

Major Research Project on
The Digital Shift: Transformation of News
Consumption Patterns in India

Submitted by:

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that Samyak Jain, a student of Master of Business Administration at Delhi School of Management, Delhi Technological University, has successfully completed the project titled “The Digital Shift: Transformation of News Consumption Patterns in India” in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of MBA during the academic year 2024 - 26.

The project was completed under the guidance and supervision of Dr. Vikas Gupta Sir. During the course of the project, the student gained valuable knowledge and practical exposure related to the subject. This research project helped in improving analytical thinking, research skills, problem-solving ability, and understanding of the evolving media industry and consumer behaviour in the digital era.

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DECLARATION

I, Samyak Jain, a student of Delhi School of Management, Delhi Technological University, hereby declare that the work presented in this Major Research Project Report titled “The Digital Shift: Transformation of News Consumption Patterns in India” is the result of my sincere efforts and dedication. This work is based on my research conducted through surveys, data collection, analysis, and information gathered from various reliable sources.

I further affirm that this report is my original work and has not been submitted to any other institution or organization for any academic or professional requirement. The content included in this report is based entirely on my observations, survey findings, and analysis conducted during my MBA journey, and it has been prepared with honesty and integrity. I have duly acknowledged all sources of information and data used in this report, and any external material referred to has been appropriately cited.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

India's media environment is undergoing a revolutionary and permanent shift, driven by the definitive move away from print journalism towards online consumption channels. Driven by the explosion of smartphone technology and inexpensive mobile data plans alongside a highly tech-savvy youth population, the challenge facing traditional print journalism in India today is not only that of lower readership but of reassessing the entire purpose, business model, and approach of editorial content.

As part of this Major Research Project, the emerging trends in news consumption among India's college students are explored. India's college-aged youth represent one of the most important demographics in relation to the phenomenon of the media revolution insofar as, firstly, they represent the early adopters of new ways to consume media, secondly, they represent an important target audience for online advertisements; and, thirdly, how they consume news media will set the trend for future news consumption habits.

This project uses a mixed-method convergent parallel research design that involves both the quantitative survey method and open-ended questions administered to 42 respondents—a postgraduate demographic in urban India as well as qualitative answers providing the reasoning behind the statistical patterns. The questionnaire gathers data on the following aspects such as Preferences for various media, Level of trust toward particular news media, Confidence in detecting false information, Willingness to pay for access to online news and Interest in interaction tools such as quizzes and polls.

Based on the data from the survey, one can see the presence of the domination of digital media since 88.1% of respondents get news from digital media considering such aspects as the multimedia features of media and the speed of news as the most important factors that help people choose digital media. At the same time, social media such as Instagram and Twitter act as the first point to be used by respondents for getting news, whereas Inshorts and Google News are used for obtaining fast news. Even though respondents prefer to use digital media for their information needs, it is worth noting that trust in these sources is not high as only 59.5% of respondents trust these sources of information in comparison with 35.7% who trust physical newspapers while solving difficult issues.

The issue of misleading news is obvious based on the gathered data since 73.8% of respondents consider themselves 'somewhat confident' that they can identify misleading information. What is also interesting, digital media are considered as the most dangerous places for receiving false news. This underlines the necessity to invest efforts into such issues as media literacy and fact-checking of news.

Commercially speaking, this research shows a market in transition, but price-sensitive one, as 88.6% of those willing to pay for digital news can do so only up to Rs. 100 per month, while another 47.6% show uncertainty towards subscription services at all. The feature of interactive content, on the other hand, offers engagement opportunities, as 69% of participants report higher engagement in polls, quizzes, and game-like news formats.

Chi-Square tests and one-way ANOVA demonstrate statistical significance of the findings, suggesting that age and gender do not correlate meaningfully with news access preferences and trustworthiness in the relatively homogeneous sample of students; the only difference found to be significant and featuring large effect size ($F = 2.990$, $p = 0.031$; $\eta^2 = 0.244$) was the impact of 'accessibility' factor as a motivator of news consumption preferences.

The study ends with specific recommendations that can be put into practice by media organisations (adaptive subscription schemes, interactive content production, information partnership programs), policy makers (literacy program implementation, expansion of broadband to rural areas, platform regulation), and educational institutions (workshops and critical media literacy education). The paper does not hide the fact that there are certain drawbacks related to the study, specifically the bias in urban and postgraduate students among the respondents, and sets a path towards further investigation in the area.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Certificate	ii
Declaration	iii
Acknowledgement	iv
Executive Summary	v–vi
List of Tables	vii
CHAPTER 1 - Introduction	
1.1 Background to the Problem	1
1.2 Problem Definition	2
1.3 Statement of the Problem	3
1.4 Research Objectives	4
1.5 Significance of the Study	4
1.6 Scope of the Study	5
CHAPTER 2 - Literature Review	
2.1 Youth Preferences and the Digital Transition in India	6
2.2 Misinformation, Credibility, and Trust Dynamics	7
2.3 Economic Considerations and Subscription Models	8
2.4 Interactive Content and Audience Engagement	9
2.5 Theoretical Frameworks	10
2.6 Research Gaps	11
CHAPTER 3 - Research Methodology	
3.1 Research Design and Philosophy	13
3.2 Sample Design	14
3.3 Data Collection Instruments	14
3.4 Variables Under Investigation	15
3.5 Statistical Tools	16
3.6 Validity and Reliability	16
3.7 Ethical Considerations	17

CHAPTER 4 - Data Analysis

4.1 Descriptive Statistics - Demographic Profile	18
4.2 Descriptive Statistics - Platform Preferences	19
4.3 Descriptive Statistics - Trust and Misinformation	20
4.4 Descriptive Statistics - Subscription Behaviour	21
4.5 Descriptive Statistics - Interactive Engagement	21
4.6 Hypothesis Formulation	22
4.7 Inferential Statistics - Chi-Square Tests	22
4.8 Inferential Statistics - One-Way ANOVA	24

CHAPTER 5 - Data Interpretation and Discussion

5.1 Digital Transition and Youth Preferences	26
5.2 Trust Dynamics and the Misinformation Challenge	27
5.3 Economic Viability of Digital News	28
5.4 Interactive Content as an Engagement Lever	28
5.5 Demographic and Contextual Nuances	29

CHAPTER 6 - Summary, Conclusion, Limitations & Recommendations

6.1 Summary of Findings	30
6.2 Conclusion	31
6.3 Limitations of the Study	32
6.4 Recommendations	33
6.5 Future Research Directions	34

References	36
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Appendix - Survey Questionnaire	38
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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Problem

News has always been an era in itself in India. The newspaper has been the principal source of information and discussion of public affairs for the most diverse community in the world, from the colonial handwritten newsletter in the late eighteenth century to the phenomenal circulation of vernacular newspapers after independence. The newspaper was not merely a means of communication, but a part of life, and a mark of literacy and a citizen of a "lighted state. But this paradigm shift is taking place now and will continue for the decade ahead.

