

A Study Of Journalistic Use Of Social Media In Maharashtra

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Abstract:

In this new technological era, the growth of the internet and various mobile apps are the new news consumption gateways. The immediacy of the feedback in other words the fastest sharing of content is the specialty of these social media apps. This new medium is popular because of the USPs' ease and usefulness. Public use this social media as a medium but journalist use this media as one of the tools to gather the required information. This paper attempts to explore the journalistic use of social media for journalistic work like finding story-related hints, and sources of information and using technological features to enhance the work quality and share the work with a media house and with the audiences.

Key Word: Social Media, Journalism, Journalist tool, news, new media.

Introduction:

The growth of the internet and mobile apps are the new mediums of news consumption by the masses. The easy and quick sharing of content is the main feature of this new media along with the most crucial feature interactivity. Social media like whatsapp, YouTube, Instagram, blogs, vlogs, Twitter, Face book, and many more platforms shares news. Here interesting content, fast and short is the logic. So with this logic, the audience becomes news providers and propagators as well. In other words journalists and audiences work for each other for the news.

The digital age provides various types of content to the audience. Any sort of subject we can see on these platforms. Personal information, general information, government information, the information which would be immediately followed or need to follow, entertaining content, and likewise information loaded on these platforms. Most importantly masses use, ignore the information, and share the information with limited people within no time. The content has been in various formats like text, audio, audio video, photograph, mimes, and likewise. So in total, this information on social media platforms is huge and selectively important but it is not verified. So to fit in the 'news' definition the information needs processing. In another word, scanning the information, and selecting important useful information from the no important content is a challenging task for the journalist.

Across the world according to the source Statista, Jan 2021, 4.2 billion people are active users of social media (Statista, 2021) while 448.0 million social media users are in India in January

2021. The number of social media users in India increased by 78 million (+21%) between 2020 and 2021. The number of social media users in India was equivalent to 32.3% of the total population in January 2021. From these figures, one can check the growing influence of social media and the growth in media users as well. Social media disrupted communication patterns and traditional journalism practices are changing because of social media.

The available study suggests that journalists are using social media for professional purposes. The journalist uses the information available on social media platforms as a source for news, to get information, and to check the local interest subjects. To check how a journalist is using social media, particularly in a specific geographical area needs proper study of the use of social media in news making by mainstream media. This specific study will share the facts about the shift in the use of information by journalists, challenges in the journalism profession, and in a present situation more specifically required skills by journalists. On this backdrop researcher in this paper will explore how journalists in Maharashtra who work for the Pune edition use social media for their profession.

Objectives:

The study explores the usage of social media by Journalist in Maharashtra who works for Pune Edition. The study attempts:

- To identify the social media platforms and tools used by journalists
- To explore the purpose of social media use by journalists
- To identify the social media tools used by journalists in news making;
- To know the challenges faced by professional journalists due to social media;
- To understand whether social media guidelines if any, adopted by media organizations for journalists.

Review of Literature:

With the rise of digital and mobile technologies, interaction on large scale becomes easier for individuals than ever before. Such a new media age was born where interactivity was placed at the center of new media functions. One individual now speak too many and instant feedback was a possibility. However , the low cost and accessibility of new technology also allowed more options for media consumption than ever before- and so instead of only few outlets , individuals now have the ability to seek the information from several sources and to dialogue with others via message forums about the information posted.

Manuel Castells ((2009) explains what he calls the rise of ‘mass self-communication’ in his 2009 article, this being a process of users building their own mass communication systems, via SMS, blogs, vlogs, podcasts, wikis.

The other researcher Kaplan and Haenlein mentioned about social media - “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user generated- content [also known as UGC]” (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010).

While Poll and Borra ((Poell and Borra 2011) define social media in relation to communication, researchers have come to describe it as “alternative platforms of public communication”.

However Steensen mentioned that the Internet and social media have only increased the ability to bring many different kinds of news to its audience, and significantly quicker than had before been possible (Steensen 2011).

