

Social Media Health Reporting by Independent Mobile Journalists in India.

Ms. Anshita Gupta¹, Dr. Divya², Mrs. Rama Choudhary³, Mayank Kumar Jain⁴, Ms. Muskan Golani⁵

¹ Research Scholar, Department of Media and Creative Arts, Maharishi Markandeshwar Deemed to be University, Mullana, India.

ORCID: 0009-0009-0122-7999

Email: anshitagupta952@gmail.com

² HoD, Associate Professor, Department of Media and Creative Arts, Maharishi Markandeshwar Deemed to be University, Mullana, India.

ORCID: 0000-0002-0704-9582

Email: drdivyagirdhar@gmail.com

³ Assistant Professor, Department of Journalism & Mass Communication, Vivekananda Global University, Jaipur, India.

ORCID: 0009-0008-3025-9968

Email: ramadagar1995@gmail.com

⁴ Assistant Professor, Department of Journalism & Mass Communication, Mangalayatan University, Aligarh, India.

ORCID: 0000-0001-7534-1916

Email: mayankjn544@gmail.com

⁵ Assistant Professor, Department of Journalism & Mass Communication, Vivekananda Global University, Jaipur, India.

ORCID: 0009-0001-5300-9565

Email: muskangolani27@gmail.com

Abstract

India has fully undergone an overhaul of its health information delivery systems with the proliferation of smartphones, Internet connectivity and social media platforms. Independent mobile journalists are increasingly playing a new role of providing health-related information, awareness and advice on social media platforms including YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp and Facebook. Their role gains increased importance in the context of marginalized communities, where there is limited access to communication in mainstream media and to traditional healthcare communication. Independent mobile journalists use a smartphone to report to multilingual readers in the region, provide healthcare facility-related information, discuss sanitation, disease prevention, vaccination, nutrition and mental health through regional language material, and serve as the boots on the ground in social media communications.

This paper explores the phenomenon of social media health reporting as independent mobile journalists in India and looks into its function specifically on behalf of marginalized sections of the society. It examines the potential of mobile journalism for easy accessibility and health communication involvement and outlines significant issues like misinformation, unverified information, digital divide and ethical issues in digital journalism.

The study is qualitative in nature and is based entirely on secondary data. Results show that independent mobile journalists play an important tool in democratizing health communication and are improving public participation among marginalized groups. But the study states that for effective and credible dissemination of health-related information in India responsible journalism, fact-checking mechanisms and digital literacy are needed for ensuring the dissemination of health-related information that could be acceptable to India.....

Keywords: Mobile Journalism, Marginalized Communities, Healthcare, Fact checking, Social Media

INTRODUCTION

Access to reliable healthcare information continues to be a challenge for many marginalized communities in India. Members of a rural community, economically disadvantaged groups, tribal communities, migrant workers, and socially marginalized groups may experience challenges like poor access to health care, lack of media coverage, lack of digital literacy, and limited understanding of public health services. In many cases, healthcare-related discussions in the mainstream media remain limited or geared towards the city. Today however, with the

increasing use of smartphones and social media, there are new opportunities to communicate and engage in public health digitally. Independent mobile journalists are now increasingly turning to the use of a smartphone and social media platforms in the dissemination of health related information directly to the population that it needs.

The ever increasing penetration of affordable Internet services and mobile phone capabilities has made India a mobile centric digital society. For communication and information sharing, and public awareness, there are social media applications that are important, including YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram and Facebook. Social media has achieved popularity in recent years, and almost half of the internet users are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram users are active on these platforms on a daily basis **Sundaram, Rammohan and Sharma(2020)**. In May, India's user base of the internet surpassed 950 million users with over 50% of internet users being rural according to the **Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) and Kantar Report (2025)**. Low cost mobile devices for both smartphone and mobile data has enabled marginalised populations to become active subjects in digital communication practices.

Mobile journalism, also known as MoJo, is the practice of using mobile digital devices and smartphones for news reporting, editing, recording and publishing. Mobile journalism is not like traditional journalism, where journalists, freelancer or citizen reporters can create real-time digital journalism content from a variety of locations without needing to rely on the old, rather costly, newsroom systems. The Reuters Institute **Digital News Report (2024)** found that smartphone use is the most important way for Indians to get their digital news, and video and messaging are the most significant media patterns of engagement (**Reuters Institute, 2024**). In this transformation towards mobile communication, the independent journalist's function as a disseminator of socially relevant information, such as communication on healthcare awareness, has become more robust.

