



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Use of Social Networking Sites among Journalists in Karnataka, India

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, the buzz around social media and the rapid expansion of social networking and microblogging have led journalists to frequently utilize social networking sites. Numerous journalists in Karnataka have recognized the potential of social networking sites and integrated them into their professional activities, which plays an essential role in the newsroom. This study identified the main purpose underlying Karnataka's print media journalists in utilizing social networking sites, using a survey research method with a well-designed questionnaire tool to elicit data from respondents. A total of 230 responses were collected and it was found that Facebook, Twitter, and Whatsapp were the most popular social networking sites. In addition, it is demonstrated that a substantial number of journalists use social media and microblogging sites for professional purposes, primarily to gather news. Additional research indicates that social networking sites are linked to the issue of fake news. Consequently, the majority of journalists utilize Google News Checker and Alt News to combat the issue. In addition to social networking sites, the research reveals that Karnataka journalists utilized alternative media platforms such as Scrollin, The Wire, and One India. The study aids librarians and information specialists in comprehending the information-seeking behavior of journalists, allowing them to provide the necessary resources for their development.

Keywords: Social Networking Sites, Social Media, Facebook, Twitter, Journalists, Reporters, Newsgathering, Media Professionals, Karnataka

Introduction :

The development of ICT has resulted in profound societal changes, leading to the emergence of a fourth wave society (using the Alvin Toffler concept of waves, we can name the technological age as the fourth wave). The fourth wave of society is dominated by social networking sites, which have brought about various changes in individuals' lives. So, individuals have varying perspectives on social networking sites, for instance Watermeyer, who views them as a way to remain connected with people regardless of their physical location; Griffiths, who views them as a way to engage with friends and make new friends with similar interests through the internet; Allison, who views it as a way to market their services; and Hagman, who views it as a way to not only communicate story more widely than ever before, but also spend much more time tagging along with the story (Science Direct, 2021). We regard social networking sites as a trinity of followers, content creators and content. The trio has popularized social networking sites and

helped in achieving extensive growth. This proliferation of social networking sites has fostered widespread collaboration and content sharing for personal or societal benefit.

Social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Pinterest, and Flickr have more than four billion users (Kemp, 2021). The majority of followers, who can be categorized as users, have professional interests in addition to their desire for social interaction and entertainment. Specifically, the majority of Indian users engage in professional activities on social networking sites (Dean, 2021). Academicians, marketing professionals, business professionals, professional writers, including journalists, etc., are also content creators. These users regularly contribute to discussions and provide feedback. Overall, social networking sites have transformed their users into contact lists, empowering them to generate content and enhancing their role in content creation. Journalists have relied heavily on social networking sites and provided content for various purposes on social networking sites. This article attempts to identify the purpose and professional use of social networking sites by Karnataka's print media journalists in their professional activities.

Review of Literature

This section highlights some of the most significant publications that show the use of social media and microblogging sites among journalists. Journalists have utilized different social media and microblogging sites in addition to mainstream news houses to communicate with readers. Journalists have preferred Twitter as they believe it is more professional in nature and that its followers/readers are more receptive in receiving information from it (Craig & Yousaf, 2013). Additionally they consider Twitter as a news source and a channel to distribute news (Brandtzaeg & Chaparro Domínguez, 2018). Several studies show that Facebook is used by the majority of journalists apart from Twitter, as many government organizations and authorities use Facebook for professional assignments (Zhang & Li, 2020), promoting their media houses and to create awareness among users about the news articles (Rahman, Zannat, and Joyti 2018). WhatsApp is also been used by journalists for personal and professional purposes, especially for internal official discussion (Kumari, 2018), it is also used by Tamilnadu university students for communicating with friends, for obtaining information, building interpersonal relationship, sharing trending data, volunteering with civil society and students' organizations and for collaborating with experts (Balamurugan & Thanuskodi, 2019). Youtube is used as a social media channel by Indian TV journalists (Pradhan & Kumari, 2018). On the whole, social networking sites have blended into journalists' daily work and have influenced editorial decisions (Kumari, 2018). It has eliminated boundaries between journalists and readers and opened new channels for conversation.

