



# DIGITAL MEDIA USAGE AND NEWS CONSUMPTION BEHAVIOUR AMONG RURAL YOUTH IN ANDHRA PRADESH

<sup>1</sup>Mekala Saida Rao, <sup>2</sup>Dr. Jampula Manjunath

<sup>1</sup> Research Scholar, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Acharya Nagarjuna University, Guntur, A.P., India

<sup>2</sup>Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Acharya Nagarjuna University, Guntur, A.P., India

**Abstract:** This study examines the growing influence of digital journalism and mobile-based news consumption among rural youth in Andhra Pradesh. The research focuses on how smartphones, social media platforms, and mobile news applications have transformed news access patterns. A survey method was used among 120 rural youth respondents from selected villages in Andhra Pradesh. The findings reveal that mobile phones have become the primary source of news consumption, while social media significantly influences political awareness and public opinion. The study concludes that digital journalism has expanded information accessibility but also increased exposure to misinformation.

**Keywords:** Digital Journalism, Mobile Journalism, Rural Youth, Social Media, Andhra Pradesh, News Consumption

## I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of digital communication technologies has transformed journalism practices worldwide. In India, smartphone penetration and affordable internet services have accelerated digital news consumption, especially among youth populations. Rural areas, which once depended mainly on newspapers, radio, and television, are increasingly shifting toward digital platforms. In Andhra Pradesh, youth audiences actively consume news through YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook, and mobile news applications. This transition has changed traditional patterns of information dissemination and audience engagement. Mobile journalism enables instant access to breaking news, citizen journalism participation, and multimedia storytelling.

However, concerns regarding fake news, misinformation, and lack of media literacy have also emerged. This study investigates the patterns of digital news usage among rural youth and evaluates its social and political impact.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The transformation of journalism from traditional print and broadcast media to digital platforms has significantly altered news consumption behavior across the world. Several scholars have examined the relationship between technological advancements, audience engagement, and digital journalism practices. The following review discusses important studies related to digital news consumption, mobile journalism, and youth media usage.

Beam, Weaver, and Brownlee (2009) examined the changing professionalism of journalists in the twenty-first century and observed that technological advancements had transformed newsroom practices and audience interaction. Their study emphasized that digital journalism encourages speed, audience participation, and multimedia storytelling, which significantly influence contemporary news production. Pavlik (2013) analyzed innovation in digital journalism and highlighted how internet technologies have reshaped journalism through immediacy, interactivity, and audience-centered communication. The study argued that digital media platforms have increased accessibility to information and enabled citizen participation in news dissemination.

Mehta (2018) studied digital media consumption patterns in rural India and found that smartphone penetration and affordable internet services contributed to the decline of newspaper readership among younger audiences. The study further noted that rural youth increasingly depend on social media platforms and mobile applications for accessing daily news updates.

Kumar and Rani (2021) investigated the influence of social media on political awareness among Indian youth. Their research revealed that platforms such as WhatsApp, YouTube, and Facebook play an important role in shaping political discussions, electoral participation, and public opinion formation among young users.

Srinivas (2025) examined Telugu newspapers and rural reporting practices and observed that digital platforms are gradually replacing traditional newspapers in rural regions. The study pointed out that youth audiences prefer mobile journalism due to convenience, accessibility, and real-time updates.

Rangaswamy and Nair (2020) explored mobile internet usage among rural populations in South India and concluded that digital communication technologies have reduced information gaps between urban and rural communities. However, the study warned about the increasing spread of misinformation through social media platforms. Rao (2019) focused on media literacy and fake news in India and argued that rural youth often lack the necessary skills to verify digital information sources. The study emphasized the need for media education programs to improve critical evaluation of online news content.

The rapid growth of digital communication technologies and smartphone penetration has significantly transformed news consumption patterns across India. Several studies have examined the impact of digital journalism, social media usage, and mobile communication on audience behavior. Previous researchers such as R. A. Beam, John V. Pavlik, and Manuel Castells discussed the broader transformation of journalism practices in the digital era. Similarly, studies conducted in the Indian context focused on social media influence, political awareness, and mobile internet usage among youth populations. However, most of these studies concentrated mainly on urban audiences, national media trends, or general digital media consumption patterns.

