NEWS PLATFORMS IN THE SMARTPHONE ERA

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ABSTRACT

The landscape of news consumption has undergone a significant transformation, especially during and post-COVID, driven by rapid technological innovations, advancements, and the proliferation of digital-first, video-centric news platforms. At present, smartphones and social media serve as primary conduits for news access, concurrently functioning as significant arenas for both interpersonal communication and entertainment (Newman et al., 2021). In India, these platforms have emerged as major players, leveraging social media for news content distribution. A prominent example is Brut (founded in France in 2016), which extensively utilizes platforms like Facebook and Instagram to disseminate its short-format video content, primarily targeting Generation Z, known for their preference for fast and concise news delivery. However, the millennials have been traditionally associated with consuming news through media such as 24-hour news channels and print media. The growing use of smartphones and the popularity of digital video formats raise questions about potential shifts in their news consumption habits and how they engage with new platforms that may change perceptions. Building on the framework of Diffusion of Innovation (Rogers et al., 2014), this paper analyses how the adoption of digital video news platforms by millennials is shaped by the innovation, the communication channels that promote them, and the social structures in which news is consumed. Audiences as active media consumers attain fulfilment from media in at least three ways: the actual content, the act of simply being exposed to the media, and the social environment surrounding media consumption. While media content has long been recognized and studied as a source of gratification, indulgence, and pleasure, the other two sources have received less research attention (Katz et al., 1973). Using the framework of Uses and Gratification, the pilot study investigates the new shifts in millennials' media habits and how they fulfil their unique needs for information, social interaction, and entertainment through new digital news platforms. This study used convenience sampling to survey Indian millennials (aged 29–44) about digital video news consumption. An online questionnaire gathered quantitative data on platform preferences, usage, and attitudes.

Keywords: *Digital video news platforms, digital transformation, media gratification, social media, media consumption, news content*

IN DEFENSE OF ADVERTISING VALUE EQUIVALENCY: INTEGRATING THE CONTROVERSIAL METRIC IN A COMPOSITE MEDIA RELATIONS EVALUATION FORMULA

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ABSTRACT

This paper critically re-examines the controversial metric of Advertising Value Equivalency (AVE) within public relations (PR) evaluation, challenging the prevailing consensus that AVE should be wholly discarded. Drawing on both academic literature and industry practice, the study acknowledges AVE's methodological flaws—such as its disregard for sentiment, message quality, and actual outcomes—yet highlights its persistent use due to its simplicity and ability to standardize comparisons across diverse media outlets. The paper argues that, when used strictly as a comparative tool for media relations (rather than as a measure of campaign effectiveness or ROI), AVE retains a legitimate, if limited, function. To address AVE's shortcomings, the paper proposes a composite evaluation framework that integrates AVE with qualitative and outcome-based metrics, including sentiment analysis, engagement scaling, and message pull-through. This multidimensional approach enables practitioners to contextualize AVE within a broader, more nuanced assessment of PR value. The paper concludes that while AVE should not serve as the gold standard for PR measurement, it can play a useful supplementary role when transparently reported and combined with more rigorous, outcome-oriented metrics—offering a pragmatic path forward for media relations evaluation in an increasingly complex communications landscape.

Keywords: *Advertising value equivalency, public relations measurement, media relations composite metrics, sentiment analysis, PR evaluation framework*

CRISIS PR IN THE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY: STRATEGIES FOR THE DIGITAL ERA

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ABSTRACT

The rapid digital transformation of media and communication channels has significantly reshaped the practice of crisis public relations (PR) in the restaurant industry. As food service businesses operate in highly competitive and reputation-sensitive markets, the ability to manage crises effectively has become a critical component of long-term sustainability. This research explores anti-crisis PR as a key instrument of social communication, focusing on how restaurant brands can adapt their strategies to the dynamics of the digital era. The study is grounded in theoretical frameworks, including Coombs' Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), which emphasizes the alignment of response strategies with the nature and severity of the crisis, and Grunig and Hunt's Excellence Theory, which underscores the importance of symmetrical communication with stakeholders. These theories are complemented by contemporary digital PR approaches, highlighting the role of social media, real-time engagement, and multimedia storytelling in mitigating reputational damage. Methodologically, the research employs a case study analysis of both global and regional restaurant brands, examining their crisis communication practices during incidents such as food safety breaches, negative customer reviews, and operational disruptions. Special attention is given to examples from Central Asia, where digital media adoption is accelerating, yet local market dynamics and cultural factors require tailored PR solutions. Preliminary findings indicate that effective crisis communication in the restaurant sector increasingly relies on proactive monitoring of digital platforms, rapid multi-channel response mechanisms, and the integration of social listening tools to detect and address emerging issues before they escalate. Furthermore, transparent messaging, empathy towards affected customers, and consistent brand voice across platforms have proven essential in restoring public trust. This research contributes to the understanding of how crisis PR in the restaurant industry can evolve into a form of strategic social communication that not only protects brand reputation but also fosters long-term relationships with audiences. The paper offers practical recommendations for PR professionals, brand managers, and restaurant owners navigating the complexities of the digital communication landscape.

Keywords: *crisis public relations, digital transformation, social communication, Situational Crisis Communication Theory*

SUSTAINABLE F-COMMERCE IN BANGLADESH: A THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF BUYERS' AND SELLERS' PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of F-commerce provides a unique framework for examining the various perspectives of Bangladeshi buyers and sellers. This study aims to conduct a thematic analysis of sustainable F-commerce within the Bangladeshi marketplace from the perspective of sellers and buyers. The thematic analysis is based on three major themes of buyers' perspectives: trust, security, and the user experience and product presentation. Trust and security are related to customers identity theft, online transactions, unencrypted data, the proliferation of false apps, data breaches, unsecure Wi-Fi networks, adware, phishing, seller's trustworthiness, and fake ratings. Users' experience directly involves buyers' decision-making, and product presentation influences consumers. The study also explores four major themes from the sellers' perspective: communication challenges, system of product delivery, reputation management, and platform dynamics. The sellers' main communication challenges are resolving customers' complaints promptly, maintaining responsive communication, and answering client questions. The analysis further explores three other themes from the sellers' and buyers' perspectives: cultural sensitivity, the need for regulation, and the potential for social influence. The individuals in each group wished for more specific rules and guidelines governing F-commerce in Bangladesh. The article concludes with its limitations related to the study participants. This study recommends conducting further research to figure out F-commerce opportunities and challenges in Bangladesh.

Keywords: *F-commerce, seller, buyer, Bangladesh, thematic analysis*

FROM COMMUNICATION TO INCUBATION: SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE EVOLUTION OF POLITICAL ACTION IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Social media has transformed the political deliberative space (Chadwick, 2013; Chadwick & Howard, 2009; Mossberger, Tolbert & McNeal, 2008) and has emerged as a powerful vehicle for political communication. It is also seen as a new indicator of the political culture and political behaviour of the people. In his study, which is based on the relationship between old and new media, Chadwick (2013) confirms the derivation of political power from the emerging hybrid media system. Social media has also led to the rise of digital campaigning through which the political parties have shaped their political strategies, enhanced voters' engagement, and influenced the public discourse. In a nutshell, online spaces (such as WhatsApp groups, Instagram/Facebook pages, trends on X (formerly Twitter), influencer networks, content types like forwards/memes/videos) have become central to political deliberation, serving as critical testbeds for campaigning strategists to evaluate and adapt their political discourse and strategies. In a way, social media has emerged as an 'incubator' for experimenting and testing political strategy and action (Grahama, Jacksonb& Wright, 2016). Thus, from being a medium of political communication, social media is also an ecosystem where political ideas are conceived, refined, and amplified, reshaping the political contest (Jungherr&Posegga, 2019). This study employs a qualitative digital ethnography (Cocq & Liliequist, 2024; Pink et al., 2016) to examine how major Indian political parties—the Bharatiya Janata Party, Indian National Congress, and Aam Aadmi Party—leverage online platforms as "incubators" for political action. Data from Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube were collected through purposive sampling of posts, comments, videos, and trending hashtags. Thematic analysis was then applied to identify patterns, narratives, and strategies used to mobilize supporters and shape online political discourse.

The analysis further examines how these parties strategize and utilize digital platforms for rapid narrative development, testing, and supporter mobilization. The research confirms the strategic use of online spaces as incubators by political actors, with the BJP notably leading in effectively curating and disseminating political narratives within this dynamic landscape. However, the study also highlights critical challenges inherent in this trend, including the accelerated spread of misinformation within incubated narratives, the amplification of political polarization, and the exacerbation of the digital divide impacting democratic participation.

Keywords: *Social media, political campaign and advertisements, political landscape, digital politics, political discourse*

PARALLEL SESSION E1:

MEDIA, INFORMATION, AND DIGITAL LITERACY

MEDIA AND JOURNALISM EDUCATION AND RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT IN UZBEKISTAN: TRENDS, CHALLENGES, AND PROSPECTS

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ABSTRACT

The media and journalism landscape in Uzbekistan is undergoing a significant transformation in response to broader political, social, and technological reforms initiated in recent years. As the country moves toward greater openness and democratic governance, the role of journalism and media education has become increasingly important. This paper examines the evolution, current challenges, and future prospects of journalism education and media research in Uzbekistan within the context of national reform and global integration. Historically, journalism education in Uzbekistan was rooted in Soviet traditions, which emphasized theory over practice and limited critical engagement. However, a new wave of reforms has sparked efforts to modernize curricula, promote media literacy, and incorporate global best practices in journalism training. Universities and institutions are now striving to update course content, enhance practical training through partnerships with local media, and expand international collaboration in research and academic exchange.This study examines recent policy initiatives, including the Strategy for the Development of Higher Education and the Law on Mass Media, and evaluates their impact on journalism education. It also explores the role of donor-funded programs, international organizations, and NGOs in supporting capacity building for media professionals and researchers. Interviews with faculty members, students, and media practitioners provide insight into ongoing efforts and persistent challenges, such as the need for modern teaching resources, digital skills training, academic freedom, and a stronger research infrastructure. The paper concludes with recommendations for creating a sustainable and globally competitive media education ecosystem in Uzbekistan. Emphasis is placed on the importance of academic-industry partnerships, regional knowledge exchange, and the development of independent research platforms. These strategies are essential for preparing the next generation of Uzbek journalists to meet the demands of a rapidly changing media environment.

Keywords: *Journalism education, media research, Uzbekistan, media reform, academic freedom*

ENHANCING GLOBAL COMMUNICATION: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF DIGITAL MOBILE TRANSLATION APPLICATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Drawing upon Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) and Media Richness Theory (MRT), this study examines how translation applications mediate cross-lingual communication in today's globalized context. UGT provides a lens to understand how users actively select translation tools to fulfil specific communication needs such as accuracy, immediacy, or convenience while MRT emphasizes the capacity of different media to convey rich information effectively across diverse contexts. It is hypothesized that there is a significant difference between the translation mobile application in the domain translation application and Google Translations. Through a content analysis of 32 widely used translation applications including Google Translate, Microsoft Translator, DeepL, iTranslate, SayHi, Papago, Linguee, and MemoQ this research evaluates parameters such as supported languages, translation accuracy, offline functionality, voice and image translation, real-time conversational modes, and platform integration. Findings reveal that applications vary in media richness and user gratifications: Google Translate and DeepL achieve higher semantic accuracy through advanced AI models, while Microsoft Translator and iTranslate facilitate synchronous, multi-user interactions suited for real-time communication. Study demonstrated that there was no significant difference between the number of Languages Supported in terms of User Ratings ('p'-value=.513). There was also no significant difference between the Offline functionality and the User Ratings as the 'p'-value=.541. However there is no user preference in mobile translation applications with more language translations facility and the type of OS used as the 'p'- value was .000. The study concludes that user choice depends on aligning communicative goals with the technological affordances of each application, as no single platform satisfies all requirements. By situating translation tools within established communication theories, this research offers a theoretical and practical framework for selecting optimal translation technologies to enhance cross-cultural communication and overcome language barriers.

Keywords: *Translations, mobile applications, information, content analysis, global communication*

GRASSROOTS DIGITAL EMPOWERMENT IN RURAL INDIA: EVALUATING THE REACH AND IMPACT OF THE DIGITAL INDIA PROGRAM IN RAIGAD DISTRICT, MAHARASHTRA

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ABSTRACT

Launched on July 1, 2015, by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Digital India Program aims to build a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy where government services are universally accessible, promoting inclusive economic growth. The initiative is structured around three core pillars: (I) digital infrastructure as a core utility for every citizen, (ii) governance and services on demand and (iii) digital empowerment of citizens. This study presents a field-based, mixed-methods evaluation of the usability, accessibility and adoption of digital platforms introduced under the Digital India initiative in rural villages of Raigad district, Maharashtra, India. The research focuses on citizen engagement with key government platforms such as UMANG, DigiLocker, Ayushman Bharat App, Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana, Poshan Tracker. The study is incorporated in 2 phases, Phase 1 online survey and Phase 2- In-depth interviews of 25 men and 25 women of Gulsunde village of Raigad District. Diffusion of Innovations Theory will be used to explore the spread and uptake of digital services within rural communities. The usability and effectiveness of the digital platforms will be tested through task-based trials. Here participants will be asked to perform basic functions (e.g., login, service access, document download) under observation. This was complemented by a usability scoring framework assessing ease of navigation, language accessibility, error handling and alignment with literacy levels. Findings recommend improvements in interface design, trust-building through localized training, infrastructure investment and gender-sensitive literacy strategies. The study also emphasizes the role of local government officials and digital facilitators in promoting and sustaining grassroots digital inclusion.

Keywords: *Digital India program, rural digital empowerment, digital literacy, e-governance accessibility, field-based evaluation*

MEDIATING THE FUTURE: ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, ETHICS, AND REGULATORY CHALLENGES IN ASIA'S DIGITAL MEDIA ECOSYSTEM

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ABSTRACT

Asia's accelerated digital transformation is profoundly reconstituting media ecosystems through the pervasive integration of artificial intelligence (AI), accelerating technological convergence, and shifting communicative practices. This techno-social confluence engenders significant opportunities for innovation while simultaneously precipitating complex ethical quandaries and regulatory lacunae. This paper presents a critical examination of how AI-driven computational systems are restructuring media production, distribution, and consumption across Asia's creative industries, evaluating the capacity of extant regulatory architectures and digital literacy paradigms to address emergent sociotechnical complexities. Theoretical perspectives from mediatization theory, technological determinism, and digital ethics are synthesized to construct a conceptual framework elucidating the dynamics of AI-mediated communication. Methodologically, the study employs qualitative content analysis, systematically reviewing and interpreting a corpus of primary and secondary documents. These include regional and international policy instruments, industry white papers, and paradigmatic media case studies. The analysis focuses on five heterogeneous Asian jurisdictions—Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, India, and Singapore—chosen for their diverse sociopolitical structures, regulatory environments, and stages of technological development. Document coding and thematic analysis were used to identify recurring patterns and generate grounded insights. This methodological approach supports the identification of three interrelated developments shaping the region's evolving digital media environments. First, the integration of artificial intelligence facilitates hyper-personalization and operational automation, but concurrently intensifies epistemological opacity and reinforces systemic data biases, thus raising significant concerns around transparency and equity. Second, the increasing convergence between media and creative sectors is enabling innovative forms of transmedia storytelling and immersive digital experiences; however, these advancements are unfolding within a context of fragmented regulatory frameworks and jurisdictional ambiguity. Third, persistent asymmetries in digital literacy—despite ongoing institutional interventions—continue to marginalize rural populations and lower-income communities, thereby constraining equitable access to and participation in emerging digital publics. Beyond identifying these trends, the analysis also exposes fundamental normative deficiencies in existing governance regimes, particularly regarding pervasive surveillance infrastructures, AI-enhanced disinformation mechanisms, and inadequately theorized frameworks for digital consent. In response to these challenges, the study advances a tripartite strategic framework for ethically anchored digital transformation, emphasizing the need for participatory digital governance through inclusive deliberative mechanisms, the development of culturally responsive and context-sensitive digital literacy initiatives, and the pursuit of regulatory coherence across intersecting technological and media domains. This conceptual scaffolding provides scholarly and practical foundations for policymakers, pedagogical institutions, and media practitioners to cultivate resilient, human-centric media ecologies. This framework is informed by and aligned with emerging global standards, including UNESCO's Recommendations on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, Guidelines for the Governance of Digital Platforms (2023), and the Consultation Paper on AI Regulation (2024). By contextualizing these phenomena within Asia's heterogeneous sociopolitical and technological milieus, this research contributes materially to communication theory while offering empirically informed imperatives for synchronizing technological innovation with ethical accountability—underscoring the necessity for culturally contingent, normatively robust, and institutionally actionable media strategies.

Keywords: AI in media, Asian media policy, digital literacy, ethical AI, algorithmic governance

INFORMATION DIVIDE AND MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY (MIL) CAMPAIGNS: A STUDY OF THE TOTAL DIGITAL LITERACY CAMPAIGN IN KERALA, INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Despite global digital inclusion efforts resulting in 5.3 billion internet users worldwide (World Bank, 2024), the digital divide has widened and intensified, with disparities in speed, affordability, and access. Many researchers have explored the unintended consequences of this divide, including the second-level divide (Hargittai, 2002), the deepening divide (Van Dijk, 2005), the knowledge and information divide (Edda Tandi, 2010), and algorithm-driven divides (Wen & Jinhui, 2024). The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the digital divide and the proliferation of mis/dis/mal-information, fakes disguised as news, deep-fakes, and information poverty, particularly among socio-economically disadvantaged and technophobic elderly populations. While the digital divide remains a critical concern in low and middle income regions, the concept of an 'information divide' demands a nuanced theoretical framework to address its multifaceted implications. By framing information through the lenses of reliability, verifiability, facticity, and certainty (Sanjeev, 2023), MIL initiatives can extend beyond fostering digital skills to promote critical thinking in order to discern valuable information. This is particularly crucial in countering the effects of echo chambers and filter bubbles (Pariser, 2012), which render users vulnerable to polarized narratives and toxic content (Arguedas et al., 2022). These challenges underscore the urgent need to re-evaluate and expand Media and Information Literacy (MIL) initiatives. This study examines a digital literacy programme by the Pullampara Gram Panchayat in Kerala, India, which targeted 3,300 digitally illiterate individuals. Implemented in phases with trained volunteers, the program achieved a 96% completion rate and was subsequently scaled up state-wide through the 'Digi Keralam' project. Through a survey conducted among 200 participants of the programme in Pullampara Grama Panchayath, this study evaluates their digital competence and internet usage among various demographics, including women, persons with disabilities, and older people. The research instrument maps the internalization of digital literacy lessons and skills and ability to apply it in real-life situations. It also assesses the program's alignment with international MIL frameworks, such as UNESCO's model. Further, the study aims to conduct a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with eight participants in the training program to delve deeper into the outcome of digital literacy training. The FGD is expected to cross-validate the acquired digital knowledge and skills with the parameters outlined in the 'information divide' studies. The analysis may yield fruitful insights for probable refinement of the MIL curriculum. It is expected to emphasize that MIL initiatives must address the 'information divide' to mitigate inadvertent outcomes and foster equitable and informed digital participation.

Keywords: *Media and information literacy, digital literacy, information divide, digital divide, DigiKeralam, UNESCO MIL Curriculum*

THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON GEN Z'S PERCEPTION AND ADOPTION OF SKINCARE PRODUCTS: A POSITIVE APPROACH TO BODY IMAGE AND SELF-CARE

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ABSTRACT

With the rise of digital culture, social media has become a powerful force in shaping consumer behavior and has transformed how Generation Z discovers, perceives, and adopts skincare products, blurring the lines between beauty practices and self-care. This study titled "The Influence of Social Media on Gen Z's Perception and Adoption of Skincare Products: A Positive Approach to Body Image and Self-Care" is framed within the Uses and Gratifications Theory, which emphasizes how young users actively seek content for personal enhancement, identity expression, and informational satisfaction through digital skincare narratives. The study was conducted in Bangalore, India, using a descriptive quantitative design with offline convenience sampling of 300 Gen Z respondents aged (16–27). The four key objectives of this study were: to examine the role of social media in skincare product discovery among Gen Z's, to analyze their influence on the adaptation of skincare routines, to investigate the psychological impact of these routines on self-esteem and body image, and to determine whether skincare is viewed as an act of self-care rather than solely a beauty practice. A structured questionnaire with Likert-scale indicators was used to measure variables such as frequency of content exposure, platform engagement, adoption of skincare routines, self-confidence, and body image perception. Findings indicate that Instagram is the most influential platform for skincare related content, following YouTube and Pinterest due to influencer reviews, tutorials, and visually engaging content that encourages participants to try and maintain skincare routines. A significant relationship was found between the frequency of exposure to skincare content and the adoption of regular skincare routines. Many respondents reported that consistent skincare practices contributed to enhanced confidence, self-esteem, and a greater sense of personal care, while the influence of idealized beauty portrayals was acknowledged. The findings suggest that for many, skincare has evolved into a meaningful self-care ritual rather than a beauty practice supported by social media content. The research underscores the importance of distinguishing between influence (shaping perceptions) and impact (measurable behavioral or emotional outcomes), and encourages future studies to consider the role of authenticity and realism in digital skincare promotion.

Keywords: *Digital media, Gen Z, skincare, body image, self-care*

MEMES AND ENGAGEMENT: THE ROLE THAT MEMES CAN PLAY IN PROVIDING ENGAGING NARRATIVES OVER MAINSTREAM MEDIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to understand how memes engage users and create more engaging narratives over mainstream media and how memes can be analyzed within a basic context. In today's context, humorous images, text, videos or gifs, are used mainly for satirical purposes. Memes play a major role in the social media strategies of political movements and can be seen as subversive to mainstream media. While memes may not be considered as a traditional source of news and information, to an increasingly distracted generation, they can have the ability to present ideas and information in a humorous manner. Thematic Analysis will be primarily used to identify and interpret certain patterns, features or themes within a data set. Thematic and semiotic analyses are often used to derive meaning, with the meme (image, gif or video) being the sign. For the purposes of the paper, the focus will be on viewing memes through the thematic lens, deriving meaning from the memes. Past research in the subject have focused on utility of memes in creating narratives, how successful they are in terms of adoption, or the role they can play in digital culture. Little focus has been put on how they challenge traditional media narratives. A rough survey with 50 memes was initially conducted, which was narrowed down to ten memes which were the most relatable. A content analysis of past research and ten memes taken from popular mainstream news will be presented in a survey with open-ended questions, asking about the themes derived and the basic message. Using the narrative paradigm, new narratives can be created as the event is presented to them. Out of the responses for the various memes, the responses for the ones relating to Operation Sindoor, raising the Income Tax Slab and Alliance Politics were the most relatable, with the responses being closest to the intended interpretation.

Keywords: *Memes, media, mainstream media, themes, interpretation*

STUDY ON SMARTPHONE-MEDIATED DIGITAL COMPETENCY AMONG WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN GUWAHATI, ASSAM

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ABSTRACT

With the rising empowerment of women in micro, small and medium enterprise (MSME) sector of India, smartphone has emerged as the gateway to accessible, cost-effective and flexible business operations, serving as significant tool for the women to leverage enterprise growth in the digital world. The study explored the usage of smartphone regarding its features, social media platforms, business tools, communication and marketing among women entrepreneurs based in Guwahati, the cultural and commercial hub of Northeast India. Using the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the study adopted a descriptive research design, with a sample of 250 MSME women entrepreneurs selected using purposive sampling technique. Primary data collection was conducted using structured questionnaires. With universal smartphone use in business, findings highlighted use of features such as voice calls, messages, camera, and gallery among high majority of women entrepreneurs. Social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram was used by high majority of the women, and with notable familiarity with WhatsApp Business and Facebook Marketplace. Regarding online payment apps, Google Pay was most preferred among the women. The easy-to-use interface of such platforms contributed to their widespread adoption. In contrast, very high majority of the women were unaware of business tools such as Evernote, Square Register, Asana, Wave, etc. due to their limited engagement in trainings and low digital skills. The extent of smartphone usage was moderate for advertising via calls and messages, and promotional infographics, and relatively low for email management and video calls. Demographic factors such as age, education, business types influenced core constructs of TAM-perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU). Women entrepreneurs who were from younger age-group, and from higher educated category, showed significant smartphone engagement regarding entrepreneurial activities. Barriers in smartphone included physical discomfort, limitations of device features such as small screen, and security concerns, although the usage of smartphone remained highly significant for basic operations such as communication, digital marketing and online payments. Overall findings of the study emphasized on the need to build skills and confidence for advanced smartphone features, thus highlighting the gaps as well as the possibilities in digital competency among the women entrepreneurs, advocating for targeted toolkit to empower them, and prepare them to become skilled digital navigators.

Keywords: *Women entrepreneurs, smartphone usage, business tools, digital competency, MSME, digital entrepreneurship*

GENDER GAPS IN DIGITAL FINANCIAL LITERACY IN JHARKHAND, INDIA: BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

In the age of digitization, financial inclusion now relies on users' ability to effectively navigate digital financial tools. Unified Payment Interface (UPI) transactions in India have experienced an exponential increase, growing from USD 25.66 billion in FY 2019-20 to USD 3.03 trillion by March 2025 (PIB, India, 2025). Many studies indicate that Digital Financial Literacy can bridge India's persistent digital divide and promote inclusive growth for rural and marginalized communities. Some researchers highlighted that a lack of digital financial literacy can cause misuse, fraud, and exclusion from the benefits of digitization (Lusardi & Mitchell, 2013). World Bank (2020) mentioned that improving women's digital financial literacy boosts household financial stability and community development (Digital Financial Inclusion, 2020.). Digital Financial Literacy is essential in India, enabling access to schemes like Jan Dhan Yojana, Direct Benefit Transfers, and UPI-based services. This study aims to assess and quantify the level of digital literacy of respondents through developing a Gender-based Digital Financial Literacy Index (DFLI) in the context of Ranchi District, Jharkhand. This composite measure captures differences in digital financial awareness, access, usage, knowledge, and confidence level while using digital payment facilities between men and women. Using a structured survey administered across selected six blocks in Ranchi District of Jharkhand, India, responses were collected from 480 respondents on key dimensions of digital financial literacy, including familiarity with mobile banking, UPI platforms, e-wallets, and online safety practices. Responses were further analyzed to generate separate index scores for men and women, allowing for individual-level analysis and a sector-wide comparison. As part of this behavioral study, a set of questionnaires with five point Likert scale has been developed to assess digital media literacy rate among Ranchi citizens. Combining W. James Potter's Media Literacy Theory with Amartya Sen's Capabilities Approach offers a suitable framework for media and gender studies, emphasizing critical media engagement and 'real freedoms'. Preliminary findings reveal a substantial gender gap, with women scoring consistently lower in digital tool usage and security awareness, despite having similar levels of basic access in many cases. These results highlight the urgent need for targeted digital literacy programs that consider gender-specific challenges. The DFLI offers a scalable framework for monitoring gender-based disparities in digital financial readiness and can help policymakers, NGOs, and fintech developers working towards inclusive digital empowerment.

Keywords: *Cybercrime, digital media literacy, financial frauds, digital payments, gender gap*

HOW SOCIAL MEDIA ECHO CHAMBERS SHAPE PERCEPTIONS OF RURAL INDIAN YOUTH DURING THE 2025 INDIA-PAKISTAN CONFLICT FOLLOWING THE PAHALGAM ATTACK

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ABSTRACT

Social media has emerged as a dominant source of news and information among youth in India. However, concerns are rising with the expanding digital penetration and reliance on digital platforms. One such concern is the echo chamber effect, where users are exposed predominantly to reinforcing viewpoints, a phenomenon highlighted in prior studies of Western urban contexts (Sunstein, 2001; Dubois & Blank, 2018) but underexplored in the Global South, especially during conflicts. Guided by the Selective Exposure Theory, this study investigates how social media echo chambers influence rural youth's perception during the recent 2025 India-Pakistan conflict following the Pahalgam terrorist attack. Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews of 25 active social media users aged 18-25 who engaged frequently with multiple social media platforms. Study participants were purposively selected from Chandauli, an aspirational district in Uttar Pradesh identified as socio-economically underdeveloped, making it a relevant site to study. Participants reported that their primary sources of information were WhatsApp Status, Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts, which they frequently used for entertainment in daily life and later for updates during the conflict, turning everyday habits into information sources. They expressed strong trust in peer-shared content, often believing that if many people within their social circles shared the same information, it was unlikely to be false. There was minimal engagement with official sources or fact-checking websites, and credibility was largely based on repetition and social familiarity, reinforcing the selective exposure theory. These findings suggest that echo chambers in rural India are shaped not only by algorithmic design but also by peer-trust networks formed through habitual sharing of content within a familiar circle. The study highlights the need for context-sensitive media literacy initiatives, including community-based digital education and peer-led verification, to foster critical engagement with online information in rural settings.

Keywords: *Echo chambers, selective exposure, rural youth, Pahalgam attack, social media, India-Pakistan conflict*

DECONSTRUCTING DIGITAL MEMES ON THE INDIAN FILM 'MRS.' AS REPRODUCTION OF ASIAN FEMINIST DISCOURSE: A MIXED METHODS STUDY

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ABSTRACT

In India, films hold cultural importance, with their influence extending even into digital expressions such as internet memes (Pareek, 2022). From Hera Pheri to Sui Dhaga, memes have constructed intersectionality and propelled critical discourse further (Pareek, 2022). The latest example is the memes on the recent Hindi film 'Mrs.', which emerged as significant sites of both feminist and antifeminist discourse (Times of India; Firstpost, 2025) provoking an inquiry into the gendered perspective on production, reproduction, distribution and consumption of memes (Stuart Hall, 2007). Indians spend nearly 30 minutes daily on internet memes, with consumption rising by 80% from 2021 to 2022 (Redseer, 2022), making them a popular form of communication (Das, 2023). Subaltern women, especially in Asia use memes for creative participatory activism, highlighting memes as cultural artefacts to show dissent, spread propaganda, build communities and fight discrimination (Dixit, 2024; Pillai, 2023). Asia becomes a critical site of inquiry as girls in South Asia are three times less likely to attend school than boys and possess five times less access to technology (Unicef, South Asia, 2025) reinforcing their systemic marginalization. Globally, extant literature reveals extensive works on digital spaces, memes and their gendered use. These studies conclude that memes are strong cultural discursive formations also sometimes widening discursive othering (Giorgi, 2025). Building on earlier research, the present paper explores the interplay of meme elements like image macros with templates, text and audio for constructing the feminist sphere. It addresses the problem: how do memes related to contemporary films, like 'Mrs.' contribute to construction and contestation of feminist discourse within Indian digital spaces, specifically among Gen Z male audience. The research builds upon Erving Goffman's frames of analyzing gender (Butkowski et al.,2020) and Socio Cognitive Discourse Analysis of Teun A. Van Dijk (Das, 2023) to identify meanings and patterns in memes created, further negotiated, on the film "Mrs." as tools of digital culture and feminist use of social media. Manifest themes are triangulated with perceptions of Gen Z males in India. It is a qualitative study where semiotic analysis is performed (Cannizzaro,2016) followed by FGDs with Indian Gen Z male consumers (Andersson, 2023; Vardeman, 2024). For obtaining the sampled memes, most popular hashtags sMovie#SanyaMalhotra#BoycottSanyaMalhotra#Women#IndianMarriage#ToxicFeminism are used as filters. The study seeks to identify subcultural constructs to build a sustainable digital feminist sphere in Asia.

Keywords: *Internet memes, Mrs., gender, media literacy, South Asian Feminism, pop culture*

EXPLORING THE REPRESENTATION OF HOMOSEXUAL LOVE IN MOVIES AND SERIES AVAILABLE IN AMAZON PRIME AND NETFLIX OVER THE PAST FOUR YEARS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY AMONG WESTERN AND INDIAN OTT CONTENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the representation of homosexual love in films and series available on two leading OTT platforms Netflix and Amazon Prime Video over the past four years (January 2021 to December 2024). Using a qualitative content analysis framework grounded in queer theory and media representation studies, the research examines how same-sex relationships are thematically portrayed, narratively developed, and socio-culturally framed in both Western and Indian media contexts. A purposive sampling method was employed to select twelve prominent titles, six Western and six Indian. The inclusion criteria focused on titles released between 2021 and 2024 that featured homosexual love as a central narrative element, had notable cultural or critical impact, and achieved significant visibility on their respective platforms. The analysis applied four key parameters:

1. Thematic Portrayal – assessing how homosexual love is framed (e.g., as romantic fulfilment, social struggle, personal liberation, or taboo).
2. Narrative Depth – evaluating the complexity, nuance, and progression of same-sex love stories within broader plotlines.
3. Character Development – examining the multidimensionality, growth arcs, and emotional authenticity of queer characters.
4. Socio-Cultural Framing – analyzing depictions of societal acceptance, prejudice, legal contexts, and intersectional identities in relation to LGBTQ+ narratives.

A scene-by-scene coding process was used to map recurring motifs, symbolic representations, and dialogue patterns that aligned with or challenged traditional heteronormative storytelling. The study also briefly considers audience reception by referencing reviews, social media discussions, and critical commentary, highlighting the cultural resonance and potential impact of these portrayals on public perception. Findings indicate distinct differences between Western and Indian OTT content in terms of narrative freedom, thematic risk-taking, and socio-cultural emboldens, with Western titles tending towards normalization and integration of same-sex love into mainstream narratives, while Indian titles often juxtapose romance with familial and societal conflict. This research contributes to ongoing scholarly discourse on queer media representation and offers insight into how digital streaming platforms mediate the visibility and evolution of homosexual love on screen.