Social networking sites have provided a new environment for journalists to practice journalism (Jian and Liu 2018). Journalists use them for different purposes, some journalists use them for identifying story ideas (Broersma and Graham 2013), whereas some use them for identifying story ideas and to communicating their news to readers. Whereas Jordan journalist use social networking sites for generating story ideas, clarifying the doubts of the idea, identifying problems confronting people, getting into news sources, interacting with readers, and for maintaining public profiles as part of their professional work (Gillis and Johnson 2015). Similarly, France and USA journalists use social networking sites for completing day-to-day activities like identifying story ideas, gathering information, attracting readers and they use social networking sites as a discussion forum to show their significance to journalism and primarily for engaging with their peers (Powers and Vera-Zambrano 2018). Whereas, Hindi news journalists use social networking sites heavily for news gathering, sharing links to the stories on various social media platforms for drawing traffic to their news websites, and also forgetting the feedback of readers spontaneously (Pradhan & Kumari, 2018). Further it is also used for increasing productivity and sourcing stories (Sinha, Bhattacharjee, and Bhattacharjee 2014). Social networking sites particularly Twitter is used for sharing news and responding to user reviews, to excel professionally, market news articles, expand the reader base and to create a positive image of the media house (Pathak 2018). Additionally, tweets are utilized to show depth to the news articles by including quotations (Broersma and Graham 2013).

Social networking sites are seen as an alternative medium for publishing news, gathering news, communicating and facilitating journalistic work. Some journalists however, disagree with the positive impact of social networking sites as an alternative medium for communication. They prefer, in person interview, phone conversation and mail communication for the news-gathering process since they do not trust social networking sites (Gillis & Johnson, 2015). It is also viewed as a complex environment (Gehrke &

Benetti, 2020) with equal agreement and disagreement on the favorable impact of social networking sites as few issues are associated with them apart from their positive impact (Balamurugan & Thanuskodi, 2019). Fake news is considered a significant issue by journalists during usage of social networking sites. Several authors (Zhang & Li, 2020); (Pitabas Pradhan & Kumari, 2018) have proved that the journalists are concerned about authenticity and validity of the news on social networking sites since large volume of subscriber generated content are difficult to verify for its authenticity. Apart from this, identifying hate news, providing breaking news, being neutral on the subject of news are other challenges (Craig & Yousaf, 2013). Recent studies have revealed that journalists are quoting tweets in their news articles, which is creating a problem for journalism and the relationship between journalist and source (Broersma & Graham, 2013). Some journalists consider social networking sites as a technological hype, which will soon lead to redundancy in journalism (Djerf-Pierre et al., 2016).

The review of literature revealed two major gaps in the research. First one is the gap in studying Karnataka journalist's opinion on social networking sites. Second one is gap in identifying challenges, perspective of journalists on social media and opinion on social networking sites.

Objectives of the study

The study investigates the journalists in Karnataka to understand the use of social media and microblogging sites for professional purposes and attempts to

- To determine the purpose of using social networking sites by Karnataka journalists
- To identify the alternative media platform used by Karnataka journalists for gathering information and opinion of journalists on alternative media platform
- To comprehend journalists' perspectives on social networking sites

Methodology:

Survey approach was adopted for conducting the present study. A well-designed questionnaire was used for data collection. The total population included journalists working for leading newspaper publishing firms namely Times of India, Deccan Herald, The Hindu, Indian Express, Bangalore Mirror, Vijay Karnataka, Prajavani, Udayavani, Vijayavani, Hosa Diganta, Indian Express, The Hindu and Kannada Prabha (in Kannada / English language) located in Karnataka, India. A total of 320 questionnaires were randomly distributed to print media journalists using offline (personal visit) and online (Google Forms) modes from 1st March to 30th September 2021. Among them completely filled 230 (78.25%) responses were received. The data so collected has been tabulated and the results are presented in the following sections. 5-point Likert Scale is used in few questions to measure respondents' opinion or behaviors regarding the extent to which they agree or disagree with a particular question or statement. Weighted Mean has been calculated based on reverse coding. Reverse coding of items helps in improving the validity of the scale (Jozsa and Morgan, 2017).