In the field of health communication, the contribution of mobile journalism is extremely important in the marginalized communities. Linguistic, economic, geographic and infrastructural barriers prevent the effective engagement of the underprivileged and rural population with traditional healthcare communication methods. There are many socially disadvantaged communities that do not have access to newspapers, shows on TV debates or institutional health education programmes. Unlike it, mobile communication allows for more expeditious dissemination through easily accessed digital outlets at the local and regional level, using the language(s) used by target audiences. Utilising both domestic and foreign news sources, the media landscape increased its coverage even further and offered a thorough worldwide

analysis of the pandemic's course **Jain, Lalitank. (2024)**.

According to the reports, regional/indic language consumption is more preferred by the majority of the internet users in India as compared to English (**KPMG, 2024**). Independent mobile journalists contribute with health-related videos, reels, podcasts and awareness messages in Hindi and regional languages for making the communication easier understandable to the local people. The role of journalists is made easy through regional language reporting which breaks down even a complicated subject like vaccination, disease prevention and prevention, menstrual hygiene, nutrition, sanitation, mental healthcare, and government welfare services. This micro communication helps raise public awareness and promote audience engagement in the dialogue around health.

The study of dependency of the marginalised groups on mobile communication can be explained using Uses and Gratifications Theory proposed by **Katz, Blumer and Gurevitch (1973)**. According to the theory, audiences actively select media platforms according to media needs related to information, education, social interaction and entertainment. With their immediate, low cost, interactive and accessible capabilities, marginalised populations grow more dependent on social media and smartphones. Social media, in contrast to media systems, enables a direct interaction between people and journalists in the form of comments or shares, through live sessions or in a community.

In addition, an important theoretical framework that is relevant to this study is that of the Agenda-Setting Theory outlined by **McCombs and Shaw (1972)**. The theory is that the media are to a certain degree able to shape attention on specific issues by making some topics visible and others invisible. Independent Mobile Journalists play a role in agenda-setting by raising concerns and picking up issues and events that would otherwise not be picked up, such as healthcare inequalities, lack of sanitation, public health issues and circumstances affecting marginalized communities, as well as insufficient hospital facilities and shortages of medicines such behavior pattern recognition algorithms are employed to detect abnormal actions, such as unusual spending habits or aggressive communication patterns, indicative of exploitation or harassment **Rawat, R., Singh, K., Raj, A. S. A., Muzumdar, P., Sarangi, S. K., & Rawat, H. (2026)**. They keynote negative experiences within the healthcare setting into public conversation, topics that mainstream media outlets overlook.

The COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted the importance of digital (and mobile) health communication in India. In the pandemic, social media platforms were a significant means of information on symptoms, measures to take, vaccination campaigns, Hospitals infrastructure, and Government guidelines. Media practitioners from the outside - with cell phones and social media - reported from hospitals, villages, quarantine areas and public

spaces. They also broke down the information on medicine in videos, explainers, real-time discussions and interacting with the audience.

The pandemic has also made misinformation and information disorder a serious issue, however. Misinformation about vaccines, medication, natural cures and treatment for diseases spread like wildfire in the WhatsApp forwards, short videos and unverified social media posts. During health crises, the amount of information that was spewing out by both scales was too much and too unreliable to be trusted, which the WHO described as an “infodemic” (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). Marginalised communities are especially vulnerable to the effects of misinformation due to their reduced digital literacy, less access to reliable health care services and more reliance on informal communication channels.

Thus, the trustworthiness of information in the context of digital health communication is quickly becoming a significant issue. Independent journalism, where the decision-making processes lack a strong editorial control and the verification system is not established among the professional journalists, can impact online health reporting credibility. Social media algorithms tend to favour content that evokes emotion, or is shocking/sensational, and boosts the spread of false information. Attitudes and behaviors regarding clickbait headlines, emotional appeals, poor fact-checking and privacy concerns also affect audience confidence in digital health communications. Thus, these responsible approaches of journalism and digital verification tools are crucial to the proper dissemination of healthcare information.

Concurrently, independent mobile journalism has greatly deepened the engagement and participatory communication of communities. Social media website systems are a lot different from normal media, as journalists can communicate with audiences as well as audiences can communicate with journalists. It's common for mobile journalists to use live sessions, podcasts, Q&A discussions, interviews, polls and comment interactions to connect with audiences on healthcare topics. Such communication practices are part of participation methodology and engage the public to enhance their participation in access to health services, women's health, mental health, sanitation, nutrition and public welfare policies.