Gunter (2003) mentioned the role of the journalist in the new cyberspace era as related to the freedom of the reader in choosing what to read and when to participate in the construction of news. He mentioned that the interaction between journalists and sources can be skipped, with information being spread directly by sources on online pages. Thus, the role of the journalist as a mediator between the external world and the audiences is withdrawn from the professional world of journalism (Gunter 2003).

Hermida and Thurman’s 2008 study showed that most journalists feel blogs offer them the possibility to express news freely without the pressure of being part of a corporate news chain. User generated content, expressed on different social media platforms, is mainly seen as complimenting journalism rather than replacing it.

Reuters Institute for the Journalism and Study researched the ‘The rise of social media and its impact on mainstream journalism’. This study is about how newspapers and broadcasters in the UK and US are responding to a wave of participatory social media, and a historic shift in control towards individual consumers. (September, 2009) This report is also known as Newman report.

According to a study by Ruth A. Harper (Harper, 2010), the most popular social media tools for journalists today are Twitter and Face book. While media organizations and journalists see twitter more popular than other social media tools, but according to Adam Ostrow, Facebook dominates social media landscape.

A Hoot survey among 275 journalists and other related fields in India found that 28 percent of them use Facebook, whereas 11 percent use the Twitter. Both Face book and Twitter are used by 57 percent of journalists and 04 percent of them use none of the social media platforms. 68 percent use Face book as a news source and 61 percent use Twitter for the purpose.62 percent use Face book to follow others, for which 43 percent use the Twitter. For sharing other links, 49 percent use Face book as against 55 percent using Twitter. 48 percent of journalists each use Facebook and

Twitter for disseminating personal work. Through a study based on survey among editors, Jennifer Alejandro (2010) found that newsrooms use social media networks mostly for three reasons, branding and making a presence in the social media sphere, driving traffic to the company's news website and for breaking news. It also survey reveal that journalists are beginning to leverage on social media to receive, gather and distribute news, and they needs to be multi-skilled to cope with the change.

However, Blanchett Neheli (2011) discussed the content. She said that public improved the depth and breadth of news coverage. She explained in her thesis that, in the age of social media we cannot say journalism is not a matter of "us versus them," that means citizens or audiences or readers versus professionals. Further she explained that, it is like a symbiotic relationship. It is required to achieve the best end result when they feed off of each other's strengths; thereby balancing each other's weaknesses...It is rater required a genuinely respectful relationship with the audience.

Johanna Baker-Dowdell (October 2013),in her thesis, 'understanding how social media is used a news source during crisis events' mentioned that social media could continue to be used as a news source and its potential influence on future reporting. To study the use of social media for news by mainstream media she took case study approach. She took only two events 2009 Black Saturday and 2013 Tasmanian bushfire as a case study. While analyzing she observed that the 2009 Black Saturday and 2013 Tasmanian bushfire case studies to see how social media was used in the reporting of these events four years apart, the evolution of journalistic practice due to the addition of social media as a news source was evident. While the sample of news articles was small, it did show that social media was used as a news source during both crisis events, and that this use increased in the period from 2009 to 2013.

A social media impact survey, conducted among 165 journalists, editors and bloggers by ING Netherlands(ING News:2014) has found that half of the journalists use social media as main source of information even though one-third of the journalists believe that social media posts are not reliable(# SMING 14). Journalists mostly use social media to find out what people are talking about. 60 percent of the respondents feel less bound by traditional journalistic rules on social media and share opinions openly. The study also found that half of the journalists publish their stories as quickly as possible to correct later if necessary, and only 20 percent always check their facts before publishing.

