



**SELINUS UNIVERSITY**  
OF SCIENCES AND LITERATURE

**Evaluating The Role of Social Media In Imparting  
Critical Media Literacy As a “Sine Qua Non”; For  
Developing Informed Citizenship In India in the Post-  
Truth Digital Convergence**

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## List of Contents:

Acknowledgements .....	I
Abstract:.....	1
<b>Chapter 1</b>	
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>3</b>
Aims of This Thesis .....	6
Challenges For News/Journalism.....	9
Journalism – Real World Overview .....	11
India's Strategy For Regulating Disinformation .....	14
An Overview .....	16
The Researcher's Personal Interest.....	21
Ten Key Indicators of New Media Literacy Skills(NMLS) .....	21
What is the Post-Truth Era?.....	23
The Challenges of The Post-Truth Digital Convergence .....	27
Social Media Platforms.....	31
The Characteristics of Digital Economy and Digital Society.....	37
Carl Sagan's View of The Planet - The Pale Blue Dot.....	46
Empowering Audience Agentic Perspectives.....	49
Overlooked Impact on Students of Omitting Non-cognitive Skills in Education...	53
Impact of Environmental-School Factors on Non-cognitive Skills .....	54
If You Are Your Thoughts Think About What You Think.....	56
Spiritual Underpinning of Thoughts.....	56
Spiritual Dimension of Media Education .....	57
The Soul's Attributes as Invisible Power .....	60
Philosophers' Views of The Soul .....	62
Epistemic Knowledge.....	63
<b>Chapter 2</b>	
<b><u>Literature Review</u>.....</b>	<b>67</b>

Academic Contributions to Critical Media Literacy .....	68
Three Academic Perspectives On Critical Thinking .....	74
Critical Political Economy Approach.....	78
Pre-Requisites of Digital Public Sphere (DPS).....	82
BJP's Noble Thoughts - 'Ano Bhadraha Kritavayo Yantu Vishwataha'.....	83
The Brain's Role in Learning .....	86
The Cognitive Pitfalls .....	89
The 'Mistake of The Intellect' - 'Pragyaapradh' .....	90
What is Critical Media Literacy? .....	92
The Purpose of Critical Media Literacy .....	94
Motivators of Critical Media Literacy .....	96
What CML Skills Are Important In The 21 <sup>st</sup> Century? .....	97
The Role of Online-Comments Today .....	98
Journalism Views Comment as a Conundrum .....	99
Online Comment Fields .....	99
Media Marginalisation Problems .....	101
The Role of Critical Thinking in Detecting Intended Message .....	102
The Importance of Critical Thinking To Social Media in India .....	105
<b>Chapter 3</b>	
<b>Correlation of Journalism, New Media and Social Media .....</b>	<b>107</b>
The Definition of News .....	107
How Important Is News? .....	108
The Role of Social Media .....	110
Social Media as an Emerging Source of News .....	110
UK's Plan To Ban Digital Giants From News Provision .....	111
Journalistic Objectivity, Fairness and Transparency .....	115
Social Media Literacies .....	121
Understanding Man as Media? .....	122
Social Media and Public Interest .....	127
Theory of Journalism .....	128

The Significance of Social Media .....	132
Social Media as a Challenger To Traditional Journalism .....	134
Habermassian Public Sphere Evolves As Social Media.....	135
Strategy for Combatting Counterfeit News .....	137
The Anatomy of False News: A Critical News Education .....	137
How Some Nation States Combat Counterfeit News? .....	140
European Broadcasting Union (EBU) Viewpoint.....	141
How Do People Understand News? .....	143
The Definition of False 'News'.....	144
Mixed Comments About Journalist Credibility .....	154
Propaganda Model of The Media – Noam Chomsky.....	158
The Importance of News In The Digital Era .....	158
What Guide News Selection? .....	159
Three Different Perspectives To News.....	160
The Effects of Negative News .....	165
Positive News and Negative News.....	166
The Health Hazards of Negative News .....	167
News Impact on Democracy.....	171
Six Principles Behind News.....	175
Strategies Against Digital Challenges .....	180
Seven-Part Definition of Media Education.....	182
Domain-specific or Domain-General?.....	184
Multiple Literacies .....	186

#### **Chapter 4**

<b>Data and Research Methodology .....</b>	<b>190</b>
The Three Types of Research Approaches .....	192
Research Design & Objectives .....	194
Research Methodological Approach .....	196
What is Internet-based Research? .....	198
The Reasons for Selecting These News Stories.....	200

The Research Question.....	201
Research Questions: Primary and Secondary .....	202
Reflecting The Research Questions .....	206
Governments' Manipulation of Information .....	206
The Role of Public Service Media(PSM) .....	210
CML is a Responsive Strategy.....	213
Five Defining Characteristics of Media Literacy .....	214
The Role of Sentiment in Critical Judgement.....	219
Why Does The Average Person Use SM?.....	220
The Statement of Problem of The Research .....	222
Underlying Problems.....	223
Limitations of Research.....	226
Scope - Scope of Research Work.....	227
Historical Context .....	228
What is CT? .....	228
Epistemological Perspectives.....	230
The Adventure of the Mind.....	233
False News, Lies And Sensational News .....	236
Scope of Research Work.....	238
Research Hypotheses.....	239
Why Does India Need Critical Media Literacy?.....	242
The Impact of Digitalisation on Media Literacy.....	243
Chanakya's Anvikshiki and Socratic Scientific Enquiry .....	244
Theoretical and Philosophical Underpinnings of Media Literacy .....	248
The Seven Communication Theories .....	249
The Critical Perspective.....	249
The Stimulus Response (S-R) Model.....	249
The Uses And Gratifications Model.....	250
The Cultivation Theory.....	251
The Agenda Setting Theory .....	252
The Framing Theory.....	252

The Media Effects Theory .....	253
The Harold Lasswell Model.....	253
The Cultural Studies Approach.....	254
Marshall McLuhan .....	257
Dedicated Organisations Promoting CML .....	257
The Centre For Media Literacy.....	257
The National Association for Media Literacy Education .....	258
The Mission of Critical Media Education.....	264
The Seven Great Debates.....	269
Approaches to Critical Media Literacy.....	274
Media and Digital Convergence.....	277
The Case of The Internet .....	279
Citizenship .....	281
YouTube House Rules.....	285

## **Chapter 5**

<b>Contents and Results .....</b>	<b>287</b>
Research Findings .....	287
What Are Comments? .....	288
Task Related and Non-Task-Related Comments .....	289
Thematic Analysis .....	291
Thematic and Sentiment Analysis .....	292

## **Chapter 6**

<b>Discussion .....</b>	<b>293</b>
<b>YouTube - Powerful Platform News, Information, Discussion and Learning</b>	<b>293</b>
Who Use YouTube? .....	295
What Kind of Content People Post On YouTube?.....	295
The Role of YouTube as Media Literacy Educator .....	296
YouTube Throttles Epistemic Knowledge .....	298

Sample Population.....	300
Data Collection.....	301
Raw Data Coding and General Coding Rules.....	301
Categorising Themes Based on The Sentiments.....	304
Six Thematic and Three Sentiment Analyses.....	306
Positive Sentiments.....	307
Neutral Sentiments.....	308
Negative Sentiments.....	308
Inductive.....	308
Potter's Adapted Media Skills Framework.....	312
News Stories Selected By Popularity, Interest and Controversy.....	312
Demonetisation of Indian Currency Notes.....	313
Ram Janam Bhumi/Babri Masjid.....	313
Revocation of Article 370 on Kashmir.....	313
Triple Talaq: Divorce by Oral Pronouncement of 'Divorce' Thrice.....	313
Chandrayaan II – India's Moon-2 mission.....	313
Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) 2019.....	314
Limitations of Research Work.....	314
Research Approach.....	314
Inductive: An Approach To Research.....	314
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>315</b>
Appendices.....	318
Bibliography.....	336

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## Abstract

*"An unexamined life is not worth living" - Greek philosopher Socrates.*

This study is predicated upon the hypothesis that the role of critical media literacy(CML) is a 'sine qua non' for everyone in the post-truth era of digital convergence in a world characterised by widespread moral decadence. It delves into the essential role of CML,advocating for the integration of an epistemic curriculum. It explores the indispensable role of CML while advocating the integration of an epistemic curriculum and non-cognitive skills supported by an adaptable pedagogy for students' holistic learning agentic development for empowerment.

This research highlights the growing recognition of the need to integrate cognitive and non-cognitive factors into a more comprehensive understanding of learning. This includes acknowledging the role of spiritual literacy, lived experience, emotions, social interactions, and environmental contexts in shaping learning experiences. Educational strategies and interventions need to broaden their scope to support not only cognitive development but also emotional and social skills, reflecting a more holistic approach to learning.

The study emphasises the necessity for educators to additionally focus on metaskills to create an environment where learners can develop an adaptable and epistemic mindset. This approach encourages learners to cultivate inspiring thoughts and be receptive to divine intuition, thereby unlocking their inherent abilities. Such a framework is crucial for enabling students to navigate the complexities of discerning between genuine, implied, and deceptive content in an information society overwhelmed by misinformation.

To achieve this, the study suggests an integrated development of non-cognitive metaskills, including spiritual literacy, grit, resilience, perseverance, values education, emotional intelligence, critical thinking, creative skills, conative and affective skills, alongside the wisdom derived from lived experiences are important alongside cognitive skills for achieving success. People lacking in non-cognitive skills may not fully utilise their cognitive potential. These metaskills are instrumental in equipping learners with the necessary skillset to effectively manage and make sense of big data in today's digital age, ensuring their preparedness to contribute positively to society.

This empowerment enables them to resist manipulation, challenge dominant narratives, and make more informed decisions based on a comprehensive understanding of the content. Additionally, it stresses on the improved performance, self-fulfilment, happiness, and success, navigating challenges posed by the scourge of false news, and evaluating the role of metaskillset as a supervening master skill to enhance reflexive skills.

This transformation is grounded in epistemic knowledge and underscores the importance of a holistic educational approach to meet the challenges of the contemporary information landscape, incorporating insights from lived or self-experienced knowledge.

The research identifies epistemic security as of paramount importance for distinguishing between falsehoods and truths to understand reality in the 21st-century. Drawing on the Socratic method and Chanakya's Anvikshiki, the study argues for the development of students' autonomy and learning agency. This is key to enable citizens to discern misinformation in news, detect agenda-setting and news-framing motives, and judiciously assess and react to rhetorical and insidious content masquerading as news.

Informed by various interrelated theories and concepts, including media, audience, information, digital, visual, and participatory media literacies, as well as social responsibility, self-development, journalism, and communication theories, this study underscores the importance of developing an informed citizenship essential for vibrant democracies. Embracing a powerful and innovative concept, it emphasises the interdependence of individuals, necessitating the deployment of metacognitive teaching-learning through an interdisciplinary approach consistent with constructivist and interpretive learning theories.

In a society where misinformation and subjective beliefs can easily permeate unchallenged having a strong foundation in epistemology becomes essential. Epistemic education, which focuses on knowledge, truth, evidence and credibility, empowers individuals to identify reliable news sources and critically evaluate information before making informed decisions. It highlights the importance of cultivating an enquiring mindset to counter the impact of misinformation on personal and societal levels.

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

*“You are entitled to your own views, but you are not entitled to your own facts.”- Schlesinger*

*“The illiterate of the 21 century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn.” (Alvin Toffler)*

*“Journalists know news and opinion are separate, but readers often can’t tell the difference”  
- Kevin Lerner.*

*Chomsky asserts that "propaganda is to a democracy what the bludgeon is to a totalitarian state" (Media Control).*

The emergence of a transformative media landscape, driven by the integration of technology, telecommunications, various media channels, content, devices, and platforms, has led to numerous ways to access and disseminate information. This digital convergence has introduced a multitude of channels including broadcast, broadband, new media, mobile networks, and Internet-based platforms. As a result, people across the globe are now constantly inundated with an overwhelming stream of data, news, information, and discussions, accessible 24/7. Consequently, a significant shift has occurred, with billions abandoning traditional media in favour of the pervasive and omnipresent social media platforms. Many individuals have started to rely on these platforms as their main source of news and information, often without critically evaluating the content or being aware of the potential dangers lurking online.

According to UNESCO (2021), approximately 64 per cent of the world's population now uses the Internet, yet comprehensive information literacy training remains scarce. This lack of education leaves many vulnerable to epistemic threats, including disinformation campaigns, erosion of trust, formation of echo chambers, marginalization of diverse views, and the silencing of critical voices. These issues pose a profound challenge to society, threatening the very fabric of our informational integrity and democratic processes.

Implicit in the above statement is an allusion to technology being the autonomous driver of digital progress and shaper of society's cultural values, social structure, institutions and relationship. This highlights a long running myth as evidenced by the extant volume of

literature.

Technological determinism, viewed as the antithesis of social determinism, is grounded in a simple cause-and-effect relationship which invokes Aristotelian theory of causality to explain that 'every event has a cause.' The widespread scourge of dis/mis/mal/-information shows that it 'is not possible for effects to be separate from their cause' according to Aristotle's theory particularly in the post-truth and post-trust digital convergence era. Aristotle's theory of causality is based on principle of causality that asserts that every event has a cause as dictated by the law of necessity which asserts that every cause necessarily produces its natural effect, 'mistake of the intellect.' It points to a knowledge gap that undermines our understanding of reality. This thesis purports to (a) explore how the impact of epistemic vulnerabilities from the perspective of causal relationship between man and technology and (b) evaluate non- cognitive, affective, spiritual and conative competencies for promoting epistemic knowledge.