Analysis and Discussion :

The collected data from Karnataka journalists is tabulated and presented for better understanding of the study.

Demographic Information:

As shown in Table 1, responses from male are at a greater rate (63.04 %) than female (36.96%). As a corollary, we may infer that the study results are slightly skewed in favor of male journalists. It also shows journalists aged between 25-45 years are higher (76.95%) than Journalists aged above 45 years. Study also reveals that, nearly half of the journalists work without obtaining a Bachelor's degree in journalism and only 23.78% have a Master's degree in journalism. Further it demonstrates that the 44.35% of the respondents are reporters.

Table 1: Personal data of Respondents

Variable	Value	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	145	63.04
	Female	085	36.96
Age Group	25-30	051	22.17
	31-35	043	18.70
	36-40	047	20.43
	41-45	036	15.65
	46-50	022	09.57
	50 Above	031	13.48
Education Background	Journalism Background	121	52.61
	Non - Journalism Background	109	47.39
Education Qualification	Bachelor's Degree	043	18.70
	Master's Degree	056	24.35
	PG Diploma	033	14.35
	Others	098	42.61
Category-wise Distribution	Reporters	102	44.35
	Editorial Staff	084	36.52
	Press Staff	029	12.61
	Administrative Staff	008	03.48
	Other staff	007	03.04

Participation in Social Networking Sites

Many journalists consider social networking sites as an alternate channel for broadcasting news and branding their news houses (Zhang & Li, 2020), it is important to identify whether or not all journalists in Karnataka share the same opinion and engage in social networking sites. The findings revealed that a majority (91.27%) of journalists are actively engaged, although a smaller number of journalists are not actively engaged in social networking sites for their professional or personal work (Table-2). The results of this research supported the outcomes of earlier studies on social networking sites usage (Rahman, Zannat, & Jyoti, 2018). This demonstrates that a few journalists in Karnataka have rejected the advantages of social networking sites while the majority of them have included social networking sites in their daily routine.

Table 2. Participation in Social Media Networking Sites

Sl.No	Participation in Social Networking Sites	Total	Percentage
1	Yes	230	91.27
2	No	22	08.73
Total		252	100

Preference of Social Networking Sites

The social networking sites have brought the news to people, allowing them to express their views freely. Our study revealed that WhatsApp followed by Facebook are the most used social networking sites as only 2 and 5 journalists respectively never used them (Table-3). Previous studies have revealed that Twitter and Facebook are the most preferred sites among journalists in western countries (Brandtzaeg & Chaparro Domínguez, 2018); (Zhang & Li, 2020). Whereas in India, especially in Karnataka WhatsApp which is ranked first and Facebook which is ranked second are most preferred social networking sites by journalists, which further confirms the studies by Indian authors (Meenakshi & Gupta, 2019). Our study also demonstrates that Karnataka journalists are not confined to one social networking site, rather they use more than five on an average for publishing news or engaging in personal activities. This shows Karnataka

journalists interest in using multiple social networking sites to reach a large number of readers. This may be due to the increasing usage of smartphones, which offers easy connective to different social networking sites through apps and provides alerts on likes, comments and share, in which many journalists may be interested for knowing the statistics of their news items.