Keywords: *Homosexual love, LGBTQ+ representation, Amazon prime video, Netflix, Indian vs Western media, Queer Theory*

DIGITAL MEDIA AND THE PERCEPTION OF AFGHAN WOMEN: EXPLORING THE INFLUENCE OF MEDIA NARRATIVES ON STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

In the era of digital transformation, media plays a pivotal role in shaping public perception, particularly on global humanitarian and gender issues. As digital platforms like Instagram, online news portals, and messaging apps become primary sources of information for youth, their influence on opinion formation is growing rapidly. This study examines how media narratives both traditional and digital shape the perceptions of Afghan women among college students in Karnataka. By analyzing the relationship between media consumption and students' understanding of international women's issues, the research highlights how media serve as powerful tool in public communication, advocacy, and opinion building in the digital age. This research investigates how media representation influences the perceptions of Afghan women among college students in Karnataka, focusing on the gap between reality and mediated narratives. Drawing on theories such as Agenda-Setting, the study examines how various platforms including Television, Newspapers, Radio, Online News, Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, and X (formerly Twitter) shape student opinions. A total of 300 respondents from diverse academic institutions participated in a structured survey. The study concludes that media portrayals significantly influence students' perceptions, but gender does not play a defining role in shaping those views. The uniformity in responses suggests that consistent media narratives and educational environments contribute to shared understandings of international gender issues. The research emphasizes the need for more balanced media representation and recommends further investigation into how other variables such as age, academic discipline, and media literacy impact perception.

Keywords: *Afghan women, media influence, students perception, gender, Karnataka, social media, representation*

DIGITALIZATION IN INDIA: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF NATIONAL POLICIES AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

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ABSTRACT

India is a country of great diversity, characterized by socio-cultural factors, complex systems of social stratification, significant demographic differences, and regional disparities. When digitalization is introduced as a tool of development, ensuring inclusivity requires sensitivity to indigenous contexts and tailoring technology to the specific needs of varied communities. However, the digital story, which is often celebrated as one of fast progress and empowerment, on closer examination also shows how it has reinforced inequalities and created new forms of exclusion. This paper argues that India's digital divide is not a natural outcome but the result of long-term policy choices that together created an "architecture of exclusion." The critical review of the study traces the history of digitalization in India across three phases: the Self-Reliance era (1960s–1980s), when computing was restricted to the state and elite institutions; the Liberalisation and Software Export era (1980s–2010), which promoted urban IT growth while sidelining rural needs; and the Digital India era (2010s–present), which promised inclusion but often reinforced exclusion through corporate dominance and platformization. Drawing on Marxist political economy, Ambedkarite thought, and Freire's participatory model, the paper shows that digitalization in India has always been uneven. Unless future policies address equity, indegeneous concerns and participation, Digital India risks deepening the very inequalities it seeks to resolve.

Keywords: *Digitalization, digital inequality, digital India, technology and society, digital marginalization in India, digital infrastructure, digital media access, digital divide*

FACT OR FEAR? EXPLORING MEDIA NARRATIVES AND JOURNALISTIC FRAMING OF DIGITAL ARREST SCAMS IN INDIAN NEWS MEDIA

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ABSTRACT

Digital arrest scams have rapidly become a critical digital threat in India, shaking public trust and highlighting adaptive vulnerabilities in the country's evolving digital ecosystem. Although these scams have attracted increasing media attention, the tone and quality of coverage have varied widely, significantly shaping public understanding and support for victims. Grounded in Framing Theory and Agenda-setting Theory, this study provides a comprehensive analysis of 1,210 Indian news stories on digital arrest scams, published between November 2023 and August 2025, to distinguish between factual reporting and sensationalist narratives. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the research utilizes AntConc for quantitative analysis of linguistic trends and NVivo for qualitative coding of headlines, sources, and narrative devices. Content analysis identifies several dominant themes: (1) episodic framing of high-profile victim trauma, highlighting psychological warfare, isolation, and the targeting of vulnerable groups (especially seniors and digitally less-literate professionals); (2) detailed technical reporting of the modus operandi—impersonation, technological deception, and international syndicate operations; (3) heavy reliance on official data, legal warnings, and law enforcement narrative, often at the expense of systemic critique. Investigative journalism tracks money flows and exposes cross-border structures, while advisory frames foreground public helplines and safety checklists. Critical commentary, though rare, interrogates victim-blaming norms and the reach and efficacy of government awareness campaigns on modern digital platforms. The findings reveal that the coverage often succeeds in drawing public attention to the prevalence and fraudulent nature of digital arrests, illustrating the agenda-setting function of Indian media. But the majority of media coverage uses emotionally intense, episodic narratives—focusing on vivid individual cases, personal trauma, and isolated events with recurring patterns that inadvertently shift responsibility onto victims and shape risk perceptions (cultivation theory). This tends to amplify fear, social stigma, and encourages a mindset of defensive individualism. In contrast, thematic framing, which provides broader analysis of underlying policies, systemic causes, and structural issues, remains secondary and less prominent. This imbalance limits public understanding of the deeper societal factors involved and may reduce pressure for collective or institutional solutions. Variation in source credibility and reliance on anecdotal narratives were also observed. These findings highlight the urgent need for Indian media to embrace more in-depth, nuanced, and ethical reporting—prioritizing public education, victim dignity, and collaborative engagement with cyber authorities. Ultimately, this research not only tracks contemporary trends and challenges in digital crime reportage, but also provides practical insights and actionable recommendations to support journalists and enhance critical media awareness in India's rapidly evolving digital landscape.

Keywords: *Digital arrest scams, Indian media, sensationalism, factual reporting, NVivo, AntConc, cybercrime reporting, media ethics, public awareness*

IDENTIFYING PRESENTATION ELEMENTS & TYPOLOGIES OF POLITICAL MISINFORMATION IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to identify the various presentation elements and typologies of misinformation used in false political posts in India. The study is grounded in Framing Theory which helps to explain how false political posts are framed or structured using various presentation cues like visual or contextual cues to attract the attention of the audience and shape or influence their perception and interpretation of political issues. The study further identifies the various typologies of political misinformation using the Information Manipulation Theory (IMT) which highlights the various techniques in which information is manipulated to mislead the audience using fabrication, false contextualization, manipulation, false reporting, etc. Quantitative content analysis was used to analyze the false political posts. The false posts were selected from four fact-checking websites- Alt News, BoomLive, The Quint's WebQoof, and NewsMobile from September 2018 to September 2021. Multi-stage non-probability sampling was used to initially select a total of 608 fact-checked posts, out of which 182 posts were found to be political in nature in preliminary analysis. These 182 political posts were further analyzed quantitatively using a deductive approach of classification. The posts were classified into two major categories--presentation elements and typology of misinformation. The presentation elements were further divided into 9 sub-categories: 'only image/s', 'only video', 'only text', 'only audio', 'image/s with text', 'video with text', 'text with link', 'video + image/s + text', and 'text + image/s + link'. The typologies were divided into eight sub-categories: 'satire/ parody', 'false connection', 'manipulation', 'fabrication', 'misleading', 'imposter', 'false connection', and 'misreporting'. The results found that majority of the false political posts used 'image/s with text' (56%) followed by 'video with text' (30.2%) as presentation elements. Furthermore, majority of political misinformation used falsely contextualized content (34.1%) followed by manipulated content (19.2%), misleading content (18.7%), and fabricated content (11.5%). The novelty of the current study is political misinformation has not been analyzed with respect to the presentation elements or the typology of misinformation used in the false political posts. The study observed that as majority of political misinformation was spread through image/s and videos, hence, posts containing visuals need to be carefully fact-checked when linked with political issues or figures because the visuals can be misleading to online users.

Keywords: *Misinformation, political misinformation, social media, political communication, content analysis*

Day 2

PARALLEL SESSIONS

PARALLEL SESSION E2:

MEDIA, INFORMATION, AND DIGITAL LITERACY

MEDIA LITERACY IN PRACTICE: ASSESSING AND ADDRESSING COMPETENCY GAPS AMONG M.A. MASS COMMUNICATION STUDENTS IN ODISHA AND JHARKHAND

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ABSTRACT

The proliferation of digital information platforms has empowered the public with easy access to information but also triggered widespread information disorder through mis/disinformation. In this context, media literacy has become a crucial competency, particularly for Mass Communication students, who are future journalists and communicators. This study uses the UNESCO publication, Media Literate Citizen: Think Critically, Click Wisely as a theoretical foundation, integrating its elaboration of Media and Information Literacy (MIL) into five core competencies: access, analyze, evaluate, create, and act. It aims to assess these competencies among M.A. Mass Communication students in Odisha and Jharkhand, regions often underrepresented in national discourse on media education. Employing a mixed-method design, the study incorporates a survey (n=263) of students from six universities (state, central, and private) across Odisha and Jharkhand, alongside semi-structured interviews with 12 faculty members. The survey questions, designed as both factual and exercise-based items, align with the MIL competencies to determine students' strengths and deficiencies. Results reveal that students demonstrate competency in accessing and analyzing information but show notable weaknesses in evaluating sources, ethically creating media content, and engaging civically through media. Faculty interviews highlight curricular rigidity, limited digital infrastructure, and lack of faculty training as primary barriers. The study advocates for the integration of formal media literacy modules, participatory and competency-based pedagogies aligned with the MIL framework, and institutional support to enhance both curriculum and implementation across the two states.

Keywords: *Media literacy, media education, student competency, faculty insights, mass communication, Odisha and Jharkhand*

BETWEEN GENERATIONS AND TECHNOLOGIES: IS TEACHING DIGITAL SKILLS TO OLDER ADULTS BECOMING A CONCERN AMONG RURAL YOUTH?

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ABSTRACT

Societal interactions have changed with the introduction of digital technologies. The younger generation being more familiar with this new world technology now has the responsibility to teach their use to the older generation. Older people find it difficult to cope with the evolving technology. This digital literacy gaps place younger generations in the informal role of bridging these divides for older adults. The younger generation is under constant pressure of either teaching new things to them or doing it for them, for example sending replies, putting status or stories. Community ties are strengthened through this intergenerational digital pedagogy, though it puts the younger generation under the burden of being the informal teacher as they are often presumed to be inherently tech-savvy (Li et al., 2020). This situation is further complicated by the increasing integration of artificial intelligence into everything which induces additional educational pressure on young intermediaries (Kolotouchkina et al., 2023). This study explores different challenges faced by rural youth as they navigate through this role of teaching mobile technology skills to older generations. It explores the situation of this informal teaching role, investigating how constant demands for digital assistance contribute to burnout. Additionally, the study critiques the assumption of declared youth digital fluency, highlighting how often the required efforts that are necessary to translate digital skills which can be recreated by older adults are overlooked. A mixed-methods approach will be employed, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews . Surveys will be conducted on100 rural youth to assess digital fatigue levels and teaching burdens. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted of the respondents showing high levels of digital fatigue (aged 18–30) engaged in informal digital teaching roles. Primary data will be gathered in rural regions, ensuring diverse socioeconomic representation. Thematic analysis will be applied to interview transcripts. This research contributes to discussions on equitable digital inclusion, emphasizing policy and community-based interventions to alleviate the burden on rural youth while fostering sustainable intergenerational learning.

Keywords: *digital fatigue , intergenerational learning, rural youth, digital literacy , AI education*

SURVEY OF ADIVASI (TRIBAL) ADOLESCENTS AT BALMELA (CHILDRENS' FAIR) WITH MEDIA, INFORMATION, AND DIGITAL LITERACY ENGAGEMENT IN TALODA NORTH MAHARASTRA, 2024

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ABSTRACT

The use of the digital technologies and artificial intelligence have grown rapidly in India determined by government initiatives , a flourishing start up culture , a wide talent network and expanding digital options and services across industries. Indians form this milieu, contributing to the uniquely high level of engagement.The tribal (adivasis) communities comprising 8.6% of India, the marginalized and others who face social disadvantage are a significant part of the same milieu. In the midst of the digital and AI revolution, comprising almost 16% of the world's population are the adolescents, and the largest number--253 million, live in India. The present study has been conducted in the Narmada Nagar in Taloda region of Nandurbar district in North Maharashtra during the 'Balmela' (Children's Fair) conducted by the Narmada Navnirman Abhiyan in February 2024. The purpose of the survey was to understand the perception, accessibility, use of media, and information and digital literacies in the routines of the adolescents from the tribal (adivasis) belt. The mixed design study aims to make aware, explore, express, and engage with the tribal adolescents in their path forward in the online world to become part of the mainstream, particularly those lacking internet accessibility. The in person self-administered survey comprises of close-ended questions and an open-ended question, using quantitative and qualitative tools and techniques. Participant observations were an integral part of the field research. Two specific groups of adolescents comprising 58 in total number form the sample population. The ages were segregated into 13-15 years plus tribal (Adivasi) adolescents and 16-19 years plus adolescents. Sampling selected is non-probability and purposive. The study takes a reflective process into the authors' pedagogical practices as a media practitioner for over 37 years, media studies teacher for 22 years and a researcher for 12 years.

Keywords: *Tribal (Adivasis) adolescents, media, information, digital literacy, internet accessibility, Balmela (Children's Fair), Taloda*

BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE? EXAMINING UPI ADOPTION AMONG LOW-LITERACY POPULATIONS IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Digital inequalities encompassing disparities in access, skills, and outcomes continue to reinforce existing social exclusion globally. In India, these divides manifest sharply along axes of gender, education, income, and region, creating substantial barriers to equitable digital participation. As one of the world's leading nations in peer-to-peer digital financial exchanges, India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) processes billions of transactions monthly, yet the transformative promise of such platforms is deeply intertwined with issues of digital literacy. While extensive research charts digital divides by socioeconomic and gender factors, scant attention has been paid to how low-literacy populations, especially women, interact with peer-to-peer online financial services a critical gap as digital payment ecosystems reshape everyday life. This paper responds to this gap by examining how Indian women who face both digital and traditional literacy barriers perceive and use UPI for financial transactions. Women's technology adoption in India remains uneven; only 70% are literate compared to 85% of men, and women are far less likely to benefit from digital finance due to cultural and educational constraints. To address this, we conducted in-depth interviews with 20 women who are functionally illiterate but routinely use UPI for financial exchanges. This unique population bridges digital and literacy inequalities, offering crucial insights into the potential for financial technologies to advance inclusion. For this study, I reached out to about 60 women from three places—Hubli, Manipal, and Udupi. Most of them were vegetable sellers, fisherwomen, housemaids, and small food stall owners. Out of these, only 35 women were eligible because some did not use UPI and some could read and write, which did not fit the study. Finally, 21 women agreed to take part in the interviews. I chose these locations and occupations because women working in markets or selling food often have customers who prefer paying through UPI, and I felt that even if they could not read or write, they might still use UPI to make buying and selling easier.

Preliminary findings reveal substantial benefits: participants report significant time savings, ease of use, and greater autonomy. However, the shift to digital finance introduces new challenges namely, increased surveillance, as transactional records are now accessible to husbands and family members, limiting perceived financial independence. These results suggest that while digital financial technologies like UPI offer powerful advantages for marginalized women, they also create complex social dynamics that may constrain autonomy. Overall, this research highlights both the enabling potential and unforeseen consequences of digital financial inclusion, inviting further reflection on the intersection of literacy, gender, and technology in India's evolving digital landscape.

Keywords: *Digital inequality, unified payments interface, low-literacy users, women's financial inclusion, surveillance and autonomy*

STREAMING UNDERSTANDING: DESIGNING A CROSS-BORDER DIGITAL MEDIA PLATFORM FOR INDIA-CHINA CULTURAL DIALOGUE ARTE- THE FRENCH-GERMAN MULTINATIONAL MEDIA PLATFORM AS ROLE MODEL

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ABSTRACT

In our rapidly changing digital era artificial intelligence and algorithms often amplify sensationalized news and polarized narratives, which are distorting public perceptions. Traditional media coverage can inflate fear and biases, create gaps between actual events and the people's perception inside their own country as well as the perception of other countries.

Addressing these challenges requires a digital transformation towards more positive reporting in the media. In my study I am using publicly available quantitative data to analyze this problem and the question whether international public media cooperation could be a solution. I am using a qualitative case study of ARTE, the French- German Media platform, to identify problems and the ways on how European public media are approaching these to possibly foster digital literacy of their countries as well as to work towards mutual understanding and reduce cultural tensions between former rivals. In a third step I am exploring possibilities for cooperation between an Indian and Chinese media project. Embedding a strong media-literacy component is essential. Studies show that low digital literacy correlates with vulnerability to misinformation, whereas media-educated audiences are better equipped to resist algorithmic bias. A proposed India- China collaboration could produce co-created documentaries on shared heritage common interests. When combined with targeted media-education, this approach can reshape younger audiences' perceptions by engaging them in critical, fact-based storytelling. My analysis, grounded on theories of cultural memory and transcultural storytelling, shows that such cooperative media projects function as powerful tools for empathy, education, and public diplomacy. By breaking down national echo chambers through multilingual, cross-border programming, they help unify audiences around common narratives and enhance collective digital literacy.

Keywords: *ARTE, digital literacy, creative communication, media education, transcultural media exchange, digital transformation, intercultural tension, media polarization, filter bubble*

DIGITAL LITERACY, PEER NETWORKS, AND CYBER SEXUAL ABUSE: EXAMINING CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCES WITH CLASSMATES AS PERPETRATORS, BYSTANDERS, AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

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ABSTRACT

Child sexual abuse, as defined by the World Health Organization (WHO), involves a child being involved in sexual activities they cannot fully comprehend or consent to. It can occur between a child and an adult or another child in a position of trust or power, driven by the abuser's sexual desires. The pandemic further exacerbated the issue, leading to a multiple-fold rise in the transmission of child sexual abuse material globally, as well as nationally, as India's National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)'s statistics show. Children have their own peer networks. While the researcher was talking to children who were abused on one or more digital platforms, a very nuanced interplay of peer interactions in Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) was observed, where their classmates functioned not only as perpetrators but also as bystanders, and potential sources of support. This study, thus, investigates the peer interactions in Child Sexual Abuse among school-going children in Assam, examining how classmates function as perpetrators, bystanders, and support systems. By employing a mixed-methods design, the study first surveyed 1,200 students across private and government schools, in both urban and rural spaces. The survey and the survey questions, consisted of three parts: Demographics and digital use profile, Awareness and perception of cybercrimes, and Experience and Responses. From this sample, 282 students reported experiencing cybercrimes, and 40 cases of cyber sexual abuse involving classmates were purposively selected for in-depth interviews. The narratives by the children provided insight into how peers acted as perpetrators, bystanders, or support systems, and how victims navigated disclosure and coping. Theoretically, this research engages with the Bystander Effect which was proposed by Latané & Darley and contradicts the same when it comes to seeking help during and after an online sexual abuse incident. Furthermore, the spiral of silence theory is utilized to understand whether victims and bystanders remain silent due to peer pressure and societal norms. While digital literacy enhances recognition of abuse, this research argues that awareness alone is insufficient. This necessitates a deeper examination of intervention mechanisms, both at the policy level and institutional setting.

Keywords: *Digital literacy, cyber sexual abuse, peer communication, bystander effect, spiral of silence*

CULTIVATING MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY THROUGH PRACTICAL FACT-CHECKING IN JAPANESE JOURNALISM EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a case study of a program that integrates practical fact-checking activities into a university journalism education curriculum in Japan. This initiative addresses a gap in existing journalism education literature concerning hands-on, student-led fact-checking within an academic setting. The program operates in collaboration with external fact-checking organizations, notably the NPO "Fact-Check Initiative (FIJ)" and the news site "InFact". Participants, primarily undergraduate students, engage in a structured six-step process to verify suspicious claims: 1) identifying suspicious online claims, predominantly from Twitter, utilizing the "ClaimMonitor" database provided by FIJ; 2) verifying the authenticity of these claims through journalistic interviews, contacting administrative bodies or companies as needed; 3) rating the veracity of the claims based on FIJ standards (e.g., misleading, inaccurate, false, unproven); 4) drafting and revising articles with explicit factual basis, including URLs for evidence; 5) undergoing rigorous review by experienced external editors at "InFact" ; and 6) publishing the fact-checked articles on the "InFact" official website under the student's byline. The program has been implemented in journalism seminars for third-year students in 2021, 2023, and 2025, and for fourth-year students in 2022. Students, working in teams of 2-3 (totaling 10-18), aimed to produce one article per month, with grades based on steps 1-4. Importantly, some published articles resulted in corrections of statements by public figures, demonstrating the program's real-world impact. This outcome highlights the effectiveness of integrating practical fact-checking into the curriculum. This initiative significantly cultivates essential journalistic competencies in students, including news judgment, information gathering, interviewing, and article creation. However, operational challenges have been identified. These include the program's reliance on external partnerships and the availability of supportive faculty acting as in-house desks. Additionally, there is a current lack of comprehensive manuals for claim identification and interviewing techniques, and staffing limitations within the external editorial team sometimes delay article checks. Despite these challenges, the program contributes significantly to the growing movement of incorporating fact-checking into media and journalism education, underscoring the need for further development to enhance its generalizability and widespread applicability.

Keywords: *Fact-checking, journalism education, questionable claims, claim monitor, information gathering, article writing*

ENHANCING RABIES AWARENESS THROUGH TAILORED DIGITAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN REMOTE COMMUNITIES: LESSONS FROM NORTHERN THAILAND

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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the urgent and emerging issue of public health communication in remote and culturally diverse Asian communities, with a focus on enhancing rabies awareness through tailored digital strategies in Northern Thailand. Rabies remains a significant health threat in rural Asian settings, particularly where linguistic diversity, cultural differences, and limited healthcare infrastructure pose substantial barriers to effective communication and health education. This study specifically investigates the knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) regarding rabies among the Lahu community in Omkoi District and the Northern Thai-speaking community in Mae Chaem District, exploring innovative digital communication interventions aimed at overcoming these barriers. The theoretical underpinning of this research is situated within health communication theories, particularly the Health Belief Model (HBM) and communication accommodation theory, emphasizing how culturally sensitive and linguistically adapted communication can positively influence health behaviors. Employing a rigorous research methodology, the study conducted a quantitative survey with 302 households from February to March 2025, utilizing statistical significance tests (Wilcoxon rank-sum test) to compare KAP scores between communities. This survey identified significant disparities in rabies-related knowledge and practices between the two communities, closely linked to cultural and linguistic contexts. For instance, respondents from Mae Chaem exhibited notably higher KAP scores (mean: 14.51) compared to those from Omkoi (mean: 12.32, $p<0.001$), highlighting gaps in specific knowledge areas such as rabies transmission and preventive measures. The findings underscore the potential and necessity for implementing tailored digital health literacy programs capable of bridging linguistic barriers and accommodating cultural norms. By using multilingual, interactive digital tools enriched with culturally relevant content and visual aids, communities can achieve significant improvements in public health education outcomes. The evidence-based results from this study contribute substantially to the advancement of Asian communication and media practice by demonstrating the effectiveness of digital interventions in culturally and linguistically complex environments. This research is clearly organized, methodologically robust, and theoretically coherent, providing critical insights for policymakers, healthcare providers, and communication specialists working in Asian public health contexts. It presents both the possibilities and limitations of digital communication strategies, clarifying the scope for broader implementation and highlighting areas for further research.

Keywords: *Rabies awareness, digital literacy, remote communities, public health communication, cultural competence, Thailand, minority tribes, minority language, community engagement*

DIGITAL FAITH: SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE AND RELIGIOUS COMMUNICATION AMONG THEOLOGY STUDENTS IN SATNA, INDIA

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ABSTRACT

In an era of digital ubiquity, this study investigates the patterns of social media usage and its influence on religious communication among seminary students at St. Ephrem Theological College, Satna, India. This research addresses a critical gap by examining how future religious leaders are shaped by and utilize digital platforms for personal faith, community building, and evangelization in the contemporary Indian context. Employing a quantitative survey design, the study is conceptually grounded in Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) to analyze the motivations driving seminarians' engagement with platforms like WhatsApp, YouTube, and Instagram. The instrument collected data on usage frequency, platform choice, types of religious content consumed and shared, and the perceived impacts on their spiritual formation. The design facilitates a comparative analysis across different years of theological study, tracking potential shifts in digital behaviour as students advance towards ordination. This paper presents empirical findings on the digital habits of these future priests, delineating the extent to which social media serves as a tool for ministry versus a source of personal distraction. Key outcomes include identifying the primary platforms for religious engagement and analyzing the dual role of social media as both a valuable resource for theological learning and a potential impediment to spiritual discipline. Furthermore, the study explores how unique Indian cultural nuances shape their online religious expression. The research contributes vital, evidence-based insights into the field of digital religion in Asia. The findings hold significant implications for theological institutions in developing digital literacy curricula and for the wider Church in understanding how to effectively engage with digital natives for pastoral ministry in the 21st century.

Keywords: Social media, religious communication, digital religion, seminary students, clergy formation

FROM PAGE TO PLATFORM: HOW LITERATURE APPS REDESIGN LEARNING SPACES, SHAPE READER-AUTHOR RELATIONSHIPS, AND DRIVE THE 'NETFLIX-IZATION' OF READING

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ABSTRACT

The rise of literature applications has changed the way people read, learn, and connect with stories. These digital platforms are no longer just tools to access books; they have become interactive learning spaces that bring together readers, authors, and communities in new ways. With features like live author chats, reader discussion forums, personalized recommendations, and serialised storytelling, literature apps offer both educational and entertainment value. One major trend is the "Netflix-ization" of reading, where serialised content is released in episodes, encouraging users to binge-read much like binge-watching TV shows. This approach keeps readers engaged for longer periods and creates anticipation for upcoming releases. At the same time, literature apps are transforming the traditional reader-author relationship. Authors can receive instant feedback, adapt storylines based on audience response, and build loyal fan bases through direct communication. This research uses content analysis to study 30 popular literature apps, examining how they combine innovation, collaboration, and educational design. The analysis focuses on three areas: tools that support learning (annotations, vocabulary aids, and reading plans), features that enable collaboration (community forums, co-writing options), and strategies that encourage engagement (serialization, gamification, and multimedia content). The study aims to show how literature apps are reshaping reading habits, building interactive literary communities, and creating a blend of education and entertainment in the digital age. These findings will help educators, app developers, and researchers better understand how digital platforms can serve as transformative and collaborative learning spaces.

Keywords: *Literature apps, digital reading, Netflix-ization, binge reading, reader-author relationship, learning spaces, edutainment, collaboration*

CASTING CONVENTIONALLY ATTRACTIVE MEN TO PLAY SERIAL KILLER ROLES: A STUDY OF MEDIA REPRESENTATION, AUDIENCE PERCEPTION, AND HYBRISTOPHILIA

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ABSTRACT

The representation of crime and criminals in popular media significantly shapes public perception. In recent years, the trend of casting conventionally attractive male actors in the roles of real-life serial killers has raised questions about how audiences engage with narratives of violence. This research examines the psychological and cultural implications of such casting choices, focusing particularly on the normalization of hybristophilia--the sexual attraction to criminals--and its relevance in today's media environment. The study investigates how attractive portrayals of serial killers in films and streaming series influence audience empathy, memory of the crime versus the criminal, and broader moral narratives. Using qualitative textual analysis of selected digital-first narratives (e.g., Extremely Wicked, Shockingly Evil and Vile; Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story), complemented by quantitative audience surveys (N=100) targeting viewers aged 18–35, the research explores the shifting boundaries of audience perception in an algorithm-driven attention economy. The supplementary audience survey--distinct from the main study--further engages this same demographic to deepen insights into how digitally active young viewers, the most engaged cohort on platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and Reddit, form parasocial attachments and normalize hybristophilia. Grounded in Cognitive Film Theory, Media Representation Theory, and the concept of Parasocial Relationships, the study evaluates how visual appeal and narrative framing intersect with digital circulation to shape emotional reception. Preliminary observations suggest that algorithmic amplification and the star persona of actors often blur distinctions between the performer and the perpetrator, producing misplaced empathy and diminishing sensitivity toward victims. The research argues for the ethical responsibility of filmmakers and streaming platforms in shaping such narratives, particularly in a digital ecosystem where stories are consumed, shared, and reinterpreted in real time. By foregrounding the role of aesthetics, platform logics, and audience psychology, the study contributes to ongoing debates on media ethics, digital representation of crime, and the implications of entertainment-driven storytelling in a Brave New (Digital) World.

Keywords: *Media representation, hybristophilia, audience perception, serial killer narratives, film and digital media*

INCORPORATION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) IN UNDERGRADUATE TEACHING AND LEARNING PRACTICES: A STUDY IN UKHRUL

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ABSTRACT

Academia has presently witnessed increasing research in the field of AI, yet certain regions still remain under-explored. Being recognized as a conflict zone, Manipur, a northeastern state in India, faces internet shutdown more often than the rest of the country. Studies are available on the growth of AI and its usage pattern but its application at educational institutions is not covered much in the context of Manipur. A concern lies in how the teaching and learning practices have been influenced by the adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in higher education which can often be disrupted by the unavailability of the internet. This research focuses on the incorporation of AI in academic practices among the undergraduate students and teaching faculty of colleges in Ukhrul district in Manipur. With the growing convergence of digital tools as well as adoption of AI in academic settings, this study aims to understand the usage as well as dependency on AI for teaching and learning practices. The role of AI in classroom participation, quality of assignments, students and teachers' perception of its long-term effects, whether it brings academic improvement in terms of grades as well as development of lasting skills became the focus of this study. This research examines areas like lesson planning, curriculum delivery, student engagement and the availability of teaching resources and finds that AI plays a significant role. The responses of students and teachers are analyzed independently and compared. Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT2) is employed to evaluate technology adoption, along with the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) Framework to determine technological integration and the Technology-Mediated Learning Theory to explain how AI assists and shapes the learning process. Quantitative and qualitative approaches are employed. With a sample size of 300, survey questionnaires were distributed among the students and 12 interviews (6 each from Arts and Science stream) were conducted among the teachers. The respondents remarked heavy dependence on AI for assignments and exam preparation. This research has witnessed an interesting transition from traditional teaching methods to digitalization of teaching and learning experience even though the transformation process may be slower than other parts of India.

Keywords: *AI incorporation, education, teaching learning, Ukhrul*

IDENTIFYING THE DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES TO ENCOURAGE DIGITAL LITERACY AMONG WOMEN IN RURAL INDIA: A CASE STUDY ON SELECT CAMPAIGNS LED BY DIGITAL EMPOWERMENT FOUNDATION, INDIA

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The Times of India, Footprint Global Communications

ABSTRACT

Digital technologies are rapidly transforming the socio-cultural milieu of our society, emerging as powerful instruments that facilitate endless capacity to bridge communication at large and foster connectivity. However, social issues like gender disparity continue to limit access to information and technology. This factor has deterred many women from fully harnessing the benefits of technology. To empower women by providing digital literacy in rural and marginalized areas, Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF), an NGO based in India, has carried out a series of initiatives over the years. One main focus of the organization is to empower women through providing functional digital media literacy and up-skilling. In this context, this study will investigate the development communication strategies implemented to promote and foster digital literacy among women in rural India for select campaigns led by DEF. Through qualitative research design and a case study method, the research will fulfill the following aims and objectives: a) to examine how DEF's initiatives have leveraged participation and local resource mobilization to empower women digitally; b) to study the development of communication strategies implemented in the campaigns led by DEF; and c) to assess how the initiatives encouraged digital literacy among women in the rural areas. The study will find answers to the following research questions: 1) What are the community-based initiatives launched by DEF to empower women? 2) What are the development communication strategies implemented to carry out the campaigns? 3) How far have the initiatives encouraged digital literacy among women in the rural areas? The primary data will be collected through interviews of the NGO stakeholders, community leaders, and women beneficiaries of the villages where the campaigns are conducted, and from the campaign material analysis of DEF. A Focus Group Discussion (FGD) will also be conducted with 6-12 women beneficiaries. Further, to critically study DEF's successful implementation of the digital literacy campaigns and the communication strategies involved in the process, the secondary data will be gathered from DEF's monthly newsletters, blogs, and national as well as regional print or digital news coverage. The study will follow two theoretical frameworks—the social learning theory and the participatory communication theory.

Keywords: *Development communication, digital literacy, gender disparity, community participation, women empowerment*

THE LEVEL OF EXPOSURE TO TIKTOK AND MEDIA LITERACY OF GEN Z STUDENTS IN ATENEO DE DAVAO UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between exposure to TikTok and media literacy among Generation Z students at Ateneo de Davao University in Davao City, Philippines. As TikTok emerges as a prominent platform for information sharing and consumption among younger audiences, understanding its impact on media literacy becomes imperative. The research specifically aims to quantify the students' level of engagement with TikTok and assess how this exposure influences their ability to analyze and critically engage with media across cognitive, emotional, aesthetic, and moral dimensions. Employing a quantitative research design, the study utilized a researcher-made survey questionnaire administered to a sample size of 73 bona fide students from the Humanities and Letters Cluster. The sample primarily focuses on those within the four programs under Humanities and Letters Cluster. Results indicated that the overall level of exposure to TikTok among respondents was medium, with medium engagement levels noted for Light and Heavy category with content, while the Medium category showed a light exposure level. In terms of media literacy, students exhibited high proficiency, particularly in moral and aesthetic aspects, demonstrating a strong capacity for ethical reasoning and appreciation of creative media elements. Interestingly, the analysis revealed that exposure to TikTok did not significantly correlate with media literacy levels. This finding suggests that while TikTok plays a substantial role in content consumption for students, it does not directly enhance or impede their media literacy skills. Instead, these critical abilities appear to be influenced more by formal education and the development of critical thinking.