The advocates of technological determinism like Marshal McLuhan have overlooked the logic. Just like a raft cannot autonomously carve itself out a tree trunk so is the unlikelihood of the emergence of technology without human intervention. McLuhan's contradictory argument in his "Understanding Media" which suggests; 'media technologies impact us, change our perception and ultimately change our world' is flawed. However, it begs the question - how did 'media technologies' come about without human action?

The idea of autonomous development of bots, robots and algorithms, lending credence to social determinism is absurd because the creation and deployment of neutral tool is determined by individuals, influenced by their beliefs thoughts and intention. Besides nature, only humans alone are the conceiver, designer, inventor, destroyer, builder and instigator of the artificial developments in the matrix of this planet. The smart devices that humans programme and the robotics that they embed in the automation systems eventually come to outsmart them. Only humans themselves are liable for the planet to be in the harm's way not technology.

A more plausible theory is Bandura's social cognitive theory (1986, 1999) which posits that individuals are not solely driven by innate characteristics nor are they simply shaped and controlled by their environment (Bandura, 1999). Rather, the theory explains that the

relationship between individuals and their organisational context is bidirectional and reciprocal, and is influenced by a number of basic human capabilities.

However, the endless cycle of events and developments taking place by man is key. His role is critical because he calls the initial shot to found a process of relationship between technology and society. This ignition asserts the primacy of social determinism in shaping a symbiosis for reciprocal benefits or constraints. Understanding this relationship stems from the critical autonomy of the human decision maker, who acts after considering the historical, cultural, political, economic, and ethical dimensions of technology and their implications for society.

It is a simple logic that social determinism is the cause of technological determinism as the reverse does not hold true. The causal relationship between social determinism and insidious content is likened to 'the chicken and egg' enigma. However, some also widely acknowledge that not social determinism but technological determinism has temptingly influenced human actions. This means your rights, autonomy and control are now mediated by technology. This role reversal has taken away much of an individual's autonomy to protect his/her rights. Citizens are not fully conversant with the ethics and moral values needed to judiciously drive advanced technology. The lack of information, knowledge and training is attributed to the imbalanced education system. It's like handing over the car key to someone who has never learnt to drive.

Recently several mobile phone masts were set ablaze by people who believed that 5G - the fifth generation faster and more powerful wireless cellular technology, was responsible for encouraging virus to spread brought which drew condemnation from the government who called social media platforms to restrain scaremongering by spreading disinformation. UK government minister Michael Gove described the theory as "dangerous nonsense" and dismissed claims that technology created the virus.

The impact of misleading or malicious content depends on the audience mind. While SM are a double-edged sword it can easily lend itself for malevolent purposes too. SM are used as a propaganda platform for counterfeit news and equally for peddling false 'news', which masquerades as editorial or journalistic news. (Lorenz-Spreen, et al.2023)

Digitalisation cannot make decisions as an ultimate determinant of the matrix of this planet and people's lives. Yet mostly all literature attribute challenges to the post-truth technology, reflecting inherent cognitive biases, mistake of the intellect and epistemic insecurity. Unaware of these biases the audience are encountering, commenting and sharing false news widely. People of all ages are vulnerable to such hazards posed by the ingeniously packaged, and diffused with rhetorics. The threatening concomitant of social media trigger vital questions; (a) how prejudicial are active and reactive messages and ideological discourses? (b) what are the implications for newsworthy content and reliable information? and (c) how can the transformative media ecology create epistemic environments to empower citizens to resolve infodemic beside their own routine challenges?

Coupled with the above threats of counterfeit news AI powered adaptive algorithm, has exacerbated the problem of identifying newsworthy content and factually-checked information ever harder. As the number of social media users rises so does the menace from the insidious content, which is masquerading as news and information and wreaking havoc on people's lives which overflows onto society. This vitiates journalism and erodes citizens' trust in news. Consequently, making them prejudiced against traditional or mainstream news that drives them to abandon it for the infamous social media platforms, a fertile ground for dis/mis/mal-information.

### **The Aims of This Thesis**

This study aims to reconceptualise the role of a non-cognitive skills approach to exploring how it can empower children and citizens to realise their goals of self-fulfilment and attainment of happiness and success by adopting critical media literacy as an overarching competency to negotiate life's challenges.

Literature review reflects that so far, educators and academics have solely relied on cognitive approach to cultivating media literacy and CT in school children. When they grow into adulthood to play their citizenship role they will be unable to detect the disguised intention and the motives of news and information. The power of critical discernment through interrogation is conditional to navigating them onto the correct path for the achievement of goals and avoiding problems. Hence, in exploring solutions to counterfeit news it is important

to factor in non-cognitive skills to advance beyond the cognitive approach. Repeatedly relying on cognitive skills, has historically failed to produce the desired outcome. This is symptomatic of inherent cognitive bias which leads to distortion, wrong decisions, prejudicial judgement and false perception but causes real damage.

This study emphasises the need to reposition man with a highly critical disposition at the centre of social media based on the concept that 'no man is an island.' Metacognitive learning is consistent with this study's adopted learning theory, the constructivist/ interpretive approach. Students build their own knowledge supervised by teachers who play a crucial role in facilitating the development of students' metacognitive skills including setting clear learning objectives, modelling, monitoring metacognitive strategies and encouraging learners to engage in metacognitive practices.

In pursuit of this primary goal the study aims to evaluate the role of cognitive skills in developing a critical pedagogy in neutralising rampant incidence of dis/mis/mal/-information. This is aimed at restoring trust in news in the social media as a potential source of trusted and newsworthy content in order to develop an informed citizenship for a post-truth vibrant democracy. This study is grounded in several critical ideas that shape its conceptual framework and direction:

1. Human beings are media but with a caveat. The dangers inherent in treating the human mind merely as an untrained database become starkly apparent when examining the role of humans as media entities. As creators, interpreters, sharers, managers, and disseminators of content, people are deeply embedded in the information ecosystem. However, the critical role of the mind, especially in the context of digital content consumption and creation, often goes unacknowledged. Typically viewed as a passive repository for information—bounded by time and space and filled with whatever data it encounters—this perspective raises significant concerns about our reliance on the mind in its unrefined state. The mind's potential as a catalyst for personal development is vastly underexploited in discussions about news, information, and the broader digital landscape. By relegating it to the status of a mere container, we overlook the necessity of equipping it with the skills and knowledge required to navigate complex



information environments critically. The question then emerges: is it safe or reasonable to depend on an untrained mind, one that is no more than a receptacle of unfiltered information?

If we acknowledge that an individual's mental capabilities and processes are pivotal for their development and evolution, it becomes imperative to foster minds that are not only repositories of information but are also trained or updated with accurate, scrutinized knowledge. This shift from seeing the mind as a static database to recognizing it as a dynamic, educable entity is crucial for empowering individuals to engage critically with the flood of information that characterises the digital age.

2. Integration of social media with human experience: The understanding that social media platforms have become an inseparable part of human life, deeply entwined with daily activities and interactions.
3. Essential role of the Socratic Method: The belief in the value of the Socratic method as a fundamental approach to fostering a reflective and inquisitive life, encouraging individuals to question and examine their beliefs and knowledge critically.
4. Importance of epistemic knowledge in a post-truth world: The recognition of the critical role that metaskills or knowledge about knowledge—understanding how we know what we know—plays in navigating the complexities of an era characterised by misinformation and "post-truth" challenges.

Furthermore, the study underscores that three key elements are necessary for the acquisition of factual knowledge: truth (the information is accurate), belief (the individual accepts the information as true), and justification (there are valid reasons or evidence supporting the belief). These components form the foundation for developing a deeper understanding of how individuals can discern truth in an increasingly complex information landscape.

The *raison d'être* for this study is primarily to: (a) empower children and adults by teaching them how to discern, determine, and understand the impact of ultimate, intended, embedded and manufactured news and information, (b) evaluate the role of social media for developing CML to promote an informed citizenry to enable a vibrant and an epistemic democracy and

(c) assess the relationship between users' level of CML as displayed by their comments on news stories posted on YouTube and CML skills as advanced by Potter's model of seven skills of CML.

In addressing a knowledge gap the thesis aims to consider an interventionist approach to adopting critical media literacy for taking advantage of the multiplatform society and assessing the implications of a lack of CML for: (a) safeguarding and encouraging freedom of expression necessary in promoting informed citizenship and (b) rethinking the critical role of social media as a pedagogy.

It tracks dominant and defining trending sentiments and attitudinal themes as manifested in social media's evolving conversational interaction while focusing particularly on comments to get insights. This is done by examining what the determinant influences, aimed at probing how comments manifest CML skills.

### **Challenges For News/Journalism**

News can certainly be a source of cognitive errors, particularly confirmation bias and the story bias. Warren Buffett's quote highlights how people tend to interpret new information in a way that supports their existing beliefs. News can also contribute to overconfidence and poor decision-making by providing a limited and often sensationalized perspective on events. However, it's important to note that not all news is created equal, and some news sources are more reliable and unbiased than others. Additionally, critical thinking and fact-checking can help mitigate the negative effects of cognitive errors when consuming news.

What the UNESCO describes as an increasingly precarious world order is digitally transformed news media topography which technologically influences the content saturated- mediascape. The transformative media draw the attention of academics, psychologists and other stakeholders. In such an informationally data-intensive economy the media have become an ineluctably integral part of our life, the market and culture. They influence us from pre-birth to post-death time. Such media ecosystem has led to media balkanisation, concentration and shrinking media ownership, print media decimation, audience tribalisation, transmigration, social media-domination and ideological polarisation of the Internet. A

paradigm shift has ensured for professional journalists, citizen journalists and other content users and producers who have accelerated the profusion of computer-mediated content. Digital abundance and access to reliable information are crucial for collective action in a democratic society. However, new technologies have brought about new threats and vulnerabilities to our systems of information production and exchange, including interference, attention economy, insular communities, and difficulty in evaluating the trustworthiness of information sources. Epistemic security refers to the ability to reliably produce, distribute, acquire, and assess information within a society.

Creating an epistemic environment in a democratic society involves a complex effort of diverse communities and interest groups in a broader socio-technological contexts to enhance epistemic security. include developing methods to increase the cost of spreading false information, helping consumers identify trustworthy sources, signalling reliable decision- relevant information, monitoring changes in epistemic systems, and engaging in holistic systems-mapping and red-teaming strategies to identify and analyse epistemic threats. (Seger, Elizabeth et al., 2020)

This emergence of unprecedented participatory culture has been facilitated by low or cost-free barriers to entry. The inherent dilemma overshadows the gestalt of participatory audience and media. Jenkins (2006) argues that participatory culture also involves a sense of social connection among members, who believe that their contributions matter about the opinions of others. (Jenkins et al. 2006). If Jenkins's statement were true the media would not have been balkanised nor the audience tribalised.

In today's media ecology the rise of views and thoughts, civic engagement, creation and sharing of one's creations, and informal mentorship is corresponded by a cacophony of dissension and disputes. In such an anarchy and the formation of filter bubbles people expose themselves to a narrow range of ideas and opinions that confirm their existing beliefs. Unfortunately, the most attention-grabbing strategies often manipulate people's emotions and reinforce their preexisting beliefs, rather than prioritising accuracy (Groshek, 2016),, resulting in cognitive dissonance.

The contemporary digital landscape is 'itself converging, diverging and complicating'

(Livingstone, 2013). Our templated world, screen culture, and multi-platformed media call for new competencies to deal with innovative form of technology, protocol and information. These changes necessitate: a shift towards networked literacies and CT about the online environment to empower individuals to be active citizens. Tim Lott (9.01.2015) warns; 'an electronic apocalypse is coming unless we act now.'

The digital sphere, enabled by digital convergence, riddled with neologisms such as 'manufactured consent,' 'manipulative content,' and 'bot-manipulated' content, has redefined our societal relationships worldwide. This transformation has significantly impacted the traditional values, principles, and standards of legacy media. Legacy media, also known as mass media, traditional media, or old media, have been ironically undermined, with the digital sphere thriving at the expense of public interest. Legacy media, particularly public service broadcasting—now reincarnated as 'Public Service Media'—prioritises a just, equitable, inclusive, and participatory audience in a vibrant democracy. However, with the rapid and uncritical adoption of social media (SM), it is questionable whether PSM can evolve as an indispensable element for developing civic engagement in a social democracy rather than in a predominantly liberal democracy.

### **Journalism – Real World Overview**

The UNESCO report on journalism education fails to address the potential obstacles and challenges that pose threats to the implementation of the proposed model in countries with varying political, social, economic, and cultural contexts. The report appears to assume that the model is universally applicable. However, it is crucial to recognize that different countries may face unique challenges in implementing the model, either fully or partially. Krinsky points out a distinction between adopting a model and using experiences from other countries as precedents.

Furthermore, computer-mediated interactions, such as those on social media, have the potential to enhance news coverage by fostering engagement and discussion among journalists and the public. As noted by Schellens and Valcke (2004) and Shanahan (Marie K.), this type of interaction can prompt, feed, and advance news coverage by providing a platform for exchanging ideas and raising unanswered questions about a news story. Therefore,

considering the cultural and political factors that may affect the implementation of the model and the potential role of technology in journalism education is essential, as its applicability is universal.

