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Original Research Paper

Media

USAGE OF ONLINE INFORMATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTING: AN EVALUATION STUDY AMONG PRINT JOURNALISTS.

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ABSTRACT

Usage, Information, Journalists, Environment, New Media, Reporting, Print media

India is witnessing a major revolution in the field of mass communication. The growth of communication technologies, the impact of globalization and the liberal policy adopted by the government have brought in stupendous changes in the field of communication. The technological change in news gathering have really increased the speed of news and helped newspaper managements to push their deadlines. They are also able to plan more number of editions and provide latest news to readers.

New communication technology, including accessible online publishing software and evolving mobile device technology, means that citizens have the potential to observe and report more immediately than traditional media outlets do. Bloggers and other amateur journalists are scooping mainstream news outlets as well as pointing out errors in mainstream articles, while people who've been made subjects of news articles are responding online, posting supplementary information to provide context and counterpoints. Increasingly, the public is turning to online sources for news, reflecting growing trust in alternative media.

This article proposes that changing technology influences on environmental journalism. Media development organizations are helping to change that. They and their partners on the ground train reporters and citizens to cover environmental news and issues; support investigations; and create innovative ways to gather information, present environmental data, and engage the public. Media development programs centered on environmental news can serve as a model for how to boost quality journalism and innovation more generally across the media and how to bring issue-driven donors into the media development sector to expand independent-minded topical coverage.

KEYWORDS :

INTRODUCTION

The information age has created many challenges for every profession. In the case of journalism the introduction of information technology has altered considerably various aspects of the profession. Today various computerized sources are regularly being used in media organizations. This paper investigates the adoption of information technology, three broad themes reflecting the role of the media in the digital age emerged from the Journalism, how journalists use these new tools to advance their profession, write for global audience and news gathering, the role of Internet; what the security and ethical implications are in this new realm; and whether freedom of the press necessarily means freedom of access, confusion created by new digital technologies and the power, speed and usefulness of digital creation, transmission and reception.

A new digital communications technology has made inroads in the field of mass communication. An electronic superhighway is beginning to girdle the globe as voice; video and data converge, bringing in their wake a new basket of digital, multimedia and interactive communication technologies. But it is not just the technologies that matter us. It is the social change that accompanies the technologies that is be the prime concern. The new technologies are doing much more. They are changing the way we live-the way we work, relax, manage our money, trade and communicate with each other. They are changing the way we perceive people, cultures, countries and companies and our expectations of them and also our expectations of ourselves.

Environmental Reporting:

Print media, which is still dominant and most influential compared to electronic media, can play a big role in environmental protection. Environmental reporting can contribute a lot for awareness. The concept of environmental protection is a reality pertaining to livelihoods. A few print and broadcast media had offered columns and feature programs on the environment. But the overall coverage is quite primitive and limited. Environmental reporting is a focused subject now. A media person can give general knowledge about waste concerning the environment. Since independence, the number of Indian newspapers has multiplied several folds.

News Gathering:

The technology has speeded up delivery. But that has rendered authentication of sources difficult for the reporters. Material may get discarded simply because it was delivered over fax. In many countries, press hand outs are now being issued through electronic bulletin boards and the Internet. Thus, it is now possible to release information simultaneously across continents. Journalists can dial up and get the information any time after it has been posted. Bulletin boards can be of real help if used while managing calamities and other incidents. If authorities like the police keep on posting information as and when they become available on bulletin boards, they can avoid answering a lot of telephone calls from reporters. The Internet also offers vast amount of online information useful to journalists. However, much of the material on the Internet could not be considered reliable. There is also the possibility of Internet sites or files disappearing without trace. This could become a problem if the material is controversial. In fact, the several ethical questions are being thrown up about sourcing stories from the Internet.

Objective of the Study: The purpose of the study is to determine the use of web search engines among journalists on their daily life.

The main points of our study are as under:

a) To find out the how much journalists are accessing online information.
b) To know which type of environmental related information they accesses.
c) To find out how many bureau and non bureau centres journalists accessing environment related information.

Methodology: Research Design: Research design as defined by Kerliner (1995) is the plan and structure of investigation so conceived as to obtain answer to research questions. Ex post facto research design was followed for conducting the study.

Robinson (1976) defined ex facto research design, as any systematic empirical enquiry into which the independent variables has not been directly manipulated because they have already occurred or they are inherently not manu pulable.