In independent journalism, mobile-first and social media has been adopted increasingly with regard to reporting inequalities in health care treatment, social exclusion and issues related to public welfare by actors like Faye D'Souza, Ravish Kumar and Ajit Anjum. The role the two play in the Indian landscape of public-interest reporting, mobile journalism and using social media for communication is underscoring their important role in the country. These journalists use digital media channels to raise the voice of people who are under-represented and raise awareness about healthcare issues in marginalized communities.

This study will be valuable to understand how the Indian Mobile Journalists are using social media to communicate health related information among marginalized communities in India and its significance in the context of the study. The study also explores the role of digital communication in raising community engagement and awareness and the problems about information misinformation, credibility and information trustworthiness.

Literature Review

Mobile journalism studies, social media research, and health communication research of recent years indicate that digital channels are increasingly important for communicating health information, such as for reaching underserved and marginalized groups. Today, the digital media environment is in a state of constant transformation and researchers are gradually focusing on such topics as smartphones, participatory communication, misinformation, information trustworthiness, etc.

The growing problem of misinformation during public health crises, especially in India, was studied by Sharma et al. (2020) in their research article, titled “*Fighting Infodemic: Need for Robust Health Journalism in India*”. The study emphasized that overinformed information of unverified contentions on social media platforms led to 'confusion and fear among audiences'. The researchers stressed the importance of responsible health journalism and health communication between stakeholders, along with a system for fact checking, to more accurately disseminate healthcare information to vulnerable populations more vulnerable to media illiteracy.

During the time of COVID-19, social media platforms emerged as significant information providers, as Tsao et al. (2021) did in their study, “*What Social Media Told Us in the Time of COVID-19: A Scoping Review*.” Several empirical pieces of literature were reviewed and themes emerged, including public awareness, misinformation, mental health, etc., and audience engagement. They found that whilst access to healthcare information has improved, the spread of badly-informed information has also appeared to be accelerated by social media. YouTube, Facebook, and WhatsApp, for health-related information and discussions, were increasingly relied upon by audiences, the study added.

In their work, titled “*An Analysis of Impact Pathways Arising from a Mobile based Community Media Platform in Rural India*”, Moitra, Kumar, and Seth (2021) examined the community media impact pathway that can be achieved using a mobile based community media platform in a rural set up in the context of empowerment of the marginalized people. The study has been done on the platform of “Mobile Vaani” and showcased how mobile communication deepens the engagement and information reach of the grassroot community in rural India. The

researchers discovered mobile-based platforms enable marginalized communities to obtain socially relevant information, such as healthcare awareness and public welfare communication with reasonably priced and accessible technology.

In their article, *"Using Behavioural Design and Theories of Change to Integrate Communication Solutions into Health Systems in India,"* **Dutt et al. (2022)**, explores how communication through digital channels can affect health system behaviors and how they can be applied to health devices. The study emphasized culturally competent communication messages, involving the audience, and the delivery of messages. The scientists also stressed the need for community based communication strategies that can help raise awareness of healthcare amongst underserved populations.

The aforementioned work by **Brony et al. (2024)** conducted a systematic review titled *"A Systematic Review on Social Media Utilization by Health Communicators in India: Insights from COVID-19 Pandemic"* was another major effort in the field of digital health communication research in India. The study compared various social media websites in India for their role in raising awareness about healthcare. The researchers determined that there is significant use of social media for communication about vaccination and preventive healthcare, mental healthcare, sanitation and public safety. The study also revealed a number of significant issues related to misinformation, digital divide, insufficient media knowledge, and inequalities in access to credible health information for marginalized communities.

Research into mobile journalism also shows that there has been a significant shift towards using smartphones and social media in news communication in India. **Haider and Singh (2024)** summarized the process of using smartphones for mobile journalism and how they converge with social media platforms as a comprehensive analysis of how news content has been disseminated in India in their article, titled *"Convergence of Mobile Journalism and Social Media Platforms: A Comprehensive Analysis of News Dissemination in India"*. The research revealed mobile journalism as a tool that facilitated real-time reporting, audience participation and decentralised communication practices. The researchers also noted that social networks have created a new opportunity for participatory communication with their root in allowing journalists and audiences to talk directly to each other.