Journalists prefer informed opinions and multi-perspectival news stories to enlighten, educate, and entertain, favoring posts that introduce new information or sources to further develop the stories. Citing Engadget Community Content Editor Amber Bouman, the argument is made that there would be no point in comments if everyone agreed.

This is important because journalism is relied upon to check if anything is amiss and where there is disagreement with expressed opinions or overlooked facts. What is objectionable is that 'it is not 100 percent okay to receive insulting, demeaning, disrespectful, harassing, or threatening behavior.' The author also highlights the dangers of trolls and the abuse of such comments, which, instead of motivating deliberative debates, can drive away the more level-headed members of the netizens.

No discussion on media and journalism can be justified without paying tribute to the seminal concept of the 'New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO),' as its specter still hovers over the media horizon. The New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) was a proposal put forth by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in the 1970s to address the issues of imbalance and domination in the flow of information between developed and developing countries. The proposal aimed to increase the participation of developing countries in the global communication system and promote a more accurate and diverse representation of the world in media.

The NWICO and critical scholarship, as mentioned in the previous response, had similar goals of promoting equality, and objective truth, and a normative approach to reality. This idea of NWICO was very much aligned with the NWICO, where developing countries saw the NWICO as a way to gain more control over their own media and counteract the cultural imperialism of developed countries. However, the NWICO faced significant opposition from developed countries and their media industries, and ultimately was not adopted. Nevertheless, the NWICO continues to be relevant today as it highlights the ongoing issues of imbalance

and domination in the flow of information, particularly in the context of the digital age and the rise of new media technologies.

In the article "Global Media and Communication," Fuchs (2010c) examines the role of the information economy in new imperialism, using Lenin's five dimensions of imperialism as a framework. He concludes that while media and information industries do play an important role, they are not dominant and are subsumed under finance capital and the continued importance of fossil fuels. Fuchs (2010c) argues that media and communication should be situated in the broader context of new imperialism, and not elevated too highly in the academic and political agenda.

In another article, Fuchs (2010d) extends a Marxist analysis of informational capitalism to the internet, suggesting that the notion of class needs to be expanded beyond capital and labour to include "everybody who creates and recreates spaces of common experience, such as user-generated content on the Internet" (Fuchs 2010d, 179). He elaborates a Marxist class analysis of new media and the "knowledge society" and introduces a new approach to knowledge labour and class (Fuchs 2010, 185-190).

Nordenstreng (1993) traces four common aspects between the later and critical scholarship: a holistic view of the world with communication as an integral part of it, equality as a predominant value, objective truth as the mission of mass communication, and a normative approach to reality. He concludes that it is better to focus on a long-term and indirect influence on the paradigms prevailing in society than on a direct intervention in the policy process. Two decades later, these reflections still seem valid, as media scholars continue to be faced with the two tracks of political and intellectual engagement, but in a more complex world order than before.

After these followed the third paradigm of globalisation but Sparks overlooks the inclusion of elements of the participatory paradigm as part of civil society's orientation in NWICO. The post-truth era has reversed the 'Order' into 'Disorder' in the digital public sphere. Their aims were to refocus on the inadequacy, imbalance, inaccessible and pro-industrialised nations flow of news and information which had centred on the role of western media relative to a range of issues including education, human rights, right of education for children

women's rights, economics and industrial development.

Politicians used the media as a dominant tool to propagate their own ideologies. People in power are driven by self-interests to garner public support with impassioned and rhetorical pleas to pursue their hidden agenda. Citizens who are critical news consumers are in a minority. News media are informed from a number of perspectives which determine its role and media policy: (1) organisational, (2) cultural, (3) economic, (4) programming, (5) financial, (6) regulatory and (7) technological.

### **India's Strategy For Regulating Disinformation**

The fact that such misinformation fuels citizens' paranoia and causes them to take matters into their own hands in droves, is indicative of a lack of faith in the machinery to maintain law and order in the country that lacks an understanding of the consequences of participating in these activities, and an inability to find truth beyond the realm of their messaging inbox.

In summary, false news is a scourge in the digital age. Although it is important for individuals to take steps to protect themselves from misinformation and disinformation they cannot do so simply because they are not aware of how to go about it. By using reputable news sources, fact-checking information, and learning media literacy skills, individuals can work towards a safer news environment to protect their minds from being polluted.

Instead of holding WhatsApp responsible, India's education needs to tackle the underlying issues that are making its people paranoid and vulnerable to the viral spread of lies. Hell, it could even use WhatsApp to do that. (Abhimanyu Ghoshal. July 2014) India must blame itself, not WhatsApp, for its devastating lynching spree) For WhatsApp though, the scrutiny it is facing in India is quite unusual. A country known for its missed-call culture, embraced the messaging platform for its free and seamless communication service. (Sundeep Khann. Mint). India is WhatsApp's biggest market. It's also suddenly one of the company's biggest threats. About half a billion people have access to the Internet in India. Facebook has about 300 million users, WhatsApp has more than 200 million and tens of millions of X users. WhatsApp says it is limited in what it can do to stem the spread of harmful rumours without compromising the encrypted nature of the software.

India's proposed legislation to regulate SM giants has provoked a backlash against what they describe as 'sweeping new rules by India. The Indian government, on the pretext of the failure of the self-regulation of SM, has initiated plans to purge harmful content of mainly YouTube, Facebook and WhatsApp. They apply their own rules about what content is unacceptable and 'promotes false news, hate speech or extremism' Aditya Kalra. (Jan. 11, 2019). SM giants plan push-back on India's new regulations. Gopalakrishnan S., a joint secretary at India's IT ministry argues that the proposal is aimed at making SM safer and was not for curbing freedom of speech or imposing censorship. Facebook, WhatsApp and X would be required to remove unlawful content that affected the "sovereignty and integrity of India" within 24hours. Industry executives and civil rights activists argue that this measure is designed to curb freedom of speech, to suppress content inimical to the government and also an indirect censorship to help the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to crack down on dissent.

The Indian government remains undaunted by such opposition. 'I don't get bothered by the uncalled-for campaigns,' Prasad was quoted as saying on Feb. 20. 'We'll be fair, we'll be objective, but our sovereign right to frame rules and laws will always be there.'

India's government was prompted to take the easy option by apportioning blame to the instant messenger. It wants to hold WhatsApp accountable for carrying content. Although regulators want to impose responsibilities on internet companies to 'proactively screen user posts and messages in order to ensure that people don't share anything 'unlawful' as yet no consensus has emerged. The rules are also being criticised for creating a new type of gatekeepers to judge what can be published and what can't from the point of view of what is lawful and what is "unlawful" before it's ever even shared. Apar Gupta, the executive director of the Internet Freedom Foundation has slammed the new regulation as "a sledgehammer to online free speech,' Jayshree Bajoria, Human Rights Watch, warns "We are talking about China-style surveillance here".

The rules would force tech companies to make technical changes. Companies that don't have the technology to monitor content would need to build it (though one issue with the proposed Indian rules is that it's unclear, for now, what the punishment will be for failing to comply).



Knowing fully well that WhatsApp's transmission of messages are encrypted it is impracticable because it is unlikely that the company would be ready to eliminate encryption to comply with a law like this. The correlation function is not in the hands of Facebook executives, and Facebook doesn't claim it to be so.

### **An Overview**

Democracy requires more than certain civic habits. A vibrant governance presupposes not only the constituents' ability to understand, use different perspectives, freedom of expression, freedom of press and to engage in public debates. It is also conditional upon ethical and accountable statesman or stateswoman not 'politician'. In today's world a statesman is an endangered species. He is a long term racer thinking about the next generation and is concerned with 'the interests of the body politic' whereas politicians pander to their own personal needs.

The principle of freedom of expression is rooted in the philosophy of earlier centuries associated with political theories, statesmen and philosophies without forgetting Anvikshiki, the science of enquiry; Socrates' dialectic method as a dialogic approach for enabling a deep insight and boosting understanding through conversation; Voltaires' view that no authorities are beyond the scrutiny of reasoning and tolerance; Descartes' cogito enables one to defeat skepticism, which is due to a knowledge deficit, unjustified beliefs and uncertainty, and John Stuart Mill's theory of utilitarianism.

Contemporary political wrangling over freedom of expression or speech, traditionally recognised as a moral and a legal right dates back as early as 1644 when John Milton advocated for the right to freedom of expression. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century in Britain John Milton (1608–74) defended it and the U.S. Constitution's Bill of Rights (1791) made it part of the First Amendment which was enshrined into the *Declaration on Human Rights of the French Revolution* in 1791. It was then reflected in the Universal Declaration of 1948 to regulate the relationship between governmental power and individual rights.

Shoemaker and Reese (1996) along with journalists believe that exposing corruption and wrongdoing is a necessary part of their role in preserving democracy, and is a well-established aspect of journalistic culture (Gans, 2004). Researchers argue that school, media and politics

have a responsibility to facilitate this engagement, and that the public also has a responsibility to participate in the debate. (Richard Sambrook, 2012).

The UK benefits from a diverse selection of news sources, including commercial PSBs like ITV network, the BBC, and other broadcasters like Sky offer a variety of broadcast news options. In recent months, new players entering the market demonstrate a growing demand for diversity and glocalised media. Some emphasise the crucial role of a "plural, trusted, and vigorous media" in maintaining a functioning democracy.

Today's era is characterised by a culture which predominantly has zero tolerance for dissension, difference of opinions, counter-arguments and little regards for ethics, moral values and truth due to our inherited and limited mindsets. They affect the cognitive faculty, which influences our speech, behaviours, social conducts and habits to guide our actions and decisions.

Culture includes various online communities such as Facebook, message boards and creative expressions like digital sampling, skinning and modding, video making, fan fiction writing, and mash-ups. Collaborative problem-solving, such as through Wikipedia and alternative reality gaming, and shaping the flow of media through podcasting and blogging, are also part of participatory culture that are affective too.

The rise of false news has become a polemical debate as it has resurfaced during the pandemic with epistemic vulnerabilities for everyone engaged with social media communication because the concomitant falsehoods are relentlessly menacing the digital media and society that depends on them for news.

The growing use of online media has highlighted concerns about filter bubbles (Pariser, 2011), echo chambers (Nguyen, forthcoming), and group polarisation (Sunstein, 2017; Pallavicini et al., forthcoming). These issues have led to what some consider an "epistemic crisis" (Roberts, 2017a), where "tribal epistemology" dominates (Roberts, 2017b). Levy (2017) even suggests that the best response to this crisis of epistemic vulnerability is to disconnect from certain information sources altogether. Similarly, Rini (2017) argues that individual epistemic dispositions and virtues are insufficient to address the problem, and that we must also focus on the structure of epistemic institutions like social media platforms.

The statement that digitally networked and connected information communication technologies and a market-based media culture have 'fragmented, diversified, homogenised, flattened, broadened, and reshaped the world' (Kellner and Shares, 2007) of the post-truth digital convergence is utter nonsense. The new media have emerged as digital dimension of the current third paradigm which is underway and affecting traditional news providers in the hotly contested mediasphere.

'The digital age presents a new set of challenges as reliable information is increasingly hard to come by' (cited in Patterson 2013) an "attention economy" where governments, organisations, journalists, and interest groups must compete for viewership (Sunstein, 2007).

Spurious content is not a new phenomenon. It is traced back to 400 years ago. In today's era it has been boosted by pervasive algorithms and bots as the undercurrents of the echo chamber and the megaphone of the social media. The ineluctable social media are dramatically influencing every aspect of our lives, enhancing, disrupting and transforming society. Even people who do not follow regular news updates can still be confronted by news events through the people they follow on social media (cited in Kramer, Guillory & Hancock, 2014).

SM have subsumed a number of online platforms eg. blogosphere, business or enterprise social networks (SN), forums, microblogs and micro-vblog sites, products review and gaming, video sharing, and virtual worlds. (cited in Aichner T, Jacob F., 2015).

However, the Internet is bustling and overflowing with massive amounts of unverified information readily accessible, making it challenging to distinguish accurate information from misinformation. Together with the above factors our biological and neuronal limitations coupled with the cognitive bias, mistake of the intellect and the scarcity of attention pose an unsurmountable problem that impinge on attention.

Digital affluence is inversely related to CML skills, and people's misgivings are reflected in these types of telling headlines: "Is social media empowering or silencing our voices?" (Forbes 08.10.2018) "Recent research reveals that Brits don't always trust what they see on their favourite platforms" – (UK You.Gov, 31.10.2019). Facebook is found to have similar negative effects to Instagram in the categories of bullying, body image, anxiety, depression, and loneliness.

Worldwide democracies are mired in controversy and frustrated with the incursion of mis/dis/mal-information. This “spread within participatory cultures, in which individuals shape media messages when they recirculate, remix, appraise, critique, and evaluate content,” (Jenkins et al., 2013) is designed to subvert, undermine and destabilise democratic principles and values. In an embattled world we are facing a dilemma in understanding and interpreting narratives, discourses, thoughts and rhetorical expression which are fiercely inundating us. Discerning dis/mis/mal/-information is not the only problem. The task involves a joint initiative with between news providers and news consumers.