In the research article by Koustav Mukherjee (2016) on Advancement of Social Media and Future of Newspaper Industry he talked about how journalist thinks of this change. He investigated the perspectives of the journalists on the effects social media has had on their profession, and on how they perform. Interactivity with the people, and the rise of blogs and bloggers, as well as the journalist's preferences for working with social media, are examined and implemented as part of the study. He researched the subject with the following objectives -citizen journalism/online

journalism affects newspaper business, Citizen Journalism can create social awareness, how Social media take a leading part in the social movements, the social changes in India and the role of citizen journalism in it and particular age group of the people preferring social media. After applying the methods like cluster sampling method and content analysis he concluded that with the spread of smart devices, more & more people will participate on social media and thus they will be inspired to be a citizen journalist. The young generation browses their device and gets the information or news. Along with audience the leading media houses will shift their focus on this. He concluded that if newspaper business don't get updated it can affect newspaper business. (K Mukherjee ,2016)

Siddharth Varadarajan founder of digital media startup The Wire said while speaking to Columbia Journalism mentioned that the pattern is somewhat unprecedented. In this article the Scroll editor Fernandes mentioned that Digital, also breeds discomfort, the kind familiar to legacy journalists across the globe. Further, Scroll editor Fernandes has banned the word "content" from his newsroom, saying: "We do not believe in doing content, we believe in doing journalism, and not for consumers but for readers." The word "readers," of course, betrays a print mindset, as does Fernandes's effort to raise the "credibility" of a medium he believes is considered "less than reliable" by appointing an ombudsman. This wariness of the very nature of online media, however, can make it difficult for legacy editors to grapple with its audience-driven imperatives, which are experienced as antithetical to "good journalism." (Can the digital revolution save Indian journalism?

In the same article the writer Laxmi Chaudhry (2016) mentioned that This internal conflict became visibly apparent at an August meeting in Mumbai hosted by Omidyar Network. Also in attendance were representatives from the Gates Foundation and the Independent and Public Spirited Media Foundation, a first-of-its-kind Indian foundation largely funded by Indian tech billionaires that support media startups, and to which I serve as an adviser. The goal was to bring together their digital media grantees to discuss and share experiences, a conversation that soon turned heated, with one founder declaring, "I will not allow the masses to dictate my editorial policies".

Here in this conversation The Wire founder Varadarajan is quick to point out, editorial quality and integrity do indeed have value in themselves, irrespective of the medium. They do not, however, guarantee survival in a constantly shifting online media market.

In the same article, Laxmi Chaudhry (2016) added views of Vineet Jain, the Managing Director of the goliath-sized Times Group by email interview. This was about the new crop of media startups; his answer was carefully polite to the point of being dismissive: "We always welcome new players because it gives us inspiration to do better. That being said, the challenge for any new player is to develop an offering that can have a scalable impact in India. What we've seen thus far is that there's a lot of new media that caters to smaller sets of audiences, but haven't broken out further.

Dr. Pitabas Pradhan in his research paper on a study on Journalistic use of Social Media mentioned that the mushrooming growth of social media services hugely expanded the scope of content generation and sharing. Social platforms have not only emerged as important news platforms for the public, but also as useful tools for journalists. The study found that keeping pace with the global trends; Indian journalists have embraced social media services in a big way both in personal and professional life. Twitter is mostly used for professional purpose followed by Face book. The use of YouTube is more common among TV Journalists compared to Print and Web Journalists. An obvious finding of the study is Web Journalists more frequently use the social media services professionally compared to print journalists. In personal life, journalists mostly use Face book followed by what's App. In personal life YouTube and Instagram are more frequently used compared to the Twitter.