Studies also suggest that India today is witnessing a growing role played by independent journalists in the digital media sphere in shaping public debates. As reported in **Exchange4Media (2024)**, *"How Independent Journoas are Influencing the News Landscape"* audiences are turning to such mobile-first reporting platforms and independent journalists as they seek out content that's easily discovered and relatable. The report featured those journalists, whose social media pages and phone journalism discuss the welfare of the public, inequalities in healthcare, social issues and issues of the community such as Faye D'Souza, Ravish Kumar and Ajit Anjum. The report pointed out that the independent style of digital journalism is attracting audiences due to its direct communication approach and the ease of publication.

The same can be seen in the article, *"Finding Their Mojo: How Independent Media Became The Newsmaker,"* written by **Outlook India (2024)** that spoke about how independent digital journalism has made a rise in India. The article emphasized that the digitization of independent digital platforms and mobile journalists increasingly documents topics that are absent from the mainstream media like problems of rural distress, access to healthcare, social inequalities, etc. The research indicated that independent journalism has played a role in democratizing information dissemination or giving voice to the voices of marginalization in the use of social media communication.

The other matter that has been raised in recent literature is the emphasis on information trustworthiness in digital communication. **Wardle and Derakhshan (2017)**, analyzed the transmission of misinformation, disinformation and malinformation in digital space in their article *"Information Disorder: Toward an Interdisciplinary Framework for Research and Policymaking."* The role of social media platforms underlining the spread of misinformation was the argument held by the study, especially during crises and emergency management. The lack of a high level of digital literacy and access to trusted information sources makes rumors easier to believe for marginalized communities. They emphasized that it is necessary for journalists to practice their professions ethically, to inform people on media literacy, and to establish verification mechanisms in order to preserve the trust of the public on digital communication.

The literature also brings a focus on the importance of regional language communication for enhancing the accessibility among the marginalized populations. According to **KPMG (2024)** most of the Indian internet users want to watch content in regional languages as well as in Indic languages. Health Education India continues to create video content in Hindi, local languages and social media platforms that have the potential of communicating with the rural/ semi-urban audiences via independent mobile journalists who create videos, reels, in Hindi, local language and podcasts and discuss health topics in social media.

In addition, research and in the media reports show that independent digital platforms are increasingly addressing public health emergencies and health and social related topics that are denied the attention in public debates by established media sources. **Newslaundry (2024)** reported on how independent platforms extensively covered

health emergencies linked to heatwave, hospital conditions and medical negligence that were summarily reported in the mainstream media. This is a representation of how Independent Mobile Journalists became increasingly relevant to revealing healthcare gaps and issues, thus using Mobile Reporting as a strategy.

Research Objective

To analyse the work of independent mobile journalists in health communication among the marginalized communities.

To discuss how social media can be used for health awareness and community involvement.

To detect misinformation and credibility problems with digital health reporting.

To compare and evaluate the effect of mobile journalism on participatory health communication.

Research Methodology

The method used in this study is qualitative research which is secondary data analysis. The research aims to gain insight into the role of an independent mobile journalist in spreading health related information among the marginalized groups amongst the various social media platforms in India.

The study also involves examining the media reports and digital content available on platforms like YouTube, Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp to analyse the communication ways adopted by independent mobile journalists to popularise health-related information to the population. Special regard has been given to challenges pertaining to information trustworthiness, regional language communication, community engagement among the outsider groups, and misinformation issues.

Descriptive and interpretative methods have been used to analyze the collected data and derive several themes, trends, opportunities and challenges of social media health reporting and mobile journalism in India.

Findings and Results

5.1 The results of the study show that in India mobile journalism and social media have greatly changed the nature of health communication. With the rising prevalence of smartphone sales, low-cost internet packages and social media's ubiquity, the public has become more reliant than ever on electronic tools to access health care-related information. Independent Mobile Journalists have emerged as important voices who share information on health to audiences via video streaming platforms like YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, and X.

Top social, messaging, and video networks

India

Rank	Brand	For news	For any purpose
1	YouTube	54% (-2)	71%
2	WhatsApp	48% (+1)	71%
3	Facebook	35% (-4)	50%
4	Instagram	33% (+1)	54%
5	Telegram	20% (-)	38%
6	X (formerly Twitter)	13% (-7)	21%

Figure 1

Source: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. (2024). Digital News Report 2024 – India. University of Oxford.