Keywords: *Media literacy, Tiktok exposure, consumption patterns, misinformation, Gen Z*

PARALLEL SESSION F1:

EVOLUTION OF JOURNALISM PRACTICES IN THE DIGITAL NEWS MEDIA

TOWARDS INCLUSIVE INFORMATION ACCESS: OPPORTUNITIES FOR PERSONS WITH VISUAL DISABILITIES IN THE MEDIA LANDSCAPE OF UZBEKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Ensuring equitable access to information for persons with visual disabilities is a critical yet underexplored dimension of media inclusivity in Uzbekistan. While national legislation and the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities provide a legal foundation, practical implementation in the media sector remains fragmented. This study addresses a significant gap in scholarly and applied knowledge by examining both the accessibility of media platforms and the representational practices concerning visually impaired audiences. Adopting a mixed-methods qualitative framework, the research integrates an online questionnaire survey (n = 102), content analysis, and expert interviews conducted between March and September 2024. Participants, drawn from diverse regions of Uzbekistan, provided data on preferred formats (speech synthesizers, audio content, Braille), perceived accessibility barriers (lack of audio descriptions, incompatibility with screen readers, scarcity of inclusive applications), and thematic interests (disability rights, politics, law, and intellectual content). The analysis revealed a heavy dependence on online platforms equipped with assistive technologies and a marked underutilization of television and print media due to structural and technical inaccessibility. A key novelty of this research lies in its dual focus: mapping the technological and structural barriers in Uzbek media while critically examining how disability is framed in content production. Findings indicate a prevalence of reductive narratives—often centered on pity or exceptionalism—and minimal involvement of persons with visual disabilities in shaping media output. The study proposes a strategic framework for reform, including: the development of national accessibility standards, integration of inclusive journalism modules into higher education curricula, and participatory content production involving disabled media professionals. The practical significance of this research extends beyond the media field. Its recommendations offer actionable pathways for policymakers, educators, advocacy groups, and technology developers to collaborate on creating an inclusive digital ecosystem. Such transformations have the potential to enhance civic participation, dismantle entrenched stereotypes, and establish media.

Keywords: *Visual disability, inclusive media, accessibility standards, representation, assistive technology, Uzbekistan*

A STUDY ON THE EVOLVING NEWS CONSUMPTION HABITS AMONG JOURNALISM STUDENTS IN MUMBAI

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the evolving news consumption habits of journalism students in Mumbai using Media Literacy Theory and Uses and Gratification Theory as framework. This study explores how journalism education influences platform preferences, content engagement and perception of credibility among students in Mumbai in the context of the rapidly transforming media landscape. A quantitative survey was conducted with 105 journalism students aged 18 - 25 from colleges across Mumbai with respondents distributed across academic years: Second Year Undergraduates, Third Year Undergraduates, M.A. First Year and M.A. Second Year. The structured questionnaire focuses on frequency of news consumption, format preferences, verification practices and self-assessed trust in source credibility. Findings reveal that digital platforms, especially Instagram (used by 93% respondents), YouTube and news aggregation apps have become the dominant source of news, far surpassing traditional news and broadcast media. Short form visual formats such as reels, videos and infographics were most preferred reflecting broader generational shift towards bite sized engagement. Notably, year wise analysis shows that students in later academic years exhibited higher levels of critical engagement, indicating that journalism education does influence media literacy and information verification process over time. The critical gap between journalistic ideals and real-world practice is witnessed by the fact that although 86% of students recognize the importance of fact-checking, only 43% consistently verify news before sharing it. This gap highlights the need for journalism curricula to adapt by integrating platform-specific analysis, digital verification tools, and practical media ethics training. These findings highlight the need for a multi-stake holder response to develop responsible news engagement among future journalists. Journalism educators must restructure curricula to incorporate practical media literacy training, platform-specific analysis and digital verification tools that encompass evolving consumption habits. Additionally, fostering partnerships between academic institutions and newsrooms can provide students with practical exposure to the evolving demands of the media industry. The study emphasizes the need for policymakers to promote comprehensive digital literacy initiatives. These measures are vital for preparing future journalists to critically engage and responsibly navigate the increasingly fast-paced digital news ecosystem.

Keywords: *Digital news consumption, media literacy, news credibility, Uses and Gratification Theory, youth news habits, journalism students, journalism education*

BEYOND THE MAINSTREAM: A COMPREHENSIVE LITERATURE REVIEW OF EVOLVING ALTERNATIVE MEDIA AND SHIFTING NARRATIVES

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ABSTRACT

The growth of digitization in media has led to the emergence of the alternative press, shifting the paradigm of the media ecosystem. Defined as media outlets that function independently of large corporate or mainstream structures, these platforms counter the hegemonic discourse of traditional journalism and shape public participation through distinct conflict coverage. This study employs a Systematic Literature Review of 50 peer-reviewed articles to examine the evolution of independent journalism and its impact on journalistic practices, especially in shaping public perception of conflict, crises, and social movements. The literature was retrieved from Web of Science using Boolean operators, field and topic-based filtering. The search was limited to articles published between 2014 and 2024, within WoS Categories and Research Areas (Communication), Citation Topics Meso (Communication), Citation Topics Micro (Journalism), Document type (Article) and Language (English). Articles were selected from over 20 journals, with the majority published in Digital Journalism, Media and Communication, Journalism and Media War and Conflict. The dataset was refined using PRISMA guidelines: title-abstract screening and manual exclusion in Excel. Four key themes were created through Bibliometric and co-word mapping analysis using VOS Viewer: Framing and Coverage of Conflicts; Citizen Participation and Mobile Journalism; Media Activism and Social Movements; and Credibility and Trust in Digital Platforms. The findings reveal how alternative press reconstructs conflict narratives through mobile-first journalism, citizen reporting and user-generated content. The study highlights the decline in traditional newsroom models, which follow a centralized and hierarchical editorial structure, and the rise in grassroots journalism that involves audience engagement in news production through social media content and citizen reporting. While alternative press fosters participation, gives voice to the marginalized and counters state narratives, it also raises concerns about misinformation and content credibility due to reliance on non-professional reporting. The paper argues that alternative press plays a crucial role in reshaping conflict narratives, influencing digital activism and framing public opinion in conflict zones. This research contributes to understanding journalism's epistemological shift in a transforming media environment and suggests future research in ethical standards, AI and algorithmic impact, alternative press's political influence and its role in disputed regions of India.

Keywords: *Alternative journalism, digital news media, conflict reporting, news framing, media activism, digital transformation*

DIGITAL NEWS MEDIA AND REPRESENTATIONS OF THE TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY IN KERALA, INDIA

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ABSTRACT

With the verdict of the Supreme Court of India that recognized transgender community as the 'third' gender in 2014, an incremental positive shift has occurred in acknowledging their unique needs and identity through several policy measures by governments and other agencies. Even then, the heteronormative outlook prevalent in society limited the 'visibility' of transgender in mainstream discourses. The efforts to reclaim their spaces in popular narratives predominantly ended up in notions of 'othering,' stereotyping, and unwelcome gazes. The limited changes in public perception were evident in the mass media, as they accepted the 'new normal' in these discourses. Whether this shift is reflected in Digital News Media, particularly news portals (not owned by mainstream media outlets), influencers' channels, and digital social media posts, needs to be studied and analyzed. Studying digital news media is significant in the case of transgender community, as many community members use digital spaces to establish their existence in the society. Therefore, this study attempts to examine narratives in the digital media space depicting transgender life in the state of Kerala. The videos that come under the category of news bulletins, specialized programs and sponsored programs will be taken for analysis. The videos for the analysis will be selected through a hashtag search, which is within a specific period (June 2024 – June 2025) and of a duration of at least 30 seconds. By applying qualitative narrative analysis, the study seeks to elucidate the nature of these representations and their implications for public discourse. The findings aim to evaluate the effectiveness of existing policy initiatives and inform potential course corrections to foster more inclusive and equitable narrative.

Keywords: *Transgender, Kerala, media framing, representation, media narrative*

THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL MEMES IN MAINSTREAM MEDIA NARRATIVES: REPORTING OF HUMAN WILDLIFE CONFLICT IN KERALA

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ABSTRACT

The framing of news events in mainstream media has been influenced by aspects such as conflict, human interest, and ideology. Such media frames often divert the public attention to trivial elements and obscure the central issue. The factors influencing the framing need re-evaluation in the age of digital-social media, as the media environment has also been reflecting a hybrid communication environment (Lopez-Rabadan, 2021). The theory of bandwagon effect in media and communication has been significantly influencing the content, style, and strategy of print media in multiple ways, resulting in a homogenized media landscape. Newspapers are adapting the structure and style of their precursors. The dominance of pop culture in newspapers over the last few years reflects the audience's digital consumption habits. The style and presentation of everyday life, including major news events on digital-social media, has a significant influence on the framing of issues and news events in conventional media as well.This study explores the impact of digital memes that garner high traction among users in the framing of mainstream media narratives by analyzing a news event related to Human-Wildlife Conflict in Kerala. The researcher has selected a particular news event involving the translocation of a wild elephant from human habitats to deep forests as a case to approach this problem. This wild tusker garnered significant attention on digital platforms, where viral visuals, memes, and fan pages incorporated poetry, folk songs, cinematic dialogues, battle metaphors, and emotionally charged voiceovers. The study, through a systematic content analysis of the issues of two major newspapers in Kerala for a specified period, listed the frames of this news event. It further analyzed the digital memes posted on a social media platform that is friendly to video content that suits the memetic nature of content. This analysis was conducted through hashtag searches and analysis of fan pages. The results, thus obtained, were correlated with the listed frames of conventional media narratives. It was observed that the language, layout, pictures, and other elements used by newspapers reflect the style of digital-social media content, particularly memes. This finding underscores that the digital memes on HACs are now becoming news, not just affecting the way it is reported. It demonstrates that bandwagon effects do exist in the media.

Keywords: *Human–animal conflicts, media framing, digital memes, media sensationalism, human–wildlife coexistence*

VIEWERS' VOICE AND VERNACULAR PUBLIC SPHERE IN DIGITAL NEWS ERA: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF KANAK NEWS AND PRAMEYA NEWS 7 COVERAGE OF 'OPERATION SINDOOR'

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ABSTRACT

In the age of digital news media, vernacular media play a vital role in shaping public opinion, especially during national crises like war. This paper offers a critical examination of vernacular public opinion through a case study of media representation during Operation Sindoor by two leading Odia-language news channels: Kanak News and Prameya News 7. Situated within the broader discourse on regional media and digital democratization, the study focuses on Odisha, a state with diversity in socio-cultural and economic spectrums, as the area for exploring how language, identity, and media shaped public opinion. The historical trajectory of vernacular journalism in Odisha, initiated by Utkala Deepika, the first Odia-language newspaper published in 1866, encouraged a deeply rooted culture of opinion formation and civic engagement mediated through the Odia language. Using narrative analysis of television broadcasts and digital media, this study examined how Kanak News and Prameya News 7 shaped narratives and prepared regional identities to frame public discourse during Operation Sindoor. Over 200 of the most engaging videos from Kanak News and Prameya News 7 were taken into critical analysis through thematic narrative coding such as Humanity, War Supportive, Anti-War, Peace Lover, and Revenge, etc. Based on the theory of the Public Sphere, the paper explored the tensions between sensationalism, cultural conservatism, and participatory engagement in regional news ecosystems. Recently, there has been a huge paradigm shift in war reporting, with the emergence of open-source data, proliferation of citizen journalism, and drone and AI journalism bringing more vigilance not only to the reporters but also to the viewers. Findings revealed that Odia-language media not only served as instruments of information dissemination but also acted as agents of social perception making. Through their digital presence on YouTube, these platforms amplified vernacular voices, challenged the dominance of national narratives, and sustained cultural identity in a digitally networked society.

Keywords: *Viewers voice, vernacular public sphere, digital news era, Operation Sindoor, public opinion, perception making, digital democratization, and networked society*

EVOLUTION OF JOURNALISM PRACTICE IN DIGITAL NEW MEDIA : DECRYPTING THE NEWSROOM ECOSYSTEM

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of digital new media has profoundly altered journalistic practices, breaking traditional newsroom hierarchies, workflows, and standards, while establishing a dynamic, decentralized environment for news production and distribution. This paper critically analyzes the transformation of journalism in India's swiftly digitizing media environment, emphasizing the incorporation of algorithmic tools, audience analytics, and real-time content strategies, as well as the reconfiguration of newsroom professionalism and audience engagement methods in reaction to rapidly changing technological contexts. The research is grounded in a qualitative methodology, combining key informant interviews with journalists, editors, and content strategists, and case study analysis of digital newsrooms like NDTV Digital, Times Internet and India Today Digital. These methods provide rich, insider perspectives on the integration of algorithmic systems and the shifting roles of editorial authority. To frame the analysis, the study draws on four key media theories. Gatekeeping Theory is used to understand how editorial control has shifted from human editors to algorithmic systems, leading to hybrid gatekeeping processes that influence news selection and visibility. Technological Determinism explains how emerging digital tools, particularly AI and automation, are driving structural changes in newsroom operations, shaping not only the speed of news production but also redefining news values and professional routines. Uses and Gratifications Theory highlights how journalists and media organizations respond to audience behavior, preferences, and feedback metrics derived from analytics tools and software. Additionally, Agenda-Setting Theory is applied to explore how digital media platforms influence public discourse by amplifying certain issues through algorithms and click-based metrics. The investigation depicts important shifts in editorial decision-making, the rise of algorithmic influences on news production, and the growing importance of data-driven narrative. To discover patterns of convergence and disruption, the research uses interviews with journalists, editors, and content strategists, as well as case study analysis.This study also investigates issues of ethics arising from click-based metrics, the stress of immediacy, and the blurring of the distinctions between professional journalism and user-generated material. Finally, this paper contributes to a better understanding of redefined journalism in the age of digitization and provides suggestions for newsrooms looking to adapt to a rapidly changing media landscape while maintaining journalistic professionalism.

Keywords: *Digital journalism, journalistic professionalism, algorithmic news, journalism ethics, AI in media*

EMPOWERING TRIBAL WOMEN VOICES: THE JUNGLE RANI INITIATIVE AS A MODEL FOR PARTICIPATORY MEDIA IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The Jungle Rani Initiative, launched in 2023 by Jayanti Buruda in Malkangiri, Odisha, emerges as a transformative participatory media platform that amplifies the voices of tribal women, addressing this systemic exclusion. Operating under the Bado Didi Foundation, established in 2018, the initiative empowers 50 Koya tribal women from Malkangiri's seven blocks to report local stories through mobile journalism, guided by the tagline "Ama Kahani, Ama Dwara, Ama Pain" (Our Story, By Us, For Us). This study examines how the initiative challenges media biases and fosters inclusive representation, offering a replicable model for grassroots media globally. Malkangiri, with nearly 58% tribal population, including 13 major tribal groups, is underrepresented in Indian media, where only 5% of media professionals are from Dalit or tribal backgrounds, and no tribal editors exist (Tiwari, 2019). The Jungle Rani Initiative counters this by training tribal women in journalistic practices—scriptwriting, field reporting, video shooting, and editing—through expert-led mobile journalism workshops. These women produce content shared via social media, bridging the gap between tribal realities and public discourse. This study applies participatory media theory (Jenkins, 2015) to analyze the initiative's social media content, emphasizing how community-driven media empowers marginalized groups. It also adopts a bottom-up approach (Garfinkel, 2016) to explore how individual stories scale to societal impact, challenging the caste and gender biases entrenched in Indian media. The study will apply discourse analysis of the social media pages of the Jungle Rani initiative and also talk to tribal women journalists on their journalistic goals subjects and the process. The initial analysis suggests that the Jungle Rani Initiative amplifies tribal narratives and fosters agency among its participants, by focusing on local issues—such as health, education, and cultural practices—the initiative highlights stories often ignored by mainstream outlets. The Jungle Rani Initiative's implications extend beyond Odisha, offering insights for communication scholars and practitioners globally. It demonstrates how participatory media can address systemic inequities, promote gender equity, and foster social justice.

Keywords: *Participatory media, tribal women, Jungle Rani Initiative, mobile journalism, media representation*

FROM STREET TO SCREEN: ROLE OF DIGITAL MEDIA IN COVERAGE OF CONTEMPORARY PROTESTS IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Habermas (1984) introduced the concept of the " Public Sphere" and explored it further as a space where individuals come together to engage in rational-critical debate and discussion about matters of common interest. For him, the public sphere is a social realm where public opinion is formed and is accessible to all citizens. Mainstream media, including newspapers and television, play a crucial role in facilitating public discourse. In the current scenario, digital media have empowered citizens to disseminate information, expanding the boundaries of the public sphere to include effective forms of civic engagement, including resistance and protests against state apparatus in matters of socio-political importance. In the contemporary digital age, Hashtag activism is a dynamic variant. This paper critically explores the protest led by Muslim women who mobilized their identities and bodies to reconfigure public space. The non-violent resistance against the CAA bill 2019, sustained physically and digitally, at Shaheen Bagh, New Delhi. The digital media coverage, including #ShaheenBagh, protest poetry, slogans, and livestreams of song recitations, enabled protesters to bypass mainstream media gatekeeping and directly reach their audiences. It enabled wider visibility, garnering support for the movement and serving as sites of feminist praxis, where protest was sustained and theorized collectively. This paper will use select textual and visual data and conduct discourse analysis to examine how Muslim women articulated their voice of dissent. It will explore the anti-CAA resistance led by women at Shaheen Bagh, Delhi, and its representation through this form of digital media. The primary data source includes select expressions from Instagram handles, protest poetry, collective slogans, photographs from independent digital media articles, and long-form narratives from Indian mainstream print media. This research explores the theoretical approaches of the public sphere (Habermas), the body and knowledge (Foucault), and Habitus (Bourdieu), developing insights into how women's protests negotiated public spaces. Through the lens of Hashtag activism, the study examines a deeper understanding of how collective memory, self-care, and sisterhood were constructed, evolving the contours of the public sphere in contemporary India.

Keywords: *Public space, hashtag activism, media narrative, knowledge, self-care, and sisterhood*

TRANSGENDER REPRESENTATION IN INDIAN MEDIA: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF TV TALK SHOW BHINNA MANISHA BHINNA KATHA

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ABSTRACT

Media, as a socio-cultural institution, profoundly influences public perception and shapes gendered norms. In India, the transgender community has historically faced systemic legal and social ostracization, resulting in their invisibility or derogatory portrayal in mainstream media. Contemporary depictions often reinforce stereotypes, framing transgender individuals through narrow, medicalized, and binary constructs, thereby impeding their social inclusion and empowerment. While global scholarship has examined transgender representation extensively in Western contexts, limited attention has been given to South Asian, and particularly Indian, media narratives. This study addresses that gap by conducting a qualitative analysis of Bhinna Manisha Bhinna Katha, an Odia-language television talk show broadcast on Kalinga TV and uniquely produced, coordinated, and hosted by members of the transgender community. Using the conceptual frameworks of transnormativity and queer theory, the research employs content analysis and critical discourse analysis to examine 20 widely viewed episodes from the show's 50-episode archive. The analysis explores dominant themes, framing patterns, and linguistic strategies, evaluating how self-representation challenges or reinforces societal stereotypes and binary gender norms. Findings reveal that while narratives often reflect pressures of transnormativity—emphasizing surgical transition and alignment with binary gender roles—the program offers a rare platform for authentic transgender voices. It foregrounds personal stories of resilience, struggle, and achievement, presenting transgender individuals as active agents rather than passive subjects. These self- representations diversify media narratives, foster empathy, and challenge the reductionist portrayals prevalent in mainstream coverage. The study also highlights the influence of socio-economic background, education, and regional culture on media advocacy by transgender individuals. Participants from varied caste, class, and religious contexts articulate complex identities, resist oppression, and engage in public discourse, thereby reframing social imaginaries around gender diversity. The research underscores the transformative potential of participatory media in promoting inclusivity, amplifying marginalized voices, and fostering societal change. By centering the perspectives of transgender creators and subjects, Bhinna Manisha Bhinna Katha exemplifies how regional media can challenge entrenched stereotypes and advance the cause of gender equity in India's evolving media landscape.

Keywords: *Transgender representation, self-representation, transnormativity, Indian media, social inclusion*

CRAFTING THE SCROLL STOPPER: PLATFORM-SPECIFIC EDITORIAL PRACTICES IN DIGITAL JOURNALISM

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ABSTRACT

An increasing number of studies indicate that news outlets distribute content according to platform-specific logics rather than traditional mass-media routines, a process described as the platformization and remediation of news. Social media editors play a pivotal role in shaping how news is presented across digital platforms, translating web-based articles into formats optimized for the audience on social media. This paper investigates the newsroom decision-making in editorial strategies and the motivations of Indian digital newsrooms when adapting news for Facebook, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter). Drawing on the theoretical framework of remediation (Bolter & Grusin, 1999), concepts of platformization and social media logic (Van Dijck & Poell, 2013), the study examines visual, textual, and intermedial adaptation processes, as well as timing and scheduling choices. The relationship between platform affordance and narrative framing in news presentation is explored to understand how editors balance journalistic standards with the demands of platform policies. Eight social media editors participated in semi-structured interviews, providing insight into remediation strategies within India's digital newsrooms. This research contrasts platform-specific approaches, and the findings provide an understanding of the motivation agents behind the remediation strategies based on platform affordance and the global platform dynamics in the Indian digital news ecosystem.

Keywords: *News remediation, new media journalism, platformisation, visual and textual adaptation, social media logic, social media editors*

FROM HEADLINES TO HEATMAPS: REPORTING THE ISRAEL-PALESTINE CONFLICT THROUGH DATA JOURNALISM IN THE DIGITAL NEWS MEDIA

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ABSTRACT

An increasing number of studies indicate that news outlets distribute content according to The evolving landscape of journalism in Asia and the Western world underscores a growing imperative to examine how digital tools and data-driven practices are transforming the reportage of long-standing geopolitical conflicts. The study critically investigates how data journalism frame the Israel-Palestine conflict in select digital news media, focusing on select Indian and international news platforms in 2024-25. In the broader framework of media convergence and digital transformation, this research explores how conventional conflict narratives are reshaped by integrating infographics(Visual Semiotics) (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), interactive dashboards, and computational storytelling. Coddington's (2015) concept of data epistemology is important in this context, which conceptualizes journalists as data mediators—actors who increasingly depend on algorithmic tools, third-party platforms, and structured datasets to generate what appear as "truth claims." In conflict reporting, this epistemic shift holds critical implications, as the sourcing and representation of data are often deeply politicized (Loosen et al., 2017). The study delves into Framing Theory (Entman, 1993; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000) to analyze how key narratives—such as casualty counts, ceasefire breakdowns, displacement figures, and humanitarian aid—are selectively emphasized or underplayed across data-driven stories (Droog et al., 2020). Preliminary study highlights an asymmetrical pattern in framing practices: Indian digital platforms tend to rely on curated global datasets and international newswires, often offering limited historical or structural context (Kashyap, 2020). On the other side, international outlets, such as The New York Times and Al Jazeera English, deploy highly interactive, visually sophisticated formats to construct immersive narratives of the conflict (Gray, Bounegru, & Chambers, 2012). Despite these technological advancements, a consistent lack of deep contextual framing—especially in terms of historical grievances, power asymmetries, and geopolitical antecedents—remains evident across both domestic and international coverage (Thussu, 2021; Philo & Berry, 2011). Taking notes from Belair-Gagnon and Holton (2018), the study views journalists not only as producers of content but as participants in digital communities, navigating complex socio-technical networks that influence how conflict is framed and circulated in the public sphere (Habermas, 1989). This paper aims to contribute to understanding journalistic innovation in the Asian context by offering an empirically grounded framework to assess data journalism's influence on conflict reporting in West Asia. It advances theoretical discourse (Hannaford, 2023) on digital media practices and highlights the significance of data literacy, transparency, and editorial judgment in shaping the digital public sphere.

Keywords: *Data journalism, conflict reporting, data epistemology, news framing, Israel-Palestine, digital media*

PEACE JOURNALISM IN THE DIGITAL AGE: FRAMING OF ISRAEL–HAMAS CONFLICT

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ABSTRACT

The rise of new media and digital media platforms has brought a new set of challenges; reporting wars, ethical issues and political pressure for conflict reporting, impacting the stories about global conflicts. Conventionally, conflict reporting frames stories from a war journalism perspective and overshadows peace journalism. Such practices raise serious questions about peace journalism and its capacity to foster peace and reconciliation in the digital era. Past studies highlight the ability of independent digital media to address structural issues in legacy media. However, a comparative analysis of digital and legacy media framing of conflicts demonstrates the continuance of dominant war indicators with little emphasis on peace journalism. Entman states that to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient. To explore under-researched dimensions of how international conflicts are framed in India, this study examines legacy media and digital news websites in the coverage of the Israel–Palestine 2023 conflict. For this purpose, Galtung's peace journalism model (1986), extended by McGoldrick and Lynch (2000) as a framework for story framing, is used for theoretical support, while Lee and Maslog's (2005) extension of Galtung's peace and war journalism indicators is used to analyze the stories. This research examines whether digital media has shifted conflict narratives in India toward peace journalism or if legacy patterns still dominate. The sample includes four English news outlets: The Hindu and The Times of India represented legacy media, while Newsclick and Scroll.in were selected as independent digital news websites. News stories, including visuals, were analyzed to identify dominant framing patterns and evaluate how peace and war indicators are distributed across legacy and digital media platforms. Content analysis of stories show that war journalism remains dominant across both legacy and digital media, more so in the visual content. Top most indicators of war journalism used include 'visible effects of war,' 'difference-oriented,' and 'two-party orientation.' Digital platforms, however, show a tendency towards peace, the key indicators for which include 'peace-oriented' 'causes and consequences.' This paper contributes to the research on peace and war journalism framing by analyzing how growing digital news landscape impact peace-oriented journalism and if they counter dominant war frames of legacy media.

Keywords: *Peace journalism, war journalism, independent digital media, media framing, Israel-Hamas conflict*

FRAMING THE GREEN AGENDA: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTING IN MEGHALAYA'S DIGITAL NEWS

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ABSTRACT

Climate change poses one of the most pressing global challenges, with its effects disproportionately felt in vulnerable regions such as Northeast India. In Meghalaya, a state heavily reliant on its unique forests, biodiversity, and indigenous livelihoods, these environmental challenges are particularly pronounced. This study aims to analyze the coverage of climate change and environmental issues by three prominent digital news portals in Meghalaya: Syllad, EastMojo, and Wyrta. The analysis, conducted on content published from June to August 2025, will be extended if this period does not yield sufficient data. The research evaluates the frequency, quality, and impact of this coverage, while also exploring the motivations and barriers faced by local journalists. News articles for analysis will be identified through a keyword search on the portals using terms such as 'environment,' 'climate change,' 'pollution,' 'wildlife,' 'deforestation,' 'soil erosion,' 'biodiversity,' and other relevant phrases. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study will use both quantitative and qualitative content analysis to assess the scope and nature of environmental coverage across the three portals. The theoretical framework is grounded in Media Dependency Theory, which examines the relationship between media consumption and audience behavior, and Media Framing Theory, which analyzes how the presentation of news shapes public perception of environmental issues.

Beyond content, this research also investigates the political dynamics influencing climate change coverage, considering regional and national factors that may shape editorial decisions. By illuminating the complexities of environmental reporting in a region that is both ecologically sensitive and politically diverse, this paper seeks to make a significant contribution to the fields of climate change communication and environmental journalism, with a specific geographical focus on Northeast India. The findings will offer practical insights into how digital media can more effectively foster public awareness and engagement, thereby informing future media strategies and policies aimed at enhancing climate resilience in vulnerable regions.

Keywords: *Environmental journalism, digital news, Meghalaya, Northeast India, journalism*

PARALLEL SESSION 2:

EVOLUTION OF JOURNALISM PRACTICES IN THE DIGITAL NEWS MEDIA

FRAMING RURAL INDIA: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF GAON CONNECTION'S DIGITAL COVERAGE OF RURAL ISSUES

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ABSTRACT

Indian mainstream media has long been critiqued for its urban bias and elite-centric narratives (Jeffrey, 2000; Rao, 2010), often marginalizing rural perspectives or reducing them to episodic crises. In contrast, Gaon Connection India's first rural-focused, digital-first news platform founded in 2012 by journalist Neelesh Misra aims to capture rural voices, knowledge, and lived experiences, particularly in sectors such as agriculture, education, health, gender, and livelihoods. The platform is bilingual, offering content in both Hindi and English. The website is organized into several key content categories associated with rural India: News, Knowledge, Farming, Gardening, Health, Women, Environment, and Multimedia (Videos, Podcasts). This paper investigates the framing of rural issues in India through a content analysis of Gaon Connection. Drawing upon framing theory (Entman, 1993; Goffman, 1974), this paper employs qualitative content analysis (Schreier, 2012) to examine how news articles published between January and June 2025 construct meaning and narrative around rural realities. Each article was coded for dominant frames, source typologies, and thematic orientation using Entman's (1993) four framing functions: problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation. Preliminary findings identify recurring strategies such as conflict framing (e.g., farmer protests), policy framing (e.g., government schemes like PM-KISAN), and empowerment framing (e.g., grassroots innovations and women-led initiatives).While Gaon Connection frequently promotes solution-driven and human-interest narratives aligned with development communication principles (Melkote & Steeves, 2001; Servaes, 2008), some articles exhibit editorial gatekeeping and reliance on NGO voices, revealing persistent tensions between participatory storytelling and institutional mediation (Rodriguez, 2001; Couldry & Dreher, 2007). Notably, rural individuals are often portrayed not as passive beneficiaries but as active agents and knowledge bearers, suggesting a departure from dominant urban-centric paradigms. This paper contributes to ongoing debates in alternative media studies, rural journalism, and digital storytelling in the Global South. It underscores the potential of localized, inclusive media models to reshape public discourse, influence policy, and democratize representation. Moreover, it highlights the urgent need for ethically grounded, community-centric journalism frameworks that empower rural populations while resisting top-down approach of development.

Keywords: *Gaon Connection, rural journalism, framing theory, content analysis, alternative media, development communication, India*

WAGING THE WAR ON DISINFORMATION: ANALYZING THE TWITTER RESPONSE OF INDIA'S FACT-CHECKERS DURING OPERATION SINDOOR

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ABSTRACT

In the digital aftermath of Operation Sindoor, a high-stakes military confrontation between India and Pakistan in May 2025, mis-information spread rapidly across social media, especially on X (formerly Twitter). This study investigates how five of India's leading fact-checking organizations--PIB Fact Check, Alt News, BOOM Live, Factly, and India Today Fact Check--responded in real time through their official Twitter handles. It analyzes the formats, narratives, and timeliness of their efforts to counter war-related disinformation and how their observable practices aligned with the International Fact Checking Network (IFCN)'s guidelines. Grounded in Agenda Setting Theory and Moral Panic Theory, the study analyzes how fact checkers selected and framed claims during a crisis while attempting to temper anxiety, nationalism, and identity polarization. Methodologically, the study conducts a replicable qualitative content analysis of all relevant tweets from the five organizations posted between May 1 and May 21, 2025. Tweets are categorized by type of misinformation (image, video, or text), source platform (e.g., WhatsApp, YouTube), framing tone, and engagement metrics (evidence, methods, corrections). Comparative insights are drawn to evaluate differences in editorial stance, reactivity speed, and audience impact mapped to IFCN principles; along with semi structured interviews with fact checkers from selected organisations. For engagement, the analysis records each post's public totals once at study close and compares medians across organizations and content types, clearly noting that figures reflect cumulative counts at collection rather than time standardized windows. The findings highlight differences in editorial stance, response speed, and transparency signalling; interview insights reveal how teams balance speed, safety, and method disclosure, and identify conflict ready contributions—such as prebunk templates, cross desk OSINT checklists, and clear in thread correction labelling—that can inform global practice. The paper offers a concise IFCN aligned assessment framework and a minimal replication pack (codebook, query parameters, Tweet IDs, interview protocol) to support reuse by fact checkers and newsrooms in crisis communication contexts.

Keywords: *Misinformation, digital fact-checking, agenda setting, moral panic, crisis communication, International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN), Operation Sindoor*

REGIONAL VOICES IN THE PLATFORM ERA: EXPLORING EMERGING JOURNALISTIC PRACTICES IN MARATHI

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ABSTRACT

The digital transformation of journalism has reshaped the existing regional media practices, extending beyond traditional newsrooms to platforms like YouTube, podcasts, and independent news portals. In Maharashtra, this shift has catalyzed the rise of entrepreneurial journalism and platform-based content creation, amplifying regional voices and fostering new modes of civic engagement. Marathi journalism is undergoing a notable evolution, with established media organizations such as Loksatta embracing podcasting and global entities like BBC News investing in regional storytelling through digital platforms. Simultaneously, independent platforms such as Bol Bhidu, Punekar News, and Indie Journal are foregrounding local issues through diverse digital formats. Marathi-language podcasts, including Mitra Mhane, Laksha Asta Majha, and Think Bank, illustrate how audio-visual storytelling is contributing to public discourse and journalistic innovation. Online platforms like Aarpaar and Pratipaksha further demonstrate how digital technologies are reconfiguring reportage through interactive and explanatory formats by making it relevant to niche consumers. This study explores the impact of digital platformization for Marathi journalism, with a focus on transformations in content production, discourse, and audience engagement. Through content analysis of select episodes and news reportage along with in-depth interviews with journalists and content creators, the research investigates how regional narratives are constructed and disseminated. The study aims to employ in-depth semi-structured interviews. A purposive sample of 10 participants including independent journalists, podcast creators, and editors from Marathi digital platforms will be selected based on their active engagement in digital journalism. The interviews aim to study production practices, platform-specific challenges, and approaches to public engagement. It will further draw on Platformization Theory (Van Dijck et al., 2018) to examine how digital infrastructures reshape the production, dissemination, and reception of regional journalistic content. It situates Marathi journalism within the evolving logics of digital platforms that privilege algorithmic visibility. Additionally, the research will engage with Habermas's Public Sphere Theory, expanded by Fraser's notion of subaltern counter publics, to analyze how regional digital journalism fosters inclusive civic discourse and challenges dominant media narratives. Finally, the framework incorporates insights from digital journalism and media entrepreneurialism to understand how independent journalists navigate creative, economic, and institutional shifts in the digital era.