He Further mentioned that Journalist mostly use social media as a news source specially to find leads for stories, to disseminate their own work, and sharing other links. Face book, What's App, and Twitter are found to be the most useful tools among Indian journalists. The professional social networking service LinkedIn and Flickr do not find much favor in professional life of journalist. To find leads for stories, Face book and Twitter are used by most Journalists. Journalists also use social bookmarking sites. YouTube and Instagram are more useful than WhatsApp to find story leads. So far as dissemination of information is concerned, Face book stands at the top of social media services followed by What's App. Twitter is most widely used by journalists to follow newsmakers. Instagram and Face book are also used for the purpose in that order. For sharing other links, Journalists mostly use the Face book, which is followed by WhatsApp and then YouTube. Dr. Pitabas and his colleagues mentioned that the advent of social media has made some journalistic functions easier, but at the same time it has also made some functions challenging for journalists. (Prtibhas and Nikki Kumari , 2018)

Social Media as news platforms:

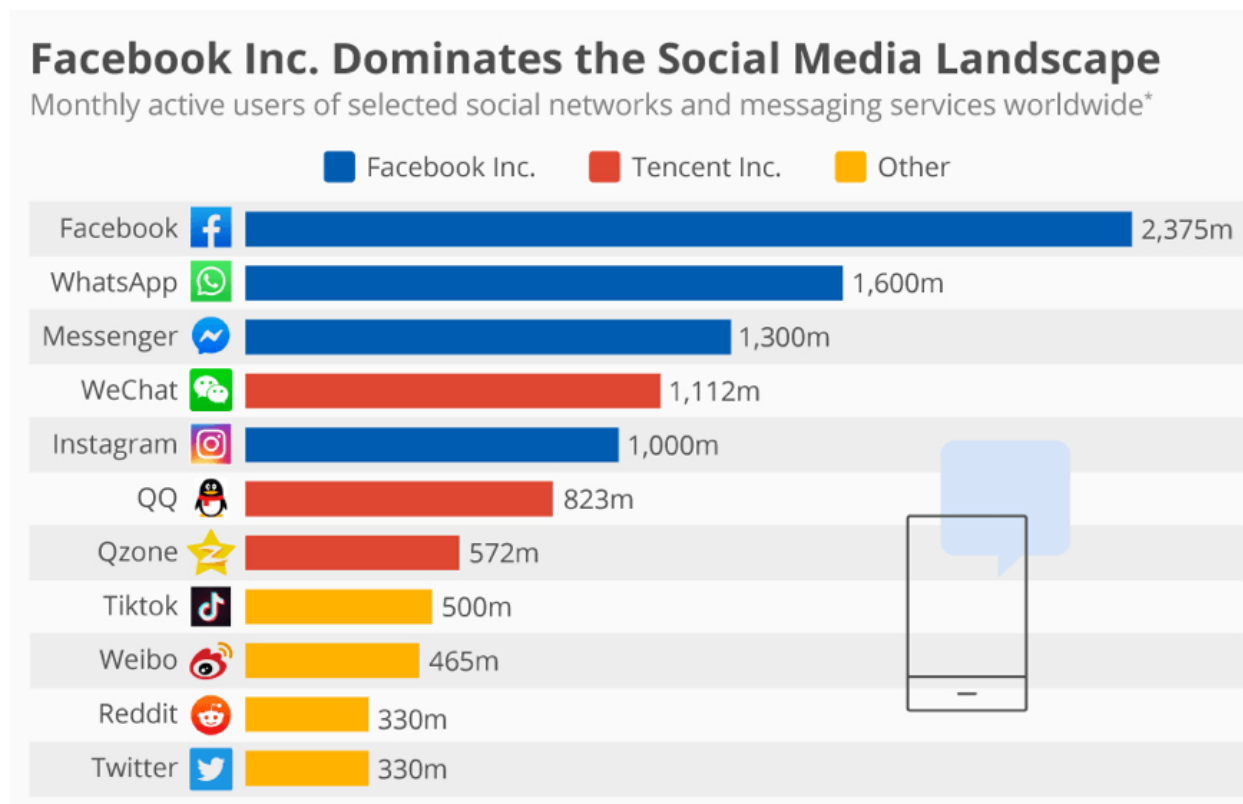
Technology played an important role in the development and delivery of the communication process throughout history. Now in the internet era, communication is unlimited. Social media has changed the world and revolutionized how information is stored, published, searched, and consumed.