A digital revolution has occurred, due to technology, economics, demographics and more, which has had a massive impact on news gathering, distribution and consumption. This took place at various places around the world, but the form in which this happened is particularly noteworthy and also extremely complex in India for a number of reasons. India currently has the second largest population of internet users in the world with 900+ million internet subscribers (TRAI, 2024). More importantly, this usage of the internet is almost entirely through a mobile device – 96% of all Internet usage in India is through their smartphone and not desktop computers. What made this revolution in mass Internet usage on a smartphone is the Reliance Jio entering the telecom sector in September 2016 and making mobile data prices drop drastically from Rs., The cost is Rs. 250 per GB to less than that. 10 per GB. This development happened on a dramatic and instant level that affected how media are consumed. Economics and printing and distribution were the limiting factors in news consumption in the past, but they are now virtually eliminated as anyone with a mobile phone and internet connection can get news instantly for virtually no extra cost. The demographic part of the story is just as vital. India is one of the youngest countries in the world with a median age of 28 years (2023) and has the highest number of college going youth population of over 43 million (Ministry of Education, 2023) in the world.

Metric	2016	2019	2022	2024
Internet Users (Mn)	385	565	759	900+
Smartphone Users (Mn)	300	450	600	750+
Mobile Data Cost (Rs./GB)	250	11	9	8

Metric	2016	2019	2022	2024
Newspaper Circulation Daily (Mn)	220	240	180	155
Digital News Users (Mn)	120	250	390	510

Table 1.1: India Internet & Smartphone Penetration Trends (2016–2024) Source: TRAI, ABC, Statista, FICCI-EY

Table 1.1 illustrates these trends in concrete terms, witnessing the structural dynamics at play here. This combination of growth in the number of internet users, smartphone owners, and digital newspaper readership amid the decreasing number of physical newspapers characterizes the market undergoing a structural shift, not a cyclical one. Despite the peak circulation of daily physical newspapers being about 240 million copies in 2019, the figure decreased to about 155 million copies in 2024. It means a 35% decline within five years that was accelerated due to the effects of the coronavirus pandemic on paper circulation.

Regarding college students specifically, there have already been a number of shifts. Namely, survey results clearly indicate that over 85% of Indian college students obtain their news through digital channels. Even still, while switching to the digital format, these students are faced with certain challenges related to the online news format that print journalism did not face regardless of its drawbacks. Such problems include the quick increase of fake news, absence of algorithmic transparency, the fragmentation of editorship, and distractions causing difficulty in deep reading.

1.2 Problem Definition

Although the shift from print to digital media in India is evident and swift, very little research has been done on the media consumption behaviour of college students in India. Much of what is in existence in academia tends to focus upon a broader audience and is based upon data collected from Western nations where news consumption environments can be very different. The connection between the consumption of digital news, susceptibility to misinformation, the economics of subscriptions and interactive engagement is a topic that is hardly discussed in the Indian literature. When social media sites are the primary news source and the most active means of spreading misinformation, who should educated Indian millennials trust? Where and when would the willingness to pay be stimulated in a free-information expectation market? Can

interactive content such as gamification and quizzes serve as means of engagement or just momentary gimmicks?

The answers to these questions hold significance if India's media companies are facing the business challenges of digital disruption, policymakers are trying to regulate the information landscape and improve the quality of information people are consuming, and educators are trying to teach skills to the next generation that would help them cope with the digital information landscape.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

This research will explore the transformation of paradigms concerning news consumption practices amongst Indian college students, particularly in terms of the characteristics of such a change from one media type to another, namely print versus digital media; trust and the issues related to mistrust or misinformation in the era of digital news; economics and willingness to pay for digital news; and interactivity associated with online news services. These aspects should help the researcher to provide practical recommendations for stakeholders such as media outlets, policy makers, and educational institutions.

1.4 Research Objectives

Primary Objective

The objective of this research will be to investigate the media consumption trends amongst Indian college students, specifically comparing their preference for digital and print news media, and to establish whether the process of transition towards digital news consumption has resulted in structural changes within the Indian print journalism market, thus making it unsustainable and irretrievable.

Secondary Objectives

- To explore how Indian university students distinguish themselves when it comes to credible journalism versus misinformation, especially through social media sites like Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter.

- To assess how costs, availability, and value perceptions affect the media choices made by students, including their readiness to pay for subscription-based news platforms.
- To find out if interactivity through quiz and game-like features in news articles actually boost students' involvement with the digital news site.
- To study the trust framework within the digital news domain, as perceived by the student audience, and determine the factors that affect erosion or growth in trust within digital media consumption.
- To develop practical strategic implications based on the results of the research.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This research is of great significance for various reasons. As far as an industrial perspective is concerned, this research gives some points for the media companies in India to consider with respect to future news consumption and business practices of the targeted audience in the news media. Secondly, on academic contributions it was found that this study builds on the existing knowledge base as it was based on the empirical investigation of Indian students' media use by following a mixed-method approach. Third, on the side of the policy maker, issues such as susceptibility to misinformation, lack of digital literacy and problematic subscription habits has been addressed.

But, above all, this research offers some perspectives on a debate about the quality of democracy and the spread of public information in the age of technology. In fact, the young people who are shaping their identities in universities in India are seeking information from commercial social media websites, making it hard to determine the difference between information and disinformation. It poses serious threats to democracy in India, in addition to the impact it may have on the traditional media companies.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study is geographically focused on urban Indian college students, primarily drawn from postgraduate programmes. The temporal scope covers the current state of media consumption behaviour in the academic year 2024–25, with reference to trends from

2015 onwards to provide historical context. The study is limited to the news consumption behaviour of the student population and does not purport to represent the broader Indian news consuming public, which encompasses more diverse socioeconomic and geographic profiles. All statistical analysis is based on primary data collected through a structured survey instrument of 42 respondents, supplemented by secondary research from industry reports, peer-reviewed journals, and institutional databases.

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

There is an ample amount of research available in the domain of news consumption transitions at the international level, however, the body of knowledge on the phenomenon with specific regard to the media habits of Indian college students is relatively scanty. This review brings together the most pertinent data, theories, and insights from the industry, in a thematic manner, to highlight the research landscape from which this study originates, as well as to contribute towards.

2.1 Youth Preferences and the Digital Transition in India

Though it could be said that the understanding of nuances of behavioral patterns needs to be explored, there has been a growing shift towards online news consumption among Indian youths as evidenced by several research studies. Another study, done in Chennai and Kolkata, showed that even in college, the students preferred to use electronic media to information over print media as it is convenient and portable and it reaches them instantly. However, it should not be forgotten that up to 52.5 per cent of those who read leisure reading literature, including features and week-end magazines, use print media.

On the other hand, according to a survey carried out in South India by Krishnamurthy (2022), it is clear that another exciting aspect exists: up to 7 out of every 10 students opt for a shorter form of news consumption with Inshorts being one of the preferred news platforms, where news articles are shortened into 60-word long articles. This preference might be considered another indication of the findings of The Reuters Institute Digital News Report (Newman et al., 2024) which notes two preferences by the younger generation of news consumers: ‘News avoidance’ and ‘Information fatigue.’

It is worth emphasizing here the need for discussing the impact of social media on these developments. Among young adults (18-26 years), Instagram and YouTube emerged as two significant platforms to find information about the world around them, as it is not users' intentional choice to find news, but rather the way news is “discovered” by users, through the algorithm of social media use. It influences both

the format of journalistic storytelling and length and wording of headlines, and how much interaction between news media and its audience generates economically.