Even professionally created news and information can be easily misunderstood by non media literate news consumers. They are likely to misinterpret truthful information or take out of the context in which it was produced and where it made sense. (Rubia Carla et al., 2021).

Mindful of the digital abundance and moral decadence in a value-bankrupt world this thesis aims to undertake a critical examination of how the role of non-cognitive skillset can complement cognitive skills which are vital for digital navigation.

Due to a paucity of empirical studies it is not easy to know how audiences actually behave in comment fields. In India there is limited research on Indian government’s use of SM for citizen engagements. (Ravinder Kumar Verma et al., 2017). CML has been a persistent, but under-engaged concern in India despite its media explosion. (Jesna Jayachandran, 2018). The rationale for this research is implicit in the above indispensability of media education for the development of CML in the tiers of the education system in India.

The literature review indicates that no study on media literacy has transcended beyond cognitive faculty to investigate the underlying factors minding us towards negativity bias. A critical mindset is crucial for progressive democracies, which are under increasing pressure from fringe and populist political parties, who leverage the connective technologies of the web to further expand their voice and impact. (Paul Mihailidis). A democracy is increasingly reliant on citizens' ability to obtain trustworthy and credible information. (Paolo Celot, 2018). Constituents should have the critical aptitude to perceive democracy to uphold basic principles and values where political leadership should be above reproach to command their respects.

However, the ground reality does not reflect this sentiment. A UN Special Rapporteur's Report on disinformation in April 2021 showed 40 per cent of respondents identify the government, politicians or political parties in their own country as the source of false or misleading information from. (MacKenzie F. Common and Rasmus Kleis Nielsen, April 2021). Dis/mis/mal-information has been deployed by political actors using political correctness to discredit unfavourable news or facts and reporting they dislike (Elinor Carmi, 2020) because 'blatant lies being routine across society become norm for politicians, who can lie without condemnation. (Higgins, K., 2016; World Economic Forum, 2014; Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017; Colomina et al., 2021)

Previous research supports the view that the public perceives disinformation as primarily a problem stemming from the actions of politicians and other domestic actors, particularly on social media, rather than solely from false information or malicious actors. It has shown that people often encounter stories where facts are distorted to advance a political agenda (political propaganda) and poor journalism practices (superficial, sensationalist, inaccurate content) as the most common forms of potential misinformation. These forms of misinformation are the worst political version of propaganda which is commonly referred to in the UK as 'spin', and described by the Collins dictionary as 'a the way in which political parties try to present everything they do in a positive way to the public and the media.'

Spinning of certain forms of propaganda has become a common practice in many countries including India and the UK where relegating the truth does not raise any ethical or moral questions Spin is primarily viewed as a political messaging strategy where a set of facts, such as the UK's unemployment rate between 2008 and 2016, had been manipulated for political gain. The result may only be partially true or false, but the intention is to mitigate any negative impact on public perception. The difference between the statement and the actual truth may be a matter of interpretation, leading to partial deception of the person hearing the statement.

However, spin must contain some elements of truth, similar to highlighting only the positive or negative aspects that serve one's purpose, but not a deliberate lie. This aligns with research indicating that high-profile public figures, including elected officials, make up a significant

portion of social media engagement.

The cacophony of contradicting, conflicting and disputed discourses, claims, threats and narratives during the onslaught of COVID-19 epitomises the worst kind of misinformation and disinformation.

The ensuing debate most in the political arena was jockeyed and hijacked by capricious politicians who over-zealously acted as self-appointed medical advisers and agents of WHO. Many countries big or small including the United Kingdom, the US, India and Mauritius have resorted to indirectly blackmailing and bullying people into getting vaccination. The internet-powered new media warrant a new skillset to meet digital challenges.

### **The Researcher's Personal Interest**

Multiple reasons prompt this research. First it is motivated by the need for potential empowerment of citizens as participatory audience or citizen journalists or teachers in promoting authentic journalism. Journalism intersects with citizen journalism, media education amidst an uncertainty of the disjuncture between both. My long-standing interest in media literacy reinforced by my journalistic and media training experience underscores my further interest in media from different approaches.

The motivating factors that inspire me to undertake a research include my personal interest in protecting children and citizens who are exposed to the negative or harmful media effects. It is important to teach them how to understand the ulterior motives of media content. Students are encountered with the scourge of 'fake news'. This coupled with 'epistemic insecurity' which is prevailing over truth, reality, facts, reasoning, perception and their implications in the post-truth India is of serious concern to me.

### **Ten Key Indicators of New Media Literacy Skills(NMLS)**

The New Media Literacy (NML) framework identifies 10 key indicators of new media literacy skills which have also been echoed by Lin, Chen, and Liang (2013):

1. Access, retrieval and consumption of information: able to locate and access information using various digital tools and sources, comprehend, interpret, and analyse various forms of media, such as text, images, audio, and video, in order to extract meaning and understanding.
2. Evaluation of information: knowing how to critically assess, analyse, evaluate and synthesise multiple forms of media and quality of online information to gain a deeper understanding, to draw connections between them and to check the credibility and reliability of information and media sources in order to determine their trustworthiness.
3. Creation of content: being able to use digital tools to create and publish original content, such as websites, videos, and podcasts.
4. Communication and collaboration: the ability to digitally create, communicate and publish original media content, including text, images, audio, and video, using various digital tools and platforms both synchronously and asynchronously.
5. Design and customisation: how to use digital tools to design and customize digital content, such as personalizing a blog or creating an avatar as well as publishing and distributing content for the 360-degree media platforms.
6. Coding and programming: how to understand and use code to create and manipulate digital content.
7. Networking and online identity: being proficient to: (1) understand and manage one's online identity, (2) use digital tools to participate in online networks and the global community, using digital technologies to engage with people and cultures from different parts of the world and (3) being able to navigate digital environment such as the Internet and online platforms, in order to access and manage information.
8. Digital safety and security: the ability to understand and practice safe and secure online behaviour, including the responsible use of personal information, to consider and reflect on the social, cultural, and ideological implications of media content and to use this understanding to create media that is inclusive, ethical, and culturally

sensitive.

9. Data analysis and interpretation: being able to collect, analyse, and interpret data from digital sources.
10. Legal and ethical issues: the wisdom to understand and apply ethical and legal considerations in the use of digital technologies, including issues related to privacy.

An important finding of the study provides support for Jenkins et al.'s (2006) Participatory culture framework, which argues that the successful participation of individuals in new media sites can be achieved through the practice of certain new media literacies (NMLs).

Jenkins (2006) further argues that “fostering such social skills and cultural competencies requires a more systemic approach to media education” but Elinor Carmi (2020) stresses that data (new media, news media information, critical media literacies) citizenship outlines the importance of citizens having a critical and active role in the increasing prevalence of society's datafication and algorithmically-driven decision-making (Gather, 2020). As digital data have become central to our cultural, social, political, and economic worlds, data citizenship seeks to establish a framework that examines the connections between data, power, and contextuality (ibid). Through data citizenship, individuals are encouraged and empowered to engage in critical inquiry and participate meaningfully and proactively in their communities (Gather, 2020). The framework encompasses three areas:

1. Data thinking - citizens' critical understanding of data, including understanding data collection and the data economy (Gather, 2020).
2. Data doing - citizens' day-to-day engagements with data, such as deleting data and using data ethically (Gather, 2020).
3. Data participation - citizens' proactive engagement with data and their networks of literacy, including taking steps to protect privacy and well-being in the data society, as well as helping others with their data literacy (Gather, 2020). (Gather, 2020) refers to the source that provides the original information.

### **What is the Post-Truth Era?**

The Oxford Dictionary describes 'post-truth' as: ‘circumstances in which objective facts are



less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief.' The majority of negative news coverage is directed towards people's emotions (Philo, 2002). It relates to arbitrary culture of prioritising emotions, lies, absurdity, rhetorics and subjective perceptions with little or no regard for rationality, common sense, facts or truths.

The term "post-truth" refers to a situation in which emotions and personal beliefs are made to prevail over facts and evidence, thus influential in shaping public opinion. Coined in the early 21st century the term has been used to describe a range of phenomena, including the spread of misinformation, the erosion of trust in traditional sources of information, and the role of social media in shaping public discourse. The post-truth era is synonymous with a break down in societal norms, human values, virtues and ethics including trust which affects communication. Many scholars contend that false news is a function of the post-truth political era in which we now live (Andersen, 2017; Davies, 2016; Lewandowsky et al., 2017). This era heralds a catastrophic period of our life, marked by a number of dystopian traits. At the political level it systematically signifies the age of institutionalised lies, pretentiousness, conceit, deceit, skulduggery, outrage, distrust and disconnect where the evaporation of ethics and axiological, deontological, epistemological, reasoning, truth, facts, rules, norms, values is the source our woes, failures and sufferings.

This is an era of self-identity crisis. People can't decide who they want to be the next day. Being different from being a man, woman, or a zombie for that matter depends on their aims and ideology. The desire to recognise the third gender is nothing new but needs to be recognised based on physical and biological features in regulating an individual's identity with arbitrary rules, which is political correctness and not justifiable. What do our biology, physiology, and anatomy tell us? What are the implications of people's self-determination for society? These issues are on the agenda for the cognitive skills in a world crying out for epistemic security. Transcendence is the key to knowing what you want to be or to have. Unfortunately, the post-truth mind and knowledge have fallen short in dealing with this.

The post-truth age has been defined as the age of fake news or counterfeit news. Newsworthy reports are defined as those that have undergone the typical modern journalistic process, which involves professional reporters, fact-checkers, and editors (Goldman, Alvin I., 2011).

In January 2018, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg shifted the responsibility of detecting false 'news' to the public when he wrote, "We could try to make that decision ourselves, but that's not something we're comfortable with" (Linda Emma, March 5). This alluded to the controversial issue of news censorship. Several media organizations have shifted the burden of skepticism onto their audience, which is seen as relieving journalism from its responsibility to fact-check due to the overwhelming amount of information that needs to be processed (Riordan, Kellie, 2014).

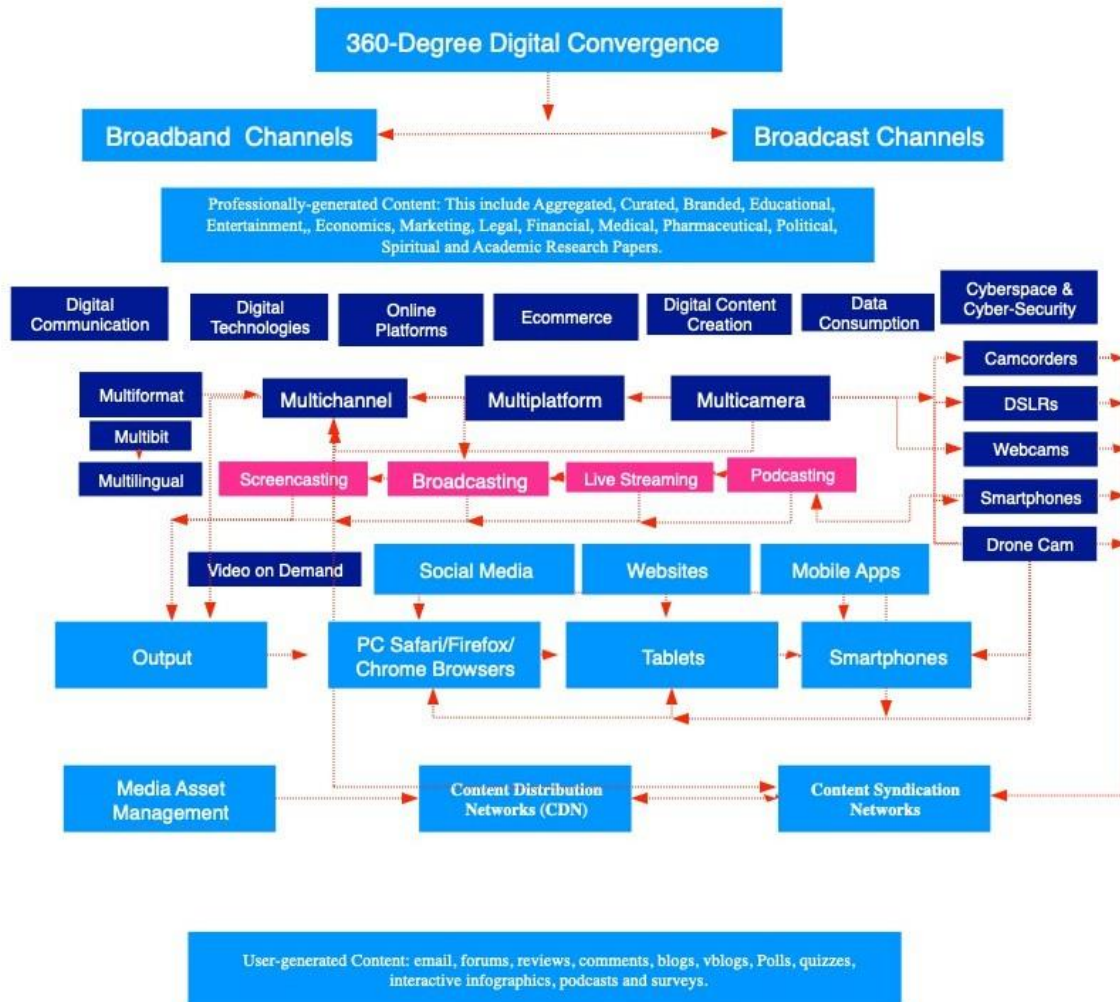
Counterfeit news is a story that is not genuine but is presented as such, with the intention of deceiving its audience. This definition contributes to the field of 'systems-oriented social epistemology' (Goldman, Alvin I., 2011). Fake news is dis/mis/mal-information, a form of online misinformation containing false or misleading statements, sometimes connected to actual events, created to deceive and influence the public through an opportunistic format resembling news (such as headlines, images, content) to increase clicks, shares, advertising revenue, or further an ideology (João P. Baptista and Anabela Gradim, 2022).