According to Oxford Dictionary (2011) defines social media as 'websites and applications used for social networking'. Merriam-Webster dictionary define social media as: "Forms of electronic communication (such as Web sites for social networking and microblogging) through which people create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages and other content (such as videos)".

Social media is in the phase of transition and it is increasingly evident that it has a great influence on business, industries, cultural values, information systems, and also on traditional journalism

whether it is newspapers, radio, or TV news programs. In the case of journalism, the introduction of information technology has altered considerably various aspects of the profession.

Following are some important figures about the use of social media on global level –



(Reference-<https://www.smartinsights.com/ecommerce/social-commerce/social-commerce-trends-for-2020>. Retrieved on Jan 2021)

In India as well about the social media the scene is not different. In Jan 2020, WhatsApp is the most used app in India. In the entire stats about the usage of social media apps in India and WhatsApp topped the charts with YouTube in the second spot, followed by Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

WhatsApp has over 53 corers users, followed by YouTube which has over 44.8 crores users in India. Face book has around 41 corers; Instagram has 21 corers while Twitter has the lost number of users1.5 corers. This could also be due to the recent shift of Indian users from Twitter to the Koo app, which is the Indian alternative of Twitter.

So, surely the Social media has been emerged as a new news platform for masses. Like masses we can say that for journalist also this platform is new and useful. From these platform's content and information journalist can take hint for news, hint for various trends on social media can provide

the journalist popular subject or most discussed subjects of that particular time. In other word these platforms are useful for journalists also.

Now social media like Twitter, Koo shares story leads directly from the important source. As this information or lead from the source, for the journalist this is the news. That means here social media acts as facilitator.

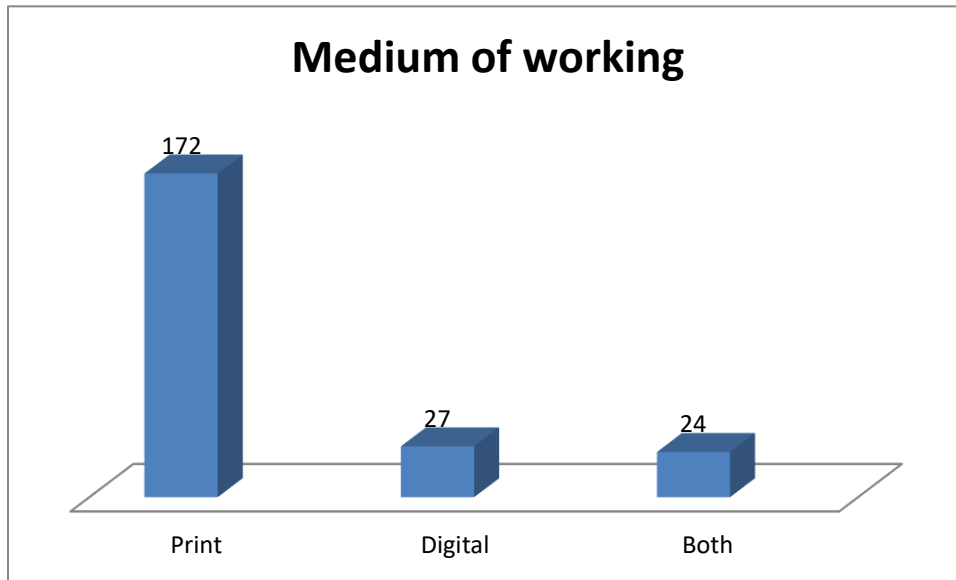
Research Design and Methods:

The core of the study is a survey among journalists in Pune who work for Marathi language dailies pertaining to the use of social media in the news making process. The sample for the study was selected randomly from among working journalists having the experience of working with the print as well as the online news platforms. While selecting the sample it is assumed that a person acquainted with both the platforms could better understands the change as per time. Researcher listed such 420 journalists for survey. A structure questionnaire containing 10 questions relating to social media use by the journalists was used as the principal tool of data collection and send to 250 journalists on randomly. Responses were collected and coded and then arranged in a table and various charts.