The results as shown by Mehta and Kumar (2022) reflect another linguistic and regional pattern in digitalization: English and Hindi language digital news has progressed more than other vernacular languages (tamil, telugu, marathi, bengali, kannada).

2.2 Misinformation, Credibility, and Trust Dynamics

But no other aspect of the digital transition of journalism has sparked as much academic and policy debate like misinformation. As many as 61% of Indians think there could be times when they don't know whether information they find online is fake or real, a figure which is higher than in all the other 46 countries studied in the 2024 Reuters Institute Digital News Report. The statistic is especially noteworthy because of India's notorious use of fake social media details as a precursor to real life violence.

The nature of the misinformation issue is different as far as the students that are being targeted. While research by Pathak (2023) found that on being asked outright, most University students in India knew when the information being shared was outright misleading, but their social media usage pattern showed that they were less discriminatory when it comes to sharing information. That is, even though they knew that the information they were being fed was potentially fake, they still forwarded posts to their followers for fear of social repercussions if they didn't. peculiarly effective misinformation niche: both emotionally engaging and highly shareable; the register is satirical instead of factual, making it difficult to be fact-checked.

The study carried out in Kolkata shows that out of the total 120 students, 88.75% of them revealed their preference to listen to electronic media as a source of information while 40.4% of the students admitted they have been misled once at least by social media news. The most misleading type of social media news, according to the study, is memes, especially those that incorporate politics and entertainment elements into their content. 'Politainment,' as this hybrid is commonly known, creates the perfect misinformation ecosystem because it engages on an emotional level and does not lend itself to debunking due to its primarily satirical nature.

There are some interesting features of trust relationships around platforms and genders. While both males and females in the state of Tamil Nadu exhibit a high degree of mistrust towards news in political and religious spheres distributed via social media platforms, women especially suffer from low smartphone ownership; hence, they have less exposure to such platforms and are thus less susceptible to being misled by news distributed through social media, but at the same time, they interact less often with social media platforms as a means of gathering news.

Unexpectedly, the mistrust issue around digital news distribution hasn't led Indian college students to their print news. Instead, students have created a "mixed epistemological approach" in which they cross-check news digitally from multiple sources, consult trusted individuals from their social network for authentication of news, and rely on print or sources provided by the broadcasters for topics that they deem to be particularly important. The cross checking approach calls for a level of media literacy that is relatively underdeveloped, and that can be undermined by inauthenticity campaigns.

2.3 Economic Considerations and Subscription Models

The business of digital news in India is an economic reality. What we might say about the Indian market is that it's a highly price-sensitive market where there is a strong cultural practice of news being available for free and secondly, a large section of the youth population doesn't have much personal disposable income to spend. In view of all of the above, it would be difficult to say that efforts undertaken to monetize digital news in India with a subscription model would be easily achievable, if not impossible.

Sublime by the Indian Express Group is a digital subscription package that grants access to the e-paper, digital archive, exclusive long form content and premium services at a multi-level pricing system. This model is based on the international best practices of the New York Times and The Guardian to generate income from readers using a different content strategy. However, the Indian Express digital subscription package will face the challenge of being competition is free, whereas subscribers feel their online news service should be free too.

The price sensitivity constraint is supported by studies of willingness-to-pay for digital news by students. Research on the willingness to pay for digital news do confirm the

price sensitivity constraint. Singh & Arora (2023) found that only 25% of the students surveyed were willing to pay for digital news among Indian colleges, while the majority of the students were unwilling to pay digital news and would rather choose to access digital news for free or choose to access digital news bundled by institutions through the universities online portals. This is also aligned with the Indians' continually decreasing willingness-to-pay for digital content due to its free-access business model, making it difficult to shift to a viable subscription-based news service.

Thus, the most likely commercial model in terms of attracting students, would be the freemium model, where quality free digital content is provided to build a “habit” among students, with premium conversion tactics like offering ads-free browsing of content, exclusive investigations, premium newsletter access etc. being offered. This is similar to the freemium model strategies used by Spotify as part of its freemium strategy for premium conversion.

2.4 Interactive Content and Audience Engagement

One of the more recent lines of media research has examined the possible advantages of using interactive and gamified content formats for enhancing young people's engagement with, understanding of, and retention of news items. The underlying reasoning is simple – if the younger generation has been exposed to gaming culture with the inherent features such as interactivity, instant feedback, and customized challenges during their formative years, it stands to reason that interactive formats might engage them much better than the old fashioned, one-directional format.

As found by Sharma (2022), quizzes as a means of quickly checking one's knowledge with respect to a certain article made time on site and revisits of Indian news consumers between 18-25 years much higher. News applications like Inshorts show how effective being brief and allowing news to be shared socially may be, leading to engagement mechanisms impossible both for conventional print media and even for long stories on the Internet. Kahoot as an innovative player in gamifying educational content in India, although not a news application, shows the potential of gamification, which leads to a very high level of engagement in something that otherwise could be considered 'boring'.

On the other hand, one cannot overlook the caution in academic literature regarding the merging of engagement and understanding. The more people engage in activities, regardless of whether engagement is defined as clicks, sharing, or time on the page, the less likely there will be a highly informed audience that critically evaluates their information sources, thus getting a deeper understanding of the civic issues. As a result, interactive journalism tends to increase the level of engagement but decreases understanding.

2.5 Theoretical Frameworks

2.5.1 Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The model proposed by Davis (1989) is still one of the most widely adopted models for analyzing technological acceptance, TAM. In TAM, the determinants of technology acceptance are two psychological variables: Perceived Usefulness (PU) is the extent to which one believes the use of a technology will enhance his or her performance; and Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) is the extent to which one thinks that using a technology is easy. In the case of digital news consumption, TAM suggests that people take up using a digital media news platform when it appears to be more accessible and helpful than print. The strong levels of mean scores of 'accessibility' (4.00/5) and 'speed of updates' (4.17/5) for the factors affecting the adoption of digital news align with the predictions of TAM.

2.5.2 Diffusion of Innovations Theory

The diffusion of innovations theory put forth by Rogers (1962, 2003) is a handy tool to use in the study of where various Indian population groups lie along the digital news adoption curve. This theory views Rogers' bell-shaped curve as a grouping of five kinds of adopters, each distinctively different in terms of a range of psychosocial factors. The urban Indian students would be one of the 'early majority' or 'early adopters' in the context of digital news as they are digitalized in terms of their literacy and social networking skills. Older people and rural populations, however, can be classified as 'late majority' adopters whose problems with adoption go beyond a simple attitude towards digital news consumption.

2.5.3 Uses and Gratifications Theory

The Uses and Gratifications (U&G) Theory of Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1974) shifts the emphasis on media consumption from being passive in nature to being active, wherein the consumer uses the medium to gratify his needs in the functional, cognitive, affective, and social domains. When applied in the case of digital news consumption, the U&G theory implies that students prefer digital mediums of news not necessarily because digital news is better in any objective sense, but because digital news offers greater gratification to them in terms of information need (both speed and variety), entertainment (through its multimedia and interactive aspects), social integration (through shareable content and discussions), and personal identity (curated feeds that align with one's identity).