Figure 1 shows the **Reuters Institute Digital News Report (2024)** captures the mobile dominance of social media platforms for news usage and communication in India, which is decreasing as content is moved to mobile devices. The findings shows that YouTube is the most-used platform with 71% of users using the service for any kind of reasons and 54% for the news purpose. This is the growing preference of India for news content to be available in video format and via mobile devices.

WhatsApp is next with 48% usage for news and 71% for overall communication. This is the proof of the significance of messaging applications in sharing information and digital communication in India.

Likewise, Facebook has 35% usage for news, and Instagram has 33% of news usage. The results indicate that social networks still have a high impact and an important role in the dissemination of information and audience engagement. The uptick in Instagram engagement may be a sign of its appeal for younger audiences who are digital content aficionados, embracing short-form, visual content.

It's also revealed that Telegram and X (Twitter) also have relatively low scores in terms of news consumption, coming in at 20% and 13% respectively.

5.2 The other important result that can be derived here is the importance of independent mobile journalists in disseminating related information on the COVID-19 pandemic, such as vaccination drives, hospital facilities, oxygen shortage, preventive healthcare advice and government regulations. Journalists like Faye D'Souza, Ravish Kumar and Ajit Anjum utilized social media platforms such as YouTube and Instagram to broadcast public health messages in simplified and populist ways. It has been revealed that their reporting style is more interactive, explanatory and citizen-oriented than traditional television reporting.

As per **Meltwater's Digital India Report (2025)**, Indians spend more than three hours a day on social media platforms and India has almost 491-million people using the social media platforms. The results indicate that the heavy usage of social media has reinforced the impact of mobile journalism on social awareness of health issues.

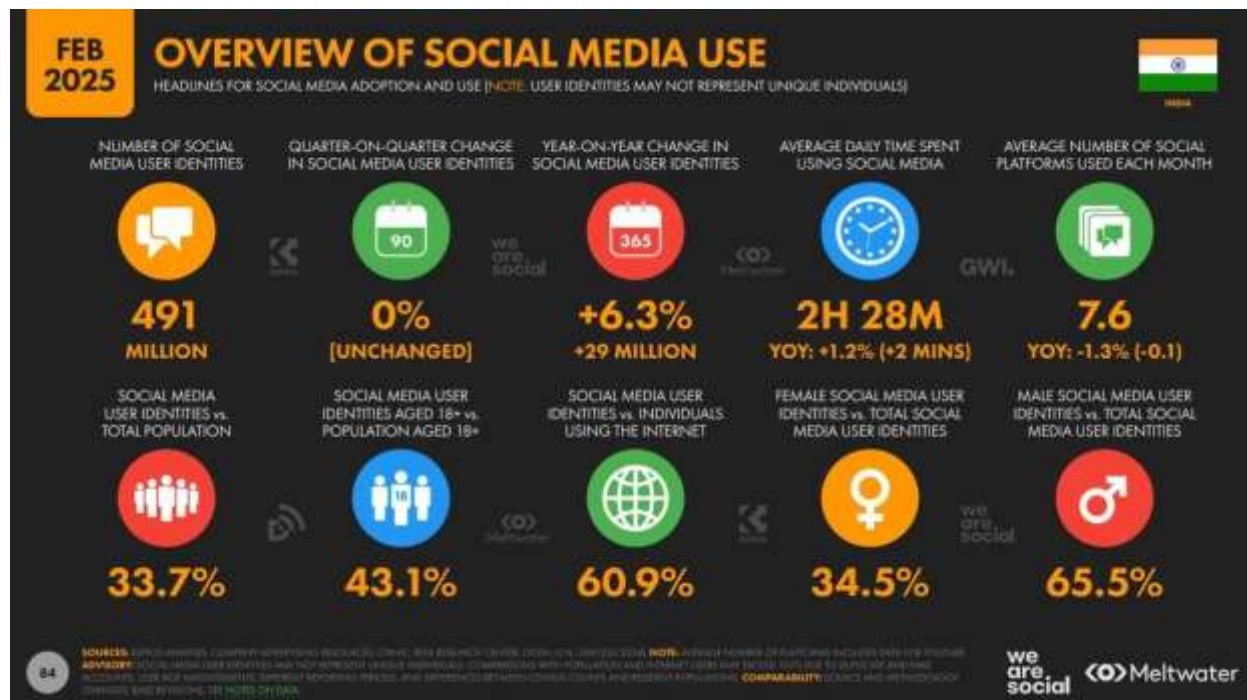


Figure 2

Source: Meltwater & We Are Social. (2025). Digital 2025: India.