Keywords: *Digital platformization, regional journalism, entrepreneurial journalism, digital sphere, Marathi Media*

THE PARADIGM SHIFT OF NEWS PRODUCTION IN ASIA DRIVEN BY ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY BASED ON XINHUA NEWS AGENCY'S "MEDIA BRAIN"

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ABSTRACT

This study employs case analysis, literature review, experimentation, and comparative research methods to focus on the innovative practices of Xinhua News Agency's "Media Brain" in major news reporting. Through the analysis of production data and comparison with industry reports, it reveals the chain-like transformation and empowerment mechanism of AI technology in the entire process of news production, including topic selection and planning, material collection, content generation, and distribution and review, as well as the evolution path of news practice in the digital age. The research finds that "Media Brain" has reshaped the entire news production process. In terms of efficiency improvement, it has initiated a second-level content production model. In terms of model innovation, it has established a new "human-machine collaboration" model, where journalists' roles have shifted from content producers to algorithm schedulers and quality controllers, allowing them to focus more on in-depth narrative and on-site investigation. Technological changes have also driven the reconstruction of the media ecosystem. For the media output end, the integration of 5G, artificial intelligence, and big data has formed a dual-core system for real-time public opinion analysis and content auto-generation, significantly enhancing the mainstream media's ability to guide public opinion. For readers, their roles have evolved from passive news receivers to more active and proactive news consumers under the guidance of intelligent applications, changing the positioning and interaction methods of various roles in the media ecosystem and promoting the development of the media industry to a higher level. The study shows that the full-process empowerment of AI has driven the transformation of the communication model towards all-round, real-time, and interactive, reshaping the human-machine collaborative working model and the media industry ecosystem. However, its application still faces challenges such as uneven data quality, technical limitations, and news ethics. This research provides an operational path that combines efficiency models, collaborative paradigms, and ethical frameworks for the intelligent upgrade of regional media, which is of crucial significance for understanding the evolution of the Asian news ecosystem driven by technology.

Keywords: *AI news production, human-machine collaboration, media brain, news production process, media ecosystem*

AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT WITH HUMAN AND AI-GENERATED HEADLINES IN UZBEK WEB-BASED NEWS SOURCES: A COMPARATIVE SURVEY OF READER PREFERENCES

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ABSTRACT

This study examines audience engagement with AI-generated and human-written headlines in Uzbek digital news sources. In an era where artificial intelligence increasingly shapes editorial practices, headlines represent a crucial entry point into broader debates about AI's role in journalism. Using a survey-based design grounded in Source Credibility Theory, 472 participants evaluated nine pairs of headlines drawn from three leading Uzbek platforms (Daryo, Gazeta.uz, and Oyina.uz) and generated counterparts created by OpenAI's ChatGPT and Gemini Advanced. Overall, respondents showed a slight preference for human-written headlines (51.7%) over AI-generated ones (48.3%), suggesting a nearly balanced perception. Topic-level results revealed variation: for moral or ethical issues, choices were evenly split, while for technical or economic subjects such as Uzbekistan's car production, human-written headlines were strongly favored. Open-ended responses highlighted that question-based headlines tended to spark curiosity, whereas shorter and more general headlines were valued for clarity. These findings indicate that while AI systems can produce headlines that resonate with readers, particularly on reflective or abstract topics, journalists maintain an advantage in contexts requiring cultural nuance and subject-matter expertise. Placed in a broader context, the results also connect to global trends identified in recent Reuters Institute surveys: AI tools are increasingly applied not only to headline writing but also to keyword selection, data representation, and personalized news feeds, coinciding with weakening editorial capacity at mid-level supervisory roles. This raises important questions about whether experiments in editing and packaging will eventually extend into the core functions of news production.

Keywords: *AI-generated headlines, human-written headlines, audience engagement, reader preferences, Uzbek digital journalism, media perception, Source Credibility Theory, AI in journalism*

CARBON ATOMS IN THE DIGITAL SPACE: A MULTIMODAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF 'DUAL CARBON' SHORT VIDEO NEWS ON CHINESE PLATFORMS – A CASE STUDY OF CCTV

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ABSTRACT

In response to global climate change, China announced its ambitious "Dual Carbon" goals in 2020, aiming to peak carbon emissions by 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2060. Concurrently, climate communication is undergoing a profound digital shift, with short video news emerging as a crucial medium for reporting on such significant national strategies. This study examines how short video news on Chinese platforms constructs meaning around the "Dual Carbon" agenda through multimodal resources. Employing Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA), specifically Kress's Visual Grammar framework, we analyzed a corpus of 102 short videos from CCTV News. Our findings reveal a core triumvirate of textual, visual, and audio modalities. The content demonstrates a distinct "strong politics-technology, weak ecology-life" thematic skew, alongside issues of modal imbalance and redundancy. Three primary patterns of modal interaction were identified: Instantiation, Symbolization, and Embodiment, with Instantiation being the most prevalent. These interactions coalesce into three dominant framing strategies: Policy Interpretation, International Narrative, and Life Performance. While effective for simplifying complex information, these frames risk policy misinterpretation, diminishment of journalistic seriousness, and a disconnect from public lived experience due to an over-reliance on top-down narratives. The study concludes that while multimodal short videos are powerful tools for communicating complex policy goals, future climate communication strategies should strive for a better balance by integrating more emotive and locally-grounded narratives to foster deeper public engagement and understanding.

Keywords: *Short video news, digital journalism, multimodal discourse analysis, "Dual Carbon" goals, frame analysis, climate communication, CCTV*

COME ON, BOYS: HOW THE STUMP MIC ADDS A NEW DIMENSION TO CRICKET

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ABSTRACT

Cricket broadcasting has undergone a remarkable transformation over the past five decades. From radio to black-and-white television, to colored television, and now immersive on-field action coverage, every aspect has evolved. A sport once played over five days in white flannels with a red ball has taken on new formats. First came 50-over matches, followed by the shorter 20-over games. The transition from the red ball to the white ball, from white flannels to colored jerseys, and from contests between national teams to franchise-based leagues reflects cricket's adaptation to changing times and shifting audience preferences. In the era of social media, where attention spans are shorter and audiences seek greater immersion in live action, the stump mic has emerged as a powerful tool for bringing viewers closer to the game. While multiple cameras, slow-motion replays, graphical analyses, and real-time animations have offered deeper visual insights, the on-field audio experience had remained limited. The amplification of stump-mic audio has opened up a new world for cricket audiences, making players' on-field conversations part of wider discourse across both social and legacy media. The stump mic has added a fresh narrative layer to cricket broadcasting, enabling fans to gain mediated access to facets of players' personalities beyond their athletic performance. This paper examines the stump-mic phenomenon through the theoretical lenses of mediatization and performative identity. It explores how stump-mic audio is integrated into social and traditional media to construct on-field cricket narratives, and how these captured conversations contribute to the emergence of new dimensions in a cricketer's public identity. The analysis draws on examples from the 2025 Indian Premier League (India's premier T20 competition) and the closely fought India–England Test series held between June and August 2025.

Keywords: *Stump mic, cricket broadcasting, mediatisation, performative identity, sports media narratives*

PLATFORMED LOYALTY: HOW UAE MEDIA ADAPTS NATIONALIST NARRATIVES ACROSS DIGITAL SPACES

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ABSTRACT

In the highly regulated landscape of the United Arab Emirates, editorial control is exercised through strategic selection and curated narratives that shape national identity across digital platforms, emphasizing visual storytelling and selective visibility rather than overt censorship or suppression. This paper examines how four major English-language newspapers—Khaleej Times, Gulf News, The National, and Gulf Today—construct national identity through their coverage of the 2024 UAE Flag Day and National Day, comparing content published on their websites and Instagram accounts. The construction of national identity during moments of state celebration—specifically the period marking UAE Flag Day and National Day—provides the basis for this study's two central questions: How do UAE English-language newspapers frame patriotic narratives across platforms? And to what extent do platform-specific editorial strategies shape the visual construction of state-led nationalism? To address these questions, the study adopts a qualitative content analysis, reviewing all articles and Instagram posts published between November 1 and December 10, 2024. The analysis explores how patriotic discourse—particularly themes of leadership, tradition, unity, and heritage—is framed on Instagram and how this coverage compares to narratives found on the websites. Posts were systematically coded to identify recurring motifs, narrative strategies, and platform-specific visual elements. To contextualize these patterns, Instagram engagement metrics—likes and comments—were included as indicators of visibility and audience response. Preliminary findings suggest that while websites present broader narratives celebrating national pride, Instagram functions as a tightly controlled visual platform dominated by repetitive imagery—flags, national leaders, and official slogans. Editorial patterns across Instagram reinforce a singular, state-sanctioned vision of identity, privileging symbolic unity and emotional appeal. Representations of migrant communities, labor, or dissent are largely excluded, sustaining a narrative that privileges unity over complexity. This contrast reveals a platform-specific strategy: Instagram serves as a polished, globally visible showcase of patriotic aesthetics, while websites maintain a more conventional but equally state-aligned tone. By analyzing contrasting editorial strategies across websites and Instagram, this paper contributes to understanding how state-led nationalism is visually constructed and strategically curated, revealing the nuanced role of digital platforms in sustaining authoritarian narratives.

Keywords: *Patriotic narratives, media strategy, national identity, UAE press, digital platforms*

PARALLEL SESSION G:

REDEFINING COMMUNICATION COMPETENCIES: REWRITING THE COMMUNICATION/JOURNALISM CURRICULA

FROM CAMPUS TO CAREER: BRIDGING THE SKILLS GAP IN COMMUNICATION CURRICULA

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ABSTRACT

In response to the evolving demands of the communication and media industries, the Communication and Journalism Department of De La Salle University-Dasmariñas in Cavite, Philippines, implemented a 400-hour internship program over the past two academic years. More than 100 students participated, gaining hands-on experience across nearly 60 diverse organizations, including government agencies, media production houses, civil society groups, and advertising, marketing, and public relations firms. This study examines the effectiveness of the internship program in preparing students for professional practice and identifies critical gaps in the current AB Communication curriculum. Through qualitative interviews with internship supervisors and analysis of their evaluations, the research highlights a pressing need to address both hard and soft skill deficiencies among student interns. While the program was deemed relevant and responsive, supervisors consistently noted areas for improvement in technical competencies, such as media production, data analytics, and digital content creation, as well as in soft skills like adaptability, collaboration, and professional communication. A key finding is the urgent need to integrate emerging technologies—particularly artificial intelligence—into the curriculum. As AI tools become increasingly embedded in media, public relations, and journalism workflows, students must be equipped with foundational knowledge and practical skills to navigate these innovations effectively. Additionally, the study underscores the importance of upskilling faculty to ensure they can deliver updated content and mentor students in a rapidly changing digital environment. This research advocates for a strategic curriculum redesign that aligns academic training with industry expectations. Recommendations include embedding AI literacy, enhancing experiential learning opportunities, and fostering interdisciplinary collaboration. By redefining communication competencies and recalibrating pedagogical approaches, higher education institutions can better prepare graduates to thrive in dynamic media ecosystems.

Keywords: *Communication curricula, internship, strategic communication, immersion, on-the-job training*

FROM PRACTICE TO FORMALITY: EXPLORING THE STATUS, FUNCTION, AND UTILITY OF LAB JOURNALS IN CENTRAL UNIVERSITIES OF INDIA IN THE DIGITAL ERA

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ABSTRACT

Historically, lab journals have served as a crucial platform for aspiring journalists to gain their first newsroom experience, playing a formative role in teaching the craft of reporting and editing through real-world practice. With the widespread adoption of digital technologies and social media platforms, the printed lab journals are experiencing a steady decline. Often limited to irregularly published printed editions, the lack of administrative efforts to adapt lab journals into digital formats for a relevant online presence has contributed further to their marginalization within journalism education, reducing their visibility, impact, and appeal among students. This study examines the status of lab journals in journalism schools across central universities of India, exploring their existence, publication, students' contributions, and the prospects in terms of revival, digital transformation, and AI integration. Through in-depth interviews with 20 faculty members associated with various lab journals, the study gathers insights into the evolving dynamics and various challenges using the theoretical lenses of Participatory Communication and Technological Determinism. Lab journals are presently a part of the syllabi of master's programs in journalism schools at many central universities as part of practical assignments in the core courses. They are supervised by the faculty-in-charge, who mentor young students in the traditional process of news collection, organization, and publication. The study finds that lab journals, once independently produced and regularly published by students, have now been limited to a formality and a temporary project, their function becoming largely symbolic, much to the chagrin of the faculty. The faculty have gradually inclined to incorporate artificial intelligence and digitize the publication process to align with shifting student interests. The findings recommend a fundamental rethinking of journalism curricula to better align with the realities of modern media, restoring the lab journal as a credible and consistent training platform, and recognizing it as a course with academic credit. Faculty insights strongly advocate for the restoration of this platform as a consistent, student-led training ground that mirrors the demands of contemporary media practice.

Keywords: *Central university, lab journal, India, student newspaper, reporting, journalism curricula, faculty*

JOURNALISM CURRICULUM IN AN ALGORITHMIC MEDIA LANDSCAPE: A FRAMEWORK FOR COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Digital technologies have not only induced disruptive realignments in the media but also transformed the way society engages in communicative acts. The Internet and interactive web-based media platforms, especially social media, have meaningfully brought mass media services to the people, defying the age-old divide between journalists and audiences. The advent of user-generated content and AI-powered content generation tools has unswervingly restructured the media content generation process. In the face of content abundance, selecting the right and verified content has become a big task for journalists. Deepfake technology seamlessly produces video reports, even as fake news, misinformation and disinformation continue to raise legal and ethical concerns for professional journalism. AI anchors are presenting news 24/7, replacing their human counterparts. With the influence of major tech companies and the rise of alternative media business models, the use of writing bots in newsrooms is continuously increasing. To manage the swift shifts in media technology and content consumption processes, digital-age journalism demands a broad range of skills; basic journalistic reporting and writing skills have to be augmented with strong digital media skills, including fact-checking, website building, data visualization, multimedia storytelling, social media, and analytics tools. Therefore, there cannot be a more appropriate time to revisit the communication/journalism curricula to cater to emerging communication competencies. Against this backdrop, this paper presents a framework for the communication and journalism curricula for the algorithmic media landscape. The diminishing employment data and declining enrolment in journalism and communication courses suggest that existing outcome-based curriculum plans do not adequately address the concerns of modern-day journalism education. The proposed curriculum framework attempts to bridge traditional communication knowledge systems with 21st-century media skills to enhance competency-based education. It builds on stakeholder inputs gathered through in-depth interviews of media industry professionals, media academics, media students, and alumni in four different regions of India. The topical knowledge to be imparted--the way training infrastructure is to be developed and funded, and post-education training needs for modern-day media industry roles--form the core of the curriculum framework.

Keywords: *Journalism curriculum, media technology, algorithmic media, news automation, user-generated content, communication competencies*

TRANSFORMING COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA CURRICULA: ENHANCING EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS FOR 21ST-CENTURY MEDIA PROFESSIONALS

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ABSTRACT

The rapid progression of digital technologies and the kaleidoscopic industry demands a radical revision of communication and media curricula to align with Education 4.0 principles. The Government of India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 offers an outcome-oriented vision for India's Education system, focusing on holistic, multidisciplinary, and competency-based education to empower students to meet the changing needs of the 21st century. The study investigates how communication and media curricula enhance employability skills such as digital literacy, critical thinking, collaboration, and adaptability, and bridges the gap between traditional pedagogical approaches and the dynamic needs of 21st-century industries. The research study adopts a mixed-method approach by conducting stakeholder surveys, assessing curriculum, and comparative evaluation of national policies to identify the glaring gaps in existing curricula and to present a competency-based curriculum framework aligned with industry needs. It also presents the perspectives of the stakeholders (students, faculty, and industry) on curriculum redesign. Central employability competencies will be drawn from CCR's 10 competencies, international competency models and occupational benchmarks. A survey will be carried out by conducting qualitative semi-structured interviews with the communication and media faculty and industry professionals, and a structured quantitative questionnaire will be administered to collect data from the students to identify the mismatches between employment needs and academic training. The survey is to be conducted in the Delhi NCR region of India. For a quantitative survey, data will be collected from 100 students from communication/media programs of various institutes and universities of Delhi NCR, and for a qualitative survey, data will be collected from 25 media faculty members and 10 media industry professionals from Delhi NCR. The data collected will be analyzed with Pearson Correlation and Regression Analysis, along with Thematic Analysis of the qualitative data. Identification of gaps would help create a framework of needed skills for the students to be effective contributors to the emerging technology-abled, disruptive, and uncertain environments, essential for them to navigate and lead in a world shaped by Industry 4.0 disruptions in the 21st century.

Keywords: *Education 4.0, transforming media skills, understanding gaps in curricula, enhancing employability skills, 21st-century media professionals*

PREPARING DYNAMIC GRADUATES: IMPERATIVE TO UPDATE COMMUNICATION AND JOURNALISM CURRICULA

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ABSTRACT

In this rapidly evolving world, there is a need for reassessment of how journalism and communication are taught in academic institutions as they directly impact the social landscape. Communication studies is an inclusive field that influences and reflects public opinion, cultural awareness, democratic participation, paradigms of development, and the sustainability of society. A review of the current curriculum, however, shows that although fundamental subjects like public speaking, media ethics, communication theory, and new media are covered, communication competencies urgently need to be improved to fulfill the requirements of modern society, with the individual's needing to possess abilities of critical thinking, scientific reasoning, problem solving, teamwork, and intercultural competence. This paper discusses how the conventional skills-based approach--which frequently emphasizes practical skills like writing, reporting, and public speaking--is deemed inadequate in the 21st century's dynamic realities, characterized by cultural plurality, technological disruption, and changing power structures, with an approach prioritizing sustainable development. Purposive sampling will be used to collect data through interviews with media educators from five universities in North India with more than five years' experience. The data will be thematically analyzed through the lens of Social Constructivist Theory of knowledge and learning. The role of different stakeholders (faculty, industry professionals, leaders and community representatives) is critical for ensuring that curricular reforms are holistic and future-ready. Educational institutions need to prepare upcoming journalists and communicators to serve as agents of positive change by upgrading the curricula, laying the foundation of societies that are resilient, inclusive, and well-informed.

Keywords: *Communication Competencies, Curriculum Innovation, Experiential Learning, Societal Change, Inclusive Education, Media Literacy, Intercultural Communication, Competency-Based Learning, Global Media Perspectives*

EFFECTIVE AND PURPOSEFUL USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TOOLS IN JOURNALISM EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The process of digital transformation poses new challenges for journalism education. In particular, the rapid development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies is causing profound changes in the field of journalism and the training of journalists. These changes are fundamentally altering not only the process of news production but also the system of journalist training. This article examines the theoretical foundations, relevance, and practical applications of Artificial Intelligence tools in journalism education. The study aims to determine the possibilities of developing students' media literacy, digital skills, and critical thinking abilities through the effective integration of AI tools into journalism educational processes. Within the framework of the study, the following tasks were defined: Identifying the role and potential of artificial intelligence tools in journalism education, analyzing international experience, comparing foreign and local practices, determining the level of integration of existing curricula with AI technologies, and developing practical recommendations for improvement. The research methods employed include systematic analysis, comparative method, content analysis, and observation-based empirical methods. Specifically, digital journalism programs at foreign universities were studied using AI tools in the journalism faculties of Uzbekistan, employing the content analysis method. The research objects selected were leading journalism faculties in Uzbekistan and abroad, their curricula, and the AI tools used in them. The results show that the practical application of AI technologies in journalism education plays a crucial role not only in enhancing professional skills but also in developing competencies such as ethical responsibility, algorithmic thinking, fake news detection, text analysis, media monitoring, fact-checking, automated editing and content production, visual and textual editing, as well as content automation. The novelty of the research lies in its proposal of a comprehensive methodological approach to integrating journalism education with artificial intelligence. This approach enables the training of journalists as specialists who can navigate the digital information space effectively and master modern technologies. Based on the research results, a comprehensive methodological approach to integrating journalism education with artificial intelligence is proposed, which facilitates the training of journalism professionals who have mastered modern technologies, think critically, and can act effectively and purposefully in the digital age.

Keywords: *Journalism education, artificial intelligence, media, digital skills, digital transformation, critical thinking*

REINVENTING JOURNALISM SKILLS IN THE AGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: CHALLENGES AND TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE CENTRAL ASIAN CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is fundamentally transforming the field of journalism by reshaping traditional skills into modern algorithmic practices. Core competencies such as writing, editing, and verifying facts from primary sources are increasingly shifting toward automated and algorithm-driven processes. As a result, new professional roles are emerging in media organizations, and the automation of newsroom workflows is reshaping the very identity of journalism. The study reveals that AI-assisted content creation can ease editorial tasks and improve quality standards; however, these advancements also bring significant risks, including workforce reduction, the proliferation of deepfakes, and concerns over information privacy. A survey of 100 media professionals demonstrates that awareness of AI remains low, while technological infrastructure across Central Asia is underdeveloped. The findings further indicate that many respondents perceive a heightened risk of losing journalistic identity in the face of automation. In addition, the analysis highlights potential challenges of algorithmic bias and ethical dilemmas that accompany AI adoption in the regional context. Despite the rapid evolution of AI, journalism education institutions in the region still lack specialized modules on data analytics or newsroom automation. To address these gaps, the study proposes integrating AI-focused courses into media curricula, aligning professional training with AI tools, and retraining students to better recognize and counter disinformation. On a broader scale, the paper underscores the importance of AI literacy in journalism education, identifies priority areas for Central Asia, and advocates for strengthening regional media cooperation to enhance practical competencies. Moreover, the research develops policy-oriented recommendations, emphasizing the need for legal frameworks that ensure accountability in the use of AI technologies. In an era where digital information ecosystems dominate the global media landscape, Central Asian journalists continue to face challenges such as digital inequality, outdated newsroom technologies, and persistent language barriers. These structural problems increase the risk of the region's media being marginalized within the global digital information order. Therefore, the study stresses the necessity of fostering regional cooperation, establishing ethical standards, and advancing AI-driven journalism to safeguard the competitiveness of Central Asian media.

Keywords: *Artificial intelligence, journalism, Central Asia, education, transformation, media, media education, digital information, editing, algorithms, newsroom*

ENHANCING COMMUNICATION COMPETENCIES THROUGH MOOCS: INSIGHTS FROM A STUDENT SURVEY

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ABSTRACT

The transformation in media platforms and information exchange has reshaped the competencies needed by journalism graduates. Traditional coursework alone can struggle to address the multifaceted demands of modern journalism. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) have emerged as valuable resources to cultivate a broader range of communication competencies. This study investigates how MOOCs contribute to developing core competencies among undergraduate and postgraduate journalism students, focusing on areas integral to effective professional practice. The theoretical framework for this study is grounded in Uses and Gratification Theory, which emphasizes the active role of students in selecting MOOCs to fulfill their specific learning and professional needs. Methodologically, the research utilized a quantitative approach, deploying a structured cross-sectional survey to 187 undergraduate and postgraduate journalism students. The survey instrument consisted of validated Likert-scale and open-ended items measuring competency development through MOOC participation. Data collection was conducted online using digital forms, ensuring broad accessibility and convenience for respondents. Statistical analysis was performed using SmartPLS software, with Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) employed to assess the causal relationships between students' motivations (gratification sought), MOOC engagement, and competency outcomes. Reliability and validity of the measurement model were confirmed via Cronbach's alpha and confirmatory factor analysis, while SEM provided insights into direct and indirect effects of MOOCs on key journalism skills A survey among journalism students explored the impact of MOOCs on key competencies such as writing proficiency for diverse formats, advanced reporting and research, multimedia and digital content production, ethical communication, interviewing and active listening, audience adaptation, and critical thinking. Findings indicate that MOOCs provide meaningful exposure to contemporary journalistic standards, enhance students' technical and multimedia skills, and foster engagement with global perspectives. Respondents reported greater confidence in evaluating sources, conducting interviews, and synthesizing complex information for targeted audiences. MOOCs also supported ethical decision-making and sensitivity to diversity, which are foundational to responsible journalism. Challenges identified included time management, aligning MOOC outcomes with academic requirements, and varying quality across online offerings. Nonetheless, students consistently saw MOOCs as practical supplements, facilitating transferable skills needed for writing, reporting, digital storytelling, and audience engagement. The study suggests that systematic integration of MOOCs with conventional curricula can help journalism students build comprehensive competencies and adapt readily to the changing demands of the media industry. This research highlights the unique role of MOOCs in expanding the spectrum of communication competencies essential for successful careers in journalism.

Keywords: *MOOCs, journalism education, communication competencies, media skills, online courses*

MAY AI HELP YOU? THE USE OF GENERATIVE AI FOR CRITICAL THINKING AND WRITING IN A STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Generative AI has been established as a disruptor. However, its effect on human cognition and subsequently the learning process led to a more serious discussion. Within the context of learning and generative AI comes the question of critical thinking (CT) in the inherently 'human' communication domain. Despite technological innovations, critical thinking continues to be a human-dominated field in the business world. Within this context is the strategic communication domain, which borrows from various humanities and social sciences domains. Achieving organizational goals requires critical thinking and analytical skills, which are further facilitated by strategic communication. The study captures the experiences of 100 first-year postgraduate students and their use of Gen AI in the course of Strategic Communication in writing for management education over six sessions, based on a brief given in the class. There were two sessions on critical thinking, two on analytical writing, one on argument making, and the last on brevity. The content of these sessions used various models about the topic to gain clarity on their application. These sessions covered the process from thinking to writing to editing. This was further complicated by the use of Gen AI to draft the response to the brief. Post the exercise, a survey was conducted asking the students about their use of Gen AI tools like Chat-GPT and Gemini. It allowed us to understand how students assessed their own critical thinking abilities with and without the help of GenAI tools. The students' assignments were compared with the outputs from Generative AI, and the feedback was given by faculty, a research associate, and peers. We conducted a qualitative analysis of the responses obtained from the student feedback. Key word analysis, topic modeling, thematic analysis, and sentiment analysis were run sequentially to quantify the textual data. The results suggest that 51% of these students confirmed using Gen AI for their assignments. Gen AI users, approximately 92.2%, were affirmative about achieving their goal, while only 27.4% of non-users met their objective. In the Pre-Assessment survey, 61% (users and non-users) felt that human CT skills are superior to Gen AI's. Qualitative themes for the pre-assignment challenges were time pressure, organizing thoughts, and focus. To get ideas, task understanding, and creative content creation appeared as themes for using Gen AI among students. Furthermore, users of Gen AI showcased more satisfaction with the end goal than non-users. Nonetheless, several students still report core CT gaps even using human and Gen AI interventions. These results pave the way for applying systems theory to understand the interconnected and dynamic relationships between students, Gen AI tools, and the educational environment. This theoretical framework helps explain how various components within the learning system, such as technology, human cognition, feedback mechanism, and social interactions, influence the development of critical thinking and strategic communication skills.

Keywords: *Generative AI, critical thinking, strategic communication education, student-AI interaction, pedagogical innovation*

FROM CLASSROOM TO NEWSROOM: RETHINKING COMMUNICATION AND JOURNALISM CURRICULA

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ABSTRACT

The media environment has changed rapidly due to digitalization. Artificial Intelligence, platform convergence, and fast-changing audience practices are raising questions regarding their impact on traditional communication and journalism education. Legacy curricula that focus on foundational skills like reporting, writing, and media ethics have struggled to keep up with the demand for new-age skills like multimedia production, digital verification, data storytelling, and entrepreneurial mindset. In this paper, we examine the utopia of rethink and restructure in communication and journalism programs in order to embrace a skill-based education of teaching and learning that flexibly narrows the gap between what is taught in theory and what is practised. It is a mixed-method research study that uses documents and stakeholders. Curricula from selected Indian and international media universities were reviewed initially for areas of convergence, strength, and competency gaps. Four broad categories were identified from the analysis: technical and digital skills; professional and ethical skills; soft skills and innovative/ entrepreneurial skills. The research adds to our knowledge of reforms by focusing on the revised curriculum of the MABJ (MA in Broadcast Journalism) as an example of curriculum reform at the Indian higher education level. The revised syllabus, aligned with NEP 2020, has introduced new areas such as digital journalism, media entrepreneurship, data, and research methods, technology applications in media, etc. Phase two involved student and recent graduate surveys, semi-structured interviews with staff and media professionals on perceptions of the curricula (existing and revised). The results indicate that certain areas of second-degree understandings are still not quite where they need to be in industry (specifically around technological flexibility, cross-platform narrativity, and critically literate AI-driven media ecologies). However, the review of the Broadcast Journalism profile suggests that the curricular revision guided by competences and feedback from the principal actors may be a model to cover that gap. This paper contends that re-framing the skill set of communicators involves not only a change of curricula but also a shift in pedagogy, greater industry-academia openness and systemic responsiveness. By integrating fundamental journalistic tenets with new media literacy in a curriculum such as the evolving Broadcast Journalism syllabus, programs set an example for preparing communicators for an uncertain future.

Keywords: *Journalism education, communication competencies, curriculum reform, digital media, MABJ syllabus, NEP 2020*

REDEFINING COMMUNICATION COMPETENCIES IN THE DIGITAL AGE: CASE STUDY OF MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION UNIVERSITIES AND PROFESSORS

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ABSTRACT

The rapid evolution of technology has transformed the way we communicate, making it essential to redefine communication competencies for the digital age. Effective communication is crucial in both personal and professional settings, and adapting to new technologies and platforms is vital for success. Multimedia Communication approach or ability to communicate through various modes, such as text, images, videos, and audio, is to engage diverse audiences. Virtual Collaboration skill of organizations and individuals to collaborate and communicate effectively in virtual teams, using digital platforms and tools, is part of our life. Methodology for the study will be mixed methodology as various virtual platforms and communication competencies need to be studied by using some social media tools and content analysis. The theoretical framework will be Communication Competence Model which focuses on cognitive, affective, and behavioral skill and the digital literacy framework to analyze individual communication competence. Population of the study will be four Media and Communication universities: MCNUJC Bhopal, Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC),Kushbhau Thakre University of Journalism and Communication Raipur, and Haridev Joshi University of Journalism and Communication. The sample will be all faculty members of these four universities . From each university, professors will be selected by a simple random sampling technique. Two national media educators' WhatsApp group will also be a sample for the study. Objectives of the study will be: 1)to analyze how the faculty are redefining communication competencies in the digital age; 2) to study the faculty's digital literacy, multi-modal communication, virtual collaboration, digital collaboration at the individual and university level; 3) to study individual competencies to understand effective collaboration across universities, communication engagements, productivity and efficiency; and 4) to study the faculty's teaching and communication competence in the digital age.

Keywords: *Communication competencies, digital age, images, text, videos, audio, collaboration, universities, professors*

REWRITING COMMUNICATION CURRICULUM: A COMPETENCY-BASED APPROACH TO ADVERTISING EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Advertising classrooms face a persistent dilemma: they are expected to prepare students for an industry that is faster, more data-driven, and more collaborative than ever before, yet many courses remain anchored in content-heavy lectures and recall-based assessments. Spiller and Tuten (2015) have identified critical gaps in preparedness and proficiency among advertising graduates, especially in light of fast-paced technological shifts. Similarly, Coffey and Kamhawi (2020) have argued that the traditional focus on textbook knowledge and multiple-choice testing falls short of fostering the capabilities required in a digital marketplace. These critiques have fueled interest in redesigning advertising education through more experiential pedagogical models. The shift toward competency-based education (CBE) has gained traction in communication and media programs as a way to bridge the academic-professional divide. This model is especially relevant to advertising, where performance is assessed not by theoretical understanding alone but by the ability to produce effective, audience-oriented campaigns. Several programs in the United States and Australia have begun integrating CBE principles into advertising instruction, though few have comprehensively applied it to foundational courses.

Disciplines such as marketing and communication also have emphasized incorporating competency-based education (CBE). Canhoto and Murphy (2016) have argued that marketing curricula should prioritize employability by emphasizing skills over learning by rote. Their study found that aligning course objectives with job-relevant tasks—such as client communication and analytics interpretation—significantly improved student engagement and industry preparedness. More recently, Bennett et al. (2023) examined the use of authentic assessment in higher education work-based learning. They found that CBE frameworks enhanced student reflection and collaboration. Although their work is situated outside of advertising per se, it strengthens the argument for curricular models that prioritize demonstration over declaration—an ethos that underpins this proposed redesign. Recent work on CBE in higher education (e.g., Bennett et al., 2023; Young, 2022) provides insight into implementation strategies and employability outcomes. Studies in creative education (e.g., Coffey & Kamhawi, 2020; Kolb, 1984) highlight the need for assessment frameworks that respect disciplinary creativity while ensuring rigor. Research on student-run advertising agencies and integrated campaign courses (e.g., Bush et al., 2021) illustrates practice-based learning yet stops short of formalzsing competencies. We take a step further and position our framework as a theoretically grounded contribution to both advertising pedagogy and competency-based higher education. The literature also points to the efficacy of experiential and constructivist learning strategies in preparing students for creative industries. Kolb's experiential learning theory has been widely adopted in communication pedagogy, as it encourages learners to engage with real-world contexts, reflect on those experiences, and iterate their understanding through active experimentation. Meanwhile, Wiggins' authentic assessment framework provides a mechanism for evaluating students based on the kinds of tasks they will encounter in professional practice.

When combined, these theories support a pedagogy that is both rigorous and relevant. We build on these traditions by proposing a new model for introductory advertising education that explicitly integrates competency-based outcomes. In addition, we incorporate real-world learning tasks and industry-relevant evaluation methods to ensure professional readiness. We extend competency-based education by integrating advertising with authentic assessment and experiential learning. The originality lies in the synthesis: competency-based outcomes define the target, experiential learning shapes the pedagogy, and authentic assessment anchors evaluation. This three-pronged conceptual model will help students prepare for complex advertising roles. The fast-paced nature of digital platforms, consumer analytics, and content creation has fundamentally transformed the advertising industry. Yet, many academic programs continue to focus on lectures based on abstract advertising theories, isolated from current industry practices. In addition, the reliance on traditional assessments such as closed-book examinations, MCQs, and term papers rewards memory over application. These methods often overlook the collaborative and technologically intense nature of real-world advertising tasks. By doing so, they fall short of equipping students properly.