No other phenomenon has had so much impact on humanity since industrialization began in the 1800s as the usage and affordance of the Internet. The following apocalyptic challenges are a testimony to the concept of social determinism, which is accountable for the incursion of a 'dis-information order' indicative of an 'epistemic security' deficiency. Foucault's (1970) implicit 'rules of formation' govern what constitutes legitimate forms of knowledge for a particular cultural period. Cognitive bias and epistemic bias are interrelated. Cognitive bias refers to the tendency to systematically deviate from rationality or objectivity in various ways, including biases in perception, memory, judgment, decision-making, and reasoning. Epistemic bias is a type of bias that specifically affects scientific inquiry and knowledge acquisition, involving a deviation from the ideal of objectivity and impartiality in the process of scientific inquiry.

Sweeping new laws have raised concerns about free speech and the character of India as an Indo-Pacific power (Sasha Fegan). Given the capricious politicians and decision-makers in the post-truth era, one has to be circumspect of spurious news being weaponized against freedom of expression and press freedom. At worst, such content could lead to indoctrination,

paving the way for spreading a hegemonic culture. "Now we are drowning in outrage stories, very high-quality outrage stories, often supported by horrifying video clips. Social media are turning out to be a gigantic centrifugal force" (Jonathan Haidt, 2017).

## The Challenges of The Post-Truth Digital Convergence



This simplified flowchart attempts to illustrate how digitalisation has reshaped the legacy media into an overarching phenomenon of Digital Convergence which has drastically disrupted and globally transformed the environment, processes and modality of legacy media into a seamlessly integrated, ubiquitous, interactive, engaging and collaborative mediascape.

The transformation of traditional media into a digital public sphere is characterized by multiplatform, multi-camera, multi-format, multibit, and multilingual channels. The flowchart outlines how different types of communication, journalism, user-generated content (UGC) through social media and professionally-generated content (PGC) enabled by various digital technologies in an integrated 360-degree agora or media ecology.

The most challenging dilemma that faces us is fake 'news,' which is modern term to refer to an old composite problem called dis/mis/mal-information. The Collins dictionary's definition as: 'false, often sensational, information disseminated under the guise of news reporting,' could not be more meaningful. The phrase “false news” which the EBU and UNESCO refers to as an oxymoron is a mess of conflicting meanings because 'false news' is a contradiction.

Instead this researcher chooses to use the term 'counterfeit' as one word embodies all the traits of falsehoods, as well as convenience to use a single word. The proliferation of counterfeit news on social media and blogosphere has made it more difficult for individuals to discern what is true or real and has led to the erosion of trust in traditional sources of information and the rise of alternative sources of information that may not be based on fact.

In 2017, Wardle rejected the phrase false 'news' on the ground that it is 'woefully inadequate' which she substituted with the term 'information disorder' and 'information pollution.’’ (Higdon, Nolan, 15.08.2020).

Counterfeit news encourages the spreading of false beliefs (Silverman and Singer-Vine, 2016a), and excessive skepticism may prevent people from accepting true information from credible sources (Fallis, 2004). Despite being an effective tool the Internet with all its affordances enhances the quality of life of sagacious users who appreciate how it enables them to hugely save time and efforts in the attainment of outcomes.

However a huge category of people has been overwhelmed by their negatively skewed approach digital convergence whose limited mindset is incapable to perceive a knife as more than a murder weapon. A new study by Brigham Young University has pointed out four personality traits that trigger an Internet troll. Those who post inflammatory, irrelevant, or offensive comments online possess the dark personality traits, including narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy, combined with schadenfreude, which is the enjoyment of other people's misfortunes.

The below concomitants of the post-truth era are indisputably attributable to man's inability to defy the vagaries and manipulation of their untrained mind:

1. Compulsive use of social media occasions the 'fear of missing out.' FOMO is understood to relate to a situation where one perceives one has lesser experiences than

others. The feelings of not being able to live up to their peers' or net users' expectations and or certain social situations. This causes social anxiety symptoms, which are the second most common anxiety disorder. "Social media can definitely cause social anxiety," according to Charna Cassell.

2. Narcissism: This condition is the result of social anxiety syndrome. The fear of being judged by others may increase in a setting where it's easy to compare yourself with others or feel evaluated by a like — or lack thereof. Narcissism was declared 'narcissistic personality disorder' (NPD) in 2017. The Internet is a narcissist's paradise. (Laporta, Lauren, 2009). "Narcissism levels among millennials are higher than previous generations." (Shawn Bergman,) being judged by others may increase in a setting where it's easy to compare yourself with others or feel evaluated by a like —or lack thereof.
3. Hedonism: the doctrine that pleasure or happiness is the sole or chief good in life.

In comprehending the psychological factors contributing to the popularity of social media platforms Foucault (1993) describes "technologies of the self" as methods people use to modify their bodies, minds, and conduct in pursuit of an ideal state of psychological perfection. Although he mainly focused on ancient practices such as meditation and diary- keeping, the prevalence of such techniques in modern times is evident. Nowadays, these online platforms have become the preferred means for many individuals to shape and regulate their self-identities. Michel Foucault's work on power and knowledge has also had a significant impact on the way that journalists and media scholars think about truth-telling in contemporary journalism. Truth is not an absolute or objective concept, but rather a product of the discursive practices of those in power. The significance of Carpentier and Foucault's contributions to journalism and truth-telling rely on their ability to illuminate the ways in which contemporary media practices are shaped by larger social and political forces, including neoliberalism and power relations. (Carpentier; Foucault. M.1972-1977)

4. Cyber-hedonism: This obsession has prompted The Economist to shoot a question; will they try to change the world, or simply settle for enjoying themselves? The

pursuit of pleasure from online resources has mesmerised the youth to such an extent that many families, relationships and studies have been adversely affected. For many net users from China and the US virtual life is more than real which signifies a point of no return. In China, two-thirds of the respondents to one opinion poll agreed with the proposition that “It's possible to have real relationships purely online,” compared with one-fifth of Americans who felt the same way. (iBid)

The following excerpt from the *The Economist* (Feb. 2009) evidently concerns the future generation: “There is so much evidence of the latter choice that pundits have invented a new word—cyber-hedonism—to describe it. To the dismay of idealists, young people in many countries seem to be giving up the political struggles of previous generations and opting instead for a sort of digital nirvana, revelling in a vast supply of movies, music, instant communication and of course, sexual opportunity. One appealing thing about cyber-hedonism is that, compared with politics, it's less likely to attract the authorities' attention.” *The Economist - International* ( 7.2.2009).

5. Emotional Appeals: Emotions and personal beliefs often play a greater role in shaping public opinion than facts and evidence. Emotional appeals in political campaigning and public discourse, are used to manipulate public opinion and shaping public policy. Journalism has become increasingly focused on creating and perpetuating narratives that appeal to the emotions and beliefs of their audiences, rather than on objective reporting (Carpentier, 2017). The use of emotional intelligence has resurfaced as a new political device to address constituents.
6. Polarisation of the Internet: Polarisation and division refers to where individuals are more likely to seek out and consume information that aligns with their preexisting beliefs and values, resulting in the emergence of echo chambers and the entrenchment of opposing viewpoints. One of the downsides of the Internet is the recognition and monitoring of polarisation in the media landscape. The unprecedented speed of data transfer and scale has also led to an increase in the spread of false, misleading, and biased information, which has contributed to the polarising of society.
7. The Social Media: SM platforms have played a significant role in the emergence of

the post-truth age, as they have provided a platform for the rapid and easier sharing of content and connecting like-minded individuals. SM have been criticised for their role in spreading misinformation leading to the erosion of trust in traditional sources of information. The resulting impact on digital journalism is the rise of user participation, which can incite hate speech and trolls and become hotbeds for toxic comments, with users posting hateful and derogatory messages that can harm individuals and groups. This has led to calls for media organisations to take a more proactive role in moderating user-generated content and ensuring that their platforms are safe and welcoming for all users.

### **Social Media Platforms**

Social networking sites have fundamentally altered the way individuals live. "Today, I heavily depend on social networking sites for our day-to-day activities" (Saurabh, S., & Sairam, A.S., 2013). By examining the history of traditional collection development in academic libraries, the author illustrates how YouTube fits into the long continuum of library media collections as an open-access platform (Cho, A., 2013). Google's solution to the issue of inaccessible areas was the creation of a new YouTube portal, which allowed students to explore safely on their own. However, by blocking access to YouTube in classrooms, educators are isolating themselves from the environments where students spend significant time and engage in informal learning (Kristen Bloom & Kelly Marie Johnston, 2010). Koumi (2013) offers a useful categorization for assessing the learning value of video content, arguing that video's power in supporting learning resides in three distinct areas: motivation and engagement, cognitive learning, and experiential learning value (Peter Tiernan, 2015).

The participatory nature of video platforms empowers users through the multimodal format, enabling expression, civic engagement, creation of user-generated content (UGCs), and sharing of knowledge, learning, and experience. Jenkins et al. have identified four types of participatory culture: affiliations, expressions, collaborative problem-solving, and circulations. These necessitate new media literacy skills developed through collaboration and networking to address performance, simulation, appropriation, multitasking, distributed



cognition, collective intelligence, judgment, transmedia navigation, networking, and negotiation (Jenkins, Purushotma, Weigel, Clinton, and Robinson, 2009). Due to its ubiquitous, collaborative, and peer-to-peer environment, the teaching profession recognizes it as a potent didactic tool for teaching and learning purposes.

Furthermore, YouTube, as the second most popular video-oriented platform, shares its high patronage with other SM channels like WhatsApp, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, Telegram, and LinkedIn. WhatsApp is deemed the most crucial instant messaging application for smartphones and computers in Spain, celebrated for its chat services and authentic social networks where users converse, exchange information, photos, videos, and homework screenshots (cSánchez-Moya & Cruz-Moya, 2015; Giménez & Zirpoli, 2015; Cánovas et al., 2014). Offering benefits like cost, community sense, and immediacy, WhatsApp serves 1.5 billion users across 180 countries, with India being its largest market (Church & De Oliveira, 2013).

### **WhatsApp**

WhatsApp, one of the most-used apps in the world is patronised by 1.5 billion users in 180 countries. India is WhatsApp's biggest market in the world. WhatsApp is beleaguered by the problems of misinformation in other large markets including India, Brazil, Indonesia, Central America and Brazil. The outcomes in India has been far more violent than elsewhere. Thirty people have been killed across the country in the past few days, after rumours spread on the app about child kidnappers on the loose and a video was circulated that purported to show a boy being snatched.

WhatsApp has grown to be the most democratised mobile-based instant messenger and chat tool to be applied in social, institutional and educational life. It has been widely recognised for its speed and effective in disseminating messages, images and videos with end-to-end encryption. Although it has been widely used for its immediacy and pervasiveness it has, nevertheless hogged international headlines for the wrong reasons in many different parts of the world. It has been predominantly used in political campaigns in the US presidential elections. In Brazil political campaigners used software to scrape Facebook for citizens' phone numbers for automatically sending them WhatsApp messages and adding them to WhatsApp

groups

This environment implies the ability to understand, media messages, discern multiple perspectives and and grasp the hidden meaning of media content. Similarly, a core principle of media education, according to NAMLE (2007), is the exploration of “representations, misrepresentation and lack of representation of cultures and countries in the global community” (section 4.5). The above objectives are critical learning points precisely because Web 2.0 puts students in contact with other students from a variety of social and cultural backgrounds in the somewhat.

### **Facebook**

This is a Facebook world. Facebook has been widely recognised not only as distribution platforms in the news industry but also as the only platform at the heart of their SM landscape where all the interviewed outlets are publishing bespoke video. But it does not follow that publication strategy and packaging features of successful video news do not publish on different contemporary platforms. (Judith Argila, 2017)

SM platforms such as Facebook are now a ubiquitous part of everyday life for many people. New media scholars posit that the participatory culture encouraged by SM gives rise to new forms of skills that are vital to learning.