The study also measured the frequency of using social networking sites among journalists using the Linkert Scale, which is depicted in Table-3. Karnataka journalists use social networking sites frequently to share the news, respond to users comments or post images, which confirms the study by Pathak K (Pathak, 2018). Higher number (116) of Karnataka journalist use facebook followed by Twitter frequently, which further confirms the study by (Balamurugan & Thanuskodi, 2019). This shows that many Indian news houses use WhatsApp to circulate messages among employees and have become a prominent integral part of day-to-day communication.

Table -3. Preference and Frequency of Social Networking Sites

Sl. No.	Preferred social networking site	Most Frequently	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total	Weighted Mean	Rank
1	Facebook	116	98	10	4	2	230	4.4	1
		50.43	42.61	4.35	1.74	0.87	100.00		
2	Twitter	115	94	12	4	5	230	4.35	2
		50.00	40.87	5.22	1.74	2.17	100.00		
3	Whatsapp	96	109	10	4	11	230	4.2	3
		41.74	47.39	4.35	1.74	4.78	100.00		
4	Youtube	65	54	45	15	51	230	3.29	4
		28.26	23.48	19.57	6.52	22.17	100.00		
5	Instagram	40	49	41	28	72	230	2.81	6
		17.39	21.30	17.83	12.17	31.30	100.00		
6	LinkedIn	29	43	76	34	48	230	2.87	5
		12.61	18.70	33.04	14.78	20.87	100.00		
7	Pinterest	26	38	78	31	57	230	2.76	7
		11.30	16.52	33.91	13.48	24.78	100.00		

Note: 5 = Most Frequently; 4=Frequently; 3=Sometimes; 2= Rarely; 1 = Never

Preferred Language for Posting News in Social Networking Sites

Language is a vital part of human connection and it provides clarity in communication. The use of comfortable and well known language helps in communicating better. So, we identified the preferred language among Karnataka journalists and depicted in Table-4, which shows that Kannada is the most preferred language for posting news (187). Few journalists preferred Hindi and English along with Kannada. It clearly demonstrates that journalists, even in an era of English dominance, choose to express themselves in local language the most.

Table – 4. Preferred Language for Posting News in Social Networking Sites

Sl.No.	Language of Posts	Total	Percentage N=230
1	Kannada	187	81.30
2	English	67	19.14
3	Hindi	14	06.09

Purpose for Utilizing Social Networking Sites

The most interesting part of the study is to identify the purpose of Karnataka journalists' in using the social networking sites. Many journalists are striving to exploit all the possibilities of social networking sites for different purposes. Our study reveals that the most (57%) of the journalists utilize social networking sites for professional purpose and few journalists use for both professional and personal purpose (23%) (Figure-1). The journalists who use social networking sites for professional purpose have different professional interests in using them like gather news, connect with other professional friends and to share news, ideas, and messages. They also use social networking sites to create and increase news house recognition apart from using it as the news source (Table-5). The majority (95.68%) of Karnataka journalists use social networking sites to gather news, which is in line with other studies (Rahman, Zannat, & Jyoti, 2018); (Gulyas, 2013). This can be inferred that journalists utilize social networking sites for professional activities to advance in their career. This shows that purpose of utilization is similar to developed countries like France, Sweden (Sumida et al., 2019); (Rehkopf, F; Gulyas, A & Pole, 2012) and developing countries like Bangladesh, India. This represents that journalists all over the world are gaining from the functionalities of social networking sites for professional growth.