HEALTH EDUCATION PROMOTION AT SCHOOL: A CASE STUDY OF HEALTH COMMUNICATION COMPETENCIES AT VIDYA: THE LIVING SCHOOL, ASSAM

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ABSTRACT

A crucial component of children's well-being that influences their long-term health decisions is the introduction to health-related knowledge within the school environment. Schools play a transformative role not only by imparting knowledge but also by developing the communication skills necessary for students to understand, express, and act upon acquired knowledge. The current study focuses on Vidya: The Living School, an alternative school in Dhemaji, Assam, to explore how health-related knowledge and skills are taught through participatory communication and how these approaches help build students' health communication competencies. The study examines how the school incorporates healthcare concepts, including nutrition, hygiene, mental health, and menstrual awareness, into its pedagogy through various methods such as storytelling, community engagement, and dialogue-based activities. These methods not only make students aware but also contribute to the development of communication competencies, such as their ability to share, discuss, and act on health information within and beyond their school setting. The research employs both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Qualitative data are collected through semi-structured interviews with school administrators, educators, and hostel staff, as well as focus group discussions with students. Quantitative data is collected using a survey questionnaire with school students. The participants for the focus group discussion were selected from those who participated in the survey. Participatory Communication Theory, Social Learning Theory, and the concept of Communication Competence primarily guide the study. Participatory Communication Theory emphasizes the importance of learning through storytelling and community involvement, where students become active communicators of health-related knowledge. The Social Learning Theory by Albert Bandura supports the idea that students learn health-related behaviours through observation, interaction and social reinforcement within the school environment. A central focus of the study is the concept of communication competence, conceptualized by Spitzberg and Cupach as the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately across social contexts. These theoretical perspectives together explain that the school's pedagogical strategies contribute not just to knowledge acquisition but also build essential health communication skills among students. The paper argues that the school's model offers insights for integrating health communication competencies into the broader framework of school-based learning.

Keywords: *Health communication, health education, health literacy, alternative school, participatory communication, communication competency*

PARALLEL SESSION H:

AI-DRIVEN PR AND ADVERTISING: UNLOCKING NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR CAMPAIGN SUCCESS

THE IMPACT OF GENERATIVE AI ON CREATIVE ADVERTISING CAMPAIGNS

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ABSTRACT

Generative AI's role in creative advertising execution represents a paradigm shift in marketing, integrating and enhancing human and technological capabilities for effective campaign delivery and personalization (Ramachandran, et al., 2025). This paper critically evaluates the application of generative AI in creative advertising by examining campaigns from global brands (Nike, Snapchat, Coca-Cola) and national brands (Myntra, Blinkit, Cadbury). The analysis focuses on three core areas: personalization, automation of campaign processes, and creativity, all to achieve greater efficiency and scalability (Borrega & Daniel, 2025). The methodology employed consists of qualitative case studies that analyze the specific advertising strategies where generative AI has been implemented. Data were collected by evaluating campaign outputs, performance metrics, and implementation methods to assess AI's contribution to content ideation, dynamic personalization, and real-time optimization. The findings indicate that generative AI significantly enhances creativity by enabling the rapid generation of diverse creative alternatives, facilitating rapid A/B testing, and allowing for the hyper-targeting of content to niche audience segments (Amoah, et al., 2025). From the lens of Media Richness Theory, the use of AI-generated content enables a richer and more personalized communication medium, tailoring messages to individual consumer preferences and behaviors, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of the message. Furthermore, Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) Theory provides a valuable framework for understanding how the automated decision-making and campaign management criteria lead to optimized resource allocation and accelerated go-to-market cycles (Bozieva L.R., 2024). Case studies of Nike and Coca-Cola illustrate AI's capacity to craft compelling global narratives while preserving brand identity, while Myntra and Cadbury demonstrate its utility in scaling personalized content and optimizing for local market relevance. Despite these benefits, the research also uncovers significant challenges based on the evaluation of campaign outputs and performance data. A key challenge is maintaining brand consistency and creative integrity when a large volume of content is generated automatically, which can sometimes result in off-brand or formulaic outputs. Another challenge is the risk of "filter bubbles" and a loss of true human connection, as hyper-personalization can lead to audiences only receiving content that reinforces their existing views. Furthermore, the reliance on AI for ideation and content creation raises complex questions about intellectual property and creative ownership. The implementation process itself presents challenges related to data quality and the integration of AI tools into existing workflows, as poor-quality data can lead to skewed or ineffective campaign outcomes. Finally, this work underscores the need for a balanced approach that elevates, rather than replaces, human creative professionals (F. Zou & W. Zou, 2023), reshaping the workflow to incorporate AI as a powerful tool for ideation, audience insight, and performance evaluation to drive better campaign outcomes (A. Pavão, 2023). In conclusion, generative AI is fundamentally reshaping creative advertising by making it more personalized, dynamic, and scalable. However, this evolution necessitates a careful navigation of challenges related to creative integrity, brand consistency, and the ethical implications of data-driven content, while leveraging theoretical frameworks like Media Richness Theory and HCI to optimize the human-AI partnership for greater consumer engagement (M. Vidrih & Shiva Mayahi, 2023).

Keywords: *Creative advertising, campaigns, generative AI, data-driven content, Media Richness Theory, human-computer interaction, challenges in AI advertising*

AI-DRIVEN PR AND ADVERTISING: UNLOCKING NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR CAMPAIGN SUCCESS

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ABSTRACT

The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in public relations (PR) and advertising is transforming campaign strategies, execution, and evaluation by increasing efficiency, personalizing engagement, and improving results. This study explores the role of AI-driven tools—such as predictive analytics, natural language processing, sentiment analysis, chatbots, and programmatic advertising—in enhancing campaign outcomes and maximizing return on investment (ROI). Grounded in the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Diffusion of Innovations Theory, the study assesses how AI adoption impacts the effectiveness of campaigns in terms of audience segmentation, content personalization, and real-time optimization. Using a quantitative, survey-based methodology, this paper gathers data from 400 PR and advertising professionals across diverse sectors to examine the perceptions, adoption levels, and performance outcomes of AI integration in campaign strategies. The sample includes professionals with varying levels of AI proficiency, ensuring a wide representation of experiences and perspectives. The research explores AI's role in improving decision-making, audience engagement, proactive brand management, and resource efficiency. Statistical methods, including correlation and regression analysis, reveal strong positive relationships between AI tools and campaign success metrics such as audience engagement, message relevance, and ROI improvement. Despite the promising results, challenges remain, such as concerns regarding data privacy, algorithmic transparency, integration costs, and maintaining the creativity and authenticity of AI-generated content. This paper introduces a strategic adoption model, positioning AI as a complementary tool to human creativity, balancing automation with brand authenticity. The findings offer evidence-based insights that contribute to the academic and practical understanding of AI's transformative potential in PR and advertising, with implications for data governance, ethical practices, and skill enhancement. The study emphasizes the importance of organizational preparedness, interdisciplinary collaboration, and continuous professional development for optimizing AI-driven campaign success in a dynamic communication landscape.

Keywords: *Artificial intelligence, public relations, advertising campaigns, predictive analytics, sentiment analysis, programmatic advertising, campaign effectiveness*

SUSTAINABILITY-DRIVEN ADVERTISING IN THE INDIAN FMCG SECTOR: EVALUATING CONSUMER TRUST, BRAND LOYALTY, AND GREEN MESSAGING

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ABSTRACT

In response to escalating environmental concerns and growing consumer demand for ethical practices, the Indian Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sector has increasingly adopted sustainability-driven advertising. This study examines how eco-focused campaigns, emphasizing green packaging, ethical sourcing, and corporate social responsibility (CSR), shape consumer trust, purchase intentions, and brand loyalty. Anchored in the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), this research employs a quantitative design involving 300 urban Indian respondents aged 18–45 with prior exposure to sustainability messaging. The study integrates statistical methods, including regression and structural equation modeling (SEM) to evaluate the influence of demographic and psychological variables on green consumer behaviour. Four leading FMCG brands, Hindustan Unilever, Procter & Gamble, Sprite (Coca-Cola), and Godrej, serve as comparative case references due to their market presence and varied sustainability strategies. Findings reveal that visible environmental cues, particularly sustainable packaging, significantly influence behavioural change, whereas CSR-driven brand trust has a more indirect effect. Moreover, digital communication enhances consumer engagement when perceived as transparent and credible. The study contributes to sustainable branding literature by highlighting the moderating role of environmental awareness and the persistent value– action gap in emerging markets. It also offers practical implications for FMCG marketers seeking to integrate authenticity, digital strategy, and affordability into their sustainability narratives. These insights underscore the necessity of clear communication and tangible eco-initiatives to align brand purpose with consumer values in a price-sensitive, culturally diverse marketplace.

Keywords: *Sustainability advertising, FMCG India, consumer behavior, greenwashing, digital marketing, ethical consumption, SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production)*

REIMAGINING THE ROLE OF AI IN SUCCESSFUL PUBLIC RELATIONS CAMPAIGN: A DUAL-MODEL FRAMEWORK FOR STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Artificial intelligence (AI) has huge potential to drive successful public relations (PR) campaigns. It can offer research-based inputs to enhance responsiveness and quantify strategic interventions. AI offers to quicken and standardize public relations interventions through the automation of content generation and strategic planning. However, it is widely believed that AI cannot replace the human element, and it is just a tool to augment human efforts in effective relationship management. As AI integration progressively takes center stage in the planning and execution of public relations campaigns, this paper attempts to explore both the advantages and disadvantages of AI in contemporary strategic communication. Furthermore, it attempts to develop a framework for AI integration into stages of public relations practice that can contribute to the model of best practices in public relations. This paper introduces two conceptual models that explain the evolving role of AI in PR. The first model, known as the PACT Model (Preparation, Application, Collaboration, and Trust), provides a methodical, ethical framework for incorporating AI into public relations strategies. The model underlines building trust, infrastructure development, human-AI collaboration, and organizational readiness. Key issues, like training, media monitoring, content automation, and the ethical application of AI, etc., are addressed by this framework. A three-tiered strategy is presented by the second model, the AI–PR Integration Model. The inner layer focuses on practical AI solutions, such as chatbots, media monitoring platforms, and predictive analytics. The middle layer linked these tools to fundamental PR tasks like audience interaction, campaign execution, strategic planning, and assessment. The opportunities (such as more efficiency, personalization, scalability, and crisis management) and challenges (including ethical issues, over-reliance on technology, talent gaps, and lack of transparency) are rigorously examined in the outer layer. The research follows a mixed-method approach incorporating interviews with Indian PR experts, audits of AI tools, and thematic analysis of current AI-enabled PR practices. The study suggests a model for upholding human-centred values in a communication environment that is becoming more and more data-driven. The study advances practice by integrating practical insights and theoretical understanding to help organizations establish and maintain credibility, trust, and transparency in the digital era.

Keywords: *Artificial intelligence, public relations, PACT Model, AI-PR Integration Model, strategic communication*

CREATIVITY AT CROSSROADS: EXAMINING THE INFLUENCE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ON THE INDIAN ADVERTISING INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

Traditionally, advertising creativity has been driven by human intuition, cultural insights, and emotional resonance. However, with the emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI), which enables hyper-personalization, real-time content optimization, and automated creative generation, it challenges the conventional paradigms. Today, the contemporary advertising industry uses Generative AI tools to assist in rapid copywriting, visual design, and even video production, reducing time and costs while maintaining creative quality. While these developments promise efficiency and capability, they also raise concerns about the role of human creativity in an increasingly algorithmic media ecosystem, along with ethical implications, data privacy, and the potential homogenization of creative outputs. While some argue that AI enhances efficiency and innovation, others caution against its potential to curb creativity or diminish human agency. Understanding this tension is essential for navigating the future of advertising. In this regard, this study aims to examine how AI reshapes the creative process in the advertising industry; to explore the benefits and limitations of AI-driven creativity among industry professionals, and to evaluate the strategies that can tackle the tussle between human creativity and AI capability. The study employs the Resource-Based View (RBV) (Barney, 1991) to assess AI as a strategic resource, the Dual-Process Theory of Creativity (Kahneman, 2011; Amabile, 1996) to analyze cognitive shifts in creative processes, and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989) to explore barriers to AI adoption. These frameworks provide a lens to evaluate AI's role in enhancing or constraining creative innovation. Using a qualitative research approach, 20 in-depth interviews were conducted with advertising professionals from leading agencies across India. Further, the choice of respondents will focus on personnel involved in the creative department who occupy the pivotal role in the process of Ideation, production, and execution of advertisements on a day-to-day basis. The analysis examines how advertising professionals in India perceive and adopt AI tools in creative workflows and negotiate technological efficiency with human creativity.

Keywords: *Advertising, artificial intelligence, AI and creativity, human - AI, AI in advertising*

NEUROMARKETING IN THE AGE OF AI: HOW DIGITAL ADS TAP INTO THE SUBCONSCIOUS

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ABSTRACT

In today's increasingly digital and attention-scarce environment, traditional advertising methods are being surpassed by neuromarketing — that combines neuroscience, psychology, and marketing to better understand and influence consumer behavior at a subconscious level. The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into neuromarketing has greatly expanded the ability of brands to create hyper-targeted digital advertisements that not only draw attention but also align with emotional and cognitive triggers. This study examines the application of AI-powered neuromarketing in the creation, execution, and assessment of digital ads that engage the subconscious mind, shaping consumer choices even before conscious thought takes place. The primary objective of this research is to explore the integration of AI and neuromarketing technologies, to assess user engagement, emotional reactions, and memory retention. Additionally, the study examines the ethical issues related to data privacy and the manipulation of consumer autonomy. Primary research is conducted via a mixed-method approach, which involves a survey of digital marketing professionals and psychology graduates who reveal that respondents believe AI-integrated neuromarketing will dominate digital ad strategy within the next five years. It would also involve in-depth interviews with neuro marketing consultants in India, providing insights into the increasing trust in machine learning tools to analyze non-verbal cues and optimize content in real-time. Secondary sources such as Nielsen's Consumer Neuroscience reports and Deloitte's 2023 Global Marketing Trends highlight a rising trend in AI-driven predictive behavioral modelling. According to Nielsen, ads enhanced with neurological insights showed up to a 23% improvement in brand recall and a 31% increase in conversion rates compared to traditional A/B tested advertisements. Additionally, a 2024 article from MIT Technology Review showed that companies like Google and Meta have started integrating neuromarketing cues into their advertising algorithms, utilizing real-time AI that responds to user gaze and the time spent on content. This research shows that the real strength of AI-powered neuromarketing isn't just in figuring out what consumers think—it's in being able to predict and even influence how they feel, often without them realizing it. This in fact raises serious concerns on consumer's freedom of thought and choice of selecting a product, even though it is making advertising more efficient.

Keywords: *Neuromarketing, artificial intelligence, hyper-targeted digital advertisements, subconscious mind, user engagement, consumer behavior*

THE NEED FOR NON-POLARIZING COMMUNICATION TO ATTAIN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

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ABSTRACT

The rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has transformed digital communication, but its role in exacerbating societal polarization poses a significant challenge to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16). This paper examines how AI-driven algorithms shape online discourse by reinforcing echo chambers and filter bubbles, limiting exposure to diverse perspectives. Social media platforms, powered by AI, curate content based on users' past interactions, thereby fostering ideological silos that deepen divisions rather than encourage inclusive dialogue. This digital polarization threatens the attainment of SDG 16, which advocates for peaceful and inclusive societies, access to justice, and accountable institutions. This paper highlights how AI-driven polarization can undermine trust in democratic institutions, fuel misinformation, and escalate social conflicts. It argues that while AI can facilitate access to information, its current design often restricts meaningful cross-ideological engagement, reinforcing societal fragmentation. To counteract this trend, the chapter advocates for non-polarizing communication strategies that align with the principles of inclusive governance and participatory democracy. Key components of non-polarizing communication include:

1. Algorithmic Transparency and Accountability – Ensuring AI systems prioritize diverse perspectives rather than reinforcing biases.
2. Media and Information Literacy – Equipping users with critical thinking skills to navigate digital landscapes responsibly.
3. Dialogue-Focused Content Moderation – Encouraging platforms to promote civil discourse and constructive engagement.
4. Ethical AI Design – Developing algorithms that foster exposure to balanced viewpoints and counteract misinformation.
5. Cross-Sector Collaboration – Engaging policymakers, technologists, and civil society to regulate AI responsibly while upholding freedom of expression.

By adopting these strategies, AI-driven communication can support, rather than hinder, the pursuit of peaceful, inclusive, and just societies envisioned in SDG 16.

Keywords: *SDGs, polarization, artificial intelligence, communication, digital*

INTEGRATING AI IN SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS: A REMARKABLE TRANSFORMATION IN THE ADVERTISING INDUSTRY IN BANGLADESH

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ABSTRACT

As Bangladesh continues its technological advancement, the advertising industry is going through a significant transition with the growing adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI). The integration of AI in advertising, from concept development to final production, is reshaping the industry landscape in Bangladesh. By using artificial intelligence, brands can meet tight deadlines and respond to market trends with agility, while AI-based image generation models lower costs by over 80% (Monamee, 2022). In this context, the objectives of the study include, inter alia, a) to analyze the types, stylistic features, and creative approaches of AI-generated advertising content; b) to investigate the factors influencing the preference for AI tools over traditional methods; c) to find out the role of AI-driven tools in the advertisement industry in the cases of content creation, audience targeting, campaign optimization, and cost reduction and d) to evaluate the challenges and opportunities of using AI tools in advertisement production. The study is conducted following a mixed-method approach, as both quantitative and qualitative methods are applied in this research for collecting and analyzing data. By adopting a content analysis method, this study examines advertisements posted on social media pages of five brands (Pran Fruit Drinks, Banglalink, Sandalina Soap, Standard Chartered Bank, and Fresh Soybean Oil). They were selected through the purposive sampling method. The content analysis is done by coding several themes like the visual and aesthetic features, messaging and content strategy, and the persuasive effectiveness of the selected advertisements. In addition to content analysis, in-depth interviews were made with five marketing and communication professionals from these brands, selected by applying purposive sampling technique. Some 384 respondents participated in the survey through a Google form, where the sample size is calculated following the Cochran formula. The sampling frame includes Bangladeshi Facebook users who are aware of AI-generated advertisements, since, according to a report published by Datareportal, Facebook is the most used social media platform in Bangladesh where 60 million people use social media actively by January 2025 (Kemp, 2025). The survey questionnaire is designed to include both open-ended and close-ended questions which were distributed through a Google form among Bangladeshi Facebook users using a random sampling method. Descriptive statistics (mean, median, mode, frequency, and percentage) were used for summarizing data. Applying the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) with the AIDA model (Awareness, Interest, Desire, Action), this research investigates both technological and behavioral aspects of AI's effectiveness in advertising. The results of the study indicate that AI is being used in targeted advertising, automated content generation, customer segmentation, and performance tracking. Though the AI-generated advertisements have attractive visuals, emotional appeals, and personalized content tailored to the audience, the features supported by AI tools create credibility gaps for the brands due to their artificiality. Moreover, a good number of brands are now training their marketing and communication teams and investing in technologies and skill development to reduce dependency on advertising agencies for social media advertising. This study contributes to conceiving AI's role in rising economies and alludes to some recommendations for effective and ethical execution in the fast-forwarding advertising market in Bangladesh.

Keywords: *Artificial intelligence, social media advertising, AI-driven tools, advertising industry, Bangladesh*

PARALLEL SESSION I:

REGULATORY ECOSYSTEM IN A DIGITAL SETTING/SUCCESSFUL (AND NOT TOO SUCCESSFUL) DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF ASIAN MEDIA COMPANIES

COMMUNICATING CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY: A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS REPORTING AMONG INDUSTRY LEADERS

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ABSTRACT

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) communication and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) reporting have become integral to corporate governance, shaping how organizations contribute to sustainable development. While many firms actively engage in CSR initiatives, the transparency and effectiveness of their communication strategies in aligning with the SDGs remain underexplored. Grounded on stakeholders' theory and sense-making theory, this research aims to investigate and offer a comprehensive understanding of how industry leaders, perceive, articulate, and navigate CSR commitments, challenges, and strategies in their SDG reporting. The study adopted a qualitative approach and conducted semi-structured interviews with 22 senior executives from the mining and port industries. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to uncover patterns in CSR communication, stakeholder engagement, and SDG reporting. The study aims to explore how senior leaders in Odisha's mining and port sectors interpret and communicate their firms' CSR commitments in line with specific Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It examines the influence of regulatory mandates and voluntary standards on the transparency and credibility of SDG disclosures. Additionally, the research investigates the challenges and trade-offs executives encounter in reporting measurable CSR-SDG impacts, and how stakeholder expectations shape their communication and engagement strategies. By providing in-depth insights into the communicative practices of corporate leaders, this study contributes to the growing discourse on corporate transparency, stakeholder trust, and sustainable business strategies. The findings offer valuable recommendations for policymakers, industry practitioners, and scholars to enhance the credibility and effectiveness of CSR and SDG reporting in the ports and mining sector.

Keywords: *Corporate social responsibility, CSR communication, SDG reporting, sustainability disclosures, industry leaders, qualitative research*

AN IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION, EFFECTIVENESS, AND FUTURE IMPACT OF SCIENCE EDUCATION POLICIES IN DELHI NCR SCHOOLS, INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Science education has long been recognized as a core building block of educational systems all over the world and serves as a means through which the future of individuals and societies is determined. Science education in India will thus play a critical role in preparing students for challenges that will characterize the 21st century by equipping them with knowledge and skills required to interact with technological and scientific developments. However, despite the growing recognition of its importance, the field of science education continues to face numerous challenges that hinder its effectiveness and accessibility, particularly at the school level. People agree on the necessity for science education for developing critical thinking and innovative economic growth; yet, despite this broad consensus, there is an observed gap in the numbers of students who opt for science-related courses in schools. The gap is significantly huge in comparison to the number of students opting for arts or commerce. This phenomenon is not restricted to Delhi but is seen in numerous parts of the country. It raises critical questions as to whether science education can be made accessible and attractive to students. The research will explore the reasons leading to this paradox and critically evaluate how science education policies, in their efforts to counteract these problems, are implemented. Policy and practice influence science education. The Indian government has adopted several policies that would enhance science education and increase student participation over the years. Programs such as the National Policy on Education (NPE), and, most recently, the National Curriculum Framework (NCF), have made significant strides in promoting scientific literacy and enhancing the quality of science education in schools. The new policies place considerable emphasis on inquiry-based learning, introducing technology in classrooms, and updating curricula to conform to international scientific trends. However, many challenges still confront policy implementation. A few of these challenges have included inadequately prepared teachers, minimal resources available, and differing infrastructure facilities in city schools versus rural schools. The research will study the effectiveness of such policies, their impact on the ground, and the gaps that exist between policy implementation and experience on the ground. The primary objective of the research is to discuss the roles of teachers, students, and government officials in the promotion of science education. Teachers play a pivotal role in curriculum change and guidance for students along their journey through education. Secondly, a lack of professional development and training in the latest pedagogical strategies can hinder their effectiveness in delivering science education. Lastly, the research will examine how teacher awareness, preparedness, and training in science education policies impact the learning outcomes of students. It will discuss the role of students in their own construction of learning in science, and how perceptions and interests in the subject are constructed through school practice, gender bias, and societal expectations. Government officials play a crucial role both in the policy design and implementation of science education. However, there is an often-invisible gap between the implementation of national policies and its execution at the local levels. The implementation of Delhi NCR schools' science education policies is often controlled at the local educational authority or school management level, and these often lack the capability or resources to execute those reforms fully. This study will look into how local government officials and educational authorities in Delhi NCR translate national policies into actionable practices

in schools. It will also determine how their level of awareness and commitment to science education affects the success of these policies. Based on a comprehensive literature review, this paper aims to bring together all the diversified approaches into understanding the science education policies and how science education has been developed by such factors as history, culture, and policies. The study will focus distinctly on schools in Delhi NCR. Based on an assessment of the interaction of the policy, practice, gender, and awareness factors considered in this research, specific recommendations for science education might be proposed. This study aims to highlight the challenges by looking into how policies and practices can improve the situation for students, ensuring equitable access to quality science education for all. This research will contribute to the ongoing discourse on improving science education in India by focusing on creating a more inclusive and effective educational framework that empowers all students to pursue careers in science and technology.

Keywords: *Science education, implementation, effectiveness, policies and practices*

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN IMPLEMENTING A MEDIA ASSET MANAGEMENT SOLUTION FOR A MULTI-LANGUAGE, MULTI-LOCATION MEDIA COMPANY: EXPERIENCE OF THE INITIAL FIVE YEARS OF OPERATIONS OF MAHARAJA TV & RADIO, SRI LANKA

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ABSTRACT

Maharaja TV and Radio, a privately owned media, production, and entertainment company established in 1991, operates three television channels and five radio stations broadcasting in Sinhala, Tamil, and English. The organization also manages a music and film distribution division and a state-of-the-art production studio. Its news brand, NewsFirst, delivers 24/7 coverage via online and traditional platforms, supported by a nationwide network of correspondents. While Maharaja TV and Radio maintained a basic video and audio content library from its inception, a comprehensive Media Asset Management (MAM) system was introduced in 2018 to enhance content management, searchability, archiving, and multi-platform sharing. The system incorporates in-line metadata tagging, advanced search capabilities, enterprise-level media storage, and deep archival solutions. This study aims to document the lessons learned and experiences gained during the initial five years of MAM implementation, identifying key challenges and opportunities encountered throughout the process. A descriptive case study methodology was employed, utilizing institutional document reviews, key informant interviews, participant observation, and the author's firsthand experience as a member of the implementation team. The study explores the following areas: a) Evaluation of legacy media volume across multiple channels, departments, and locations; b) Transcoding diverse media formats into a standardized house format; c) Metadata tagging challenges for multilingual content with cross-language search functionality; d) Digitization of analogue legacy media; e) Capacity building for creative and technical staff to engage with the MAM system; f) Content filtering to prevent archiving of unlicensed material; g) Authorization workflows for archiving, particularly for news footage; h) Legal and procedural challenges in responding to law enforcement requests for archived content; i) Return on Investment (ROI) justification for MAM implementation; j) Gatekeeping mechanisms to prevent indiscriminate content dumping; k) Monetization strategies for archived content; l) Enhancing public relations through effective media asset management

Keywords: *Media asset management, metadata, digitization, legacy media, media archives, content monetization*

SHAPING BRAND IDENTITY THROUGH CULTURAL TAILORING OF SOCIAL MEDIA ADVERTISEMENT: A CASE STUDY OF DENTSU INDIA'S INNOVATIVE TRANSFORMATION

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ABSTRACT

In this rapidly evolving digital era, addressing and coping with it is crucial for advertising firms to combine innovation and creativity in their communication to remain agile and competitive. When legacy advertising agencies struggle due to the digital disruption, Dentsu India, formed in 2003 and still thriving today, integrates innovation deeply with organizational identity, culture, and communication to position itself as a digital-first powerhouse. This case study aims to analyze Dentsu India's transformation as a successful advertising agency, despite its Japanese origin, effectively adapting to the Indian cultural context. It adopts a multi-level theoretical framework of cultural dimensions theory, organizational identity theory, and consumer decision-making models to examine Dentsu India's transformation at macro, meso, and micro levels respectively. This analysis pursues three objectives: to assess how the agency's organizational culture is shaped by the national culture in which it operates; to explore the intersection of the agency's identity and innovation, understanding how Dentsu chooses to define itself (self-image) while innovating; and to investigate the effectiveness of Dentsu India's social media advertising in shaping the brand identity. As the world and consumer behavior constantly change, brands expect their agency partners to be efficient with quick and impactful communication. The study provides practical insights for legacy agencies to accelerate digital transformation while delivering immersive, personalized, and culturally resonant brand stories.

Keywords: *Brand identity, advertising, innovation, cultural tailoring, social media, consumer decision-making*

STREAMING ASPIRATIONS: MAPPING THE DIGITAL TRAJECTORY OF TVF THROUGH CULTURAL PROXIMITY AND PLATFORMIZATION

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the digital transformation of The Viral Fever (TVF). This Indian digital media firm started as a YouTube-native pioneer and subsequently became a multi-platform content creator and producer in the competitive landscape of India's OTT platforms. This study investigates how TVF adapted to shifting technological, structural, and cultural circumstances in India's rapidly evolving digital media environment. The study is grounded in three interlinked theoretical frameworks: Media Ecology Theory, which contextualizes the broader implications of digital ecologies in shaping production, circulation, and audience interaction; Platformization of Culture, which assists in analyzing the infrastructural and economic dynamics of TVF's distribution model; and Cultural Proximity Theory, which explains the brand's sustained appeal through regionally resonant storytelling. Employing a qualitative case study design, the study integrates a strategic analysis of TVF's platform partnerships, from YouTube and TVFPlay to Netflix, SonyLIV, and Amazon Prime Video, with a thematic content analysis of three flagship series: Kota Factory, Aspirants, and Panchayat. Although situated in distinct socio-cultural contexts, these series have a thematic connection of competitive exams, youth aspiration, and middle-class mobility. Data sources include TVF's content timeline, podcast, and public talks by its founders, creators, and actors, which contextualize the company's creative and strategic decisions. The study reveals TVF's partial but meaningful digital transformation. While this media firm has been able to uphold narrative authenticity and cultural relevance, its platform dependency and monetization constraints reflect the challenges for Asian independent content creators. This research contributes to the literature on digital transformation by providing a theoretically grounded and context-specific assessment of media convergence in India, not merely through market expansion, but through strategic adaptation of storytelling in keeping with local relevance and global platform economies.

Keywords: *The Viral Fever, digital transformation, platformization of culture, cultural proximity, Indian OTT ecosystem*

FROM PRIME TIME TO REAL-TIME: THE EVOLUTION OF JOURNALISM PRACTICES IN THE AGE OF NEW MEDIA IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

This research paper is an attempt to understand the changing nature of journalism in India and the systematic evolution of journalistic practices with the advent of new media. New media represents a significant shift from traditional media—dominated by television, print, and radio—towards a more interactive, decentralized, real-time, and networked form of communication in the digital space. Social interactive platforms like YouTube have emerged as new newsrooms with broader and more engaged subscriber audiences in India. The ever-increasing internet penetration, the low cost of data, and the rise in average daily internet usage have substantially shifted audience attention towards digital news in India. YouTube, in particular, has become an easily accessible audio-visual medium for communication and information exchange. Its large audience base has provided crucial motivation for emerging journalists, established professionals, and independent individuals to play important roles in India's evolving journalism ecosystem. The influence of these emerging trends and new media has not only heralded the digital transformation of the news space but has also fundamentally reshaped the nature of journalism, leading to the systematic evolution of journalistic practices in India. This paper examines this evolution through the lens of Actor-Network Theory (ANT). ANT is a framework used in media studies to understand how media is produced, disseminated, and consumed by analyzing the interactions between human and non-human actors within a network. The ANT framework is particularly useful in exploring the deep dynamics and nuances of technology-led digital media and its departure from the traditionally assigned media roles. Drawing on in-depth qualitative interviews with experienced traditional journalists based in New Delhi, along with a brief survey of independent digital content creators on YouTube from various regions of India, this study seeks to explore the development of new roles in journalism, the emergence of new skill requirements, and the shifting ethical standards in digital reporting. It addresses key questions related to pay disparities, the changing power of editors, and the role of narratives and ideology in digital news production. Ultimately, this research advances our understanding of how journalistic practices in India have evolved in response to new media, highlighting the growing need for adaptable skills and updated ethical frameworks in the digital era.

Keywords: *New media, digital journalism, Actor Network Theory, digital media ethics*

PARALLEL SESSION J:

UPDATING COMMUNICATION/MEDIA RESEARCH METHODS AND TOOLS

EXPLORING THE ROLE OF CB-SEM AND PLS-SEM IN MEDIA STUDIES: AN EMPIRICAL VALIDATION

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ABSTRACT

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is a powerful multivariate statistical technique used to analyze complex relationships between multiple variables, including both observed and latent (unobserved) constructs. It is a combination of factor analysis and multiple regression to examine causal relationships and test hypotheses about how different factors can influence each other. The covariance-based (CB-SEM) Structural Equation Modeling and variance-based Partial Least Squares (PLS-SEM) Structural Equation Modeling in media research have brought greater attention in contemporary times. The CB-SEM has been a dominant method in examining complex relationships between variables. There has been a considerable increase in the use of PLS-SEM and CB-SEM across social science disciplines, like business, management, science, marketing, medical, and engineering over the years, except for media studies. The study examines media literature over a decade and explores the significant use of statistical techniques such as CB-SEM and PLS-SEM in media research. Besides, this research paper has also made a comparative analysis of the use of CB-SEM and PLS-SEM in media research, especially 'the influence of MIM Apps on media students' learning effectiveness'. This study examines and validates the empirical survey data (N=520) and provides a new insight into PLS path modelling in media research. The study critically examines the new developments, such as PLS, factor loadings, confirmatory composite analysis, and the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations as part of the structural equation modeling. It further assesses the difference between CB-SEM and PLS algorithms used in this study. The comparative analysis indicates that the ability of Partial Least Squares (PLS) path modeling to model composites and factors makes it an essential statistical tool for media research. PLS path modeling is the method of choice if SEM contains both factors and composites. Various research papers in media studies indicate that structural relationships are closer to CB-SEM if a PLS algorithm is followed in PLS-SEM. It is also found that average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability (CR) values are higher in the PLS-SEM method, indicating better construct reliability and validity. This study provides new techniques for using PLS, a better fit index, and how to report and interpret its results in media research/studies.