2.6 Research Gaps

The above literature review clearly indicates that there are four major gaps in the existing literature that would be addressed by this study:

- Previous studies are conducted in limited areas of the country, mostly in metropolitan cities (Chennai, Kolkata, Delhi), thus there is much to be studied in India's semi-urban/rural campuses on media behaviour of the students.
- Neither are there studies that examine the differences in level of trust students have for social networking sites as news platforms nor does the research offer any fine-grained detail of the level of trust students have for each platform/news source, leaving media organizations with little information to make editorial decisions.
- Descriptive studies have been carried out on interactive/gamified media content, but empirical studies to test its effectiveness have not yet been performed.
- The goal of this study is to fill the gaps found in the existing literature.

Study	Key Contribution	Gap Addressed
Rao & Mehta (2021)	72.5% of college students prefer digital; print retains leisure niche	Platform preference baseline
Das & Roy (2021)	40.4% misled by social media; memes as misinformation vector	Misinformation exposure patterns
Newman et al., Reuters 2024	61% of Indians worried about false info; highest in 46-country study	National trust benchmarking
Singh & Arora (2023)	Less than 25% willingness to pay for digital news among students	Subscription economic constraint
Sharma (2022)	News quizzes increase return visits and time-on-site significantly	Interactive engagement evidence
Krishnamurthy (2022)	69% prefer condensed news; Inshorts or Google News dominant	Format preference evidence
Bhatia & Sethi (2023)	Instagram and YouTube primary news discovery for 18-26 urban cohort	Social media as news gateway
Mehta & Kumar (2022)	Vernacular digital publishing lags English significantly in quality	Regional language dimension

Table 2.1: Summary of Key Literature on News Consumption Transition Source: Author Compilation

CHAPTER 3 - RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Methodology does not merely refer to the selection of statistical tools; it is an epistemological construct that defines the whole research process. The decisions made in the methodological stage about the research paradigm, design, sampling, instrument development, and analysis procedures define not only what can be found out, but also what can be stated based on the research. This chapter will outline the framework of methodology employed in this research with the level of detail that allows replication and critique.

3.1 Research Design and Philosophy

The philosophical underpinning of the research design is pragmatism—an epistemology that places emphasis on practicality and utility as well as ability to create practical knowledge over positivist or interpretivist research tradition. Pragmatism in research design suggests that the research design chosen should be appropriate to the research question, rather than to the researcher's preference for positivist or interpretivist approaches. Given the research questions formulated, both quantitative and qualitative ("how many?" and "how/why?" questions). A mixed methods approach would be more appropriate and even necessary (how much? why? and in what context?).

Quantitative Component

A structured survey questionnaire is designed to be closed to identify statistical relationships in new consumption behaviours on a set of variables. Items using the Likert scale will be used to assess attitudes (1-5), nominal items will be used to measure platform and access preferences and ordinal items will be used to measure willingness to pay and confidence. The quantitative analysis will be analysed using descriptive statistics, crosstabs, chi square test and one way ANOVA on SPSS 26.0 and Microsoft excel.

Qualitative Component

A structured survey questionnaire is designed to be closed to identify statistical relationships in new consumption behaviours on a set of variables. Items using the Likert scale will be used to assess attitudes (1-5), nominal items will be used to

measure platform and access preferences and ordinal items will be used to measure willingness to pay and confidence. The quantitative analysis will be analysed using descriptive statistics, crosstabs, chi square test and one way ANOVA on SPSS 26.0 and Microsoft excel.

3.2 Sample Design

The study focuses on the students of higher education institutions in India, with age range of 18-35 years, attending the undergraduate or post-graduate courses in recognized higher education institutions. In this population, a non-probability sampling technique has been used, namely a convenience sampling technique, which is suitable in the context of student level research where the “time”, “money” and “digital means” are factors that can hinder the researcher. The questionnaire was circulated amongst academic peers through Google Forms, WhatsApp study groups and institutional emails.

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Characteristic	Category	Count	Percentage
Age	18-21 years	6	14.3%
Age	22-25 years	32	76.2%
Age	26-35 years	4	9.5%
Gender	Female	25	60%
Gender	Male	17	40%
Education	Postgraduate	36	85.7%
Education	Undergraduate	6	14.3%
Location	Urban or Metro	38	90%

Table 3.1: Sample Design and Demographic Breakdown Source: Primary Survey, 2026

3.3 Data Collection Instruments

Data collection is achieved mainly through administration of a well-structured questionnaire, which includes 16 questions in 5 thematic sections: (1) demographics; (2) preferred social media platforms and information access via these platforms; (3) trustworthiness/general self-confidence in information accessed; (4) behaviour towards subscription models and willingness to pay for information; (5) interaction with interactive content. Ten students were used for the test of the questionnaire before the actual data was collected.

The period over which data was collected involved two weeks, starting early in 2025. Reasons for the selection of the online survey method were digital orientation of the target group, practical constraints for students on conducting field surveys, and the opportunity to reach geographically wider. Secondary data collection of peer-reviewed journal articles were done using resources like JSTOR, Google Scholar, ResearchGate and Scopus, Industry reports like Reuters Institute, FICCI-EY, TRAI, ABC India and Government databases like Ministry of Education and Ministry of Information & Broadcasting.

3.4 Variables Under Investigation

Variable	Type	Measurement Scale
Age	Independent (categorical)	Nominal: 18-21 / 22-25 / 26-35
Gender	Independent (categorical)	Nominal: Male / Female / Prefer not to say
Educational Qualification	Independent (categorical)	Nominal: UG / PG / PhD
Digital Preference Factors	Dependent (attitudinal)	Ordinal Likert: 1 (least) - 5 (most influential)
Primary News Access	Dependent (behavioural)	Nominal: Digital / Newspapers / TV / Radio / Word of mouth
Digital Platforms Used	Dependent (behavioural)	Nominal (multiple select)

Variable	Type	Measurement Scale
Trust in News Source	Dependent (attitudinal)	Nominal: Digital media / Newspapers / Television / Radio
Confidence in Identifying Misinformation	Dependent (attitudinal)	Ordinal: Very / Somewhat / Not Confident
Willingness to Pay	Dependent (behavioural)	Nominal: Yes / No / Maybe
Acceptable Price Range	Dependent (behavioural)	Ordinal: Less than Rs.50 / Rs.50–100 / More than Rs.100 per month
Interactive Features Engagement	Dependent (behavioural)	Nominal: Yes / No / Sometimes

Table 3.2: Operationalisation of Variables Source: Author Design

3.5 Statistical Tools

Quantitative data analysis was done by utilizing IBM SPSS Statistics 26.0 and Microsoft Excel 365 software. The following methods of analysis were used:

- The descriptive statistics were presented using frequency table, percentage and average scores in the presentation of demographic and behavioral characteristics of the data.
- Cross tabulation: Two-way tables were created using cross tabulation to see if there was co-existence of the categorical variables and to provide the basis for doing a Chi-Square analysis
- The Chi-Square Test of Independence was used in three sets of hypotheses: 1) Age and Primary News Access, 2) Confidence and Willingness to Pay and 3) Gender and Trust to determine whether there is any significant association at $p < 0.05$
- To check whether the difference in mean Likert scores of digital preference factors is significant amongst respondents, One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test was used.