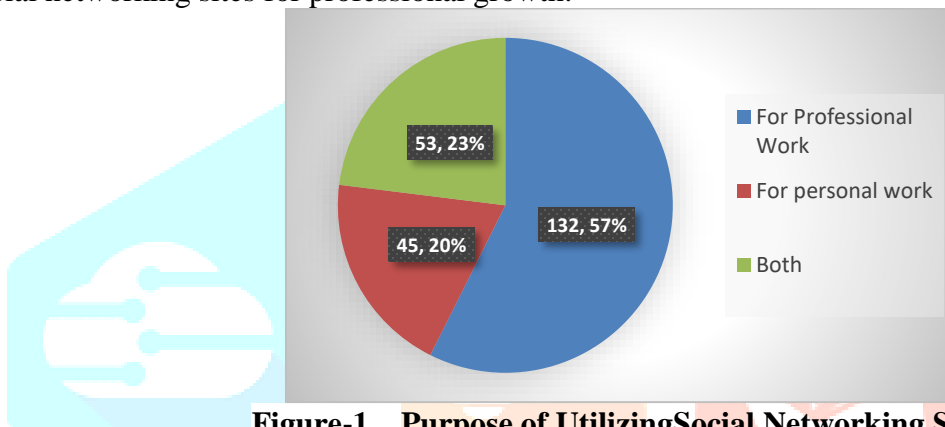


Figure-1. Purpose of Utilizing Social Networking Sites

Table-5. Professional Purpose of Utilizing Social Networking Sites

Sl.No	Professional Purpose of Utilizing Social Networking Sites	Total	Percentage N=185
1	To gather news	177	95.68
2	To share news	98	52.97
3	To collect feedback	74	40.00
4	To increase popularity of news house	57	30.81
5	To follow fellow professionals	54	29.19

Purpose of utilizing Social Networking Sites to Gather News

Social networking sites provide user generated content which includes news stories, current happenings, trending news and statements, which become very important sources for writing new news articles. So, this approach enables us to comprehend the functionalities of the social networking sites for news gathering process which benefits Karnataka journalists. The study revealed that 95.68% of respondents agree that they get sources to write news articles from social networking sites (Table-5), indicating the significance of social networking sites in newsroom operations. This also indicates that, all journalists regardless of whether they are digital natives or immigrants rely on social networking sites for news gathering. Journalists have diverse intentions in gather news which is depicted in Table-6. However, the major intention is to get the story lead (42.94%) followed by trending news (38.42%). The process of getting story lead may be regarded as a circle in which a journalist monitors the content on social networking sites and identifies story leads, adds value to the story lead, further posts the news on social networking sites, collects the feedback in the form of comments and then restarts the process. This cycle will continuously repeat showing that journalists are led by the social networking sites (Kumari, 2018). Results also reveal that the least number (11.86%) of journalists use photographs available in social networking sites.

Table-6. Type of News Source from Social Networking Sites

Sl.No	Type of news source from social networking sites	Total	Percentage N=177
1	To get story lead	76	42.94%
2	To know trending news	68	38.42%
3	To know current happenings	56	31.64%
4	To get analytical outlook through its pages and links	37	20.90%
5	To know the statements	26	14.69%
6	To get major content	23	12.99%
7	To get photographs	21	11.86%

Perspective on Social Networking Sites

Different journalists share different perspective on utilizing social networking sites either positively or negatively. In this section, the opinions of journalists on utilizing social networking sites are gathered and tabulated in Table-7 to measure the influence of social networking sites on Karnataka journalists. The results revealed that the majority (95.65%) of the journalist agreed that, social networking sites are user friendly and the majority (67.39%) of them have used it as a tool for redistributing the news to reach the large mass. It shows that, all journalists, including digital migrants are able to use them comfortably for professional gain.

Social networking sites have provided a voice for people who are unable or afraid to express themselves (Meenakshi & Gupta, 2019). The majority (93.48%) of the journalists shared similar perspective in our study. Only a meager (21.74%) journalists use social networking sites as a contact making tool, which once again shows that Karnataka journalists are using social networking sites for professional activities.