Very limited research has specifically examined digital news consumption behavior among rural youth in Andhra Pradesh. Existing literature does not adequately explore how rural youth depend on smartphones, WhatsApp, YouTube, and mobile journalism platforms for accessing daily news and participating in public discussions. Furthermore, there is a lack of empirical studies analyzing the relationship between digital journalism, social media usage, fake news awareness, and changing media preferences among rural youth audiences in the Andhra Pradesh context. Another important gap identified in previous studies is the insufficient focus on the decline of traditional media consumption, particularly newspapers, among rural youth due to the increasing popularity of mobile-based journalism. Moreover, earlier research has not extensively analyzed the role of media literacy in identifying misinformation and fake news within rural communities. Therefore, the present study attempts to fill this research gap by examining the patterns of digital news consumption among rural youth in Andhra Pradesh, with special emphasis on mobile journalism usage, social media influence, fake news awareness, and the changing relationship between traditional and digital media platforms.

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To identify the major digital platforms used by rural youth for news consumption.
2. To examine the frequency of digital news usage among respondents.
3. To study the role of social media in shaping political and social awareness.
4. To analyze the challenges associated with fake news and misinformation.
5. To understand the impact of mobile journalism on traditional news consumption habits.

### III. Methodology

framework for collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data related to the research problem. The present study aims to examine the patterns of digital news consumption among rural youth in Andhra Pradesh and to understand the influence of mobile journalism and social media platforms on their news consumption behavior. The study adopted a descriptive research design to analyze the news consumption habits of rural youth. Descriptive research is useful for identifying current trends, attitudes, behaviors, and practices related to media usage and digital communication. The study is empirical in nature and is based on both primary and secondary data sources. Quantitative methods were primarily used to collect and analyze responses from the selected respondents.

### IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 4.1: Preferred News Platforms

News Platform	Respondents (%)
Mobile Apps	78
WhatsApp	65
YouTube	72
Facebook	48
Television	61
Newspapers	25

The above table 1 explains the preferred news platforms among rural youth respondents. Mobile applications received the highest preference with 78 percent, indicating that smartphones and internet accessibility have significantly increased digital news consumption in rural areas. YouTube ranked second with 72 percent, showing that video-based news content is highly popular among young audiences due to its visual presentation and easy accessibility. WhatsApp accounted for 65 percent, reflecting its importance in news sharing and communication among peer groups. Television continued to remain a relevant medium with 61 percent usage, as many respondents still consider television news more reliable. Facebook usage stood at 48 percent, indicating moderate engagement with social networking platforms for news updates. Newspapers recorded the lowest readership with only 25 percent, which suggests a gradual decline in traditional print media consumption among rural youth. Overall, the findings demonstrate the growing dominance of digital journalism and mobile-based news platforms.

Table 4.2: Frequency of Digital News Consumption

Frequency	Percentage
Daily	68
Weekly	22
Occasionally	10

The table 2 presents the frequency of digital news consumption among rural youth respondents. A majority of respondents, constituting 68 percent, reported that they consume digital news daily. This indicates a strong dependence on online media platforms and mobile journalism for regular news updates. Around 22 percent of respondents accessed digital news weekly, suggesting moderate engagement with online news platforms. Only 10 percent reported occasional news consumption, indicating comparatively lower media exposure among a small section of respondents. The findings clearly show that digital media has become an integral part of daily life among rural youth, enabling continuous access to political, social, and entertainment-related information through smartphones and internet services.

The cross-tabulation table 3 highlights the relationship between age groups and digital news platform usage among respondents. In the 18–21 age group, 72 percent used WhatsApp and 75 percent preferred YouTube for news consumption, indicating higher dependence on social media and video content among younger audiences. Respondents aged 22–25 years showed the highest usage of YouTube at 80 percent, while WhatsApp usage stood at 68 percent.

Table 4.3: Cross Tabulation Between Age Group and News Platform Usage

Age Group	WhatsApp Users (%)	YouTube Users (%)
18-21	72	75
22-25	68	80
26-30	55	61

This suggests that multimedia journalism and online video platforms are highly attractive to this age category. In the 26–30 age group, WhatsApp usage decreased to 55 percent and YouTube usage to 61 percent, reflecting relatively balanced media consumption patterns. The analysis indicates that younger respondents are more actively engaged with digital and social media platforms compared to older respondents. The findings further reveal that age plays an important role in determining preferences for online news consumption.