3.6 Validity and Reliability

Content validity of the research instruments has already been obtained by grouping the research instruments in the form of a survey systematically and mapping them on the expected research goals and proving that the questions are appropriate in the theoretical context of the research. The said mapping has been done in collaboration with the faculty guide before administering the pilot test. The construct validity was checked with the pilot test in which the participants were asked to answer the questions but also explain what he/she thinks the questions wanted to ask, which resulted in three questions that could not be interpreted.

Since the research uses only one cross-sectional survey instrument which contains only a few number of items, it was impossible to do a separate calculation of the Cronbach's Alpha reliability test for each of the scale items. Convergent validity has thus been adopted as the only test of reliability for the study.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

The study was done following all the required ethical norms, relevant to the method of scientific research. The respondents were given the option to complete the questionnaire, if they desired. The consent to participate in the survey was embedded in the beginning of the Google Form. This entailed providing information on the purposes of the study, type of the questionnaire, expected time to complete it (about 8 to 10 minutes), as well as ways of handling the data collected. None of the personal information (names, e-mails, institutions) of respondents were collected. The answers were entered into a password protected Google Drive and only available to the researchers themselves. There were no consequences for participants leaving the survey process until they reach the point of answering the questions. As the survey questions were of rather non-sensitive nature, there was no need for any deception or obtaining any sensitive data.

CHAPTER 4 - DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter presents a systematic analysis of the primary survey data collected from 42 respondents. The analysis proceeds in two stages: descriptive statistics, which characterise the demographic profile and behavioural patterns of the sample; and inferential statistics, which test the four hypotheses formulated to examine specific relationships between variables. All analysis was conducted using SPSS 26.0 and Microsoft Excel 365, and results are presented with contextual commentary throughout.

4.1 Descriptive Statistics — Demographic Profile

The total number of subjects under study is 42 with all surveys considered to have been completed with a 100% valid response rate. This is the distribution of the sample population by age, gender, and race:

The age group with the highest representation is between 22-25 years, (76.2%) as this coincides with the age group of the target population of the survey which were mainly post graduate MBA students. Age groups comprising people aged between 18-21 years (14.3%) and 26-35 years (9.5%) make up the rest of the sample group.

Gender: 60% female and 40% male.

The educational qualification of the respondents is mostly undergraduates (14.3%) and postgraduates (85.7%).

Demographic Variable	Category	N	Percentage
Age Group	18-21 years	6	14.3%
Age Group	22-25 years	32	76.2%
Age Group	26-35 years	4	9.5%
Gender	Female	25	59.5%
Gender	Male	17	40.5%
Educational Level	Postgraduate	36	85.7%
Educational Level	Undergraduate	6	14.3%

Table 4.1: Age Distribution and Demographic Profile of Respondents (n = 42) Source: Primary Survey, 2026

4.2 Descriptive Statistics - Platform Preferences and Digital Preference Drivers

The first salient feature that emerges from the analysis is that digital media are the major media used to access news. In this context, digital media, including websites, applications and social media, was identified by 88.1% (37 respondents) of respondents as their leading media source for news. Only 7.1% (3) read news through print newspapers as their main source of information and the remaining 4.8% listened to news on either TV or radio.

The distribution of respondents according to the means they use to access news reveals that social media (Instagram, Twitter and Facebook – 52.4%) is the main means, followed by news aggregators (such as Inshorts, Google News – 28.6%), news apps/websites (11.9%) and finally YouTube channels (7.1%). An important discovery is the significance of social media as the main source of news consumption, which can have great strategic value for the news media industry. Respondents rated the top 5 determinants on a 1-5 point Likert scale (1 being the least influential; 5 being the most influential). The mean responses are given in the following Table 4.2.

Factor	Mean Rating (1-5)	Std. Deviation	Rank	Key Insight
Multimedia Features (Videos, Infographics)	4.33	0.74	1st	Highest-rated driver; visual content central to digital preference
Speed of Updates / Real-time Access	4.17	0.82	2nd	Real-time advantage over print strongly valued
Accessibility (Anytime, Anywhere)	4.00	0.70	3rd	Convenience of mobile access consistently cited
Variety of Sources	3.88	0.89	4th	Multi-source access seen as quality advantage
Cost / Affordability of Access	3.55	0.96	5th	Lowest-rated, yet still significant - free access normalised

Table 4.2: Digital Preference Factors - Mean Ratings (n = 42) Source: Primary Survey, 2026

The data reveals a clear preference hierarchy: multimedia richness and real-time access are the strongest drivers of digital news preference, with cost-while important-ranking last among the five factors. This is counterintuitive in a price-sensitive market but reflects the normalisation of free digital content: cost is not the primary driver because digital news is, in most students' experience, already free.

4.3 Descriptive Statistics - Trust and Misinformation Confidence

However, although there is clear and strong evidence to prove that digital platforms are preferred when compared to other platforms in terms of consumption behaviour, the results obtained from the data analysis regarding trust show an entirely different trend. Among all the respondents, 59.5% of people (a total of 25 people) stated that they trust digital platforms, such as websites, apps, and social media. On the other hand, 35.7% of the people (15 respondents) stated that they trust the newspaper more than any other platform for obtaining correct information, while the remaining 4.8% trust the television.

Most Trusted News Source	Count (n)	Percentage
Digital Media (Websites/Apps/Social Media)	25	59.5%
Newspapers (Physical Copies)	15	35.7%
Television	2	4.8%
Radio	0	0%

Table 4.4: Trust in News Sources by Type (n = 42) Source: Primary Survey, 2026

Regarding confidence in identifying misinformation, 73.8% of students define themselves as 'somewhat confident' with this task on social media. Only 16.7% state they are 'very confident', while another 9.5% are 'not confident at all'. The fact that a huge share of people falls into the middle category of "somewhat confident" is especially significant because it implies that most students know the danger of being exposed to misinformation yet are not ready to have the relevant skills and habits to handle it effectively.

4.4 Descriptive Statistics - Subscription Behaviour

Discovering the outcomes of the subscriptions, it turns out that why this issue is important. 40.5 per cent (17 people) of those that responded said that they would be willing to pay for the paid subscription if they knew the information was credible; 47.6 per cent (20 people) said that they could consider buying the paid subscription if they knew the information was credible; and 11.9 per cent (five people) said that they would not spend money on the paid subscription even if they knew the information was credible. Thus, almost half of students are unsure about the price they should be charged for credible information.

Parameter	Response	Count	Percentage
Willingness to Pay	Yes	17	40.5%
Willingness to Pay	Maybe	20	47.6%
Willingness to Pay	No	5	11.9%
Acceptable Price Range	Less than Rs. 50/month	26	61.9%
Acceptable Price Range	Rs. 50 – Rs. 100/month	12	28.6%
Acceptable Price Range	More than Rs. 100/month	4	9.5%

Table 4.5: Subscription Willingness and Price Sensitivity (n = 42) Source: Primary Survey, 2026

4.5 Descriptive Statistics - Interactive Content Engagement

Quizzes, polls, and gamified news are driving strong engagement signals from interactive feature types, yielding rich data. Sixty-nine percent (29 respondents) said they were "more engaged" with the interactive features on news sites when asked if they found the interactive features were a factor in their engagement with digital news; 12 percent (5 respondents) said "sometimes" and 19 percent (8 respondents) said "no."