Table-7. Perspective on Social Networking Sites

Sl.No	Perspective	Yes	%	No	%
1	Do you agree that social networking sites is user-friendly	220	95.65	10	04.35
2	Do you agree that social media is the voice of the people	215	93.48	15	06.52
3	Do you agree that sharing link or Re-tweet will help in reaching large mass	155	67.39	75	32.61
4	Do you agree that social networking sites is a contact-making tool	50	21.74	180	78.26

Challenges in Using Social Networking Sites

The rapid uptake of social networking sites like Facebook, twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn have got a reputation as places for sharing various news in real time with its subscriber. However, they are also associated with the risk of providing fake news, which is considered as the major challenge observed in journalism. Fake news can be considered as hoaxes which are intentionally produced content intended to mislead readers. Fake news is distributed in order to boost reading or as a kind of psyops. More interestingly meager (54) number of journalists do not consider it a challenge as shown in the Figure-2. This shows that those journalists are optimistic and consider the positive side of social networking sites. To overcome the challenge of fake news, many news houses have guidelines to prior check news before releasing (Safari, 2018). The majority of the journalist use different web sites like Google fact check, Alt News, Youtube data viewer, newspaper websites, Hoax check and Boomliv for checking authenticity and verifying news. Among them google fact check (24.35%) is used by many professionals followed by Alt News (23.91%) as a tool to verify and authenticate news as shown in Table-8. This shows that journalists are not dependent on single web sites but they depend on different web sites to check the fake news.

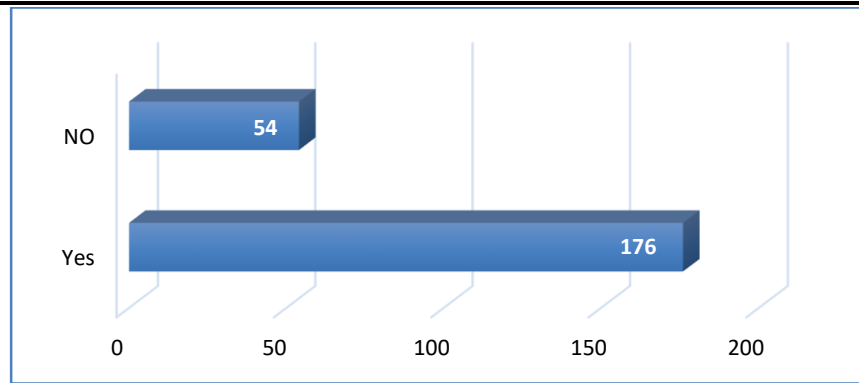


Figure-2. Fake news in Social Networking Sites

Table-8 Websites Used for News Authenticity

Sl.No	Websites used for news authenticity	Total	Percentage N=230
1	Google fact check	56	24.35
2	Alt News	55	23.91
3	Youtube data viewer	37	16.09
4	Through newspaper websites	35	15.22
5	Hoax check	28	12.17
6	Boomlive	24	10.43

Opinion on Using AlternativeMedia

Alternative media is 'another possibility to the mainstream media'. Alternative media can be in the form of newspapers, magazines, newsletters Radio and TV shows, which provide an alternative to the mainstream media. It provides relevant information with different interpretations. Journalists either become the producers or the consumers of the alternative media. Many journalists use alternative media for distributing news and gathering news. Alternative news media share the latest news instantly and even breaking news is updated minute by minute. They offer descriptive news with photos and videos and help in communicating with reader all over the world. The majority (63.91%) of journalist depend on alternative media platform (Figure-3). It shows that Karnataka journalists prefer alternative media as an alternative medium to publish news and gather news apart from social networking sites.

Journalists depend on different alternative media platforms like Scroll.in, The Wire, Quint, Firstpost, The Hoot, Huffpost, One India, NannuGouri.com, Kannada.truthindia.com to publish news items and to get story lead. Journalist prefer Scroll.in which is ranked first the most followed by The Wire which is ranked second. The majority of Karnataka journalists rely always on alternative media that publish news in English language and rarely rely on alternative media platform that publishes news in Kannada language (Table-9). On the whole it shows that alternative media platforms are less often used than social networking sites (Table-3).