Scholars argue that platforms such as Facebook or X allow individuals to practice new skills and ways to engage with learning processes (Greenhow, C., and Gleason, B. 2012, Greenhow, C., and Robelia, E. 2009)

Jenkins observes that individuals now participate in online communities and engage with new technologies that encourage media creation and sharing. Today’s learner does not merely read or consume content. They create information in a myriad of media channels and formats, such as status updates on Facebook, tweets on the X platform, videos on YouTube, or personal blog posts. These affordances create a participatory culture where creating, sharing, and collaborating in online networks become vital skills for learning. Jenkins suggests that the following skills are vital when working in new media environments:

- Play - capacity to problem solve, tinker, and experiment with one’s surroundings

- Performance - ability to adopt different identities to explore and learn
- Simulation - ability to construct and interpret models to explore real-world phenomena
- Appropriation – understanding of how to sample and remix other sources in one’s own work
- Multitasking - capability to shift attention as needed
- Distributed Cognition - skills to effectively use information to expand one’s mental capacity
- Collective Intelligence - ability to collaborate and pool knowledge effectively
- Judgement - skills to evaluate information sources as credible and reliable
- Transmedia Navigation - use of multiple means and platforms to follow information streams
- Networking - ability to search for, synthesise, and share information through online networks
- Negotiation - ability to participate in and adapt to different communities

Facebook is an online social communication utility for interacting people, promoting brands and linking with organisations. It is deemed as a globally used ‘Swiss Army Knife’ of tools for in-class and out-of-class teaching and learning in the 21st century. Facebook’s mission is to make the world more open, social and connected and to enable teachers to harness its potential to improve learning outcomes for young people. With the advent of online digital pedagogy young people find Facebook convenient for accessing knowledge and learning. It enables interactive, student centred, peer-to-peer, collaborative and on demand learning for both environments; in-class learning and also non-formal. (The Education Foundation)

Research show that social networking site like Facebook provides a virtual constructivist environment conducive for students to actively participate in during the study, which can supplement in-class learning. Knowledge is constructed by the students, as constructivist approach suggests and developed by the students. Hence, Facebook is amenable as an effective learning environment. (Toprak, A et al)

What Can We Learn from Facebook Activity? Using Social Learning Analytics to Observe New Media Skills (The Education Foundation is a leading organisation set up to accelerate and support positive change in the British education system and beyond.)

The aim of this section is to respond to three following questions: (1) Is there a potential educational value in using Facebook? (2) How does the educational utility of Facebook compare with that of other social mediums available on the Internet, such as the bulletin board system (BBS)? These subjects were questioned about their use of Facebook, BBS platforms, and e-learning platforms. There were three major new findings. Firstly, 81 per cent of subjects had discussed course-related problems with their peers on Facebook. Secondly, in relation to the six known motives for using Facebook, peer discussion of educational matters was considered to be the fourth most important in this survey. Lastly, Facebook does not satisfy users' occasional need to review or browse through past communication records; BBS fares much better in this regard.

Another research found that Facebook has the education element of using motivation and is more convenient in sharing educational resources than e-learning and Bulletin Board System (BBS). and offers immediacy of learning. (Bin-ShyanJonga et al)

The Economist pointed out that contrary to SM's 'promise of a more enlightened politics, as accurate information and effortless communication helped good people drive out corruption, bigotry and lies' it has been spreading poison rather enlightenment. It noted that users may have seen Russian misinformation on its platform as Google's YouTube admitted carrying 1,108 Russian-linked videos and X to 36,746 accounts.

“WhatsApp profile pictures can be used by ISIS for terror activities”, “New notes have a GPS chip to detect black money”, “UNESCO falsely declares; (1) new Rs 2,000 note best currency in the world”. (2) Jana Gana Mana best national anthem”, (3) PM Modi best Prime Minister”, and “RBI declares the Rs 10 coin invalid”. These were some headlines that criss-crossed the digital superhighway in India. Not forgetting the following false headlines: 'Pope backs Trump', 'Hillary sold weapons to ISIS', 'FBI Agent Suspected in Hillary Email Leaks Found Dead' -that went viral on Facebook in the run up to the election.

### **X (formerly twitter)**

Micro-blogging instant messenger X enhances active engagement and access to information. The Twiducate Platform is a popular awesome incredible popular free learning tool for students in K-12. is a free social network platform for school educators to create private

networks for posting assignments, sending messages etc. with other educators either outside or inside the classroom. is a free social networking tool for teachers and students. It's a social micro blogging platform for educators so that they can learn outside the classroom. By using this platform educators can create their own personal workspace where they can add and collaborate with the desired members. Along with this educators can create their private network for posting assignments and messages to students or other people with an invitation to the class network. Being a teacher, you can monitor and administer the accounts of the students of your network. With features like bookmarks and +links educators can manage their resources. For offline use, educators can export their favourite posts and comments which can be accessed with a word document .

Students' perceptions of X as a pedagogical tool is scanty. X feed was a positive addition to teaching/education and provided insights in three themes: digital , educational experience and professional identity. X appeared to add value to the students' educational experience via peer-assisted learning, collaboration and connectivity. Professional identity awareness can impact students' X activity; therefore, consideration regarding the enhancement of self- confidence and active engagement within this platform is recommended. Amanda Deves et al)

If the press is the Fourth Estate, William Dutton of the Oxford Internet Institute termed SM as the emergence of the Fifth Estate. In a 2009 interview with Nic Newman, former BBC Future Media Controller, Dutton said "we are witnessing the emergence of powerful new voices and networks which can act independently of the traditional media. Highly networked individuals (helped by new platforms like social networking and messaging) can move across, undermine and go beyond the boundaries of existing institutions." (N.Newman, "The rise of SM and its impact on mainstream journalism")

Jeff Paine, managing director of the Asia Internet Coalition -- whose members include Apple, Amazon, Facebook, Google, Line and LinkedIn -- said in a statement the key provisions of the draft rules 'fall short of India's legal precedents and laws around privacy and free speech.'

A study by the Pew Research Center found that 64 per cent of Americans believe that social media platforms mostly have a negative effect on the way news is reported. Additionally, 56 per cent of respondents believe that social media platforms are not effective at separating fact

from fiction. These findings underscore the need for media organisations to take a more active role in countering hate speech and misinformation on social media platforms.

### **The Characteristics of Digital Economy and Digital Society**

1. **Market Forces:** Free market ideas have been the driving force shaping media policy in the UK since the 1980s. Although the free market competition is essential for empowering consumers, fostering freedom, and achieving efficiency media history informs us that public interest as a public good would not exist if it wasn't for government's interventionist policy. Normative economics holds the view that left to citizens they would opt for purely and exclusively entertainment and excitement channels which unbeknown to them only leads to entanglement with their own ignorant or skewed minds. Many participants actively looked for more entertaining or uplifting news in social media or aggregators instead. (Reuters, 2012)

The report points to a growing disconnect between what traditional news brands offer and what young consumers are looking for: “Traditional news brands feel their job is to tell people what they should know. To an extent youngsters also want what is useful to know, what is interesting to know and what is fun to know.” This above normative practice has been undermined by the fomentation of socially constructive learning facilitated by online pedagogy as well as collaborative, cooperative and interactive engagement of the ubiquitous platforms.

Mainstream media need to make news more accessible, relevant and entertaining to attract next generation of consumers.

2. Free market advocates, the market not only makes for efficient media but also produces media that people want, a wide range of choice, and media independence from government. However, it acknowledges criticisms of this approach, particularly with regards to public service broadcasting, which is often viewed by free market advocates as unrepresentative and prone to waste and profligacy. The pace of deregulation has not been fast enough for committed neo-liberals, some of whom argue that the BBC should be broken up into independent, separately financed stations

funded partly by advertising.

In this context, it suggests that regulation can play a role in ensuring that the market functions in the public interest. It notes that there have been attempts to regulate media policy at the European level through directives such as the Audiovisual Media Services Directive, which aims to remove barriers to cross-border competition between television organizations in Europe. It addresses some of the concerns about media concentration and unrepresentative broadcasting that have been raised by critics of the free-market approach.

3. **Digital Data Abundance:** The rise of digital abundance creates a number of problems: (a) news saturation, (b) news overexposure, and (c) news fatigue. Multiplatform journalism in the round-the-clock broadcasting has transformed the media landscape, bringing with it new challenges that threaten the credibility of journalism. One of the most significant issues is the accelerated publication cycles of online journalism, which increase the risk of editorial errors and misinformation. The pressure to publish news stories as quickly as possible can lead to mistakes and inaccuracies, resulting in reputational damage for media organizations and a loss of trust among their audience. The avoidance of news threatens the role of media in supporting citizens to make informed decisions and participate in public debate, thus weakening democracy.

However, television was still a collective activity, and now we seem to be paradoxically connecting ourselves to death on our solitary screens. The coordinates of the empty space we used to climb into to find ourselves are being lost, and an entire generation does not even know of its existence. Therefore, taking the first steps towards controlling the information/entertainment overload within their family, starting with banning all screens in the house during weekends and afternoons. (Postman, N. (1985). *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*. Penguin Books.)

4. **Searching for Attention Creates Digital Zombies:** Rising content and superabundant social media and broadcast channels have enslaved children to narcissism and hedonism. Contemporary society is heavily mediated by the digital media communication matrix. Children with a mobile phone in their hands are alone in the crowd. They live in a silo in public as well as in the privacy of their bedrooms, where

they are moronically glued to their screens and re-emerge as digital zombies like the undead.

A 'Digital Zombie' is a person using digital technology and/or social media to the point that it takes control of their life for the worse, to the point that they become fixated only on that faux reality. In the process, digital zombies have carved out their own niche. Andrew Campbell expressed concerns over whether or not the individual can truly live a full and healthy life while they are preoccupied with the digital world. These digital zombies present a cold and meaningless physical appearance in the presence of their parents.

The digital zombie loses moments to love, connect, and care for others when its attention is extracted for profit. For the digital zombie, the thesis of *Warm Bodies* might not sound so far-fetched. Digital zombies are walking disasters, courting unnecessary risks to their lives, and have now become a source of light-hearted entertainment for television viewers. Thousands of CCTV cameras for traffic enforcement and surveillance installed in and around shopping centers, malls, and residential streets have built up a hilarious stock of footage of the misadventures, stumbles, and follies of these digital zombies who, fixated by their gadgets and connected to the virtual or web world, test their invincibility by mindlessly walking in front of moving vehicles. Digital zombies collide against pillars, lamp posts, shop windows, knock over pedestrians, fall into potholes, and startle happily sleeping dogs on the pavements.

5. Digital addiction has turned the youth into digital zombies who have lost their 'humanness' or sense of appreciation for their parents' love, care, and affection. The term "digital zombie" was coined by University of Sydney scholars as someone "connected online all the time but never really living a full and healthy life being disconnected from the digital world." Many define the term as "the person caught in the grip of systems of digital zombie biopower."
6. Four Personality Traits That Make an Internet Troll: Narcissism, Machiavellianism, Psychopathy, and Schadenfreude. A new study conducted by researchers from Brigham Young University has revealed the personality traits that motivate a person to become an online troll. It found that those who post inflammatory, irrelevant, or offensive comments online possess the dark triad personality traits and gloat at other



people's misfortunes.

A study by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism found that 56 percent of people in the US and 49 percent of people in the UK believe that journalists prioritize speed over accuracy to compete with social media platforms. Huang et al.'s (2016) study found that social media can increase the speed at which information is disseminated while also speeding up the spread of misinformation and the amplification of biased perspectives. The study also indicated that more than half of the respondents in both countries were concerned about the reliability of news on social media platforms. These findings highlight the need for media organizations to prioritize accuracy and reliability over speed.

7. **Trust Deficit:** The deluge of scandals, deception, and misinformation indicates that trust and truth are declining. Edelman's Trust Barometer (2023) revealed that (a) two-thirds of the countries surveyed are now considered "distrusters," with less than half of the population trusting mainstream institutions such as business, government, media, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to act ethically; (b) over two-thirds of the general population lack confidence in their leaders' ability to address the challenges facing their countries; and (c) the media are distrusted in more than 80 percent of the countries surveyed. This lack of trust in institutions and leaders is concerning, as it can erode societal cohesion, create chaos, and corrupt, resulting in a loss of faith in the democratic process. It also makes it more difficult for organizations and governments to effectively implement policies and solve problems. It is important for leaders and institutions to take steps to regain the public's trust by being transparent, accountable, and working to address the concerns and issues that drive mistrust.
7. **Disregard for Political Accountability:** Accountability erosion is a function of diminishing trust. The need for a functional system of media regulation is becoming more pressing as the integrity of the international media landscape faces challenges from far-reaching transformations. In democratic societies, various instruments of media accountability, including press and media councils or journalism ethics boards, play a crucial role in ensuring responsible media performance. However, as the

established system of media accountability encounters new challenges, concerns arise about the effectiveness of these instruments as guardians of press freedom and media plurality.

8. **Media Accountability:** In their book "Power Without Responsibility: Press, Broadcasting and the Internet in Britain," James Curran and Jean Seaton (2019) have revisited issues relevant to the digital era worldwide. The pivotal argument is the immense power of digital media, which lacks accountability and responsibility as a source of newsworthy content. The relegation of accountability is attributed to the decentralization of the media, the rise of social media and online news platforms, low entry costs allowing anyone to become a content creator, and easy access to the internet.

One of the main concerns regarding media accountability instruments is their ability to effectively ensure media responsibility without infringing on press freedom and media plurality. While press councils are meant to hold media outlets accountable for inaccurate or unethical reporting, they may also limit freedom of the press if they are overly punitive or restrictive in their judgments. Research has shown that the effectiveness of media accountability instruments varies depending on the media culture of the country in question. In some countries, press and media councils have been effective in promoting responsible journalism and media freedom. For example, the Press Complaints Commission in the UK has been successful in resolving complaints without resorting to legal action.

However, media accountability instruments are insufficient in addressing new challenges facing the media landscape, such as the spread of disinformation and the rise of social media. These challenges require new approaches to media regulation that involve a combination of self-regulation, government intervention, public education, and, above all, a foundation in epistemic knowledge. The effectiveness of media accountability instruments depends on the media culture of the country in question, and new challenges require innovative approaches to media regulation.