. The data was analyzed based on the graphs and table. The findings have been interpreted in the context of the research setting and generalized conclusions were drawn for wider applications of the research findings which is as follows.

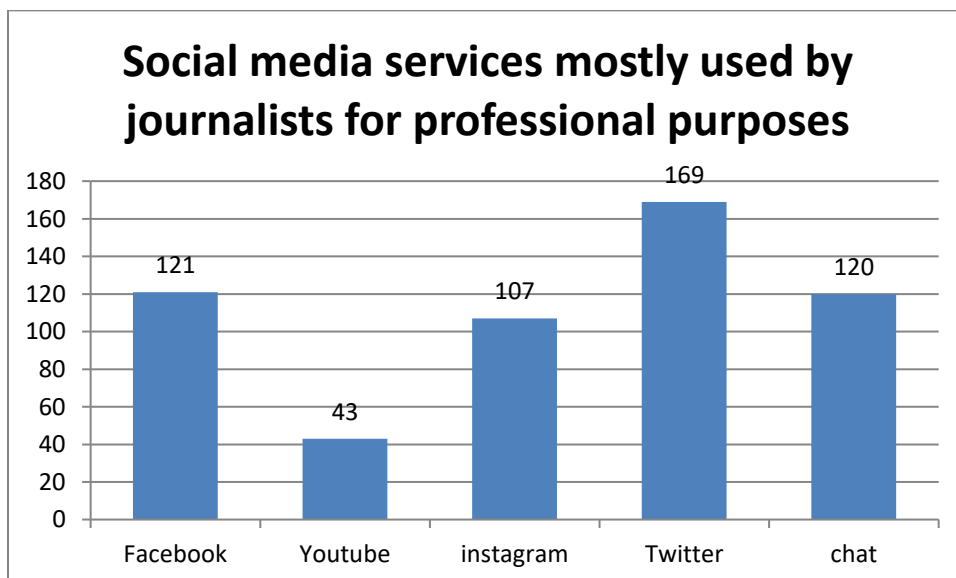
Data Analysis and Interpretation:

In a structured questionnaire researcher asked first question. It was in which medium they are working. From 250 journalist 197 journalists responded. Amongst them most of journalists working for print medium especially newspaper . For digital medium 27 journalists were working and for both the medium print as well as digital 24 were working.