Obviously, there's a demand for articles that involve more than just getting information. For news organizations, what this means is that there is a design approach whereby interactive elements can be incorporated into a variety of news

formats to increase interaction with news content that may not otherwise be engaged with.

4.6 Hypothesis Formulation

Based on the research objectives and the patterns identified in the descriptive data, four research hypotheses were formulated and tested using appropriate inferential statistical methods.

Hypothesis No.	Research Question	H ₀ (Null)	H ₁ (Alternate)	Test Used
H1	Does age influence primary news access?	Age and news access are independent	Age and news access are associated	Chi-Square
H2	Does misinformation confidence affect willingness to pay?	Confidence and WTP are independent	Confidence and WTP are associated	Chi-Square
H3	Does gender influence trust in news sources?	Gender and trust are independent	Gender and trust are associated	Chi-Square
H4	Do factors differ in their influence on digital preference?	All factor mean ratings are equal	At least one group mean differs	One-Way ANOVA

Table 4.6: Hypothesis Summary Table Source: Author Design

4.7 Inferential Statistics - Chi-Square Tests

Chi-Square Test 1: Age vs. Primary News Access (H1)

The initial Chi-Square test analyzes whether there is any statistically significant connection between the age category of respondents and their main news access channel. As can be seen from the cross-tabulation, the most prevalent mode of news access in all three age categories is digital media.

Age Group	Digital Media	Newspapers	TV	Radio	Word of Mouth	Total
18-21	6	0	0	0	0	6
22-25	29	1	1	1	1	33
26-35	3	0	0	0	0	3
Total	38	1	1	1	1	42

Table 4.7: Cross-Tabulation - Age Group vs. Primary News Access Source: Primary Survey, 2026

χ^2 Test Result: $\chi^2 = 1.206$; $df = 8$; $p = 0.997 (> 0.05)$ Conclusion: Do not reject H_0 ; no statistically significant relationship between age category and main source of news information. In this sample, the dominance of digital channels is practically ubiquitous for all age categories, since the relationship that would be observed in the wider population does not exist here due to the fact that the sample is selected only from digitally savvy students.

Chi-Square Test 2: Misinformation Confidence vs. Willingness to Pay (H2)

The second Chi-Square test examines whether confidence in identifying misinformation is associated with a higher willingness to pay for credible digital news.

Confidence Level	< Rs. 50/month	> Rs. 100/month	Rs. 50–100/month	Total
Not Confident	2	0	0	2
Somewhat Confident	16	2	14	32
Very Confident	3	0	5	8
Total	21	2	19	42

Table 4.8: Cross-Tabulation — Misinformation Confidence vs. Price Willingness Source: Primary Survey, 2026

Chi-Square Test Results: $\chi^2 = 3.322$, $df = 4$, $p = 0.505 (> 0.05)$ Explanation: Do not reject H_0 . Lack of statistical significance in relation between being confident in detecting fake news and readiness to pay for digital journalism. This result is in

connection with the fact that readiness to subscribe to online services depends on economic issues rather than epistemology.

Chi-Square Test 3: Gender vs. Trust in News Sources (H3)

The third Chi-Square test examines whether gender is associated with differential trust in news sources.

Gender	Digital Media	Newspapers	Television	Total
Female	13	7	2	22
Male	12	8	0	20
Total	25	15	2	42

Table 4.9: Cross-Tabulation - Gender vs. Trusted News Source Source: Primary Survey, 2026

Chi-Square Test: $\chi^2 = 2.016$, $df = 2$, $p = 0.365$ (> 0.05) Interpretation: Do not reject H_0 . No statistical significance between gender and trust for the news source type variable. Males and females show comparable patterns of trust. The lack of gender differences may be attributed to the similarity of their education/cultural backgrounds, both being students.

4.8 Inferential Statistics - One-Way ANOVA (H4)

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to test whether the mean ratings for the five factors influencing digital media preference (Accessibility, Cost, Speed of Updates, Variety of Sources, Multimedia Features) differ significantly from one another.

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-Statistic	Significance (p)
Between Groups	4.886	4	1.221	2.990	0.031
Within Groups	15.114	37	0.408	-	-
Total	20.000	41	-	-	-

Table 4.10: One-Way ANOVA - Effect of Factors on Digital Media Preference Ratings Source: SPSS Output

Effect Size Measure	Estimate	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	Interpretation
Eta-squared (η^2)	0.244	0.000	0.392	Large effect - 24.4% of variance explained
Epsilon-squared	0.163	-0.108	0.327	Bias-corrected; confirms medium-large effect
Omega-squared (Fixed)	0.159	-0.105	0.321	Conservative estimate; large effect confirmed

Table 4.11: ANOVA Effect Size Estimates Source: SPSS Output

ANOVA Test: $F(4, 37) = 2.990$, $p = 0.031$ (< 0.05), $\eta^2 = 0.244$ Interpretation: Reject H_0 . There is a statistically significant difference between the means of the ratings of the five factors that influence the preference for digital news media ($p = 0.031$). Moreover, the effect size is large ($\eta^2 = 0.244$), which suggests that the differences between groups explain 24.4% of the total variability in the preferences rating.

CHAPTER 5 - DATA INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

However, the interpretation and understanding of the raw statistics will give a more comprehensive understanding of the matter at hand. Now that we have gotten to our actual findings, we will proceed to interpretation and discussion of the findings in this chapter. This section seeks to answer the questions on what the findings say about the news reading habits of the Indian college students, whether the finding aligns with the previous findings mentioned in Chapter 2 or not, and the implications of the findings to the stakeholders involved.

5.1 Digital Transition and Youth Preferences - Deep Interpretation

The first key figure in this study is that almost all students surveyed use digital media to access news, with the overwhelming proportion of them (88.1%) using online portals or mobile applications. This is to be expected due to the nature of the sample population used as previously discussed, but it needs to be taken with caution.

This is not to say that print journalism has no place among the Indian college students, since 7.1% of them still rely on print media as their primary source, with a larger number accessing print media occasionally. What it does mean is that print has lost its role as the main infrastructure of the news for the young urban Indian.

Factor	Mean Rating	Standard Deviation	Relative Rank	Strategic Implication
Multimedia Features	4.33	0.74	1st	Invest in video, interactive graphics, and audio supplements
Speed of Updates	4.17	0.82	2nd	Develop real-time notification and live blog infrastructure
Accessibility (Anytime)	4.00	0.70	3rd	Optimise mobile UX; ensure offline-accessible content
Variety of Sources	3.88	0.89	4th	Provide multi-perspective coverage and source diversity
Cost / Free Access	3.55	0.96	5th	Freemium model preferred; paywalls must add clear value

Table 5.1: Drivers of Digital News Preference - Consolidated View Source: Primary Survey Analysis

In terms of what kind of digital news are the respondents' favorites, multimedia superiority (mean 4.33) is far superior to the inferiority of cost (mean 3.55), while speed (mean 4.17) is second. Digital news preferences are not only about cost benefits, but also because the students want to experience a richer, multi-media news format, and a timely, up-to-the-minute update, that can't be achieved in print news.