9. **Devitalization of the Internet:** This term refers to the process of depriving something of vitality or essential qualities, making it lifeless or weakened. A concerning aspect of

the internet is its role in the devitalization or disengagement of users with extreme content. The internet has facilitated easier access to extreme content, including hate speech, extremist ideologies, and violent propaganda. This access has contributed to a decline in CT skills and an increase in exposure to harmful ideas. Research indicates that exposure to extreme content can lead to desensitization and a reduction in empathy, making individuals more susceptible to extremist ideologies.

10. **Tribalization of the Audience:** This phenomenon occurs when filter bubbles form due to the attention economy, leading individuals to be exposed primarily to their pre-existing beliefs while opposing views are blocked. People tend to focus on opinions from familiar sources within their communities, facilitated by social media platforms. This results in "bounded rationality," where limited access to diverse information impairs effective reasoning and decision-making.
11. **Political Manipulation of Social Media:** Social media platforms have become powerful tools for political manipulation, posing serious concerns for democracy. The spread of false, misleading, and biased information, coupled with the lack of transparency and accountability from social media companies, and their failure to effectively monitor their platforms, contribute to this issue. It is crucial for society to recognize these challenges and take measures to address them, such as implementing increased regulation of social media companies, supporting fact-checking initiatives, and promoting media literacy campaigns. The capability of these platforms to reach vast audiences quickly and at low cost has made them attractive to politicians and political organizations seeking to sway public opinion. However, this also facilitates the spread of misinformation, which can have detrimental effects on democracy. Research has shown that social media algorithms can exacerbate the spread of false information and polarize public opinion by prioritizing engagement over accuracy, thus giving misleading information precedence over factual content.

Social media companies have faced criticism for their opacity and lack of accountability. There have been numerous instances of foreign governments using social media to interfere in the political processes of other countries, such as the reported manipulation by Russian

operatives during the 2016 US presidential election and the use of social media by political parties to spread misinformation during the 2019 Indian general election. Furthermore, the failure of social media companies to effectively regulate their platforms has led to widespread dissemination of hate speech, fake news, and other harmful content, prompting calls for stricter regulation to curb their influence on public opinion.

12. **Online Ethnocentrism as a Sophisticated Dilemma:** Ethnocentrism has reemerged in the online world as a complex issue. William Graham Sumner described ethnocentrism as the viewpoint where one's own group is considered the center of everything, with all other groups evaluated in relation to it (Sumner, 1906). The Bush and Blair administrations utilized the "war on terror" as a pretext for enacting measures that limit journalists' freedom to hold governments accountable and scrutinize the actions of the wealthy and powerful. The US Patriot Act and the UK Terrorism Acts, along with a greater readiness to control the dissemination of official information and restrict the use of Freedom of Information legislation, have obstructed journalists' ability to gather information and produce content without facing official sanctions and punitive measures. Additionally, these administrations have engaged in various public relations and news management techniques to influence media content and minimize negative coverage. When these efforts have been unsuccessful, they have attempted to marginalize major media outlets by denying them access to privileged sources or by favoring news outlets more inclined to replicate official statements and viewpoints. These state-sponsored initiatives pose a threat to independent and investigative journalism, undermining the very type of media that the market is supposed to support.
13. **Impact of Social Media on Traditional News Organizations:** The impact of the internet on traditional news organizations is often described in terms of the contrast between the open, free, inclusive, participatory, collaborative, deliberative, and pluralistic nature of the internet and the decline of traditional news media organizations due to mergers, acquisitions, and shutdowns. This decline is attributed to several factors, including the shift of audience attention from traditional to digital media, the rise of alternative news sources, and changes in the business models of

traditional news organizations. Key observations include:

( a ) **Shift in Audience Attention:** The decline of traditional news organizations is significantly impacted by the shift of audience attention from traditional media to digital media. The Reuters Institute reported a decline in the percentage of people who regularly use traditional news sources, like television and newspapers, and an increase in those who use digital news sources, such as online news websites and social media (Newman, N., et al., 2017).

(b) **Emergence of Alternative News Sources:** The rise of alternative news sources, including online-only news outlets and social media, has also contributed to the decline of traditional news organizations. The Pew Research Center found that a significant percentage of U.S. adults now rely on alternative news sources, such as social media, as their primary news source (Perrin, A., 2019).

( c ) **Changes in Business Models:** The changing business models of traditional news organizations have contributed to their decline. A study by the Knight Foundation found that traditional news organizations struggle to monetize their digital content and are facing declining revenue from traditional sources, like advertising and subscriptions (Mitchell, A., et al., 2017).

**Explanatory Journalism:** The rapid and continuous flow of online and 24-hour broadcast news has necessitated further clarification and elucidation due to the prevalence of incomplete, misleading, and inaccurate information. The absence of an editorial process and regulation contributes to this issue. Explanatory journalism (EJ) is a response strategy that aims to explain complex issues and events through detailed reporting and analysis, helping readers and viewers develop a deeper understanding of the topics covered and promoting a more critical approach to media consumption (Carlson, 2020).

**Asymmetric Information:** This occurs when one party in a transaction has more or superior information compared to the other. In the context of social media, it can happen when users share content that misrepresents their personal or professional experiences, expertise, or qualifications. Asymmetric information is pervasive across various fields and can undermine the critical autonomy of citizens. Deploying critical media literacy (CML) can help overcome

information barriers (Jindrich Vanek and Josef Botlik, 2013).

These social, psychological, technological, political, and economic factors demonstrate their impact on media and journalism, challenging the aims, principles, standards, and particularly the press freedom underpinnings of journalism in the post-truth era of digital convergence.

**Epistemic Insecurity Highlighted During the Pandemic:** The UK's bleak economic outlook post-Brexit, with the lowest growth in the G20, exemplifies the consequences of a lack of diversity in media opinion. The highly partisan British media, especially evident in the run-up to the EU referendum, failed to provide impartial and pluralist coverage, contributing to economic challenges such as runaway inflation, low growth, and dwindling investment prospects. The media's role in the Brexit debate, criticized for its biased and EU-prejudiced coverage, highlights the failure to fulfill the responsibility of providing impartial and balanced reporting (Taylor, Ros.16.05.2017; FT. George Parker and Chris Giles in London, 20.06.2022).

The British media's coverage of the Brexit debate was characterized by a failure to provide clear explanations and a tendency towards poorly articulated, biased, and EU-prejudiced reporting, including 'scaremongering' articles. Despite playing a significant role in the Brexit debate, the media did not fulfill its responsibility to offer impartial and balanced coverage. Broadcast media, newspapers, and social media broadly supported the Leave campaign through their coverage and/or editorial policies.

The broadcast media's approach was constrained by Ofcom's rules on impartiality and balance, leading to coverage that, in the author's view, was misleading and lacked substance. Newspapers, caught up in the excitement of the campaign, failed to hold both sides accountable. An analysis by the University of Loughborough revealed that the Leave viewpoint was emphasized to 82 percent of readers, while only 18 percent were exposed to the Remain viewpoint.

Regarding social media, it was noted that despite the Brexit camp generating most of the debate's intensity, the majority of social media users, particularly those in the 18-40 age demographic, voted to Remain. The skepticism surrounding social media's 'echo chamber' effect, where users are exposed only to views they agree with, contributes to polarization

rather than promoting a diversity of viewpoints. This situation underscores the media's failure to provide straightforward facts and to challenge the falsehoods presented by both sides. The outcome of the poll should serve as a wake-up call for the industry.

Transparency, the third principle, is essential for fostering trust. Being transparent about sources, interests, intent, methods, and affiliations is crucial wherever reasonable. This includes being open about values and codes of practice against which an organization may be held accountable.

Besides being inspired by several different scriptures this study is influenced by a number of prominent thinkers, philosophers, monks and deep thinkers as spiritual leaders who come from different fields and subfields including education, philosophy, psychology, neuroscience, educators and scientists namely: Carl Sagan, Bruce Lipton, Joe Dispenza, Alan Watts, APJ Kalam, Tibetan spiritualist leader, the Dalai Lama, Tao Te Ching, Swami Paramhansa Yogananda, Paramhansa Prajnanananda, Swami Kriyanand, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Swami Vivekanand, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Swami Sarvapriyananda, SwamiMukundananda, and Neville Goddard.

### **Carl Sagan's View of The Planet - The Pale Blue Dot**

The theory of social determinism is epistemic vulnerability. Man alone should carry the can for his own sufferings, unhappiness, woes, and wanton destruction on this planet. It is no external force but his mind that drives him to create mayhem on this only life supporting tiny and fragile planet. This is self-evident with what's happening in the turbulent world as it was. Referring to the Earth as "The Pale Blue Dot" the famous scientist and astronomer Carl Sagan described it as the only planet, less than the size of a pixel in the cosmological matrix that supports life. His unforgettable narration, which is reproduced verbatim invokes a vividly dreadful picture in readers' minds with the following harrowing but powerful words still reverberating in the cosmos to which he belonged.

Carl Sagan's damning remarks in his iconic quote reflect many poignant issues: "There is perhaps no better demonstration of the folly of human conceits than this distant image of our tiny world. To me, it underscores our responsibility to deal more kindly with one another, and

to preserve and cherish the pale blue dot, the only home we've ever known.”

*“Look again at that dot. That's here. That's home. That's us. On it everyone you love, everyone you know, everyone you ever heard of, every human being who ever was, lived out their lives. The aggregate of our joy and suffering, thousands of confident religions, ideologies, and economic doctrines, every hunter and forager, every hero and coward, every creator and destroyer of civilization, every king and peasant, every young couple in love, every mother and father, hopeful child, inventor and explorer, every teacher of morals, every corrupt politician, every "superstar," every "supreme leader," every saint and sinner in the history of our species lived there-on a mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam. The Earth is a very small stage in a vast cosmic arena. Think of the endless cruelties visited by the inhabitants of one corner of this pixel on the scarcely distinguishable inhabitants of some other corner, how frequent their misunderstandings, how eager they are to kill one another, how fervent their hatreds. Think of the rivers of blood spilled by all those generals and emperors so that, in glory and triumph, they could become the momentary masters of a fraction of a dot.*

*Our posturings, our imagined self-importance, the delusion that we have some privileged position in the Universe, are challenged by this point of pale light. Our planet is a lonely speck in the great enveloping cosmic dark. In our obscurity, in all this vastness, there is no hint that help will come from elsewhere to save us from ourselves. The Earth is the only world known so far to harbour life. There is nowhere else, at least in the near future, to which our species could migrate. Visit, yes. Settle, not yet. Like it or not, for the moment the Earth is where we make our stand. (Carl Sagan, *Pale Blue Dot: A Vision of the Human Future in Space*)*

*It has been said that astronomy is a humbling and character-building experience. There is perhaps no better demonstration of the folly of human conceits than this distant image of our tiny world. To me, it underscores our responsibility to deal more kindly with one another, and to preserve and cherish the pale blue dot, the only home we've ever known.” - (ibid)*

Time has changed in a fast changing world but unfortunately people's mindset is horribly stagnant as they haven't been able to break out of a fixed mindset. Sagan's pathological and



graphic depiction of the gruesome reality of what people engage in in this world reflect many themes which demonstrate that man being befuddled and delusional is living aimlessly and meaninglessly. Being blinded by selfishness, hostility, self-conceit, avarice, greed and jealousy people have lost life's focus nor have an idea of what their goals are or should be.

People's sojourn in this complex and enigmatic matrix of this time-bound material world have gone in the wrong direction to their own version of freedom to self-destruct with free lifestyle devoid of once imperative morals, values and ethics, and to call themselves what they will, whatever sexual gender that takes their fancy. Their online behaviours are being replicated in their lives in the lawless, reckless and unaccountable agora of the post-truth social media.

Being subservient to an uncritical mind is evidently perilous and outrageous according to Tim Allot. From the Cold War era between the UK and the USSR to global warming and pollution, the imprint of pollution unleashed by man from the deep sea to the deep space and the trail of destruction from the length and breadth of this planet are traced to the uncultivated and uncritical mind. There is nothing that has nothing to do with the mind, justifying Socrates' exhortation for everyone to be the master of his own mind.

The environmental pollution of air, water, noise, soil, radioactive, plastic, visual, light and thermal are direct consequences of mental pollution. Mental pollution is sourced to the digital public sphere boosted by the convergence of technological, technical, industrial, telecommunication and media platforms. Consequently, the confluence of scrutinised and opinionated discourses have a serious impact on people's lives and their own environment. Man sending of hundreds of satellites and spacecraft have created space pollution on a large scale. A series of spacecraft for civil, military, environmental monitoring, broadcasting, mobile communications and commercial purposes have outlived their usefulness. The abandoned satellites are creating a huge amount of debris, posing a threat to functional satellites.

The invention of the atomic bomb gave humanity the ability to destroy on an unprecedented scale, and the narratives illustrate how scientific hubris can lead to the end of the world.

Human activities such as the burning of fossil fuels are responsible for the rapid change in the Earth's climate, creating a crisis for the planet. Even though many countries have started to

address the carbon emissions problems, global warming continues to create environmental chaos and more frequent natural disasters and the extinction of species. Youngsters, in particular, are more concerned and are calling for immediate action to be able to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change.