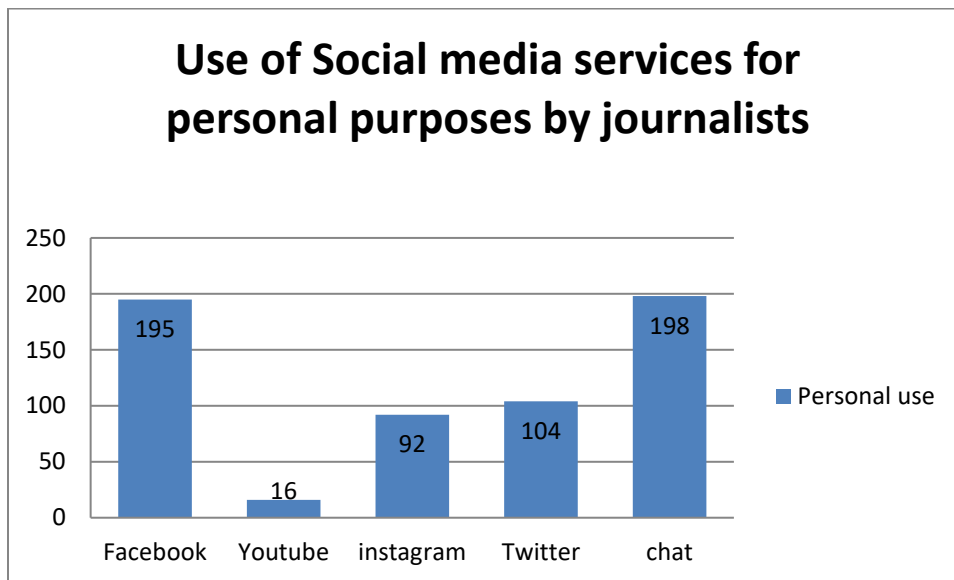
Graph 1: Journalists medium of working

In the questionnaire the next question was the purpose of social media use by journalists. The respondents had three options to choose from- use of social media for personal purpose, its use in professional life, social media use both in personal and professional life. On this journalists answered that mostly they use their personal social media account for professional purpose. Only 48 percent said that they use organizations social media for professional purpose but again they shared that for dissemination of news they use personal as well as organization's social media platforms. Journalist most preferred medium for professional use were twitter, face book followed by chat after that journalists preferred Instagram. They did not prefer you tube platform for professional purpose.



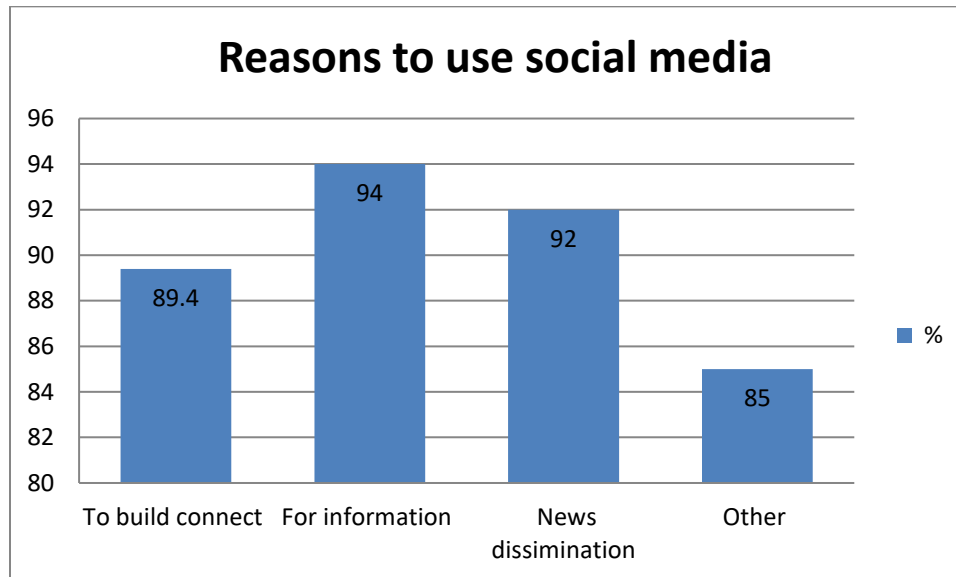
Graph 2: Social media services mostly used by journalists for professional purposes

Journalists preferred face book and chat platforms particularly for the personal use. To interact with friends and masses they are comfortable with the face book platform along with whatsApp, messenger like platforms. Face book provides face book live facility so journalist preferred the platform over YouTube. Around 195 journalists shared that they use Face book. Almost 198 journalist preferred chat platforms to share the news or article. Many journalist use twitter platform and only 92 journalists shared that they like to use Instagram. From the following chart we understood that journalist gives least preference to You tube.



Graph2: Use of Social media services for personal purposes by journalists

The next question about to understand the reasons behind journalist want to get connected through social media to masses. On that 89 % of the journalist shared that they want to ge connected with the audience to built the relationship. They want to establish personal connect with the masses. 94 % said that they need information which they could use for the profession so they want to use the social media platforms.92 % journalist use the social media to spread the news or to disseminate the news. In the other category journalists shared the reason that they want to discuss the news subject with the readers also no reason they want the connect along with some personal touch.