Figure 2 from **Meltwater's Digital India Report (2025)** indicates that social media networks have reached far and deeper than ever in India. The findings highlight India's gigantic social media presence, with an estimated 491 million social media user identities in February 2025.

The figure further highlights that the number of social media user identities has increased by 6.3% on a yearly basis which indicates the steady and ongoing growth of social media in India. Emails and phone calls are the other methods used to spread rumors. This data also shows that Indian social media users spend an average of 2 hours and 28 minutes per day on various social media platforms, highlighting the vast penetration of digital media in the daily lives of citizens.

Yet another key conclusion is the average Indian social media user is active on approximately seven social media platforms in a month. This indicates that it is a multi-platform dynamism. The figure also reflects the gender gap, with the use of social media being more prominent among the male users (65.5%) than among the female ones (34.5%).

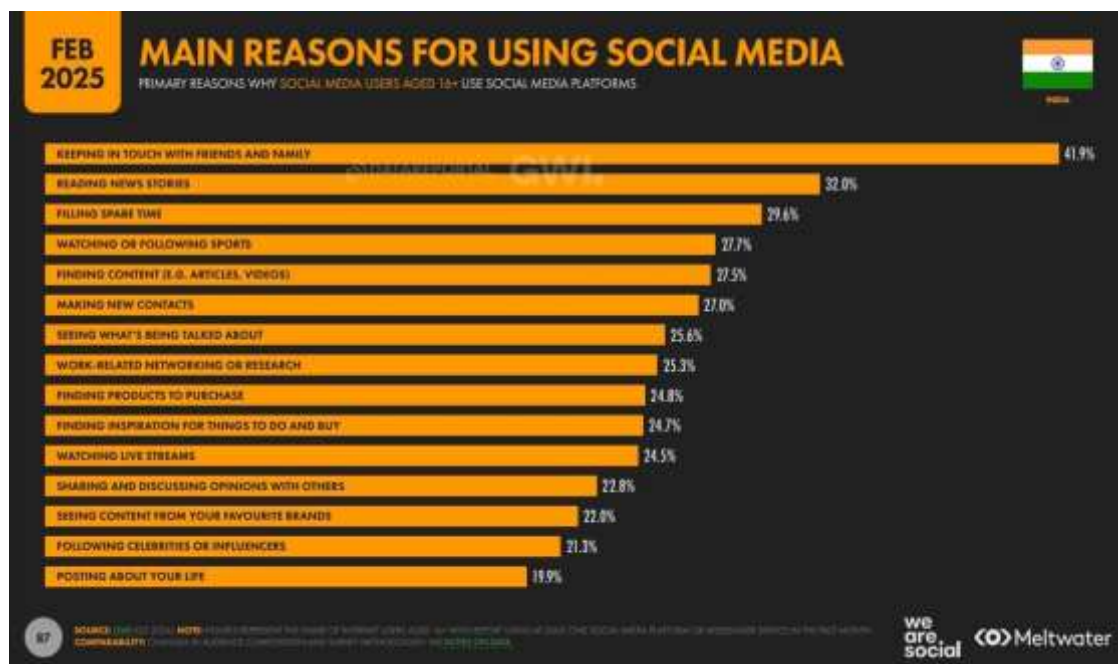


Figure 3

Source: Meltwater & We Are Social. (2025). Digital 2025: India.

Figure 3 from **Meltwater's Digital India Report (2025)** explains the primary motivations behind social media usage among Indian users aged 16 and above.

The results indicate that the primary reason for using social media is "friendship/family" (41.9%). A significant number of users also read news content using social media apps (32%) signifying its importance in news consumption and information delivery in India.

It can also be seen that people spend time using social media for things like filling empty time (29.6%), watching or following sports (27.7%) or looking for things like articles and videos (27.5%). Besides, somebody makes use of social media to get in touch with friends, speak with fellow people, broadcast live for a meeting, and also share opinions with the people.

5.3 The key result of the research is the significant increase in access to health information due to improvement in regional language communication with these marginalized groups. Independent journalists use Hindi and regional languages to make videos, reels, podcasts, and awareness videos and articles about sanitation, vaccines, nutrition, mental health, and public welfare programmes. It has been reported that Indian audiences favour watching digital content in local and Indic languages, thus bolstering local health communication usage (**KPMG, 2024**).