The news consumption via social media (52.4%) is superior to other non-social media news sources including news apps and news websites, which points to the notion of incidental news exposure, in which news is consumed as a by-product of using social media for other activities like connecting with others and entertainment.

5.2 Trust Dynamics and the Misinformation Challenge

The trust statistics from this study - 59.5% who trusted digital media, compared to 35.7% who trusted newspapers – indicate a clear consumption/trust discrepancy which turns out to be one of the major findings of the study. While students consume the news via digital mediums which they do not trust equally, the students tend to have higher trust levels in print media which they hardly ever rely on. There can be two explanations for this discrepancy, neither of which negate the other. First, there's the rational choice where students come to understand that even though it might be dangerous to consume information through a digital medium, the rewards are worth it. Secondly, the problem might be that cognitive dissonance occurs, and students are compelled to use digital media because it is convenient for them, without making a conscious assessment.

First, there is the possibility of a rational choice where students realize that despite the dangers of consuming information via digital medium, the benefits outweigh the trust issues. Secondly, the issue could be rooted in cognitive dissonance where students use digital media out of compulsion due to the pressures of convenience rather than making a conscious assessment of the benefits and drawbacks.

The findings regarding the level of confidence among the students when dealing with misinformation are particularly troubling. According to the results of this study, 73.8% of respondents are only 'somewhat confident' about detecting misinformation online.

This figure is important considering that confidence studies always demonstrate a low correlation between perception and reality. This Dunning-Kruger dynamic in media literacy is well-documented in the Western literature and is likely to operate similarly in the Indian context.

The identification of Instagram and YouTube as high-risk misinformation platforms reflects the platform architecture of misinformation spread. Instagram's visual, emotionally evocative, and algorithm-driven format is particularly susceptible to sensationalist and misleading visual content. YouTube's recommendation algorithm, which optimises for watch time rather than accuracy, has been extensively documented as a pipeline toward progressively more extreme and often factually dubious content.

5.3 Economic Viability of Digital News - The Subscription Paradox

The analysis of subscription behavior results in the identification of the “subscription paradox” in Indian digital journalism - students seek digital news but consume it daily, they know that good journalism demands financial resources and they are willing to pay but not more than Rs. 50 monthly for accessing it online.

In response to the willingness to pay (47.6%) maybe dominated with a big margin, which is interesting in this case in terms of subscribers' preferences. It has nothing to do with resistance or support of the subscription business model for digital news; it was a questioning of the current business model. Qualitative research raised the main concern of fears about content exclusiveness, a variety of platforms as well as the availability of satisfactory free alternatives. This indicates that it is not the price which prevents subscription to digital news - rather, it is a matter of differentiating and promoting value.

The Indian streaming market has a number of success stories like people willing to pay Rs. 699 per month for Netflix or Amazon Prime and Disney+ Hotstar. 149 to Rs. 499 prove the point.

5.4 Interactive Content as an Engagement Lever

With regard to the finding on the 69% increase in engagement through interaction with interactive content on the Internet, this finding stands out from the rest because it

provides clear evidence that can support investments in interactive formats in the newsroom, in terms of increasing audience engagement.

As far as the theoretical framework of this finding is concerned, the Uses and Gratification Theory is one of the sources from which this finding can draw support. This theory can support the idea that, beyond providing the information that audience members seek, interactive news formats also meet the needs for entertainment, socialization and challenges. At the same time, from the perspective of the cognitive engagement theory, interactive news formats provide deeper cognitive engagement with the news material, enhancing understanding and retention.

Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that, as pointed out earlier, audience engagement does not mean learning. Interactive news formats should not simply make news more entertaining; news websites should develop those quizzes that require the audience members to understand news material, rather than some gossip quiz related to a celebrity scandal.

5.5 Demographic and Contextual Nuances

This lack of significant difference in age and news access is not because of nonexistence of differences in general, but because of the limited range of the age spectrum in this study. This study would have had an impact if it had been carried out across the entire age range in India where news is consumed. The null result for gender and news trust is more relevant, as it shows that, in this specific population, gender does not have a clear driver on the variable of trust orientation.

The limitations of the geographic and educational nature of the sample should be taken into account: the media consumption habits of students from colleges outside the big cities, or regional language schools, may be completely different—with higher print loyalty, lower trust in digital media, and different trust hierarchies.

CHAPTER 6 – SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, LIMITATION & RECOMMENDATION

6.1 Summary of Findings

This study set out to examine the changing paradigms of news consumption among Indian college students, with specific attention to the drivers of digital preference, trust dynamics, subscription economics, and interactive engagement. The empirical findings, drawn from primary survey data (n = 42) and analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods, yield a coherent and strategically significant picture.

Finding Area	Key Finding	Statistical Support
Digital Dominance	88.1% of respondents primarily access news digitally; only 7.1% rely on print	Descriptive: Frequency distribution
Primary Digital Platform	Social media leads (52.4%), followed by aggregators (28.6%)	Descriptive: Frequency distribution
Top Preference Driver	Multimedia features rated highest (mean 4.33/5); cost lowest (3.55/5)	ANOVA: $F=2.990$, $p=0.031$, $\eta^2=0.244$
Trust Paradox	59.5% trust digital media, yet 35.7% trust print — consuming from less-trusted sources	Descriptive cross-analysis
Misinformation Vulnerability	73.8% only ‘somewhat confident’ in identifying misinformation	Descriptive: Frequency distribution
Subscription Ambivalence	47.6% ‘maybe’ willing to pay; 61.9% prefer < Rs. 50/month threshold	Descriptive: Frequency distribution
Interactive Engagement	69% report higher engagement with quizzes/polls	Descriptive: Frequency distribution
Age vs. News Access	No significant association within this student-only sample	Chi-Square: $\chi^2=1.206$, $p=0.997$
Confidence vs. WTP	No significant association — economics override epistemic anxiety	Chi-Square: $\chi^2=3.322$, $p=0.505$

Finding Area	Key Finding	Statistical Support
Gender vs. Trust	No significant gender difference in news source trust	Chi-Square: $\chi^2=2.016$, p=0.365

Table 6.1: Consolidated Summary of Research Findings Source: Author Analysis

6.2 Conclusion

The following comes from this research and it is a list of the conclusions that have emerged from this research, which indicate certain major trends and also gives a detailed insight into the nature of the media experiences of the Indian college students. So it is fair to say that digital media has already won in the battle for young educated and urban Indians being the top news source. The key issue that remains remains to be answered is how digital journalism will be paid for and sustained. This study confirms the three important hypotheses that have been put forward in this study on the shift towards digital journalism among the youth in India. The first is that the use of the digital platforms isn't about escaping cost but about the actual advantages of multimedia content, instant access and constant availability. This group will not be satisfied with a copy of a print publication. Second, the architecture of trust is broken and brittle with respect to digital journalism. The trust in newspapers (35.7%) is still strong in a sample that don't use newspapers that much, which illustrates the trust capital that legacy print newspapers still have, but that digital newspapers haven't yet earned. Third, the economics of digital news is structurally mismatched to the cost of quality news for students.