Cooper and Schindler (1992) defined ex post facto as a research design in which investigator had no control over the variables in the sense of being able to manipulate them, they can only report what has happened or what is happening, Keeping this in view, the adaptability of the proposed design with respect to the type of study, variables under consideration, size of respondents and phenomenon to be studied, the ex post facto design was adopted as an appropriate research design.

Study Area: The study was conducted in eleven major district centres in Karnataka. Following the multi-stage sampling method, eleven district centres were selected for this study. Out of them, six were non-bureau centres while five of the district centres had bureaus of various newspapers, wherein editions have been brought out. Non-bureau centres had only news gathering facilities and newspapers were not printed in those centres.

Sampling Method: In the present study, cluster random sampling method has been used, in which bureau and non-bureau centres are considered as two clusters. Later the researcher identified the number of bureau and non bureau centres in each cluster. It was found that 300 bureau and 180 non-bureau centres were functioning. Later, simple random sampling method with random number table was used. Based on the random numbers, the researcher selected 60 bureau and 30 non-bureau centres for the final study. Further, from each bureau and non-bureau centres, 10 random samples were selected. Therefore, the study included 600 bureau respondents and 300 non-bureau centre respondents for the study.

Data Collection: For the purpose of data collection, 60 respondents were contacted in bureau centres and in non-bureau centres 30 respondents were contacted to collect required data. In total, five bureau centres and six non-bureau centres were selected and the total number of respondents was 480. The reason for contacting 60 journalists from bureau-centres was that there were more number of journalists working for various publications and they were major towns and cities. The non-bureau-centres were mainly district headquarters and had few journalists working.

Significance of the study:

Modern communication technologies have come to play a major role in the functioning of media professionals. Without their applications, it would be difficult to comprehend the existence of newspapers. Both writing skills and competence in using modern communication devices have become very essential for journalists. What role has communication about environmental issues, and how might scientists, journalists and others do a better job of communicating about it to bridge the gap between a high degree of public awareness and a low degree of concern? Scientists and the news media have tended to emphasise the global nature of dramatic climate change in recent years, probably a less effective means of promoting societal action than pointing out actions and options that can make a difference. In this context it would be interesting to examine their importance.

Distribution of respondents according to centres, sex and education with respect to the frequency of downloading information on environmental Issues.

Factors	Regularly	%	Occasionally	%	Rarely	%	Total
Districts							
Bangalore	11	18.33	19	31.67	30	50.00	60
Belgaum	1	1.67	9	15.00	50	83.33	60
Bidar	8	26.67	13	43.33	9	30.00	30
Gulbarga	3	5.00	9	15.00	48	80.00	60
Haveri	7	23.33	14	46.67	9	30.00	30
Hubli-Dharwad	18	30.00	27	45.00	15	25.00	60
Karwar	9	30.00	12	40.00	9	30.00	30
Koppal	1	3.33	3	10.00	26	86.67	30
Mysore	9	15.00	12	20.00	39	65.00	60
Udupi	4	13.33	4	13.33	22	73.33	30
Yadgir	0	0.00	8	26.67	22	73.33	30
Chi-square= 109.287 df=20 p=0.000001*							
Centres							
Bureau centres	42	14.00	76	25.33	182	60.67	300
Non-Bureau centres	29	16.11	54	30.00	97	53.89	180
Chi-square=2.133 df=2 p=0.34427							
Gender							
Male	61	15.89	101	26.30	222	57.81	384
Female	10	10.42	29	30.21	57	59.38	96
Chi-square=2.018 df=2 p=0.36464							
Education							
PUC and Less	7	21.88	10	31.25	15	46.88	32
Degree	33	16.26	67	33.00	103	50.74	203
Postgraduate	25	11.52	45	20.74	147	67.74	217
M.Phil&PhD Degree	6	21.43	8	28.57	14	50.00	28
Chi-square=16.239 df=6 p=0.01254*							
Age groups							
21-25yrs	8	13.56	17	28.81	34	57.63	59
26-30yrs	25	13.51	56	30.27	104	56.22	185
31-35yrs	16	15.84	24	23.76	61	60.40	101
36-40yrs	12	16.22	12	16.22	50	67.57	74
40+yrs	10	16.39	21	34.43	30	49.18	61
Chi-square=8.342 df=8 p=0.40085							
Total	71	14.79	130	27.08	279	58.13	480

Data Interpretation:

Environmental related issues do not seem to be very popular among journalists. An examination of the data analysis provided in the Table indicated that only 15 percent of the respondents obtaining information on a regular basis followed by 27 percent downloading occasionally and 58 percent rarely. Among the centres, 30 percent each from Hubli-Dharawad and Karwar downloaded information regularly followed by 27 percent from Bidar. No one from Yadgir downloaded information on a regular basis and it was only two percent in Belgaum. In case of those who obtained information occasionally, 47 percent were from Haveri, 45 percent from Haveri, and 43 percent from Bidar. In respect of those who downloaded rarely, 87 percent were from Koppal, followed by 83 percent from Belgaum and 80 percent from Gulbarga. The data pointed those journalists from Karwar, Hubli-Dharawad and Bidar seem to be more interested in environment related issues. The Chi-square test indicated that the difference was found to be statistically significant Chi-square= 109.287.p=0.000001. Five percent level significance. According to centres, a significant of 14 percent of the respondents from non-Bureau centres obtained information regularly whereas it was only 14 percent in Bureau centres. Even among those who downloaded information occasionally 30 percent were from non-Bureau centres and 26 percent from Bureau centres. The Chi-square test indicated that the difference was found to be statistically not significant. (Chi-square= 2.133.p=0.34427. Five percent level significance).

In respect of the data analysis based on gender, male journalists constituted 16 percent among those who downloaded information regularly whereas it was only 10 percent among female respondents. However in case of downloading information occasionally female respondents constituted 30 percent and male journalists 26 percent. The

Chi-square test indicated that the difference was found to be statistically not significant. (Chi-square= 2.018.p=0.36464. Five percent level significance).

Regarding their education qualifications, the data pointed that almost 21 percent each from PUC and less and research degree holders downloaded environment related information regularly. 16 percent of graduates and 12 percent postgraduates downloaded information on a regular basis. In respect of those who obtained such information occasionally, 33 percent were degree holders, 31 percent were PUC and less qualified respondents followed by 29 percent of research degree holders. Surprisingly 68 percent of postgraduates rarely downloaded such information. The Chi-square test indicated that the difference was found to be statistically significant. (Chi-square= 16.239.p=0.01254. Five percent level significance).

The analysis of data based on their age groups, 16 percent each from 36-40 and 40 plus groups downloaded such information on a regular basis followed by 16 percent belonging to 31-35 age group. Among those who obtained such information occasionally, 34 percent were from 40 plus group followed by 30 percent from 26-30 and 29 percent from 21-25 age groups. More than 60 percent of the respondents from 36-40 and 31-35 age groups rarely downloaded such information. The Chi-square test indicated that the difference was found to be statistically not significant. (Chi-square= 8.342.p=0.040085. Five percent level significance).

15 percent of the respondents regularly downloaded information on environmental topics followed by 27 per cent occasionally and 58 per cent rarely. 30 percent of the respondents each from Hubli-Dharwad and Karwar downloaded such information on a regular basis followed by 27 percent from Bidar. More percentage of male journalists (16 percent) downloaded such information on a regular basis compared to their female (10 percent) colleagues.

Reasons for downloading information to obtain background information: Most of the journalists downloaded the latest information from the web to get the background information got the background information. Most of them stated that they used web to downloaded photographs, more percentage of men downloaded such information compared to women respondents. As the educational qualifications improves, their percentage of downloading information increases.

Downloading for latest news: Regularly Journalists are accessing online information regarding on environmental issues**.** There was no difference among male and female journalists with respect to downloading information for latest information about environmental issues.

Downloading photographs, charts and graphs: In respect of those who downloaded photographs, charts and graphs more percentage of female journalists' downloaded photographs, charts and graphs compared to their male colleagues.

CONCLUSION:

The web has opened new vistas for daily newspapers, enabling them to offer video content that competes directly with television. It provides newsrooms the ability to establish a genuine two-way conversation with readers in a newspaper's own community while at the same time extend the reach of the paper's circulation to anyone with an Internet connection. Newsrooms need to plan to dominate and retain their role as the premier sources of news and information. The present survey confirms that journalists had adopted news reporting skills for both the web and print versions of the paper. The technology brought together everyone at the paper responsible for gathering data and then engaging them with library researchers and archivists, Today a reporter is trained in computer-assisted reporting plus and he is high-level database researcher. The enormous online information accessibility has helped journalists. The study confirms that more than one-third of them regularly downloaded information regularly and 45 percent occasionally. Photographs/graphics followed by latest information and background information were very popular downloads among the journalists of this study. It is obvious that newspapers use more images these days because of advancements in printing technology. Around 20 percent of journalist's downloaded information on a regular basis on issues related to cinema-entertainment, health, science and technology. It was interesting to note that education topped the chart with 43 percent of them downloading on regular basis.

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