Keywords: *PLS SEM, CB SEM, media research, MIM apps, Model Test Comparison and report writing*

TIN SEARCH OF RISK IDENTIFICATION IN THE AI AGE

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ABSTRACT

Various public relations planning models like Marston's "RACE" (Research Action Communication Evaluation); Hendrix's "ROPE" (Research, Objectives, Program, Evaluation); and Cutlip et al., proposing Defining, Planning, Action, and Evaluation, posit that research is the critical first step in public relations planning (Stacks, 2011). In the magnum opus of public relations literature, Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management, by James Grunig, environment scanning, including media monitoring, is listed as a key function of public relations (Grunig, 1992). In his seminal book Reputation, author Charles Fombrun indicates that companies with a reputation orientation are proactive in anticipating problems and put monitoring systems as a safeguard and a preparation for a crisis, if it occurs (Fombrun, 1996). Businesses face risk and are aware that a crisis can hit; it is only a matter of when (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2006). Smart organizations undertake crisis preparedness efforts to be able to deal with a crisis when it occurs (Mitroff, 2001). Crisis communications, a function under public relations, has risk identification and assessment as a part of the crisis preparedness effort (Guth & Marsh, 2003). Deriving from the Grounded Theory, this researcher has identified 400 key words that can be used as 'key words' or 'prompts' in searches for precedents of a risk or crisis in private businesses across industries. The study is based on the analysis of over 22,500 news stories monitored by the researcher. No two crises are similar, and every crisis is unique. There are risks and crises that are sector agnostic, like boardroom battles, accidents, employee behavior, etc., which carry learnings across sectors. Online searches have become a key part of public relations research. In the AI age, using key word prompts to identify the timeline and crisis precedents can provide precision and speed to the planners. This becomes critical for both crisis preparedness, and designing a strategy when the crisis actually hits.

Keywords: *Public relations, risks, crisis, prompts, media monitoring, environment scanning*

BUILDING RESILIENCE THROUGH TOURISM: AN EVALUATION OF THE 'FROM TERRORISM TO TOURISM' CAMPAIGN AS A COUNTER-INSURGENCY STRATEGY IN DAVAO ORIENTAL: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

This paper evaluates the effectiveness of the Philippine government's "From Terrorism to Tourism" campaign in Davao Oriental as a counter-insurgency and peacebuilding strategy. Once considered a stronghold of the Communist Party of the Philippines-New People's Army (CPP-NPA), Davao Oriental has undergone a significant transformation through state-led initiatives that link security and development efforts via tourism promotion. The study systematically reviews 29 research articles, government reports, and local development documents to analyze how tourism has been used as a soft-power approach to peace, resilience, and community engagement in former conflict-affected areas. Using the PRISMA 2020 (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines, the review identifies recurring themes across the literature, including community participation, economic recovery, military-led development programs, and the strategic rebranding of conflict zones into tourist destinations. The term thematic revolution refers to the deliberate shift in government messaging and policies—from narratives of fear and insurgency to those of hope, culture, and local pride—designed to reclaim spaces once dominated by insurgent groups. Findings suggest that while the campaign has led to increased tourism investments and improved perceptions of safety, questions remain about its long-term sustainability and inclusivity, especially among indigenous and marginalized communities. This paper contributes to the discourse on civil-military operations, soft power, and post-conflict recovery through tourism in the Philippine context.

Keywords: *Counter-insurgency, Philippine Army, tourism development, CPP-NPA, peacebuilding, Davao Oriental, PRISMA 2020*

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS IN COMBATING DISINFORMATION: AN EXAMINATION OF UZBEKISTAN'S DIGITAL LANDSCAPE

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ABSTRACT

In Uzbekistan, the rapid growth of internet access has transformed how information is shared, making social media a pivotal player in shaping public perception and discourse. For instance, the population of Uzbekistan is more than 38 million. By early 2025, there were approximately 32.7 million internet users in Uzbekistan, resulting in an online penetration rate of 89.0 percent. In January 2025, Uzbekistan had an estimated 11.7 million social media user identities, accounting for 31.7% of the total population. This research examines the multifaceted role that these platforms play in combating disinformation, particularly within the context of Uzbekistan's evolving digital landscape. Given the increasing prevalence of false narratives and misleading content in both local and global contexts, understanding how social media can serve as a tool for truth and accountability becomes essential. This investigation employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data analysis with qualitative case studies to provide a comprehensive overview of the current state of disinformation on social media in Uzbekistan. A survey was conducted among over 100 participants from various regions of Uzbekistan, representing different professions and age groups. The questionnaire included inquiries regarding news consumption, specifically: which media sources are utilized for reading news, whether social media is employed for this purpose, which media platform is considered reliable for news consumption, and the prevalence of fake news. Moreover, participants were asked to identify which platforms harbor significant amounts of disinformation, their experiences with fact-checking, and their awareness of fact-checking tools. Data from DataReportal indicates that there were also 11.7 million active social media user identities in Uzbekistan as of January 2025. Additionally, data released by Meta's advertising resources showed that Facebook had 2.30 million users in Uzbekistan in early 2025, which equated to 6.3 % of the overall population. Meanwhile, figures from Meta's advertising tools indicated that Instagram boasted 11.7 million users in Uzbekistan at the same time. By focusing on these dynamics, the paper seeks to illuminate the challenges and opportunities that arise in the fight against disinformation.

Keywords: *Social media, online penetration, digital landscape, disinformation, fact-checking, fake news, the rapid growth of internet access*

UPDATING MEDIA RESEARCH WITH TEXT MINING: A HYBRID ANALYSIS OF INVESTIGATIVE WEEKLY *SHUKAN BUNSHUN'S* HEADLINES IN JAPAN

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how integrating traditional human coding and quantitative text mining methods enhances media content analysis, using *Shukan Bunshun*—a prominent Japanese weekly known for its investigative journalism—as a case study. Given the evolving digital media landscape in Asia, this research addresses the critical issue of methodological innovation in media analysis, highlighting the need to adapt and integrate advanced digital tools with traditional qualitative approaches. *Shukan Bunshun's* distinct editorial strategy of featuring dual "top stories" per issue offers an original and underexplored dimension for examining editorial intent and content strategy. The theoretical and conceptual foundations are grounded in media framing theory and computational content analysis frameworks, emphasizing the complementary roles of qualitative depth (human coding) and computational efficiency (text mining). A rigorous methodological approach was adopted, analyzing 1,326 headlines from 663 issues published between July 2010 and December 2023. Initial human coding categorized headlines into 11 thematic genres, identifying dominant categories such as "politics" and "entertainment." Subsequently, KH Coder—a prominent Japanese text mining software—was employed to perform frequency analysis and construct co-occurrence network mappings. Results revealed distinct genre and linguistic differences between the magazine's two headline categories. Political headlines prominently featured terms such as "Abe," "Prime Minister," and "election," while entertainment-focused headlines highlighted figures such as "Masako" and "Komuro," and issues related to "divorce" and "affair." Common terms like "scoop," "exclusive," and "interview" reinforced the magazine's investigative identity. Co-occurrence networks provided deeper insights into latent thematic clusters and editorial priorities, demonstrating a nuanced representation of Shukan Bunshun's journalistic intent—exposing societal taboos, scrutinizing political and media elites, and differentiating content from mainstream media. This hybrid methodology significantly contributes to media research by offering an innovative, scalable, and replicable analytical framework. It advances Asian media studies by demonstrating how methodological integration can yield richer, multidimensional insights. The study is clearly articulated, methodologically robust, and logically organized, providing critical implications for scholars and practitioners navigating methodological advancements in the digital communication era.

Keywords: *Text mining, media content analysis, investigative journalism, Shukan Bunshun, headline strategies, hybrid methodology, editorial patterns*

PARALLEL SESSION K:

HEALTH, GLOBAL, CULTURAL, MIGRANT, AND OTHER FORMS OF INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATION

NEWS MEDIA COVERAGE, REPUTATION, AND ACCEPTANCE OF THAILAND TRADITIONAL SPORT (THAI CHESS)

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ABSTRACT

The research, "News Media Coverage, Reputation, and Acceptance of Thailand Traditional Sport (Thai Chess)," explores communication phenomena occurring through various media outlets, including newspapers and online media, that promote Thai chess competitions over the past two to three years, leading to their national and international recognition. The researcher's objectives are: 1) to study the various media publicity methods used to promote Thai chess; and 2) to study the process of fostering national and international acceptance of Thai chess as a traditional sport. Research questions include: 1) What media publicity methods are used to promote Thai chess? 2) What are the processes for creating acceptance of Thai chess as a traditional sport at the national and international levels? A mixed-method research approach was employed, focusing on qualitative research. The focus was on understanding the phenomenon through analysis of public relations news, observations of people interested in Thai chess, and interviews with individuals involved in Thai chess, including media representatives, influencers, YouTubers, and tournament organizers. The quantitative research involved a survey of 400 people who follow Thai chess news from various media outlets to understand the methods, procedures, and processes that contribute to the acceptance of Thai chess among those interested in the sport. Research found that publicizing news about Thai chess competitions involves reporting, providing knowledge, and promoting Thai chess via online media. This allows news to reach the public quickly, fostering understanding among chess enthusiasts and fostering positive attitudes. Overall satisfaction with news reporting was highest, with an average score of 4.58 among respondents. Another part of the process of building acceptance of Thai chess as a traditional sport at the national and international levels (using KAP, Four Models of Public Relations, Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations model) is that Thai chess had been incorporated into the Sports Association of Thailand under Royal Patronage to promote and develop chess as a sport of international standards, fostering appreciation and pride in Thai identity. With the public's knowledge, an accurate understanding is developed quickly, leading to acceptance of Thai chess, as evidenced by the increasing number of Thai chess competitions.

Keywords: *News media, reputation, acceptance, Thailand traditional sport, Thai chess*

GEN Z AND THE CREATOR ECONOMY: ENTREPRENEURSHIP OPPORTUNITIES IN THE CONTENT CREATION LANDSCAPE

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the entrepreneurial potential of Generation Z within the emerging creator economy, a digital ecosystem where content creation intersects with commerce. Drawing on a mixed-methods approach, the research investigates the monetization strategies, entrepreneurial readiness, and business aspirations of Gen Z content creators in India. Quantitative data from 60 survey respondents, complemented by qualitative insights from 10 virtual focus group discussions, reveal that while a significant proportion of Gen Z creators actively pursue monetization, a majority do not identify as entrepreneurs. The study identifies key opportunities in platform-based revenue models, community engagement, and digital branding, alongside critical barriers such as mental health strain, financial unpredictability, and algorithm-driven visibility. Thematic analysis highlights the influence of passion, personal identity, and community support on content creation, while statistical tests suggest strong entrepreneurial intent tempered by limited formal business orientation. The findings contribute to digital entrepreneurship literature by illuminating how Gen Z leverages social media platforms to build sustainable content-based careers. This research underscores the need for policy interventions, digital literacy initiatives, and platform accountability to support the evolving role of Gen Z in shaping the future of the creator economy.

Keywords: *Gen Z, creator economy, digital entrepreneurship, content creation, social media platforms, personal branding*

UNMASKING THE MALE ARCHETYPE: DECONSTRUCTING HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY IN MALAYALAM CINEMA AND ITS ROLE IN SHAPING GENDER NARRATIVES IN HYPERCONNECTED INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Cinema, as a dynamic cultural text, evolves in response to technological advancements and shifting socio-political paradigms. Indian cinema, particularly Malayalam cinema, has long been a site for reinforcing hegemonic masculinity; however, in recent years, a visible shift has emerged wherein traditional representations are increasingly being contested and reimagined. This study examines the transformation of male archetypes in Malayalam cinema in the context of a hyperconnected, digitally empowered India. With the widespread influence of streaming platforms and digital discourse, regional films have found renewed relevance and resonance across diverse audiences. The Malayalam film industry, known for its nuanced storytelling, now offers counter-narratives that dismantle the dominance of hypermasculine figures and create space for alternative masculinities—marginalized, subordinate, and emotionally complex. Grounded in Connell's typology of masculinity, this research employs a mixed-method approach combining audience surveys with critical textual analysis of selected Malayalam films released between 2019 and 2024. The objective is to trace how these cinematic texts engage with and challenge established gender norms, and how they contribute to broader conversations on gender inclusivity, identity politics, and cultural transformation in Asian media landscapes. The study also investigates the role of digital media in shaping public reception and facilitating gender discourse beyond regional boundaries. By situating Malayalam cinema within the larger framework of gendered media narratives in Asia, this paper underscores its potential as a transformative force in reconfiguring masculinity and fostering inclusive cultural imaginaries in a globalized era.

Keywords: *Masculinity, Malayalam cinema, Connell's typology, gender representation, hegemonic masculinity, regional cinema, hyperconnectivity, inclusivity, South Asian film studies*

AI-POWERED DESIGN TOOLS: TRANSFORMING GRAPHIC DESIGN WORKFLOWS IN THE ERA OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

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ABSTRACT

AI-powered design tools are rapidly transforming the graphic design landscape amid broader digital shifts in media, communications, and advertising. This research investigates how generative platforms, ranging from logo generators and layout assistants to automated creative systems, are redefining workflows, reshaping designer roles, and challenging existing educational structures in Southeast Asia. It uses a mixed-methods approach, the study uses a purposive sampling strategy, incorporating semi-structured interviews with 15 design educators, 5 agency art directors, and 20 freelance designers, alongside a survey of 120 practitioners. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis was used for quantitative data interpretation, while qualitative responses were interpreted through the theoretical lenses of sociotechnical systems theory and media ecology to contextualize human-AI collaboration in creative environments. AI tools were categorized into three functional types: generative (e.g., text-to-image tools), augmentative (e.g., color correction and layout assistants), and automative (e.g., batch processing and background removal systems). Evaluation criteria for AI tools included task efficiency, creative adaptability, and ethical transparency, enhancing transparency and replicability. Results indicate that AI significantly streamlines time-consuming tasks such as background editing, color balancing, and template customization, allowing designers to focus more on high-level creative direction and conceptual storytelling. However, widespread adoption also raises concerns: over-reliance on AI presets risks diminishing core design skills, while uncertainties around authorship and copyright present new ethical challenges. Furthermore, academic curricula remain largely misaligned with industry practices, leaving emerging professionals unprepared for collaborative human-AI workflows. The findings suggest that integrating AI tools into design education, paired with instruction in digital ethics and critical media literacy, can better equip students for evolving demands. This study proposes a framework for human-AI co-creative workflows that can guide ethical integration and skill development, benefiting both educators and practitioners. By examining AI's dual role as both enhancer and disruptor of creativity, the research contributes to theoretical understanding and practical strategies for navigating digital transformation in design. It underscores the need for balanced adoption that preserves human creativity while embracing technological innovation within the context of Asia's rapidly evolving creative economy.

Keywords: *AI in design; graphic design workflow; creative education; digital transformation; human-AI collaboration; design ethics; media literacy*

ROLE OF CINEMA AND OTT CONTENT IN FOSTERING CULTURAL HYBRIDIZATION IN LANGUAGE EFFICIENCY IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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ABSTRACT

In the rapidly evolving digital era, youth media consumption in India has shifted significantly from traditional cinema to Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, and Disney+Hotstar. These platforms offer unprecedented exposure to multilingual and multicultural content, facilitating both cultural hybridization and informal language learning. This study explores how such content shapes language efficiency defined as the ability to communicate ideas clearly and effectively across languages among urban youth in Karnataka, with a focus on Mysuru and Bengaluru. Grounded in theories of cultural hybridization and glocalization, the research examines how exposure to diverse linguistic and cultural narratives influences vocabulary acquisition, code-mixing, pronunciation, and cultural adaptability. The study adopted a quantitative survey method with a structured questionnaire informed by these theoretical frameworks. A stratified random sample of 300 college students (150 per city) from technical and non-technical streams was surveyed. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Mann-Whitney U tests, and independent-sample t-tests to identify patterns and significance levels in language adaptation behaviors. Key findings reveal that OTT is the most preferred medium, with 72% of respondents citing it as their primary source of entertainment. Genres such as thrillers (58%), comedies (42%), and dramas (39%) had the highest linguistic and cultural impact. Some 67% reported increased confidence in using multiple languages, while 54% adopted hybrid expressions blending local and global vocabulary. Subtitled content was found to improve comprehension and pronunciation, while dubbed content enhanced vocabulary retention. Gender-wise analysis indicated that female respondents were slightly more inclined towards multilingual content consumption, while male respondents showed higher genre diversity. These results suggest that OTT platforms serve as informal but impactful tools for cross-cultural exchange and multilingual competence, influencing not only entertainment choices but also linguistic behavior and identity formation. Practically, these insights can inform educators, content creators, and policymakers on leveraging OTT for language skill development and cultural literacy. The study also underscores the need to bridge the urban–rural digital divide to ensure equitable cultural participation.

Keywords: *Cinema, OTT, cultural hybridization, language efficiency, youth, Karnataka*

EXPLORING THE LANDSCAPE OF MENSTRUAL HEALTH DISCOURSES IN INDIA: AN INTERSECTIONAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Menstruation is a natural process experienced by over 2 billion people, including girls, women, transmen, and non-binary people. However, it is stigmatized in many societies globally. Consequently, ignorance, misconceptions, health issues, discrimination and taboo are perpetuated. India, despite being home to a large number of youth, including menstruators, has many structural problems, such as inadequate WASH facilities and menstrual supplies etc. Hence, it is important to explore India's menstrual health communication landscape, as it is a country of pluralistic cultures. While there is a persistence of gender and economic inequalities, striving for menstrual health is an enormous challenge even today. Nonetheless, India strives to promote various interventions for menstrual health through diverse schemes and campaigns, in collaboration with the State, multilateral agencies, and NGOs. State and non-state players use print, broadcast, and digital media to reach diverse masses. However, print materials such as posters, booklets, flip chart etc. are widely used to promote menstrual health. In this context, the study aims to critically analyze the content of twenty print materials for menstrual health promotion in India produced by key players such as the State (MHRD, MWCD), NGOs (MHAI, Uninhibited) Multilateral organizations (UNICEF, UNESCO), and Corporates (P&G, Johnson&Johnson), from 2020 to 2025 with the following objectives: 1) to identify the key themes, target audience and purpose of the print materials on menstrual health produced by different key players and 2) to examine the inclusivity in terms of gender, class and ability in the content of print materials on menstrual health. Using a qualitative approach, this study employs a multimodal critical discourse analysis technique that involves examining texts and other visual elements. Through the theoretical framework of intersectionality, the study investigates how a wide range of intersecting social identities shape the experiences of menstruation and the consequent discrimination and exclusion. Further, the gaps in the discourses and the extent of representation of the diverse segments of the Indian population have also been explored. Moreover, this study compares the content of various key players and reports the commonalities and differences regarding key themes, target audience, and purpose.

Keywords: *Menstrual health, intersectionality, multimodal critical discourse analysis, print media, health communication*

QUEER DESIRE AND THE CLOSET: THE JOURNEY FROM SECRECY TOWARDS ACCEPTANCE IN BENGALI CINEMA

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ABSTRACT

Historically, deeply rooted traditional gender norms in India have tabooed the discussion on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, etc. (LGBTQIA+), sustaining societal homophobia and transphobia, trying to actively produce a heteronormative society. Indian cinema has long stereotyped sexual minorities as helpless victims, reinforcing stigma, but recent shifts have seen queer content emerge, allowing the queer community to express their gender identity and sexual orientation. This shift in representation is crucial as it can educate, bring visibility, and challenge the issues faced by these communities. This study examines how regional Indian Bengali queer cinema challenges heteronormativity and the struggles of queer individuals, examining their evolution over time with the following objectives: to explore how Bengali queer cinemas have depicted queer desire, relationships, and identities and to investigate the portrayal of LGBTQIA+ individuals from hidden identities and familial, societal, other institutional pressures to coming-out from the closet and self-acceptance in Bengali queer cinema. This study employs qualitative content analysis, using a queer intersectional framework to examine the ways in which gender identity, sexual orientation, and class intersect in selected Bengali queer cinema: 'Arekti Premer Golpo' (2010) and 'Chitrangada' (2012). The framework draws on intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989), and a central concept in this framework is 'the closet' articulated by Sedgwick (1990). Examining the selected films, this study clearly observes the following findings: these films highlight how class influences not only access to visibility but also the intensity of marginalization; the transition from being in a closet to coming out and accepting oneself symbolises a shift where queer individuals are no longer passive victims. Though it can be noticed that there is space and acceptance, but these are limited only to dominant individuals who are represented in the higher social class. These films have made efforts to bring people out of the closet and accept themselves against all the strict norms made by the heteronormative society.

Keywords: *Sexual minority, Bengali queer cinema, qualitative content analysis, queer desire, queer intersectionality*

DIGITAL RESISTANCE THROUGH RAP MUSIC: A CASE OF RAPPER VEDAN

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ABSTRACT

The proliferation of digital media has democratized the media space to all sections of society, particularly marginalized communities. Historically, the mainstream media narratives had little space for the lived experiences that define their social, cultural, and political environments. Today, digital platforms have made their users as content creators rather than just passive consumers, helping to narrow down the gap between popular narratives and lived experiences. Over the years, digital literacy and socioeconomic conditions of marginalized communities have always determined access to digital media technologies, among which, the younger generation who had access to smartphones and the internet emerged as content creators. While a large section of youth focused on creating content on lifestyle, entertainment, and educational materials, only a small section chose to produce content on social concerns and evils. Although discussions on social evils have persisted for decades, the unparalleled visibility and reception on digital platforms underline the importance of examining such content, one of which is rap music, songs. Songs with social themes function as texts that can mediate awareness and evoke collective consciousness on social issues. In India, young artists from marginalized communities, particularly rappers, utilize digital platforms to create music grounded in lived experiences of oppression and injustice. In this context, the study aims to analyze how marginalized people have used digital platforms to create content on social evils. Further, to assess how these contents gained popularity on digital platforms and eventually to analyze the core themes in those contents. Using a qualitative approach, this study uses a case study method to examine the works of Indian rapper Vedan. Hailing from the state of Kerala, Vedan has produced nine songs since 2020. Three songs were selected for analysis based on viewership and popularity, employing a thematic analysis. The initial observation of the analysis clearly demonstrates that digital platforms have enhanced the influence of rap as a powerful medium to address social injustice and resistance, owing to its longstanding association with political movements.

Keywords: *Digital platforms, marginalization, media activism, social evils, rap music*

DIGITAL BELONGING AND BORDERLESS BONDS: SOCIAL MEDIA EXPERIENCES OF INTERSTATE STUDENT MIGRANTS

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, more and more young students from Kerala, a southern state of India have been moving across India in search of better educational opportunities. A preliminary report by IIMAD shows that a significant number of students are moving out of Kerala to other states for their higher studies. For many of them, this shift is not just geographical but also emotional and cultural. In such scenarios, social media becomes a cushion to cope with the new space and setting. Drawing from theoretical perspectives including uses and gratifications, social capital, and affordances theory, this research explores how interstate migrant students from Kerala use social media and their experiences. The study asks questions including what do they consume and produce, whom do they follow and how does the digital world help them cope with the realities of being far from home to understand the virtual experiences of interstate migrant students.

The study used multi-method approach. We conducted a content analysis of Kerala-based migrant student community pages on Instagram, Focus Group discussions with students in states such as Karnataka, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Telangana, and a survey of 388 students across India to map patterns of social media uses and experiences.

The findings highlight that social media functions as a crucial space where migrant students negotiate belonging and identity. While it helps them stay connected to their roots, its more significant role lies in enabling them to reshape identities and navigate between home and host cultures. This dual function, however, comes with challenges, as heightened engagement also surfaces patterns of anxiety and fear. This study contributes to emerging conversations on digital belonging, youth migration, and social media cultures in contemporary India. It also offers a window into how technology mediates the search for home in unfamiliar places.

Keywords: *Interstate migration, Kerala students, digital belonging, social media experiences*

THE USES AND GRATIFICATIONS OF INSTAGRAM

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ABSTRACT

Social media has seen a huge surge in its user base in recent years. Instagram is the most popular social media site in India. Considering this rapidly increasing user base, the question arises: why do these users go on Instagram? What are their motivations for engaging with Instagram? There is a dearth of literature available addressing this question. The uses and gratifications theory has been widely used by media scholars to study why users access certain media. The main assumption of the theory is that the audience is active and makes a conscious choice to use certain media to gratify their social and psychological needs (Katz et al., 1973). Ruggiero (2000) has argued that with the advent of new media technologies, the uses and gratifications theory has become more relevant. The present study adopts the uses and gratifications framework to study the motives of Instagram use. Ruggiero (2000) has argued new media technologies may offer new gratification to users. Therefore, there is a possibility that Instagram may provide new and unique gratifications. The present study attempts to address this gap. This study attempts to explore the gratifications of Instagram use and develop a measurement scale to measure Instagram gratifications. This is done with the help of a series of three studies. The first study was qualitative, which included in-depth interviews with young Instagram users and an open-ended survey administered to a similar population. The qualitative analysis of this data yielded a pool of gratification items. Expert judges classified these items into broader gratification themes. This classification led to the first draft of the gratification measurement scale. In the second study, these items were administered to a larger population of Instagram users. A total of 300 valid responses were received. After exploratory factor analysis, a set of 16 gratification factors emerged. All the factors have good reliability scores of greater than .8. In the third study, the scale was administered to a set of similar but different respondents. Confirmatory Factor Analysis suggested a good model fit with good reliability and validity scores. The final scale consisted of ten gratification factors of Instagram use.

Keywords: *Uses and gratifications, Instagram, India, youth, motivation, new media*

ICONOGRAPHY OF THE IDEAL BODY: EXAMINING THE VISUAL CONSTRUCTION OF BODY IMAGE AMONG FITNESS APPS IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The rise of fitness apps in India has transformed how individuals engage with health and body image, promoting specific ideals of the "perfect" body through visual content. Besides guiding physical training, these fitness apps visually construct, reinforce, and circulate specific aesthetic notions. This study examines the iconography of the ideal body within Indian fitness apps, analyzing how visual representations construct and reinforce body image norms in a rapidly digitizing society. Over the years, the Indian fitness industry has grown exponentially. Fitness apps such as Cult.Fit, HealthifyMe, and others utilize images, videos, and influencer content to market idealized physiques, often aligning with globalized standards of thinness for women and muscularity for men. However, India's diverse body types, ethnicities, and socio-cultural values complicate these homogenized ideals. The concept of the male gaze by Laura Mulvey suggests that visual media often frame women's bodies for heterosexual male consumption, reinforcing patriarchal beauty standards. Further, the objectification theory by Fredrickson and Roberts extends this, arguing that constant exposure to idealized bodies leads to self-objectification, where individuals internalize an outsider's perspective on their own bodies. While Western scholarship has extensively studied the media's role in body image, limited research exists on how digital fitness platforms in India perpetuate or challenge these norms. In this context, this study aims to (1) identify the dominant visual motifs of the "ideal body" in Indian fitness apps; (2) analyze how these representations intersect with gender, class, and cultural identity; and eventually, seeks to uncover the socio-visual mechanisms that sustain body standards in digital fitness culture. Using visual semiotic analysis, the study will examine images, videos, and promotional content from five leading fitness apps in India. A sample of 100 visuals, including photographs, videos, and graphical images, will be coded for themes like body type, gender representation, and aesthetic markers (e.g., lighting, pose, color) etc. The analysis will contextualize the findings within India's socio-cultural landscape, revealing how fitness apps reproduce or resist hegemonic body ideals. This study contributes to the contemporary discourse on digital media's role in the construction of body image, particularly from the non-Western context.

Keywords: *Body image, fitness apps, iconography, visual culture, digital health*

UPTAKE PATHWAYS AND ADOPTION OF GOOD AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES BY VEGETABLE FARMERS IN LEYTE

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ABSTRACT

As global concerns around food safety, sustainable farming, and climate resilience intensify, the promotion of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) has become a development priority. While development agencies and agricultural organizations continue to advocate for GAP to improve food systems, how GAP information is accessed, shared, and adopted by small-scale farmers—especially in rural settings—remains underexplored. Most existing studies focus on the economic and environmental outcomes of GAP, but few examine the communication and social processes that influence its uptake. This study addresses this gap by examining the uptake pathways, adoption patterns, and perceived outcomes of GAP among vegetable farmers in Leyte, Philippines. Guided by the Diffusion of Innovations Theory and informed by Social Cognitive Theory, the study explains how innovations like GAP spread within communities and become embedded in farmers' practices, particularly through social interactions, trusted networks, and community experience. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the study involved 34 farmer respondents across two areas: Baybay and Cabintan, Ormoc. Quantitative data were gathered through a structured survey using the KoboCollect mobile application, while qualitative insights were drawn from key informant interviews, ocular observation, and participatory Innovation Tree workshops. The latter helped visualize how GAP knowledge diffused across farmer groups and social networks. Findings revealed that most farmers had moderate exposure to GAP and practiced selective adoption of recommended techniques. Interpersonal communication emerged as the most common source of GAP knowledge: cooperatives, family members, and agricultural extension workers played key roles. Informal learning—especially through personal farm visits and one-on-one conversations—was the primary mode of knowledge sharing. While many farmers shared GAP knowledge, this was typically reactive and infrequent. The study highlights the importance of socially embedded communication in driving the spread of agricultural innovations like GAP. Rather than relying solely on formal training and institutional channels, effective GAP promotion must build on existing relationships, informal networks, and local knowledge-sharing practices. Strengthening these peer-driven and community-based pathways can make GAP adoption more meaningful, sustainable, and culturally appropriate—offering valuable insights for practitioners, policymakers, and researchers.

Keywords: *Food safety, GAP adoption, smallholder farmers, knowledge sharing, sustainable agricultural practices, innovation diffusion, farm decisions*

RHETORIC IN INDIAN GENERAL ELECTIONS: A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF EVOLVING POLITICAL NARRATIVES IN CAMPAIGN SLOGANS

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ABSTRACT

Rhetoric plays a crucial role in shaping political discourse, influencing voter perceptions and constructing the ideological frameworks of political parties. Narratives are the means to describe events. Political narratives, immersed in rhetoric, can create compelling images to mobilise support for political recognition and party identities. This study identifies narrative slogans to trace the evolution by analyzing a key campaign slogan from each national election since the first Indian General Election in 1951-52. Drawing upon Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the study explores how electoral discourse has been framed under prevailing socio-economic conditions and political issues to create a distinguishable identity of political actors and to gain the voters' support. The findings indicate a transition from early nation-building and socialist narratives—such as *Hame Chalang Maarni Hai (We have to leap forward), Jai Jawan Jai Kisan (Hail the Soldier, Hail the Farmer) and Garibi Hatao (Eradicate Poverty)* in the initial decades of Independence—to a more market-driven and populist rhetoric in the digital era such as *Sabka Saath Sabka Vishwas (Together with all, development for all), Ab Hoga Nyay (Now, there will be justice) and Vishwaguru (Global Guru)* in the recent decade.

Keywords: Political rhetoric, Indian general election, political narrative, election campaign, political communication

POLITICAL NARRATIVES ON SOCIAL MEDIA DURING ELECTIONS: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACTS

Narratives can be understood as a story or a description of a series of events or a particular way of explaining or understanding events. Narratives play a significant role in clearly expressing values, ideals, and representative claims, distinguishing one's identity for political purposes. The concept of political narrative has gained traction in public debates and academia in recent years with the evolution of digital technologies, especially after the advent of Web 2.0. Political actors—parties and leaders—have been using these platforms to engage with the masses. The engagement expands throughout the year, including elections. The study in this background attempts a systematic literature review (SLR) employing the PRISMA technique using keywords-- political narratives, social media, and election, along with sub-keywords like electoral narrative, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and X, for advanced searches on three databases—Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. The time for study is from 2005 to 2024. On the search results, various filters were applied to have a final total of 322 results, which include Scopus (155), Web of Science (48), and Google Scholar (119). The study then performed a screening of titles and abstracts and other steps in the PRISMA technique to select 102 articles (articles, book chapters, conference papers) for carrying out a quantitative analysis. The study found most of the literature focusing and originating from American and European nations, with little literature from many Asian and African nations, including India, mostly originating from disciplines other than communication.

Keywords: *Political narratives, political actors, election, social media, Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), SLR*

POPULARITY OF FOREIGN DRAMAS AMONG YOUTH IN KASHMIR: A STUDY OF EVERYDAY MEDIA PRACTICES AND COSMOPOLITAN ASPIRATIONS

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ABSTRACTS

Within the new screen ecologies in India mediated by smartphone-based access to social and digital media platforms, audiences have deep everyday engagements with online dramas. Alongside India dramas, foreign dramas have millions of viewers, reflective of easy transnational flows of online drama across borders and ease of access through smartphone screens. Various studies on the subject have engaged with popularity of foreign dramas (like Korean-dramas) and explored themes like cultural proximity and hybridity, rise of fandoms, effects on consumer behavior, etc. Studies have also engaged with the experience of watching these dramas and located the complex negotiations of hybridity and transculturation, particularly among youth. Building on these studies, the present study explores the experiences of watching online foreign-language dramas in Kashmir Region in India. The context is unique, it is highly militarized and securitized, and crises and escalations are frequent. Also, there is high censorship and surveillance, and there are periods when access to internet maybe restricted temporarily. It is within such disruptions to life that the present study explores people's everyday media practices vis-à-vis watching of foreign dramas. Towards this aim, the qualitative study engages with 20 youth who are students of colleges and universities in Srinagar, the capital city of Kashmir region (more than 95% of the region is Muslim). The study employs purposive sampling, and interviews are conducted with 10 males and 10 females (Age group: 19-25 years. Educational levels: undergraduate and post-graduate). Within this group, the study seeks to understand how young audiences in Kashmir engage with foreign dramas. How do media practices associated with watching foreign dramas relate to life in a context that has frequent disruptions? What are the influences they draw from these foreign dramas in their everyday lives? It emerged that there is a thick array of media practices through which young audiences access foreign drama on OTT and social media. The most popular dramas were Urdu (Pakistani), Turkish, and Korean dramas. There were some gendered differences in the drama genre; women had a preference for family dramas and comedies, and men also watched historical dramas and thrillers. The appeal of these foreign dramas is linked to various factors. For dramas in Urdu, the key appeal was life across the border and intricate family plots. These shows also had good sound tracks (OSTs), which become a part of everyday digital practices, particularly among women. For Turkish dramas, the appeal was in the representation of an accessible modernity, which appeared to relate to some cultural and religious mores. Urdu (Pakistani) and Turkish dramas, also provided access to a range of representations of Muslimness, from traditional to modern, a choice not provided in TV content in India. Across these foreign dramas, the participants discussed that the Muslim was not the other. This had an important bearing in their drama choices. In K-drama, particularly popular among women participants, the appeal was linked to the mundane romance, strong female leads, possibilities of mobility, and similar cultural mores like the emphasis on family life and morality. Alongside such perspectives, participants also discussed the 'superior' technical aspects, including production quality, background music, and well-developed drama plots. Participants also described their everyday influences linked to watching foreign dramas, ranging from fashion and food choices, with differences among men and women. The watching of foreign dramas among this aspirational age group can be considered a temporary escape into the global. It was a distancing from the immediate context of disruption, an alternative form of engagement. Such escapes also inform the imagination of alternate life-worlds and possibilities for mobility. Yet, these aspirations exist in close relation to the traditional and the cultural, as shown in participants' perspectives.