Graph4: Reasons to use social media by journalists

About the authenticity of the social media platforms, journalists said that the verification is our job. Each time verification is necessary. So need to check each and every element of information from social media is necessary. From graph 5 it was understood that Journalist said that twitter shares leads over face book. Almost 95 % journalist opined that twitter has been the authentic social media platform. Other social media platforms need verification of information.

The next question was very simple though but difficult to answer. The question was because of various social media platforms the structure of news gets affected or not what journalist think about this. So on this 92 % journalist said that the news format rather the news writing style got affected. But 8 % journalist opinioned that the news structure has been same like previous but some time we need to place the title media specific. In convergence we take that separate call.

Researcher placed the next question about news selection procedure for mainstream media. He asked journalist that due to social media readers get news immediately, so the other mainstream medium get affected because of real time sharing. On this question almost 92 % journalist agreed that the selection of the news in the mainstream media get affected because of the social media. But journalist shared with the experience that the real time sharing of information and after verification and processing the news sharing has quality difference. Most important task for the journalist then was what when where and how question get answer in real time but here the skill was processing the news after knowing this that audience know the information and then why we need to prefer the text again. Many journalists said that it is the real tough decision mainly for the print media because here space matters.

Followed by this researcher asked about the organizational guideline about the social media. Now each media house has its own guidelines. Many times it is a call with the experience of the

journalist about the sort of particular information. On this question all journalist reacted positively. Now each media house shares the basic guidelines about the social media content which might be useful for news. Journalist again and again shared that verification is necessary each time and every step.

The next question was open ended. It was about their personal opinion about the mainstream media importance. Due to social media the traditional medium gets affected or not? On this almost every journalist worried about the situation. But some of them shared that if we think of next ten years mainstream media like newspaper, news channels too has future. Importantly they shared that mainstream media has even in this age documentation value because of verification and ethical aspect.

The last question was about journalist own views about the social media. It was the open ended question. Most of the journalist opined that social media has been important but they said that instead of thinking of social media over traditional media we need to think about how those social media platforms and traditional media will complimentary to each other.

Findings and Conclusion:

The study found that keeping pace with the global trends like other journalists all over India have embraced social media platforms, Pune's working journalist as well embraced social media platforms. These journalists both ways in personal as well as professional life use social media in daily. All journalists were agreeing that the new social media which has great effect is the Twitter. Most of the journalist follows Twitter for professional purpose followed by Face book and any chatting platforms like Whatsapp or Telegram. Journalist use Face book live over you tube. Very least journalist has been their own YouTube channel. Journalist uses their personal account as well as organizations social media account. But to establish the connect and professional connect they use personal account most of the time.

To get attached with the readers, to find information and maintain the flow of information and most importantly to build personal relationship journalists use social media. Many journalists opinioned that the social media platforms have been their tool to gather the information and find out specific interest of the people. In other words it is required for understanding the trends amongst readers. Pune's Journalist said that most of the time they get hints or the subjects from the social media platforms. They use the information and as per traditional news gathering followed the process of processing on information. They take hints, information from social media also follows news source specially to find leads for stories, to disseminate their own work, and sharing other links. Journalists with their answers shared the understanding that Twitter has been the news source followed by Facebook, Instagram and then other social media platforms. WhatsApp, Messenger are the useful social media chat formats which are very useful for journalist. Journalist found that the features of chatting social media platforms are very useful for daily work.

Importantly journalist shared very positive views for social media platforms as well as mainstream media importance at the time of social media. Most of the journalist opinioned that social media has made journalist work and life easy but along with many challenges. Challenges like within flood of information the actual required information getting and processing it for journalistic use has been the challenge. Now audience get real time information so what after that need to share with the audience. It is the major challenge. Most importantly the work pressure, breaking news affects journalist's life. Next to it is authentication of information each time is necessary .Journalist said that each and every step needs verification.

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