5.4 The study also finds mobile journalism enhances participatory communication and community involvement. Audiences have the opportunity to engage with journalists directly on social media forums such as comments, live discussions, social media sharing and audience feedback. This meeting allows the marginalized communities to voice their complaints about the lack of access to health services, sanitation, medicine supply and the condition

of public welfare services. The fusion of mobile journalism and social media has driven more involvement and decentralized communication processes in India, as put by **Haider and Singh (2024)**.

5.5 Another significant finding may be that independent mobile journalists play a role in raising the profile of health disparities that exist in the rural and socially disenfranchised population. Poor hospital facilities, no hospitals in remote areas, and public health issues were reported by the journalists using their smartphones. It has been observed from studies and the media that independent journalists are less likely to turn to the conventional news outlets to report on socio-economic levels and conditions of marginalized communities, and increasingly report on matters the mainstream news outlets neglect, such as access to healthcare (**Exchange4Media, 2024; Outlook India, 2024**).

5.6 The study also revealed that social media sites are increasingly being adopted as tools for disseminating awareness about prevention for health. Independent journalists are able to break down hard-to-understand information on healthcare by using brief videos, explainers, interviews and other visual storytelling strategies, as well as engage audiences who lack formal education and who are not digitally literate. Mobile community media platforms are also found to enhance the participation of the communities in rural India and information's accessibility to the public by **Moitra, Kumar and Seth (2021)**.

5.7 However, the findings show that misinformation is still one of the greatest digital health communication challenges. Misinformation about drugs, home cures, vaccines and diseases is quickly spread across social networking sites and in quick messaging apps. In the article, '*Fighting Infodemic: Need for Robust Health Journalism in India*,' **Sharma et al. (2020)** pointed out that the digital media and social platforms spread both accurate and incorrect health information to the extent that India is in an 'infodemic'.

5.8 The research also shows that information trustworthiness is important when reporting health related information via mobile devices. Independent journalists are sources of information for many people as they believe that they are more approachable and relatable than mainstream. But sensationalism, clickbait writing and a failure to undertake professional fact checking can have adverse consequences on audience belief. Rosen concluded that misinformation and information disorder are worse in societies where the media is less developed and the sources of credible information are scarce (**Wardle and Derakhshan, 2017**).

Future & Scope

6.1 Scope for Research on Audience Trust and Credibility

Marginalized communities could be explored in terms of their experiences with and perceptions of health information distributed by freelance mobile journalists through platforms like YouTube, Instagram and WhatsApp as examples. Factors that affect the trust, credibility and reliability of digital health messages to audiences can be explored.

6.2 Scope for Comparative Media Studies

The results can be compared with mainstream media and independent mobile journalism reporting on health related concerns of marginalised groups in further research. These studies can investigate the difference in representation, accessibility, audience response and the way in which it is reported.

6.3 Create space and a policy for learning about misinformation and fact checking

The outreach of health related misinformation on social media platforms and its effects on under-served populations in rural and non-rural settings could be examined in future studies. Research may also explore the fact-checking practices, ethical journalism and the digital literacy that help to guarantee that health communication is credible.

6.4 Options for Regional Language and Community-based Communication

The effectiveness of regional language mobile journalism to raise awareness about healthcare among off-line and rural communities can be investigated. Participative communication practices and community involvement can be also analysed in future studies using mobile based reporting.

6.5 Anticipation of Technological and Digital Media Research

Research opportunities include how new digital technologies, algorithms and AI are impacting mobile journalism and health communication. Researchers can also investigate the effects of technology on writing.

Conclusion

The study's findings indicate that independent mobile journalism has become a crucial medium to reach marginalized groups in India with information relating to health issues. Smartphones, low cost telecom, and social media are making communicating and consuming information a thing of the past in health care. New platforms like YouTube, Instagram, WhatsApp and Facebook have given independent media some better ways of accessing socially and financially deprived and poorly served communities in rural regions.

The research revealed that the use of mobile journalism bonds participatory communication by enabling direct interaction between journalists and the audiences. Regional language, short video footage, live web sessions and visual storytelling methods are becoming common tools for IMTJs to communicate in a language that is understandable to clients and preferred by healthcare professionals to communicate difficult information on sanitation, vaccination, nutrition, mental health and public welfare schemes. This has created awareness and championed participation of the people in the marginalized communities in the take up of healthcare.

Another key point the study makes is the importance of independent journalists as a tool to boost visibility of healthcare inequalities and local issues in the mainstream media that may not be covered. On the back of smartphone reporting, journalists can report on rural health-care issues, the absence of health facilities and public health issues in rural areas.