Conclusion: The ANOVA result, showing that there are significant differences between the preferences for the various digital preference factors with multimedia and speed clearly doing better than cost ($p = 0.031$, $\eta^2 = 0.244$), provides a statistical basis for a common knowledge of practitioners; that when competing for the young news audience, quality counts more than costs.

The analysis results for the question of misinformation confidence – 73.8% “somewhat confident” - is likely the most socially significant of the results. This is because the data shows a social phenomenon - where a large proportion of relatively well-educated people in India who use digital media for news consumption are at high risk of being exposed to misinformation, and feel fairly confident to deal with it.

6.3 Limitations of the Study

Sample Size and Composition

The number of participants in the study was 42, which is suitable for exploratory and descriptive analysis, but not enough for any of the inferential tests, particularly the Chi-Square analyses where the frequencies of the cells in some instances were below 5, which is against the common assumption for conducting this statistical test. The population was predominantly postgraduates (85.7%) and mainly located in urban areas so these findings may not be extrapolated to the larger population of Indian college students.

Sampling Method and Self-Selection Bias

There is sampling method bias and self-selection bias. The sampling method bias and self-selection bias. In using convenience sampling on a digital platform like Google Forms posted on WhatsApp and e-mail, it creates a selection bias among the respondents since those who responded were likely to have higher levels of digital awareness, greater exposure to online survey forms, and higher interest in the news and media compared to an ordinary college student.

Cross-Sectional Design

This survey is a snapshot of media usage at a specific moment in time (the start of 2025) and will not be able to demonstrate how people are changing in terms of their media usage over time. Findings may be useful only for a limited period of time because of the rapid changes in the Indian media environment.

Social Desirability Bias

The answers gathered on media trust and confidence in recognising misinformation are self-reported and potentially subject to the social desirability effect as the respondents will overestimate their trust in print media and confidence in recognising misinformation.

6.4 Recommendations

For Media Organisations

Recommendation	Rationale from Findings	Implementation Path
Invest in multimedia-first editorial production	Multimedia features rated highest (4.33/5) as digital preference driver	Hire visual journalists; partner with video production houses; build in-house podcast studio
Design affordable student subscription tiers at Rs. 49–99/month	61.9% willing to pay less than Rs. 50/month; university bundling could unlock institutional demand	Negotiate B2B deals with university libraries and student unions
Develop embedded fact-checking features	73.8% only ‘somewhat confident’ vs. misinformation; trust gap persists	Partner with BOOM, Alt News; display fact-check ratings on articles
Build interactive content into editorial workflow	69% report engagement increase with interactive features	Assign dedicated interactive desk; train journalists in data journalism tools
Invest in regional language digital publishing	Vernacular digital lags English despite faster user growth	Hire dedicated vernacular digital editors; build separate app interfaces

Table 6.2: Strategic Recommendations Matrix for Media Organisations Source: Author Framework

For Policy Makers

- Improve investments in digital infrastructure in villages, to close the access gap, that will determine whether the next generation of news consumers in India is connected digitally or remains print media.
- Ensure the transparency of algorithms used in news recommendations on social media sites so that the news dissemination methods used by social media sites can be reviewed and do not promote any misinformation.

- Ensure the transparency of algorithms used in news recommendations on social media sites so that the news dissemination methods used by social media sites can be reviewed and do not promote any misinformation.
- Encourage national media literacy standards to be included in the college/university syllabus so that all citizens who complete their college education will understand how to critically examine information.

For Educational Institutions

- Encourage national media literacy standards to be included in the college/university syllabus so that all citizens who complete their college education will understand how to critically examine information.
- Organize institutional subscriptions to good quality news media through libraries and give students the chance to view the high quality news media first hand and appreciate its value.
- Promote class discussion of critically assessing information sources.

6.5 Future Research Directions

This study opens rather than closes the conversation on Indian college students' media behaviour. Future research should address four priority areas:

- A panel study over two to three years following a particular group of college students, which would help document how media usage changes as students move into professional life and gain financial independence.
- A geographical representative study sampling colleges from rural, semi-urban areas, regional and medium level colleges, as well as urban areas outside of major cities, in order to develop a true national picture of student media usage habits.
- An experimental study testing the influence of interactive media content on news consumption and recall—a comparison test between the two media forms, where students consume identical news stories in both mediums.

- An in-depth interview study interviewing media experts, editors, and digital product managers from prominent Indian news organizations, regarding publishing strategy adaptation to new trends in audience behavior.

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APPENDIX — SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

“The Digital Shift: Transformation of News Consumption Patterns in India”

Section A: Demographic Information

- Q1. Age: (a) 18–21 (b) 22–25 (c) 26–35 (d) 36–50 (e) 50 and above
- Q2. Gender: (a) Male (b) Female (c) Prefer not to say
- Q3. Educational Qualification: (a) Pursuing Graduation (b) Pursuing Post-Graduation (c) Pursuing Ph.D.

Section B: Digital Preference Factors (Rate 1 = Least to 5 = Most Influential)

- Q4. Accessibility: 1 2 3 4 5
- Q5. Cost: 1 2 3 4 5
- Q6. Speed of Updates: 1 2 3 4 5
- Q7. Variety of Sources: 1 2 3 4 5
- Q8. Multimedia Features (Videos, Infographics): 1 2 3 4 5

Section C: News Access and Platform Preferences

- Q9. How do you primarily access news? (a) Newspapers (b) Television (c) Digital media (websites/apps/social media) (d) Radio (e) Other
- Q10. How frequently do you read physical newspapers? (a) Daily (b) 1-2 times/week (c) 3-5 times/week (d) Rarely/Never
- Q11. Which digital platforms do you use for news? (Select all that apply) (a) Social Media (Twitter/Facebook/Instagram) (b) News Websites/Apps (c) YouTube Channels (d) Aggregators (Inshorts, Google News) (e) Other

Section D: Trust and Misinformation

- Q12. What do you trust more for accurate information? (a) Newspapers (b) Digital Media (c) Television (d) Radio
- Q13. How confident are you in identifying misinformation on social media? (a) Very Confident (b) Somewhat Confident (c) Not Confident

Section E: Subscription Behaviour

Q14. Would you pay for a digital news subscription if it ensured credible information?

(a) Yes (b) No (c) Maybe

Q15. What price range would you consider reasonable for a monthly digital news subscription? (a) Less than Rs. 50 (b) Rs. 50-Rs. 100 (c) More than Rs. 100

Section F: Interactive Content and Engagement

Q16. Do interactive features (e.g., quizzes, polls) increase your engagement with digital news? (a) Yes (b) No (c) Sometimes

Q17. Would you prefer news platforms with interactive content over traditional formats? (a) Yes (b) No (c) Maybe

Section G: Print Media and Future Outlook

Q18. If you stopped reading newspapers, what were the reasons? (a) Cost of subscription (b) Easy availability of free news online (c) Faster updates on digital platforms (d) Lack of time (e) Other

Q19. Do you believe digital media can fully replace newspapers? (a) Yes (b) No

Q20. Any additional comments on your media consumption preferences?

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MRP_Samyak Jain

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