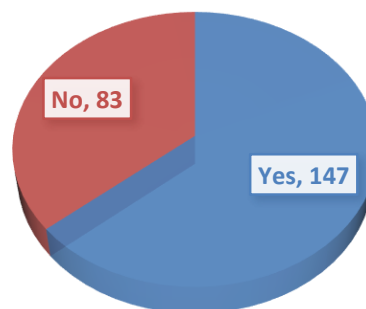


Figure-3. Use of AlternativeMedia

Table-9 Preferred Alternative Media and Frequency of Using Them

Sl. No	Online News Platform	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Total	Weighted mean	Rank
1	Scroll.in	82	48	31	56	14	230	3.57	1
		35.65	20.87	13.48	24.35	6.09	100.00		
2	The Wire	67	49	52	55	17	230	3.54	2
		29.13	21.30	22.61	23.91	7.39	100.00		
3	Huffington Post	53	58	71	28	20	230	3.42	4
		23.04	25.22	30.87	12.17	8.70	100.00		
4	Firstpost	52	60	76	33	9	230	3.49	3
		22.61	26.09	33.04	14.35	3.91	100.00		
5	One India	52	59	68	31	20	230	3.4	5
		22.61	25.65	29.57	13.48	8.70	100.00		
6	Quint	43	58	69	48	11	230	3.31	7
		18.70	25.22	30.00	20.87	4.78	100.00		
7	The Hoot	43	66	70	33	18	230	3.36	6
		18.70	28.70	30.43	14.35	7.83	100.00		
8	NannuGouri.com	28	31	54	79	38	230	2.7	9
		12.17	13.48	23.48	34.35	16.52	100.00		
9	Kannada.ruthindia.com	22	24	47	88	49	230	2.49	8
		9.57	10.43	20.43	38.26	21.30	100.00		

Note: 5 = Always; 4=often; 3=Sometimes; 2= Rarely; 1 = Never

Conclusion

Social networking sites have been used as a platform for news source, news sharing, communicating with peers, getting feedback from readers. It is an alternative mode of publishing that eliminated boundaries between journalists and readers and opened new channels for conversation. Journalists now provide a large amount of content than at any point in history. Historically, journalists provided content to their closest social network and wider users through mainstream publishing. Now, social networking sites have aided them in reaching a vast number of readers and helped them to establish new ways of communication in real time. The real time interaction has changed journalists work culture so much that they are not only content creators but also reviewers and analysts.

The findings revealed that the majority (91.27%) of journalists are actively engaged in social networking sites especially in using Facebook for their professional or personal activities. Among them 50.43% of Karnataka journalist use Facebook most frequently. Additionally, it was shown that the most (95.68%) of the journalists utilize social networking sites to gather news specially to get the story lead.

Social networking sites can be regarded as a double-edged sword with advantages and challenges. The majority (76.52%) of journalists consider fake news as a challenge in using social networking sites, so journalist used tools like google news checker, Alt news to authenticate and verify news to overcome the challenge. The study also found that majority (63.91%) of journalist use alternative media platforms like Scrollin, The Wire apart from social networking sites for professional work. Social networking sites have altered the work culture of journalists and they have depended on them for day-to-day professional activities.

Further study can be conducted to identify purpose of utilizing social networking sites by journalists of other states in India, which can be then compared with the results of present study. Additionally further study can be carried out to identify the purpose of utilizing alternative media platforms, that can be compared to the purpose of utilizing social networking sites to ascertain the difference in the purpose of utilizing them.

To summarize, journalists in Karnataka use social media to solicit user feedback and comments on issues to develop a new type of interaction than that of the mainstream media. Journalists are reviewing individuals pages, news sites, local and international newspapers to get the latest news and information about a particular problem, or to collect fresh ideas for a report or story.

When a journalists use unreliable sources or comments on news to explain aspects of the story, they risk publishing personal opinions, inadequate data, or information aimed at individuals to raise the problem and draw attention. Thus, a journalist must verify the accuracy of information received from sources before publishing on social media. Sources may be used to disseminate rumors or fake news, or to stir up public sentiment, causing difficulties for journalists.

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