But its focus also highlights key issues around misinformation, non-verification, digital divide and ethical issues when it comes to reporting health issues on a social media platform. Fast moving and unverified health information can have harmful impacts on the trustworthiness of information, particularly within digital illiterate communities. In sum, the study confirms that Independent Mobile Journalists are definitely contributing to the field of digital health communication in India. Meanwhile, the importance of responsible journalism, establishing fact checking mechanisms, maintaining high standards in journalism practices and promoting digital literacy programs can be seen as the required tools to ensure that this information on health is shared in a reliable and credible way for marginalized populations..

..

References

1. Sundaram, Rammohan and Sharma, Dr. Rajeev and Shakya, Dr. Anurag, Power of Digital Marketing in Building Brands: A Review of Social Media Advertisement (May 14, 2020). International Journal of Management, 11 (4), 2020, pp. 244-254., Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3600866>
2. Ball-Rokeach, S. J., & DeFleur, M. L. (1976). A dependency model of mass-media effects. *Communication Research*, 3(1), 3–21.
3. Brony, M., Alivi, M. A., Syed, M. A. M., Dharejo, N., & Jiaqing, X. (2024). A systematic review on social media utilization by health communicators in India: Insights from COVID-19 pandemic. *Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies*, 14(2). <https://doi.org/10.30935/ojcm/15007>
4. Dutt, P., Godfrey, A., Chamberlain, S., & Mitra, R. (2022). Using behavioural design and theories of change to integrate communication solutions into health systems in India. *Integrated Healthcare Journal*, 4(1), e000139.
5. Exchange4Media. (2024). How independent journos are influencing the news landscape. Exchange4Media.
6. Goel, S., Lewycka, S., & Batheja, D. (2025). Gender and socio-economic inequities in social listening. *Journal of Health Communication*.
7. Haider, T., & Singh, D. (2024). Convergence of mobile journalism and social media platforms: A comprehensive analysis of news dissemination in India. *ShodhKosh: Journal of Visual and Performing Arts*, 5(1), 809–815. <https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i1.2024.4610>
8. IAMA & Kantar. (2025). Internet in India Report 2025. Internet and Mobile Association of India.
9. Katz, E., Blumler, J. G., & Gurevitch, M. (1973). Uses and gratifications research. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 37(4), 509–523. <https://doi.org/10.1086/268109>
10. Jain, Lalitank. (2024). COVID-19 Health Reporting on Indian News Channels: A Study of AAJTAK and ABP News on YouTube.
11. KPMG. (2024). India media and entertainment report 2024. KPMG India.
12. Moitra, A., Kumar, A., & Seth, A. (2021). An analysis of impact pathways arising from a mobile-based community media platform in rural India. *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction*, 5(CSCW1), 1–29. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3449250>
13. Rawat, R., Singh, K., Raj, A. S. A., Muzumdar, P., Sarangi, S. K., & Rawat, H. (2026). Designing Child-Centric Platforms: Best Practices for Social Media and Gaming - The Hidden Dangers of Online Gaming. In R. Rawat, S. Sarangi, A. Arun Raj, J. Richmond, & P. Bhardwaj (Eds.), *Integrating Parental Consent and*

- Child Engagement With Digital Protection Rules (pp. 93-116). IGI Global Scientific Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3373-2716-7.ch004>
14. Outlook India. (2024). Finding their mojo: How independent media became the newsmaker. Outlook India.
 15. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. (2024). Digital news report 2024: India. University of Oxford.
 16. Rogers, E. M. (1962). Diffusion of innovations. Free Press.
 17. Sharma, D. C., Pathak, A., Chaurasia, R. N., Joshi, D., Singh, R. K., & Mishra, V. N. (2020). Fighting infodemic: Need for robust health journalism in India. *Diabetes & Metabolic Syndrome: Clinical Research & Reviews*, 14(5), 1445–1447. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dsx.2020.07.039>
 18. Tsao, S. F., Chen, H., Tisseverasinghe, T., Yang, Y., Li, L., & Butt, Z. A. (2021). What social media told us in the time of COVID-19: A scoping review. *The Lancet Digital Health*, 3(3), e175–e194. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2589-7500\(20\)30315-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2589-7500(20)30315-0)
 19. Wardle, C., & Derakhshan, H. (2017). Information disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policymaking. Council of Europe.