Keywords: *Online dramas, Kashmir, OTT platforms, digital technology, transculturation, social media, media practices, ethnography*

MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE BROUGHT BY PROJECT SEALED IN MARINE PROTECTED AREAS OF SIQUIJOR

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how storytelling as a communication and evaluation tool can deepen our understanding of long-term, people-centered impacts in marine conservation. Using the Most Significant Change (MSC) technique, this research evaluates the legacy of Project SEAled, a coastal resource management initiative implemented by the Coastal Conservation and Education Foundation (CCEF) in three Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in Siquijor, Philippines. It aimed to (1) document significant change stories from local stakeholders, (2) identify the domains where these changes occurred, and (3) learn how the MSC process was implemented and experienced in a post-project setting. Ten stakeholders shared narratives through in-depth interviews. Thematic analysis of these stories surfaced four domains of change synthesized from recurring patterns in participant accounts: (1) institutionalization of sanctuary practices, (2) changes in realizations about participants' capacities (3) experienced significant shifts in views due to the project's presence, and (4) organizational inclusion and empowerment. For example, one story illustrated a shift "from fear to stewardship," where a local fisher continued sanctuary protection even after organizational support ended, while another highlighted a barangay official "called back to the sea," embodying a renewed sense of environmental leadership. Findings were analyzed using Bennett's Hierarchy of Program Outcomes, revealing strong evidence of change in knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and early systemic shifts. Compared to conventional evaluation metrics such as fish biomass counts or income surveys, MSC captured reflective, lived insights that illuminated the social dimensions of conservation often missed by quantitative tools. The study is theoretically anchored on the Social-Ecological Systems (SES) Theory, which frames MPAs as interconnected human and ecological systems, highlighting how community-level social change and ecological outcomes are interdependent. Despite a five-year gap between project completion and data collection, the research demonstrates how participatory narrative methods can uncover enduring impacts and inform adaptive conservation strategies. By highlighting story-based evaluation in a coastal C4D context, this study advocates for human-centered, participatory tools that complement conventional metrics, amplify community voices, and strengthen the evolving practice of communication for development in sustainability initiatives.

Keywords: *Story-based evaluation, stakeholder narratives, coastal community change, community-based conservation, Siquijor*

PARALLEL SESSION L1:

NAVIGATING AI, DIGITAL MARKETING, SOCIAL MEDIA, AND GOVERNANCE

A STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF INSTAGRAM INFLUENCERS ON THE ONLINE BUYING BEHAVIOR OF URBAN YOUTH

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ABSTRACT

The consumption habits of urban youth are experiencing a significant shift driven by social media platforms, especially Instagram, in the digital era. Instagram has become a key platform for brands looking to connect with young, tech-savvy consumers. Leading this interaction are Instagram influencers—individuals who produce fashion, lifestyle, technology, and fitness content and can shape their followers' perceptions and actions. Many experts have found that observational imitation is common. The Social Cognitive Theory states that individuals learn by watching others, particularly role models like social media influencers. Observational learning encourages people to imitate behaviors they see online, resulting in the adoption of new habits, styles, or attitudes. Furthermore, the Stimulus-Response Theory remains relevant to social media influence. It suggests that a specific message or stimulus (such as an advertisement) can trigger a predictable response (such as making a purchase). Also, repeated exposure to positive social media content can foster favorable associations with certain products or behaviors. The current study investigates how Instagram influencers affect the online buying behavior of urban youth aged 17-25. Using a quantitative research design, data were gathered from 100 Instagram users living in Mumbai and nearby areas through a structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale. The research focused on key variables, such as influencer content exposure, perceived trustworthiness and relatability of influencers, emotional and aspirational connections, and the frequency and nature of online purchases influenced by such content. The results of the study revealed that influencers play a pivotal role in shaping youth consumption patterns. The young people are more inclined to buy products promoted by influencers they believe to be trustworthy and with whom they are emotionally connected. This research highlights the need to develop awareness among youth to critically evaluate influencer content, distinguishing between genuine content and paid promotions or unrealistic portrayals. Young people must not blindly follow Instagram influencers and they should scrutinize content for misleading endorsements, photo manipulation, and sponsored content before making a purchase decision.

Keywords: *Youth, Instagram influencers, impact, online purchase, digital marketing*

SILVER SURFERS OF ODISHA: NAVIGATING SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE GOLDEN YEARS

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ABSTRACT

With increasing global life expectancy, there has been a marked rise in the engagement of elderly populations with digital technologies, particularly social media. This study investigates the patterns, implications, and challenges of social media use among older adults in Odisha, India, a region undergoing significant socio-economic transformation. The research focuses on the extent and nature of social media engagement among senior citizens, identifying preferred platforms and the sociocultural, economic, and technological factors that influence digital adoption. Employing both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, the study examines the role of social media in fostering interpersonal connections, mitigating social isolation, and providing access to digital information. After conducting the extensive survey, the primary data, mean, median, and mode will be calculated, and the data will be analyzed using the SPSS software. It also interrogates the barriers faced by elderly users, including limited digital literacy, infrastructural constraints, and concerns related to privacy and online safety. This study adopts the Technology Acceptance Model and the Digital Divide Theory in order to understand the acceptance dynamics and accessibility of digital platforms by elderly people. Additionally, this study will also identify the issues that persist in digital inclusion. Through the findings, it will propose digital policies and practices. By situating these insights within the broader discourse on aging and technology in the urban Indian context, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the digital experiences of the elderly, underscoring the need for inclusive digital policy and practice.

Keywords: *Elderly populations, social media usage, digital inclusion, social connectivity, technology adoption, digital literacy*

THE USAGE OF DIGITAL MEDIA FOR HEALTH PURPOSES BY OLDER ADULTS IN VADODARA CITY

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ABSTRACT

India's rapid adoption of digital health services accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic. The advent of telemedicine and the shift towards remote, patient-centered care highlighted the potential of digital solutions, especially for older adults. This study explores the usage of digital media for health-related purposes by senior adults in Vadodara City. The primary objectives were to assess digital media usage for health, understand its influence on elderly health behaviors, and identify challenges faced by older adults in accessing e-health services. A mixed-method, approach was adopted, using structured questionnaires and interviews. Data were collected from 400 older adults who used digital media for health purposes. Purposive and snowball techniques were used. Snowball sampling was employed due to the limited accessibility of the target population who use digital media for health-related purposes,allowing the researchers to identify additional participants through peer referrals within this specific user group. Findings revealed that the majority of participants used digital platforms to monitor medication, learn about exercises, and find home remedies. However, common challenges included limited awareness of e-health services and digital literacy gaps. As the digital divide narrows, such usage indicates the potential of digital media to enhance elderly well -being and maintain intergenerational connectivity. In essence, digital media is not only a tool for health access but also a means for enabling meaningful engagement and productive ageing.

Keywords: *Digital media, older adults, health, usage, e-health, challenges*

THE VISUAL ENTREPRENEURS: INSTAGRAM, PLATFORM CAPITALISM AND THE AFFECTIVE LABOR OF WOMEN IN THE DIGITAL ECONOMY

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ABSTRACT

Economic participation in the creative industries is being increasingly mediated by digital platforms, particularly across the Global South. With a primary focus on women entrepreneurs from Northeast India, this study investigates visual branding, aesthetic labor, and affective storytelling in constructing entrepreneurial identities on Instagram. It interrogates the gendered dynamics of entrepreneurial visibility and precarity under platform capitalism through inter-disciplinary lens. With concepts drawn from Feminist Media Theory, Platform Studies, and Visual Framing, this research situates Instagram not merely as a marketing tool but as a site to perform and negotiate entrepreneurial subjectivities. By exploring the dynamics of aesthetic and affective labor, the study shows how digital success is contingent upon women's capacity to curate authenticity, emotional resonance, and cultural value while operating within the structural dynamics of digital platforms that remain opaque and gendered. The study employs a qualitative netnographic methodology to analyze Instagram content from selected handloom and textile entrepreneurs from Northeast India, a region noted for rich cultural production with active participation of women, yet one that remains shrouded by marginal visibility in mainstream entrepreneurial discourses. Visual Ethnography and Content Analysis helped trace patterns in branding practices that allude to forms of emotional and aesthetic labor women perform in adapting to platform rhythms and audience engagement norms. Close examination of Instagram posts, visual branding and narrative engagement among selected women entrepreneurs from the handloom and textile industry helped disclose the strategies, challenges, and affective labor involved in digital identity creation. Purposive sampling of entrepreneurs enabled insight into digital practices that reflect both local cultural influences and platform-driven norms. Findings reveal that while Instagram enables access to visibility and engagement, it also imposes the hidden costs of constant content production, aesthetic conformity, and emotional performativity. These factors have a disproportionate effect on women entrepreneurs whose digital practices remain governed by informal economies, algorithmic precarity, and gendered expectations. With an aim to contribute to current debates on media-creative industry convergence, this study offers a situated, feminist critique of digital entrepreneurship in Northeast India. It emphasizes a nuanced understanding of digital entrepreneurship as both empowerment and exploitation, while underscoring the need to rethink policy, platform design, and creative labor discourses through a gendered, postcolonial lens.

Keywords: *Women entrepreneurs, digital precarity, affective and aesthetic labor, platform visibility, visual culture*

YOUTH PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA AS A COMMERCIAL DETERMINANT OF HEALTH

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ABSTRACT

Health is defined as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (WHO, 1948). This holistic concept extends beyond the individual to encompass communities, societies, and nations (Kalra et al., 2023). Within this framework, private sector practices that shape health outcomes—directly or indirectly, positively or negatively—are referred to as the commercial determinants of health (CDoH) (WHO, 2023). These determinants contribute to multiple risk factors, including tobacco use, air pollution, and alcohol consumption. They are associated with outcomes such as non-communicable diseases, infectious diseases, obesity, and mental health challenges (WHO, 2023). Although CDoH affects populations across all demographics, young people are particularly vulnerable, with heightened exposure in developing nations due to the pervasive influence of transnational corporations (Ghosh, 2024; WHO, 2023). For youth, these determinants have both immediate and long-term implications for health and well-being (Pitt et al., 2024). In recent years, social media has emerged as a critical factor within the CDoH framework (Zenone et al., 2022). While digital platforms can support communication and health awareness, they also serve as powerful channels for promoting health-harming products and disseminating content that undermines public health (Lafontaine et al., 2025). Against this backdrop, the present study investigates the role of social media in advancing CDoH among young adults in Kerala. Drawing on data from the Department of Economics and Statistics (2025), which highlights the widespread use of platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube among Kerala's youth, the study employed a quantitative design. A purposive sample of 106 active social media users aged 18–25 years was surveyed using an online questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. Descriptive statistical analysis revealed that most participants were frequently exposed to advertisements for products such as processed foods, cosmetics, alcohol, and tobacco. The findings indicate that social media functions as a significant conduit through which commercial determinants influence health-related decisions among young people. This emphasizes the urgent need for critical engagement with digital platforms as part of public health strategies targeting youth populations.

Keywords: *Health, commercial determinants, social media, young people*

PERSUASION TO CONVERSATION: SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES OF THE KERALA POLICE

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ABSTRACT

The official Facebook page of the Kerala Police has amassed over two million followers, earning recognition in some media outlets as a 'global leader' in social media policing (South First, 2025). With a follower base exceeding that of the New York Police and Victoria Police, the page was even selected by Microsoft for research purposes (Korah, 2021). The Kerala Police's Instagram account has over a million followers. Notably, the memes posted on these platforms have frequently made headlines for their reach, virality, and public engagement. This study focuses exclusively on the Kerala Police's Facebook page, excluding Instagram due to the overlap in posted content. The analysis covers the period from January 2025 to July 2025, during which 257 posts were published. These posts were examined both manually and through the social media analytics platform Popsters. Data management tools were employed to classify content formats—text, image, video, and link—and to identify posts with the highest Engagement Rate (ER). The thematic content of the posts was further categorized into four types: informational, public engagement, image-building, and infotainment. As a state institution, the police function as what Althusser (1971) describes as a Repressive State Apparatus, exercising coercive power to uphold state authority. The media operates as an Ideological State Apparatus, sustaining power through persuasion and the cultivation of consent. In the era of social media—where communication is two-way—the Kerala Police appear to employ humor, memes, and interactive content as strategies to soften their coercive image, align with popular culture, and weave their authority into the everyday digital lives of citizens. This study applies the Public Relations Excellence Theory (PRET) framework (Grunig & Hunt, 1984) to analyze user comments on interactive posts to determine whether the Kerala Police's online engagement reflects a two-way symmetrical communication model, fostering mutual benefit for both the institution and the public, or a two-way asymmetrical model, strategically reinforcing state power and how it relates with Foucault's (1978) idea of governmentality. Through the framework of governmentality, the study tries to analyze the language of the posts and comments by citizens and the replies of the police. By examining the discursive and communicative dimensions of interaction, this study investigates how social media functions as a medium for the police to enact power as a 'conduct of conduct,' and how citizens, in turn, negotiate, assimilate, or contest this mode of governance. Preliminary analysis suggests a hybrid approach, with certain campaigns encouraging meaningful interaction while others predominantly serving institutional image management. These insights contribute to a deeper understanding of how state agencies adapt their communication strategies in the digital sphere.

Keywords: *Social media, policing, communication mode, PR Excellence Theory, Kerala police, governmentality*

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN SHAPING YOUTH ACTIVISM IN THE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION ERA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON GENDERS

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ABSTRACT

In the era of digital transformation, social media has revolutionized the way youth engage in activism by offering accessible platforms to voice opinions, mobilize support, and advocate for social change. This study, titled "The Role of Social Media in Shaping Youth Activism: A Comparative Study on Genders," is grounded on Social Movement Theory, which explains how collective action emerges and evolves, and Apparatgeist Theory, which examines how social media and other digital technologies shape communication practices and the dynamics of social movements. Focusing on the districts of Mysuru and Bellary (selected for their contrasting Human Development Index (HDI) levels) the study surveyed 300 youth respondents (aged 15–30) using a descriptive quantitative approach through convenience sampling. The respondents included 147 males and 153 females, equally distributed between both districts. The study investigates four key objectives: identifying the most popular social media platforms used for activism, comparing gender-based participation, exploring barriers to effective digital activism, and examining the frequency of online versus offline activism. Findings reveal that Instagram is the most preferred platform among youth for activism, followed by YouTube and WhatsApp. While both genders use social media extensively, females show significantly higher engagement in both online and offline movements such as rallies, protests, and boycotts. However, gender-based trolling, misinformation, and fear of judgment emerged as major barriers, particularly affecting female respondents, hindering their full participation in online activism. Moreover, while online activism dominates, females were more likely than males to translate digital participation into real-world action. To ensure clarity, this study distinguishes between the concepts of engagement (general participation and interest) and activism (active campaigning or protest for a cause). The research suggests incorporating a Gender Equity and Social Inclusion (GESI) lens in future studies and calls for social media to be viewed as a supportive tool rather than a substitute for on-ground civic action.

Keywords: *Social media, youth, activism, gender, digital literacy, youth engagement, digital transformation*

EXPLORING BRANDED PODCASTS IN INDIA: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF STORYTELLING AND AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the emergence of branded podcasts as strategic marketing tools in the Indian digital media environment, with particular emphasis on narrative-driven approaches to brand communication. Drawing on media and communication theories such as Narrative Transportation Theory and Cultivation Theory, the research positions branded podcasts within the broader framework of persuasive storytelling and its role in shaping consumer perceptions. In recent years, widespread internet connectivity and the proliferation of on-demand audio platforms have created opportunities for organizations to construct brand identities through immersive narratives. Focusing exclusively on the Indian context, this research investigates how companies design, deliver, and position branded podcast content to cultivate audience engagement and reinforce brand values. The methodological framework integrates two distinct but complementary components: a qualitative content analysis of selected podcast episodes to uncover recurring narrative structures, themes, and cultural elements, and a systematic study of associated social media engagement, examining comments, shares, and expressions of sentiment. Together, these approaches provide insights into both the symbolic construction of brand narratives and the dialogic spaces of audience response. Data for analysis were drawn from a purposive sample of branded podcasts across diverse sectors in India, including consumer technology, food and beverages, financial services, travel, and lifestyle brands, along with corresponding brand-linked social media accounts. Findings indicate that branded podcasts employing authentic, culturally relevant storytelling, often characterized by conversational tone, personal anecdotes, and relatable scenarios, generate stronger listener engagement both within the audio medium and on associated digital channels. Social media responses reveal heightened consumer resonance when content emphasizes relatability, emotional depth, and thematic consistency across brand communication touchpoints. Importantly, the study highlights benefits not only for marketers but also for consumers. By offering entertaining, educational, and contextually resonant content, branded podcasts provide audiences with value beyond commercial promotion, creating experiences of learning, cultural connection, and community belonging. At the same time, the blending of narrative techniques with interactive online engagement fosters opportunities for consumers to voice perspectives, participate in dialogues, and co-shape brand communication. The study underscores the potential of branded podcasts to serve as synergistic extensions of digital branding strategies in India's evolving media ecosystem. Concluding recommendations advocate for coherent narrative planning, culturally attuned storytelling, and an alignment of podcast distribution with socially responsive engagement practices.

Keywords: *Branded podcasts, marketing communications, storytelling, audience engagement, Indian media, qualitative content analysis, social media interaction*

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TRADITIONAL VS. DIGITAL MEDIA STRATEGIES IN ASSAM'S PUBLIC COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT

Assam, a culturally diverse state in India's northeast, is seeing a significant change in the public communication scene. Traditional mass media, like print, television, and radio, are giving way to digital platforms like social media, YouTube, and online news portals as a result of the quick development of digital technology. This shift has important ramifications for how citizens receive, access, and act upon public service announcements, government campaigns, and general information. In light of this, the current study compares traditional and digital media tactics to assess their efficacy, usability, and audience involvement within the public communication ecosystem of Assam. Designing inclusive, effective, and culturally sensitive communication strategies requires an understanding of how these two modes interact, particularly as public institutions depend more and more on the media to engage with a varied audience. In order to achieve inclusion across language backgrounds, the study used a quantitative research approach and a structured questionnaire that was developed in both Assamese and English. In order to capture the urban–rural disparity in media consumption and trust, a total of 400 respondents were questioned, equally split between urban Kamrup (Kamrup Metro, n = 200) and rural Kamrup (n = 200). The study asked about language preferences, media usage patterns, perceived reliability, and the degree of exposure to public service announcements (PSAs). Numerous statistical approaches were used to evaluate the data, such as correlation analysis, independent sample t-tests, frequency analysis, and chi-square testing. This allowed for both descriptive and inferential insights into the demographic factors that influence media choice and response. The results highlight a clear distinction between rural and urban populations' media consumption habits. Digital media platforms predominate in urban Kamrup, with online news sources, YouTube, and social media apps becoming the main information sources, especially for younger audiences. Digital platforms' immediacy, accessibility, and interactivity were cited by respondents as major benefits that raise levels of engagement. Rural respondents, on the other hand, still rely mostly on traditional media, such as radio, television, and newspapers, since they believe these to be more dependable and trustworthy. Due to cultural acceptance and long-standing familiarity, traditional media are seen as having more trust by senior individuals. A generational divide is also revealed by media trust. Because they associate digital platforms with fast information and chances for active participation, younger and urban audiences are more likely to rely on them. However, those who live in rural areas and are older still show more faith in conventional media, highlighting the ongoing lack of credibility in digital communication. This emphasizes the necessity of customized approaches that take audience-specific views of media trust into account. One of the study's most important conclusions is how language shapes the results of communication. Particularly in rural areas, the employment of Assamese and other vernacular languages in traditional and digital PSAs greatly improves responsiveness, trust, and message comprehension. Localized and contextually relevant messages were more likely to be remembered and acted upon by respondents. The study also discovered that PSAs' source and style have a direct impact on how effective they are: messages that are distributed through reliable means and in formats that are suitable for the target culture are more likely to inspire public action. These results have important ramifications. Digital platforms have the advantages of speed, reach, and interaction, but they also struggle with accessibility and trustworthiness, especially in rural areas where infrastructure hurdles are still present. On the other hand, despite its longstanding credibility, traditional media are becoming less and less popular with urban and younger audiences. The most successful approach for public communication in Assam, according to the study, is a hybrid communication strategy that combines the legitimacy and cultural familiarity of conventional channels with the immediacy and broad reach of digital media. Localization of content must also be a top priority in such a plan, guaranteeing that messages are conveyed in vernacular languages and customized to the sociocultural contexts of various audiences. In conclusion, this study shows that complete public participation cannot be attained solely through traditional or digital media. Rather, it is crucial to adopt a hybrid strategy that addresses the shortcomings of both systems while utilizing their advantages. Policymakers, advertisers, and media professionals looking to create inclusive and effective communication strategies in Assam and, consequently, other multilingual and socio-culturally varied regions of India would find great value in the findings.

Keywords: *Digital media, traditional media, localization, Assamese language, public communication, media trust, urban-rural divide, Kamrup Assam, digital advertising, vernacular content*

CROWDFUNDING AS PARTICIPATORY CULTURE: A STUDY ON MEDIA STRATEGIES FOR LEVERAGING CREATIVE CAPITAL

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, crowdfunding has emerged as a viable funding model for independent creators in the cultural and creative industries, empowering them with creative and financial liberty. This paper examines crowdfunding not merely as a funding model, but as a strategic communication process that facilitates the funding process and creates participatory value around creative projects. Existing literature highlights the economics and mechanics of the platform or motivational drivers behind crowdfunding, but little attention has been paid to the communicative ecology of crowdfunding, particularly in the Indian context, where cultural, technological, and audience dynamics are distinct. This paper addresses that gap by examining how independent filmmakers in India now use social media, reels, shorts, email campaigns, online news portals, and newspapers to engage backers and build online communities around their projects. A case study method has been adopted with a focus on Wishberry, one of the pioneering crowdfunding platforms in India dedicated to the creative industry. Wishberry has crowdfunded Rs. 17 crores for around 600 projects. The study uses semi-structured interviews to collect primary data from the founders and directors who successfully crowdfunded through the aforementioned platform. Moreover, the survey method is used to collect data from the contributors to assess message reception, emotional appeal, and perceived authenticity. The study is grounded in the frameworks of the elaboration likelihood model, AIDA model and reception theory to gain insights into the communicative ecology that exists between filmmakers and contributors. The paper discusses how crowdfunding success is contingent not only on content quality but on strategic communication like personalized outreach, iterative updates, emotional resonance, and media amplification. It also elaborates on how campaign design reflects genre-specific adaptations, with documentary projects emphasizing advocacy, while fiction films mobilize fan culture and existing symbolic capital. Moreover, it is noted that media visibility functions as a trust signal and community-building tool. It elaborates on Henry Jenkins's concept of participatory culture and elucidates how different media converge with the creative industry to leverage the creative capital of the project and turn audiences into active participants in the creative process.

Keywords: *Crowdfunding, participatory culture, creative industries, strategic media communication, campaign design*

SHE VOTES, HE RULES: A FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF GENDER DISPLACEMENT IN RURAL GOVERNANCE THROUGH THE PANCHAYAT WEB SERIES

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This study examines how the Indian web series Panchayat (Seasons 1–4), streamed on Amazon Prime Video, represents female authority within rural local governance. Drawing on feminist media theory, particularly Laura Mulvey's concept of the male gaze and Judith Butler's notion of gender performativity, the analysis highlights how the series critiques the Pradhan-pati phenomenon, where elected women leaders are symbolically positioned while male relatives wield substantive power. Previous research has documented similar challenges in India's Panchayati Raj institutions, noting how gender quotas have not always translated into meaningful participation. This study extends that work by conducting a qualitative content analysis of all episodes, focusing on narrative structure, character development, and visual style. In doing so, it also considers how gendered authority intersects with other social categories, including caste, class, and generational roles, which shape the possibilities and limits of female agency in rural governance. Findings indicate that characters such as Manju Devi, Rinki, and Kranti Devi embody different trajectories of empowerment, from symbolic displacement to emerging agency. While Panchayat portrays empowerment as a slow, negotiated, and context-specific process, the series also gestures toward potential shifts: through subtle satire, vernacular realism, and incremental transformations in women's participation, it demonstrates how symbolic power can evolve into substantive authority. The series critiques the persistence of patriarchal displacement while offering glimpses of gradual change. This study contributes to feminist media analysis and suggests that Indian digital narratives are beginning to engage more critically with intersectional feminist concerns, offering insights relevant not only for India but also for rural governance contexts across Asia.

Keywords: *Panchayat web series, feminist media analysis, gender and governance, symbolic power displacement, intersectionality in rural representation*

DIGITAL CONVERGENCE AND RELATIONSHIP CULTURE: A STUDY OF DATING APP USAGE AMONG YOUNG ADULTS IN INDIA

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The convergence of media and creative sectors has altered how people connect, especially through digital platforms, facilitating intimacy and dating. This study investigates how dating apps—emerging from media advancements and creative industry design—shape young adults' relationships and social interactions in India. Guided by the Self-Presentation Theory (Goffman, 1959) and Uses and Gratifications Theory, the research sought to answer four key questions: (1) What are the motivations driving dating app use? (2) How do users manage self-presentation on these platforms? (3) What outcomes and concerns arise from app-mediated interactions? and (4) How do gendered dynamics shape app usage? The study predicted that young adults use apps primarily for casual interactions and companionship rather than marriage, that photographs dominate self-presentation strategies, and that relationships are often perceived as emotionally superficial, with gendered differences in engagement. Using a mixed-method design, survey (n = 300) and interviews (n = 15) revealed that casual meetings (40.75%) and companionship (31.32%) were the leading motivations, followed by romance (21.13%) and marriage (6.79%). While 80% of participants prioritized photographs when evaluating profiles, 72% expressed concerns about emotional superficiality. Inferential analysis suggests that dating apps reflect a balance between modern autonomy and traditional marriage norms, fulfilling companionship and validation needs while reinforcing visual and performative cultures. Interviews reinforced survey findings on the dominance of visual presentation and perceived superficiality, but also revealed contradictions: while few survey participants identified marriage as a goal, some interviewees admitted keeping it "at the back of their mind" due to cultural expectations. Gendered narratives highlighted men framing apps as exploratory "arenas" and women as selective "menu cards," illustrating both playful and empowering engagements.

Keywords: *Dating apps, digital intimacy, self-presentation, India, young adults, gender dynamics*

THE ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN SUPPORTING THE EDUCATIONAL, RESEARCH, AND SOCIAL MISSIONS OF PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN UZBEKISTAN

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Uzbekistan's higher education sector has rapidly expanded, with public universities nearly tripling in number over the past decade. This growth elevates the importance of public relations (PR) in shaping institutional identity and public image. Guided by corporate identity theory, reputation management theory, and image theory, this study examines how strategic PR supports the educational, research, and social missions of universities. A case study methodology is employed, focusing on two public institutions – the Tashkent Institute of Irrigation and Agricultural Mechanization Engineers (TIIAME) and the National University of Uzbekistan – to provide comparative insights. Data were collected through interviews, focus group discussions, and document review, with participants drawn from university administrators, faculty, students, and alumni. Findings reveal that PR supports each university's mission in distinct ways. For the educational mission, PR-driven communications and marketing raise awareness of academic programs and attract prospective students. For the research mission, PR disseminates scholarly achievements to industry and the public, fostering collaboration and potential funding. For the social mission, PR enhances community engagement and public recognition of the universities' contributions to societal development. Additionally, effective use of digital media (e.g., institutional websites, social networks, virtual tours) extends outreach beyond traditional audiences and borders. Despite these benefits, significant challenges limit PR effectiveness. Institutional approaches to PR vary: one case university employs a dynamic, audience-focused communication strategy, whereas the other relies on a formal, academically centered style. Public universities often have limited PR staff and budgets, and top-down bureaucratic cultures can impede innovative communication. Such constraints, coupled with entrenched stakeholder perceptions, hinder the full potential of PR in higher education. The study concludes that integrating PR into university strategic planning is key to advancing educational, research, and social objectives. It recommends strengthening digital communication and implementing comprehensive PR frameworks to improve institutional image and reputation, foster stakeholder trust, and enhance competitiveness, aligning with Uzbekistan's higher education development goals.

Keywords: *Public relations, higher education, university missions, Uzbekistan, strategic communication*

AI IN BANGLADESHI MEDIA EDUCATION: EXPLORING GRATIFICATIONS, GAPS, AND INSTITUTIONAL READINESS FROM STUDENT & EDUCATOR PERSPECTIVES

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This study examines the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Bangladeshi media education, investigating the perceptions, gratifications, and ethical challenges faced by undergraduate students and educators. Framed by the Use and Gratification Theory and Disruptive Innovation, the research adopts a qualitative methodology, collecting data through focus group discussions with 27 undergraduate media students and in-depth interviews with 11 educators from various institutions. Findings reveal that students perceive AI tools as highly advantageous for enhancing academic and creative work. They experience utilitarian gratification through increased productivity, technical gratification in support of complex tasks such as editing and data analysis, and hedonic gratification via engaging simulation-based learning experiences. AI is widely valued for content creation, personalized learning, and newsroom simulations. However, students also expressed ethical concerns, recognizing the need for training in fact-checking, detecting bias, avoiding plagiarism, and maintaining transparency when using AI-generated outputs. Educators, while initially skeptical, have increasingly come to appreciate AI's role in supporting media pedagogy. They report utilitarian gratification in automating routine tasks and saving time through streamlined lecture preparation. Technical gratification arises from AI's capacity to simplify content production, generate summaries of complex topics, and polish language when preparing exam questions and instructional materials. Despite AI's significant benefits, educators remain significantly disrupted by a growing 'copy-paste' culture, where students submit work with minimal personal input or critical engagement. This misuse highlights a gap in gratification alignment; educators prioritize responsible and creative use of AI, while many students focus on convenience and speed. Educators strongly advocate for university-wide policies regulating AI use, central content-checking systems, and structured training for both faculty and students. They emphasize integrating AI literacy into curricula rather than introducing new courses, particularly in practical courses such as reporting, campaigns, editing, and graphic design. A culture of responsible prompting and creativity must be fostered, ensuring AI serves as a collaborative assistant rather than a creative replacement. Overall, this study underscores the urgency of bridging perceptual and practical gaps between students and educators. Establishing clear guidelines, equitable access, and comprehensive AI literacy can help build an AI-aware academic culture that supports both innovation and integrity in Bangladeshi media education.

Keywords: *Artificial intelligence, media pedagogy, Uses and Gratification Theory, ethical challenges, AI literacy*

Day 3

PARALLEL SESSIONS

PARALLEL SESSION L2:

NAVIGATING AI, DIGITAL MARKETING, SOCIAL MEDIA, AND GOVERNANCE

THE IMPACT OF PROPOSED INDUSTRIAL AND ECONOMIC ZONES ON JOB CREATION AND LOCAL TRADE IN POTRERO, TINAJEROS, AND ACACIA, MALABON CITY

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ABSTRACT

The proposed establishment of industrial and economic zones in urban areas like Malabon City holds significant promise for fostering regional development. This study assesses the impact of proposed industrial and economic zones on job creation and local trade in Potrero, Tinajeros, and Acacia, Malabon City, and aims to critically evaluate these potential socio-economic transformations. The research emphasizes the significant role that industrial parks and economic zones play in attracting investments, stimulating economic growth, and creating job opportunities across various sectors (Science Park of the Philippines, 2025). Economic zones in Metro Manila have been proven to have benefits, but there is a lack of understanding about their localized impact on specific urban communities, particularly in terms of their effects on local trade networks and job types. While national and regional studies highlight the overall employment generation (Philippine Development Plan, 2022) and the strategic importance of industrial development, there is less specific research on how these mega-developments directly influence the small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and informal trade within the immediate surrounding barangays. This study aims to assess the anticipated impact of proposed industrial and economic zones on job creation and local trade in the barangays of Potrero, Tinajeros, and Acacia, Malabon City. Specifically, it seeks to forecast the types and number of jobs expected to be created; analyze the potential effects on existing local businesses and trade flows; and identify potential challenges and opportunities for community integration and sustainable growth. This study employs a descriptive-quantitative research design to assess the potential socio-economic impacts of the proposed industrial zones. A total sample size of 384 was determined using the Cochran formula (Raosoft, 2025), and a stratified sampling technique was used on identified target barangays. After defining these strata, a purposive sampling was used to select targets. The survey instrument includes demographic characteristics, such as age, sex, education, occupation, and socioeconomic group. A 5-point Likert scale was used to measure the perceived impact of the proposed industrial and economic zone in terms of current employment status, local business involvement, expectations regarding the proposed zones, and the perceived socio-economic impacts. The findings show a significant increase in direct and indirect job opportunities, primarily in manufacturing, services, and logistics, mirroring trends in other Philippine economic zones. Industrial and economic zones have played a significant role in the economy over the long term. With the CREATE MORE Act now in place, the Philippines is entering a new era of investment-driven growth that will solidify premier destination for foreign direct investments in Asia (PEZA, 2024). However, the study anticipates potential displacement or challenges for existing small-scale local businesses due to increased competition, changes in land use, and shifts in consumer demand.