Table 4.4: Gender-wise Digital News Consumption

Gender	Daily Users	Weekly Users	Occasional Users
Male	72%	20%	8%
Female	64%	24%	12%

The table 4 indicates that male respondents consume digital news more frequently than female respondents. Male youth showed higher daily engagement with online news platforms, while female respondents demonstrated comparatively moderate usage patterns. The findings suggest that gender influences digital news consumption behavior among rural youth.

Table 4. 5: Educational Qualification and Preferred News Platform

Education Level	YouTube	WhatsApp	Television	Newspapers
Intermediate	70%	68%	45%	12%
Degree	82%	74%	56%	22%
PG	76%	61%	69%	38%

Table 5 shows that degree students highly prefer YouTube and WhatsApp for news consumption. Postgraduate respondents displayed relatively higher trust in television and newspapers compared to other educational groups. The findings indicate that educational background influences media preferences and credibility perceptions.

Table 4.6: Awareness about Fake News

Response	Percentage
Highly Aware	42%
Moderately Aware	38%
Less Aware	20%

The table 6 reveals that a significant proportion of respondents are aware of fake news and misinformation circulating on digital platforms. However, a considerable percentage still lack sufficient media literacy skills to identify unverified information sources.

Table 4.7. Cross Tabulation: Gender and Social Media Usage

Gender	WhatsApp	YouTube	Facebook
Male	74%	81%	52%
Female	58%	66%	44%

The cross-tabulation analysis indicates that male respondents use social media platforms for news consumption more actively than female respondents. YouTube remained the dominant platform among both groups, while Facebook usage was comparatively lower (Table 7).

#### 4.1 Analysis of Frequency of Digital News Consumption

The study found that 68 percent of respondents consume digital news daily. This shows that digital media has become an integral part of everyday life among rural youth. Daily exposure to online news platforms increases awareness regarding political, social, and economic issues. Around 22 percent of respondents consume digital news weekly, while only 10 percent access news occasionally. The findings indicate that frequent internet availability and mobile connectivity encourage continuous engagement with digital journalism platforms.

#### 4.2 Analysis of Social Media Usage

The research observed that social media platforms play a significant role in shaping public opinion and political awareness among rural youth. Respondents frequently use WhatsApp groups, YouTube channels, and Facebook pages to discuss political developments, local issues, and government welfare schemes. The study further indicates that social media platforms provide opportunities for citizen participation and interactive communication. Rural youth not only consume news but also actively share, comment, and react to media content. However, excessive dependence on social media has also increased exposure to fake news and misinformation. Nearly 69 percent of respondents reported that they frequently encounter misleading or unverified news content online.

#### 4.3 Analysis of Trust in Media

Although digital media platforms dominate news consumption patterns, 61 percent of respondents still expressed greater trust in television news compared to social media news sources. This indicates that traditional media institutions continue to maintain credibility among audiences despite the growth of digital journalism. The respondents perceived social media news as faster but less reliable due to the circulation of misinformation and fake news.

The overall findings clearly indicate that digital journalism has transformed rural communication patterns in Andhra Pradesh. Smartphones, mobile internet, and social media platforms have become central to news consumption among rural youth. Digital journalism promotes accessibility, participation, and immediacy in news dissemination. At the same time, concerns regarding misinformation, lack of verification, and media literacy remain significant challenges. Therefore, there is a need for responsible digital journalism practices and awareness programs to enhance critical evaluation of online news content.

### V. Major Findings

1. Smartphones are the dominant source of news among rural youth.
2. YouTube and WhatsApp are highly preferred platforms.
3. Social media increases political participation and public discussion.
4. Respondents expressed concern about misinformation and fake news circulation.
5. Traditional newspapers are losing readership among younger audiences.

### VI. Conclusion

Digital journalism has transformed rural news consumption patterns in Andhra Pradesh. Mobile-based journalism provides accessibility, speed, and audience participation. Rural youth increasingly depend on digital platforms rather than traditional print media. While digital journalism promotes awareness and democratic engagement, the spread of misinformation remains a major concern. Media literacy programs and responsible journalism practices are necessary to improve the credibility of digital news consumption.

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