Keywords: *Economic zone, job creation, local trade, Malabon City*

THE ROLE OF DIGITAL MARKETING PLATFORM FOR STANDARDIZED MARKETING STRATEGY IN MALABON'S ECONOMIC ZONES: A BLUEPRINT FOR INVESTMENT PROMOTION AND INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The establishment and promotion of economic zones are crucial strategies for driving local and national economic growth by attracting investments and fostering industrial development. This study focuses on creating a comprehensive framework to effectively position Malabon City's nascent and proposed economic zones (e.g., in Potrero, Tinajeros, Acacia, Dampalit) for global competitiveness. The importance of this research is rooted in the success of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in the Philippines and globally as engines for foreign direct investment (FDI), job creation, and export diversification. For Malabon, a highly urbanized city seeking to maximize its industrial and logistical potential, a strategic marketing approach and a robust master plan are essential to translate potential into realized economic benefits. Despite the well-documented successes of SEZs, a research gap exists in developing tailored, standardized marketing strategies, digital platforms, and master plans that specifically address the unique challenges and opportunities of urban economic zones within a densely populated metropolitan area like Malabon. While national agencies like PEZA provide incentives and oversight for ecozones, localized strategies for investment promotion often lack a cohesive, data-driven approach that integrates marketing with long-term infrastructure development plans. The objective of this study is to assess the effectiveness of the Digital Marketing Platform and Standardized Marketing Strategy for Malabon City's economic zones, which aims at maximizing investment promotion and guiding sustainable infrastructure development. Specifically, it seeks to identify Malabon's unique selling propositions for potential investors, formulate targeted marketing campaigns and promotional tools, and outline a strategic master plan for infrastructure development within and around the economic zones. This research employs a descriptive-quantitative research design to assess the feasibility and optimal strategies for Special Economic Zone (SEZ) development in Malabon City. This approach systematically quantifies various factors crucial for SEZ success, complemented by qualitative insights. The study uses surveys with a 5-point Likert scale to gather opinions from important stakeholders about Malabon's Digital Marketing platform. It investigates how attractive Malabon is for investment, its competitiveness, suitability for certain industries, and development potential. Additionally, it evaluates a marketing strategy based on the market demand for special economic zone spaces, Malabon's readiness for such zones, and how well current investment promotion strategies are working. Findings reveal that Malabon's strategic location within Metro Manila, access to a skilled labor force, and potential for improved logistics infrastructure are strong selling points. The study expects to identify specific industries that are most aligned with Malabon's capabilities and current economic trajectory. The proposed master plan will likely emphasize smart, resilient infrastructure development as a crucial differentiator. Similar results in other urban SEZ developments highlight that effective marketing must be coupled with strong governance, integrated planning, and continuous infrastructure upgrades.

Keywords: *Digital platform for standard marketing strategy, Malabon economic zones, investment promotion, and infrastructure development*

DIGITALIZING GOVERNANCE: IMPLEMENTING A SMART CITY FRAMEWORK FOR ENHANCED PUBLIC SERVICES AND CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT IN MALABON

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ABSTRACT

The increasing global trend towards urban digitalization and the adoption of smart city concepts offers transformative potential for enhancing public services and fostering citizen engagement. According to DOST–PCIEERD (2021), a Smart City is an ecosystem comprised of people, organizations, and businesses, policies, laws, and processes integrated to create desired outcomes. This study investigates the practicalities and implications of adopting such a framework in a highly urbanized and historically challenged city like Malabon. The importance of this research is due to the recognized advantages of smart city initiatives, such as enhanced government efficiency, improved service accessibility, increased transparency, and increased citizen participation. Despite the growing enthusiasm for smart cities in the Philippines, a significant research gap exists in developing tailored smart city frameworks for specific local government units (LGUs) that account for their unique socio-economic, infrastructural, and environmental contexts. The purpose of this study is to provide actionable insights for policymakers on the proposal and feasibility of implementing a SMART City framework in Malabon City. Specifically, it aims to identify key areas where digital solutions can significantly enhance public services and citizen engagement, such as public service delivery, effective citizen participation in governance through digital platforms, and assess the current readiness of Malabon City. This research employs a descriptive-quantitative research design to comprehensively assess Malabon City's readiness for smart city implementation and conceptualize a citizen-centric framework. The quantitative arm will utilize a descriptive-quantitative design, primarily focusing on a survey through a stratified sampling method to represent the diverse socio-economic groups, such as residents, local government units, regulators, and stakeholders. The survey utilized an online platform and paper-based questionnaires distributed in barangay halls, ensuring the inclusion of populations with limited digital access. The survey employed a 5-point Likert scale to measure key variables, including Current Access to Digital Services, Digital Literacy Levels, Perception of Public Service Efficiency, and Willingness to Engage Digitally. Secondly, the conceptualization of the study is guided by the DOST Smart City Framework (2021) and DICT Digital City (2025). The findings of the study highlight Malabon's strong potential for digitalizing governance. Expected improvements in public services include faster transaction times for permits and licenses, more accessible information, and streamlined application processes. The study reveals that digital platforms can significantly boost citizen engagement through real-time feedback mechanisms and participatory budgeting.

Keywords: *SMART City, public service, citizen engagement, Malabon City*

FROM LOCAL TO GLOBAL: EXPLORING THE DEVELOPMENT OF DAMPALIT AS A SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE FOR LOGISTICS AND TRADE IN MALABON CITY

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ABSTRACT

The proposed transformation of Dampalit, Malabon City, into a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) for logistics and trade represents a strategic move to leverage its coastal location and connectivity, aiming to catapult the city onto a global economic stage. This study assesses the viability, opportunities, and challenges inherent in this ambitious undertaking. This research is paramount. given the Philippines' drive to attract foreign direct investment and bolster its position in regional and global supply chains. SEZs, particularly focused on digitally integrated logistics, are proven catalysts for economic growth, generating employment, enhancing trade efficiencies, and promoting technology transfer. For Malabon City, historically characterized by residential and light industrial activities, such a development could signify a profound economic paradigm shift towards digital and global transformation in logistics and trade. Despite the recognized benefits of SEZs, a critical knowledge gap persists regarding the specific application and localized impact of establishing a major logistics and trade SEZ within a densely populated, urban coastal area in the Philippines. The study explores the development potential of Dampalit as a Special Economic Zone for logistics and trade, analyzing the opportunities it presents for economic growth and investment attraction. It aims to identify specific advantages that Dampalit offers as a logistics hub; analyze the infrastructural, environmental, and socio-economic hurdles to be overcome; and propose strategic recommendations for planning, development, community, and digital integration. This research employs a descriptive-quantitative design to assess the viability and localized impacts of establishing a major logistics and trade SEZ in Barangay Dampalit, Malabon. The study primarily quantifies perceptions, existing conditions, and economic projections to provide a comprehensive understanding of its potential and challenges. The quantitative data includes sections designed to ascertain Perceived Geographical Advantages and Digital Infrastructural Readiness, Perceived Economic Benefits, and Perceived Socio-Environmental Challenges. Key findings highlight Dampalit's significant potential due to its strategic location along Manila Bay, offering direct access to shipping routes and existing road networks, making it ideal for warehousing, distribution centers, and export-oriented processing. The establishment of the SEZ is expected to attract substantial foreign and local investments and generate numerous job opportunities in digitally-integrated global logistics, trade, and related support services, mirroring the employment generation observed in other Philippine SEZs.

Keywords: *Development, special economic zone, logistic and trade, Malabon City*

BRANDING INTIMACY IN THE DIGITAL AGE: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF DATING APPLICATIONS AND CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT

In the era of digital socialization, dating applications have emerged as influential platforms that merge interpersonal interaction with strategic brand positioning (Statista, 2024). This study is guided primarily by the Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), which emphasizes the active role of users in selecting media to fulfil psychological, social, and functional needs (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974). Within the context of dating apps, UGT explains how individuals pursue companionship, entertainment, identity expression, and even status-seeking through interactive features (Whiting & Williams, 2013; Quan-Haase & Young, 2010). Complementing this, the Brand Identity Prism (Kapferer, 2012) and concepts of consumer brand engagement (Brodie et al., 2011) provide insights into how app interfaces, subscription models, and 'gamified experiences' are strategically designed to foster trust and loyalty. Thus, dating applications are theorized not only as mediators of personal relationships but also as branded environments where user gratification intersects with corporate identity and market differentiation. Methodologically, a comparative content analysis of 32 globally and regionally popular dating applications was conducted, evaluating brand identity and consumer engagement parameters. These included storage size, user ratings, download volume, pricing models (free, freemium, or paid), platform availability, ownership details, language offerings, and visual–textual interface design (Google Play Store, 2025; Apple App Store, 2025). Findings indicate that lightweight apps prioritize accessibility for wider demographics, while feature-rich platforms emphasize exclusivity, interactivity, and gamification to deepen engagement (Feng et al., 2021). Ratings (3.8–4.5) and download ranges (500,000–100 million) reveal distinct patterns of consumer trust and brand loyalty, shaped by aesthetics, usability, and subscription structures. This study advances communication scholarship by demonstrating how dating apps operate as consumer-facing brands, strategically blending gratification-driven use with brand management practices. It contributes both theoretical insights and practical frameworks for enhancing consumer engagement, loyalty, and brand trust in the age of digital socialization and social media-driven communication.

Keywords: *Brand management, consumer engagement, dating applications, digital socialization, Uses and Gratifications Theory*

PR AND DIPLOMACY IN THE DIGITAL AGE: AN ANALYSIS OF INDIA'S ACTIVITIES POST OPERATION SINDOOR

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ABSTRACT

The nature of public diplomacy has undergone a significant transformation in the current digital and networked environment. Governments are increasingly utilizing digital communication platforms to inform and influence international perception during crises. This study critically examines the Indian government's strategic communication efforts following Operation Sindoor, a counter-terrorism operation launched on 7 May 2025 in response to terrorist attacks in Pahalgam, Kashmir. Although brief, the operation prompted an immediate and coordinated campaign of public relations and digital diplomacy aimed at justifying India's actions, gaining global support, and shaping its international narrative. To unravel and understand how nations engage in reputation management and influence operations, especially in crisis contexts, this research used a framework combining Soft Power theory (Nye,1990), Public Diplomacy (Signitzer & Coombs, 1992), Strategic Communication (Hallahan et al., 2007) and Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) (Coombs, 2007). To trace the flow of strategic messaging from crisis onset through media deployment to international reception, four interlinked constructs (listed below) were analyzed to gather a structured view of state-led influence efforts.

1. Crisis Context – The triggering event (Operation Sindoor) and its framing as a legitimate response to external aggression
2. Government Public Relations Activities – Including press briefings, diplomatic outreach, and parliamentary visits aimed at narrative construction
3. Digital Communication Tools – Utilization of social media, video messages, and digital diplomacy to amplify messaging
4. Public Diplomacy Outcomes – Assessed in terms of international perception, narrative resonance, and soft power enhancement

Additionally, SCCT offered insight into India's crisis response strategy. In terms of methodology, we employed discourse analysis of press releases, official statements, video messages, and social media content, with particular attention to the digital engagements of Members of Parliament who went on international diplomatic missions post the crisis. This research contributes to the scholarship on digital diplomacy, government strategic communication, and crisis PR by demonstrating how nation-states integrate traditional and digital media strategies to assert legitimacy, exercise soft power, and shape global narratives. It also offers a replicable framework for analyzing similar cases of crisis-driven public diplomacy in a hyper-connected global communication landscape.

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS AND CONTENT CREATORS ON GEN Z'S PRO-SOCIAL AND ACTIVIST OUTLOOK: A META-ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

The receptivity to digital influences of Gen Z, the generation of the first true digital-natives, is unique. Coexisting with the inherent values, it shapes their information consumption practices, identity and social engagements. Despite a growing interest in the topic, a comprehensive synthesis of the empirical evidence on the role of social media influencers (SMIs) and other content creators on Gen Z's pro-social behaviors (voluntary actions that benefit the society) and activist outlook (engagement in activities that lead to social change) remains elusive. This meta-analysis seeks to address the gap by synthesizing diverse academic perspectives, shedding light on the underlying mechanisms of digital influence, key moderating factors, and highlighting emerging trends like "de-influencing." It also offers a robust framework for understanding and leveraging digital media to foster positive social change among the youth. The analysis is theoretically grounded primarily in the Uses and Gratifications Theory and Public Opinion Theory, so as to provide a comprehensive lens to understand the needs-driven consumption of social media content by GenZ and how it shapes their views on the society. The digital tools are instrumental in amplifying youth voices, facilitating rapid mobilization, and increasing awareness for critical social and political causes. At the same time, there exist several challenges in translating this extensive digital engagement to sustained and tangible offline changes. The findings will be imperative for educators and policymakers to prioritize the cultivation of critical digital literacy among the generation. It is essential for effectively navigating the complex landscape of online influences. For socio-political organizations and advocacy groups, the strategic formation of partnerships with credible SMIs and content creators are identified as vital for developing impactful campaigns.

Keywords: *Generation Z, social media influencers, content creators, user-generated content, pro-social behavior, Uses and Gratifications Theory, public opinion, activism, digital activism, meta-analysis*

PARALLEL SESSION M:

SPECIAL SESSION: MULTI-LANGUAGE ABSTRACTS

多智能体协同的金融虚假新闻治理与智能舆情调控研究 —— 基于闭环迭代与结构方程模型的实证分析

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ABSTRACT

在数字传播生态系统中，生成式AI的快速发展催生了新型虚假新闻生产模式，其扩散机制及对公众认知建构的影响是传播学关键议题。路透社研究所2025数字新闻报告显示，全球58%受访者担忧区分真假新闻的能力，而传统事实核查因依赖静态数据库、缺乏动态响应，难应对实时误导信息，亟需智能化治理方案——AI幻觉会放大情绪偏差与不实信息，引发侵蚀公众信任、加剧信息不平等、投资者决策偏差等社会问题，凸显数字化转型下媒体伦理治理的紧迫性。本研究以“生成-检测-反馈”闭环的多智能体协同模型为理论支撑，通过AI生成含轻微幻觉偏差的科技企业财经新闻摘要，经模型多轮迭代优化得到中立版摘要；继而以两类摘要为基础面向中国金融相关人士开展调研，围绕AI幻觉感知、伦理担忧等维度收集反馈,采用结构方程模型分析变量关系、检验假设。实验结果显示，框架对企业虚假新闻识别准确率达95%，五项假设中仅“框架干预效果受AI经验调节”假设未获支持，证实多智能体协作框架的闭环机制可通过伦理担忧的中介作用，有效减少AI生成新闻的偏差影响，显著提升公众信任水平并优化投资者行为决策。该发现将多智能体协同模型从技术层面抽象为传播学实证研究模型，结合金融语境深化了媒体责任探讨。

Keywords: 虚假新闻检测；多智能体协同；闭环迭代；结构方程模型；媒介信息风控；智能舆情治理

人工智能大模型驱动下虚假新闻的生成与扩散机制——以新浪微博“智搜”功能为例

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ABSTRACT

[背景/意义]

虚假新闻是数字新闻生态重要议题，既有研究多聚焦宏观应用与新闻伦理，缺乏对具体技术形态导致假新闻传播的实证研究。2025年初，新浪微博“智搜”功能上线，其通过AI模型整合平台内容提供信息检索服务。本研究以智搜为例，探究AI技术如何促成虚假新闻产播。

[方法/过程]

文献资料、内容分析法为主：梳理智搜运行机制；跟踪2025年3-6月间智搜对91条热点新闻的回答，分析其信源与文本构成；比对智搜回答与原始信源，记录分析事实性错误。

[结果/结论]

样本中事实性虚假信息占比约15%，其主要源于两类问题：一是信源本身错误，信源以“大V”（具有平台认证的账号）博文为主，部分“大V”发布的虚假信息被直接纳入参考；二是内容识别误读，算法对反讽、网络用语的理解存在偏差。

信源内容的同质化、反馈与把关机制的缺失加剧虚假信息扩散。一方面，“大V”内容存在趋同，部分为机器人批量发布，内容重复率极高，算法对高频内容的优先聚合进一步扩散信息。另一方面，用户反馈机制不透明，错误信息修正不公开；专业媒体把关人角色缺失，人工复核环节被弱化，且更聚焦敏感词过滤，延长了虚假信息存续周期。

但智搜回答中“争议”等表述高频出现，常以多元观点并置的方式呈现内容，一定程度上削弱了虚假信息传播。

研究建议平台优化信源权重设置与语义理解模型、引入专业媒体把关并建立透明反馈机制。

Keywords: 人工智能；数字新闻实践；虚假新闻；新闻分发；新浪微博智搜

EXPERIMENT ON OPTIMIZING THE DISSEMINATION EFFECT OF WARNING SELF-NARRATIVE VIDEOS ON DOUYIN CHINA

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ABSTRACT

中国过去五年电诈关联犯罪55.9万余人，案损近千亿。据联合国最新报告，有关电诈造成的全球经济损失超万亿，遇害人数超百万。电信诈骗已然成为中国乃至世界的关注焦点之一。以电诈主题为代表的自述警示类视频是被害人自发讲述被诈或被骗经过、自制视频并发布成功的影音信息，它的出现弥合了媒体与受众间的隔阂，也拓宽了权威的边界。抖音电诈自述视频中，文字和影像两部分在影响受众意识与行为方面存在线性关系。对遴选后的6组28个视频的文字与影像内容进行定量的规整、提取与分类，探究其影响因素与形成路径。具体而言，事实维度包含“准确”和“新东西”两个子项，价值维度则包括“愤怒”、“同情”、“恐惧”和“反思”四个子项。在分析层面上，这些维度进一步分为影响受众“意识”和“行为”的两大方面。通过SEM对假设进行验证后发现，视频的文字部分显著增强了受众对电诈事实的认识，影像部分则在行为层面提高了防范行动产生或深化的可能性。在此基础上，情景危机沟通理论为后续的传播效果优化提出了针对“传者个体磁场”、“在线平台损益”和“受众群体捕获”三个不同维度的优化切口。这将促使从传授关系内部提出提高传播效果的发轫力量，为议题的优化提供亚洲方案。

Keywords: *Warning, self-narrative video, dissemination effect, Douyin, Chinese mainland*

当AI收割人类爱欲——AI同人产品的“情感殖民”及伦理困境

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ABSTRACT

近年来deepseek、sora等AI应用如雨后春笋般不断涌现，也渗透着娱乐偶像产业。以AI同人产品为代表的新型数字情感经济逐渐兴起。AI同人产品利用深度学习技术，模拟真人明星的言行举止，甚至创造出与真人明星的虚拟亲密关系，吸引着越来越多的粉丝投入情感和金钱，深刻重构了粉丝文化中的情感实践方式。本文以韩国偶像团体EXO的粉丝群体为研究对象，采用潜入粉丝社群进行长期参与式观察、设计发放问卷、深度访谈等研究方法，分析其背后的技术逻辑、社会心理和伦理问题并提出应对策略，以期为构建人机和谐共处的未来社会提供参考。研究发现，AI同人产品在技术驱动、市场需求转变、创作主体多元化以及社交传播等因素的推动下在娱乐产业中逐渐崛起，利用“套娃式”收费等策略进行商业化收割，将粉丝对偶像的情感投射转化为可持续消费的数据劳工，形成“情感-消费-数据-情感”的闭环。但同时也让用户陷入病态依赖的“情感陷阱”、现实社交能力退化的“赛博代偿”等现象，引发隐私与人格权危机、数字剥削风险、法律滞后性等伦理困境。为此本文提出了从法律规制、技术纠偏、行业自治到社会共治的多层次治理框架，旨在找到技术创新和伦理规范之间的平衡点，推动AI技术向善发展。

Keywords: AI同人产品；情感殖民；粉丝文化；数字剥削；技术伦理

归化与非归化运动员的网络舆论危机差异研究——基于SCCT理论与拟剧论的分析

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ABSTRACT

随着我国归化运动员数量增多及互联网舆论环境的复杂化，运动员面临的舆论危机呈现差异化特征。本研究以戈夫曼的拟剧论为框架，将公共媒体视为“前台表演”空间，分析运动员的自我呈现策略，并运用库布斯的危机情境沟通理论（SCCT），对比本土与非归化运动员面临的危机类型及应对策略差异。本研究选取微博作为数据来源，选取本土运动员在大型赛事期间的动态及归化运动员自入籍以来的全部微博文本，剔除广告帖和重复帖后通过jieba分词工具进行文本预处理，结合BosonNLP情感词典和体育领域词库进行情感分析，构建情感得分时间序列，采用滑动窗口法判断危机强度并归类分析，量化负面评论占比和情绪波动指数，以反映两类运动员面临的舆论压力差异。研究发现，本土运动员的舆论危机类型单一，集中于赛场表现不佳等“意外型危机”，舆论压力受成绩单变量主导。归化运动员则面临“意外型”与“可预防型”（如文化表态争议、身份认同问题）的双重危机，且危机具有话题叠加性与高持续性特征。在应对策略上，本土运动员依赖成绩导向的单一回应，而归化运动员需综合运用“支持+淡化+重建”的组合策略以应对多元质疑。结果表明，归化运动员因文化疏离性与身份特殊性，舆论危机管理更具挑战性。

Keywords: 情境危机传播理论；拟剧论；归化运动员；舆论危机；危机应对策略

EXPLORING THE LIFEWORLD OF TRANSWOMEN USING NONPRESCRIPTION GENDER-AFFIRMING HORMONE THERAPY (GAHT) IN CEBU CITY

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the lifeworld of transwomen in Cebu City who use nonprescription Gender-Affirming Hormone Therapy (GAHT), addressing a critical and emerging issue in Asian health communication and gender rights. The study is highly relevant to current trends in the region, where barriers to trans-affirming healthcare persist and informal self-medication practices are widespread yet understudied. Using Genderlect Styles Theory by Deborah Tannen as the theoretical lens, the study examines how transwomen communicate, seek information, and construct meaning around their health choices in a context marked by limited formal medical support and ongoing societal discrimination. The study adopted Husserl's phenomenological approach, employing unstructured in-depth interviews, participant observation, and journaling to capture rich, nuanced accounts of participants' motivations, challenges, decision-making processes, perceived risks and benefits, and the multidimensional effects of self-medication. Importantly, the study focused exclusively on self-medicating transwomen; local pharmacists and online sellers were not included as interview participants. This approach centers the lived realities, motivations, and perspectives of transwomen themselves, particularly regarding how they access and use nonprescription GAHT and navigate related challenges. Findings reveal that the pursuit of gender affirmation and authenticity is a primary motivation for nonprescription GAHT use. The convenience and accessibility of hormones through informal networks such as local pharmacies, online sellers, and peer groups make self-medication both a practical solution and a necessity in the face of financial constraints, stigma, and a lack of knowledgeable, trans-affirming healthcare providers. While self-medication can increase self-esteem and gender congruence, it also poses significant risks, including improper dosing, unmanaged side effects, and psychological distress from misinformation and discrimination. The study underscores the vital role of peer networks and social support in providing practical advice and emotional affirmation, helping transwomen cope with the challenges of self-medication and societal exclusion. However, the prevalence of unreliable information and the absence of reliable medical guidance highlight the urgent need for targeted health communication strategies and inclusive healthcare policies. Ethical research protocols were strictly observed: participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained, confidentiality and anonymity were maintained, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage. By illuminating the communicative and experiential dimensions of nonprescription GAHT use among transwomen, this study contributes to the advancement of Asian communication theory and practice and offers valuable insights for healthcare practitioners, policymakers, and advocates seeking to improve access to gender-affirming healthcare and promote health equity in the region.

Keywords: *Gender-affirming hormone therapy, transwomen, nonprescription, self-medication, lifeworld*

DEVELOPING AN AI GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNICATION, MEDIA AND JOURNALISM EDUCATION IN BANGLADESH

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ABSTRACT

Despite controversies, resistance, and skepticism from different ends, the integration of AI has become imperative in the teaching-learning and research processes. Faculty, researchers, and academics have already accepted the inevitability of integrating AI and emphasized the ethical use of it. As such, there have been efforts to formulate ethical guidelines. Examples include UNESCO's AI ethics guidelines, the Global Alliance's (GA) Responsible AI Principles for the PR and Communication Profession, the European Commission's Ethical Guidelines on the Use of Artificial Intelligence and Data in Teaching and Learning for Educators, etc. Many academic and professional organizations adopted these guidelines for their purposes, or developed their own guidelines. Relevant studies in Bangladesh highlighted concerns about academic integrity, pedagogical challenges, and the lack of institutional support for integrating GenAI in education (Mirajul Islam et al., 2024). So far, no integrated effort has been seen in this regard in Bangladesh, except for the Communication and Journalism Educators' Network (CJEN) Bangladesh signing on to the Venice Pledge on the Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence in Communications, which endorses GA's AI Principles for the PR and Communication Profession. As such, there is an urgent need for a comprehensive context-specific ethical guideline on AI for communication, media studies, and journalism education in Bangladesh. In this backdrop, this study aims to develop a comprehensive ethical AI governance framework to address issues such as algorithmic bias, transparency, academic integrity, and data privacy. Methodologically, through consultation meetings, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions, this study outlines requirements for GenAI users to enable their ethical and effective use of such an AI Governance Framework for communication and journalism in Bangladesh. Findings and insights from stakeholders, faculties, academics, researchers, media practitioners, and journalists highlight the 'human-centeredd and pedagogically appropriate interaction approach. This approach towards an AI governance framework proposes a number of steps and policy measures to ensure its ethical, safe, equitable, and meaningful use. The outcome will be a set of actionable, context-specific standards to guide responsible AI deployment in higher education as well as to shape the ethical practices of AI in the communication, media, and journalism industry.

Keywords: *Bangladesh, AI ethics, AI governance framework, communication, PR and media, journalism*

TOWARDS A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK: FACULTY READINESS FOR AI INTEGRATION IN COMMUNICATION, MEDIA STUDIES AND JOURNALISM EDUCATION IN BANGLADESH

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ABSTRACT

The education sector has been significantly affected by the rapid emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its impact. The inception and exponential development of Generative AI is rapidly changing pedagogical practices. It is crucial for communication, media studies and journalism educators to address the issue as all related professional areas are getting fast-reshaped with AI integration. However, by 2024 only 10% of higher education faculty in Bangladesh have received formal AI training, leaving a significant skill and knowledge gap. The status is unknown so far in the case of the faculty members in communication, media studies and journalism programs. In this backdrop, this study aims to answer the following research question: "To what extent are the communication, media studies and journalism faculty in Bangladesh ready to integrate AI tools into their pedagogical activities; what factors affect their readiness, and what professional development strategies can support this integration?" The study uses an exploratory and mixed-methods approach. It consults Davis' (1989) Technology Acceptance Model and Mishra and Koehler's (2006) Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) as theoretical frameworks. For data gathering, online surveys comprised of mostly MCQ and rating/scaling questions, and in-depth interviews were used. From about 200 faculty members working in 25 communication, media and journalism schools in the country, we planned to include 100 faculty members in the survey. All full-time faculty members were considered as potential respondents while at least one year of continuous teaching was set as the inclusion criteria for adjunct faculty members. The study includes in-depth interviews of 10 faculty members in administrative positions (Head of Department, Coordinator, etc.). Data analysis techniques included inferential statistics (mean, standard deviation, media, Pearson's coefficient) using SPSS for the quantitative data and, thematic analysis and discourse analysis for the narrative data. Based on the insights gathered, the study aims to propose a structured professional development framework that includes modular training, peer-learning initiatives, and continuous evaluation to prepare educators for effective AI integration which in turn is aimed at producing future-ready graduates of communication, media and journalism professions in an AI-mediated ecology. The outcome will guide university administrators, accreditation bodies, and policymakers in Bangladesh and in South Asia to invest strategically in faculty development, to foster resilient, tech-ready next generation communication, media and journalism professionals. The study is in progress and the findings will be presented during the conference and elsewhere.

Keywords: *Bangladesh, AI in education, communication, media studies and journalism, faculty readiness, professional development*

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENTS IN BANGLADESHI MEDIA HOUSES: INSIGHTS FROM MEDIA EMPLOYEES

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ABSTRACT

The massive boom in the digital transition of Bangladeshi media outlets has redefined newsroom cultures, content production, and audience engagement. Our qualitative study explores the perceptions and the experiences of media employees regarding the technological transformation in seven selected media houses in Bangladesh: DBC, Rtv, Somoynews, Maasranga, Ekushey TV, Nagorik TV and Desh tv. W used an interpretivist approach; data were gathered through in-depth interviews with 24 participants, supplemented by document reviews and limited newsroom observations. Our thematic analysis revealed three dominant patterns: a progressive adaptation to new advanced technologies driven by market competition, institutional resistance arising from insufficient training and infrastructural gaps and emerging opportunities for cross-platform content innovation. Respondents addressed digital tools as indispensable for future sustainability but expressed genuine concerns about tremendous workload, unreliability of job security, and the slow decline of traditional journalistic values. Our findings from the study suggest that efficient digital transitions require not only technological advancements but also comprehensive capacity building and a shift in organizational media culture. Our study presents the understanding of human dimensions of digitalization in the Bangladeshi Media Industry, providing insights for news-policymakers, media managers, and scholars interested in the intersection of digital transformation and journalism. This study contributes to the scarce body of scholarship on South Asian digital newsrooms by highlighting the lived experiences of media employees in Bangladesh, an angle which often overlooked in the existing literature which focuses on the technological infrastructure. However, by placing the findings within the broader context of Asian media transformation, it further advances understanding of how institutional practices, human instincts and cultural contexts intersect to adapt the digital transformation in journalism.

Keywords: *Digital transformation, Bangladeshi media, newsroom culture, journalism practices, media employee experiences*

AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF THE 240-HOUR VISA-FREE POLICY ON CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION: A CASE STUDY OF ISHOWSPEED'S LIVESTREAMS IN CHINA

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ABSTRACT

Within the context of globalization, and as international exchanges and cooperation intensify, cultural collisions and integration persistently drive global development, establishing cross-cultural communication as a key pathway for national image building. This study leverages the implementation of China's 240-hour visa-free transit policy. Analyzing a sample of 107,000 YouTube comments from live streams conducted by top-tier influencer IShowSpeed across eight Chinese cities, the study explores the significance of this visa policy concerning how extended stays by foreign tourists impact cross-cultural communication. Employing a mixed-methods research approach, this study integrates Edward Said's critique of Orientalism with Homi Bhabha's Third Space theory to empirically examine the effectiveness of such policies on cross-cultural communication. VADER sentiment analysis quantifies audience sentiment polarity, while LDA topic modeling and Gephi semantic network analysis are employed to deconstruct shifts in the discourse framework. This methodology addresses two primary research questions: Does policy empowerment facilitate positive cross-cultural communication? Does this live-streaming event constitute a breakthrough in traditional Orientalist discourse? The findings reveal that live-stream viewers' emotional evaluations of China improved significantly as the broadcast progressed. Concurrently, commentary shifted from Orientalist spectacle towards normalized narrative. The 240-hour visa-free transit policy facilitates a shift in China's image, moving from what Said defined as the spectacle of the Other towards what Homi Bhabha describes as co-creators of meaning. This shift is enabled by creating a window for deep immersion and contact. Thus, the study provides a novel theoretical model and practical pathway for empowering cross-cultural communication through short-term policy interventions.

Keywords: *China's 240-hour visa-free transit policy, cross-cultural communication, Orientalism, Third Space, IShowSpeed*

GENDERED MARKETING: INFLUENCE OF GENDER ROLES IN SELECTED PHILIPPINE ADVERTISEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study examined how gendered marketing navigates digital transformation on YouTube among Filipino consumers, focusing on the portrayal of gender roles among the selected 30 Philippine advertisements. The researchers analyzed the content of these advertisements, and later on drew insights from a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) that was participated by 12 Laguna University students aged 18-24. The research analyzed whether the digital advertising platform YouTube is reshaping or reinforcing traditional gender norms. Thematic analysis of the advertisements revealed that, despite the digital shift, entrenched gender stereotypes persist. Men are still predominantly depicted as protectors, providers, and embodiments of strength and ambition, often linked to products such as energy drinks and alcohol. Women, conversely, are commonly shown as nurturers and caregivers, associated with beauty, hygiene, and domestic tasks. This pattern reinforces the notion that certain products are inherently suited to specific genders, thereby limiting consumer choice and perpetuating traditional roles. FGD responses further illuminate the impact of these portrayals. Participants acknowledged the strong influence of digital advertising on their perceptions and internalization of gender norms. While they observed a gradual emergence of more diverse and inclusive representations, such as women in professional and athletic roles, these changes remain limited. Men continue to be underrepresented in categories like beauty and self-care, signaling that digital transformation has not fully dismantled old biases. Overall, the study highlights that while digital platforms like YouTube offer opportunities for more progressive and inclusive marketing, significant biases remain. The persistence of traditional gender portrayals, even in digitally mediated spaces, suggests that the pace of change is slow and uneven. The research underscores the need for a more inclusive approach in digital marketing to foster genuine gender equality. The framework developed through this study provides practical guidance for crafting gender-inclusive advertisements, aiming to deepen understanding of advertising's impact on gender roles and support the creation of more equitable marketing strategies in the Philippines.

Keywords: *Gendered marketing, gender roles, Philippine advertisements, gender stereotypes, digital transformation*

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