The world's population has tripled between 1950 and 2022, leading to a rise in resource needs and consumption. An increase in human population, resource exploitation, and environmental stress has been correlated by Thomas Robert Malthus' classic "Essay on the Principle of Population" (1798-1834) which has rekindled contemporary debates on food crisis worldwide. It foregrounds its significance in today's rising gap between rampant population and its impact on the dwindling of limited natural resources. It reminds us to take a critical approach to resolving this dilemma and by focussing on the need to critically evaluate the application of innovative food technology in boosting agriculture in a world also threatened by climate change and global warming. This imbalance has demonstrated that population growth is more powerful than the earth's potency to satisfy human needs.

According to research the rate of the use of resources is higher than the planetary boundaries in order to support human's ecological footprint. The incessant resource consumption exploitation has created pollution, which is the leading environmental cause of disease and death. It is argued that despite achieving a 100 per cent clean energy systems cannot ward off ecological consequences of unsustainable activities.

### **Empowering Audience Agentic Perspectives**

The prime focus of this thesis, driven by a social paradigm where social determinism, is underlined as a central theme of critical autonomy that defines and determines our life's trajectory, success, happiness and goals. Audiences are inherently interactive social beings, inter-related and inter-dependent in many ways beyond their mere interaction with the media. The digital convergence era has made it necessary for media owners and content producers to better understand the audience. As we've moved into known as the "media analytics stage" (Manovich, 2018), audience metrics have gained significant attention, particularly within the news industry. Metrics are not only used to monitor audience behaviour but are increasingly

becoming the preferred method of analysing the underlying and potentially unconscious motivations that drive audience engagement (American Press Institute, 2019).

The perception of news as factual and objective, relayed by professionals, is also connected to norms and practices. (Schudson, 2001; Bogart, 1981). One way to define news from an audience perspective is through the lens of Media Dependency theory (Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur, 1976).

The theory recognises audiences' dependency on news for satisfying needs and goals, and the unique functionality of the news media as its utility in satisfying these needs with the informational resources it provides. During times of crisis, when there is a heightened need for information and understanding, the unique functionality of the news media may be revealed as individuals seek information they may not obtain elsewhere (Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur, 1976; Ball-Rokeach, 1985).

'Man as a media' approach is a plausible approach to stamping out epistemic threats that undermine audience understanding of the ontology of social media relative to epistemic social, cultural, technological and economic perspectives. Carl Sagan's insightful overview of man's overarching role in our lives reinforces the innovative concept of 'man is media.'

This thesis draws on a number of inter-related theories to encourage students to adopt a holistic repertoire of competency which encompasses conative, non-cognitive and affective constructs to develop their agentic competency.

Buckingham (2005) has noted that print and media literacies should not be seen as a purely cognitive, rational affair: it also involves emotional response, enjoyment and cultural appreciation.” It should be noted that a trained and highly educated mind is essential to enhance students' agency, which also depends on how they develop their metacognition - 'the processes involved when learners plan, monitor, evaluate and make changes to their own learning behaviours. (Cambridge University). Metacognitive knowledge or critical algorithm involves the synchronicity of the above three types of constructs.

Despite the emergence of participatory audience and audience segmentation it is true to claim that digital convergence has built an epistemic trust between themselves and journalists on social media. The institutional perspective of news, seen as a product of practices tied to

journalists associated with "news media," operates in relation to other societal institutions (Cook, 2006; Zelizer, 2004). This prompts the agentic audience to understand epistemic journalism. Epistemology has received increased scholarly interest in response to digital transformations within journalism because it is associated with high claims of providing relevant, accurate, and verified public knowledge on a daily basis. (Ekström, M. & Westlund, O. 2019).

The impact of dependency theory are mitigated by the digital media which is liberating, democratising and participatory that derails the traction of the theory. Stuart Hall (1973 ) was one of the main proponents of reception theory who identified three types of audience in an essay: 'Encoding and Decoding in the Television, in Discourse' followed by David Morley's (1980) study of the Nationwide Audience , who identified three fundamental types of reading that consumers identify subject to their paradigm. i.e their background, surrounding, beliefs; first the 'dominant' reading as media content creators intended, (b) the 'oppositional' reading which disagree with the views expressed in the media and (c) the 'negotiated' reading where the media content reasserts their world views. {Morley, 1980}

A new research based on a survey conducted by the Media Insight Project has identified four distinct groups of news consumers among millennials, those born after 1980. The four categories are: 'the Unattached', 'the Explorers', 'the Distracted', and 'the Activists'.

The 'Unattached' group, aged 18-24, bumps into news rather than seeking it out, and primarily go online for social or entertainment activities in the world and are open to differing opinions.

'The Explorers', in the same age brackets as unattached actively seek out news and information and follow a variety of current events and news-you-can-use topics who also believe in the social and civic benefits of following news.

'The Distracted' group, aged 25-34, have families and are part of the middle class who do not actively seek news out and tend to mainly follow lifestyle and news-you-can use topics with direct relevance to their daily lives.

“The Activists”, sharing the age group as distracted people are racially and ethnically diverse who have established families, careers and a connection to their community.

They are concerned about certain issues and have a stable life. The typology and demographics of news consumers and identifies challenges and opportunities for news publishers attempting to reach the Millennial audience. (Media Insight Project, 2015)

Audience critical agency is important in this context because it allows them to make informed choices about the media they consume and to resist messages that do not align with their own values and beliefs. Additional theories further boost audience critical agency to increase their understanding engage with media texts and negotiate their meanings:

(a) Reception theory helps the reader interpret and make meaning from texts which is negotiated by the reader.

(b) Uses and Gratifications theory posits that audiences use media to fulfil their own needs and desires. Echoing Stuart Hall's (1973) statement that audience is never passive but also active this theory asserts that audiences are active agents who select and interpret media texts based on their own motivations and preferences.

(c) Self-Determination theory emphasises the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in promoting psychological well-being. This theory argues that individuals are more likely to be motivated and engaged when they feel that they have control over their own lives, are competent at the tasks they undertake, and have positive relationships with others.

An important lesson is conveyed by the OECD quote: “Too often, we teach students what to think but not how to think.” - OECD Insights (2014) that is why and how in doing anything. The 'Why' and 'How' are central to preparing students so as to predisposed them to metacognition which enable them to know that their cognitive strategies are used at optimum level in order to be aware of the skills and ability to assess and adapt to.

David Perkins' (1992) model cites four levels of metacognitive learners: (1) tacit learners refers to individuals who are not aware of their own metacognitive knowledge and do not think about particular learning strategies, but rather accept their level of knowledge passively.

(2) aware learners, which have some awareness of their own thinking processes such as generating ideas or finding evidence, but do not necessarily engage in deliberate or planned thinking. (3) strategic learners refers to those who actively organise their thinking by employing problem-solving techniques, grouping and classifying information, seeking out

evidence, and making decisions, and (4) reflective learners who not only utilise strategic thinking but also reflect upon their learning while it is happening. They evaluate the effectiveness of their current strategies and modify them accordingly to improve their learning outcomes. (David Perkins, 1992)

Apparently metacognitive knowledge will benefit all types of learners. Learning, working and goal attainment are contingent upon an interplay of the three types of skillsets, enabling them to boost their power of resistance to their mental gravity in order to avoid being anchored in the same old cycle of misery, suffering and unhappiness. The untrained mind is widely known to be an intrinsic destroyer. No one does to us what we do to ourselves by becoming subservient to the mind as metaphorically illustrated by the famous Indian visionary industrialist and philanthropist Ratan Tata's inspiring adage; "no one can destroy iron except rust which comes from itself" inferring that only the mind can destroy man.

This maddening world is a matrix (the cultural, social, or political environment in which something develops.) where people are bewildered and frantically seeking ways to free themselves from the vortex of anxiety, depression, despondency, stress, frustration, loneliness, sufferings and other afflictions. This prompted Albert Einstein to refer to this syndrome as the 'grave evils' of the anarchic capitalist system, which has been exacerbated (made serious) with a crime wave that is sweeping across the world.

### **Overlooked Impact on Students of Omitting Non-cognitive Skills in Education**

To foster such a democracy a citizen does not only have to be participatory to be involved in active interaction, pro-active dialogue and reactive comments in the public sphere he has to be self-reflexive because the mind is adversely affected by inherent cognitive biases which prevent, frustrate and distort decisions, judgements and misperceptions. In 1981, Flavell made a valuable differentiation between two types of strategies: those employed to advance cognitive development are referred to as "cognitive strategies," while those utilised to oversee cognitive advancement are known as "metacognitive strategies."

Defining non-cognitive skillset is challenging as it encompasses various terms such as behavioural skills, soft skills, personality traits, spiritual literacy, sagacity and socio-

emotional skills. They are distinct from cognitive skills and represent patterns of thought, feelings, and behaviour that play a role in the education process. non-cognitive skillset is not fixed traits of personality but may develop throughout an individual's life. The education policy list of non-cognitive skills include CT, problem solving, emotional health, social skills, work ethic, community responsibility, persistence, academic confidence, teamwork, organizational skills, creativity, and communication skills.

The importance of non-cognitive skills lies in their direct value and their correlation with academic performance, labour productivity, and earnings. non-cognitive skills matter for their own sake, contributing to emotional, social, and democratic citizenship skills. They are considered vital for a healthy democracy and the fulfillment of individuals' personal and productive potentials. Indirectly, non-cognitive skills are associated with various outcomes such as academic performance, labour productivity, and earnings. Studies show positive relationships between non-cognitive skills and academic achievement, with social and emotional learning interventions leading to improvements in both behavioural skills and academic performance. In the labour market, employers emphasize the importance of non-cognitive skills, such as oral communication, teamwork, professionalism, and CT, for workforce readiness. Empirical evidence suggests that non-cognitive skills contribute to long-term labour market outcomes and can raise wages through direct effects on productivity and indirect effects on schooling and work experience. (Digman (1990) and Goldberg (1993), Borghans et al. (2008), and Almlund et al. (2011) cited by Emma García (Dec. 2, 2014) in 'The Need to Address non-cognitive Skills in the Education Policy Agenda Report. The shortcomings of cognitive skills in dealing with today's post-truth challenges make it mandatory for educators to recognise the significance of non-cognitive skills and include them in education policies to foster success in life.

### **Impact of Environmental-School Factors on Non-cognitive Skills**

While the interdependence of cognitive and non-cognitive skills creates Simultaneous Effects social media individuals navigate complex online environments that require both cognitive abilities (CT, information processing) and non-cognitive skills (emotional regulation, communication). Recognising the parallels between traditional school factors and the digital

landscape is crucial for understanding and addressing the broader influences on individuals' cognitive and non-cognitive development in the contemporary world.

The impact of communities, peer, environmental-school factors, teacher experience, online educators and content creators on non-cognitive skills have relevance to the current pervasive influence of social media on people's minds. The factors play a role similar to traditional teachers on non-cognitive skills in the digital age. The quality of online educational content, the digital learning environment, and the expertise of online facilitators can influence the development of non-cognitive skills. Similarly, social media platforms can act as virtual communities influencing individuals' behaviours, attitudes, and emotional well-being.

Positive online communities can strengthen a sense of belonging, while negative or toxic environments may impact mental health. The influence of positive school environments on non-cognitive skills underscores the importance of community and peer support. Similarly, positive online communities and supportive peer interactions on social media can contribute positively to individuals' emotional well-being and social skills. Extracurricular activities are conducive to shaping adolescents' identity and developing non-cognitive skills. Social media engagement, including participation in online discussions, collaborative projects, and interest-based groups, can serve as modern extracurricular activities influencing personal and social development.

Our cognitive skills responsible for memorising, arguing, problem solving, remembering, recalling, criticising, reasoning and referred to as hard skills suffer from three types of problems; limited mindset, cognitive bias and mistake of the intellect. Although a human being cognitive skills are interrelated they do not extend to non-cognitive skillset to include inspiration, conscientiousness, resilience, inter-personal skills, empathy, attitudes, behaviours and strategies that contribute to success in school and the workplace, such as persistence, and self-control.

Spencer Foundation had cited seven non-cognitive skillset which supplement cognitive skills to maximise learning: (1) motivation, (2) effort, (3) self-regulated learning, (4) self-efficacy, (5) academic self-concept, (6) antisocial and prosocial behaviour and (7) coping and resilience. These, however still leave gaps to enable us to understand the sequential



progression from one skill to another and also causal relationship between the interconnection. This being the initial premise of our investigation this thesis is necessarily predicated upon the assumptions that our mindset is the ultimate definer or locus of all thoughts, relations, actions, and decisions which is the ultimate determinant of our life trajectory.

Non-cognitive skillset are important for determining outcomes for young people. Many skills are interlinked to create lasting changes. Evidence suggest there is positive correlation between self-control and school engagement and outcomes but causal evidence of impact on long-term outcomes is limited. Combining skills like self-efficacy, motivation, social skills and programs that foster social development have shown promise while meta-cognitive strategies appear to improve academic learning and success.

### **If You Are Your Thoughts Think About What You Think**

The study focuses on the importance of regulating our thoughts which regulates the mind as it cannot be controlled. re-orient our disposition towards positive thinking. The idea that our thoughts shape our lives has been indisputably recognised by numerous thinkers, seers, sages and philosophers throughout history. A few selected quotes that support this claim are evident in the following famous quotes:

*"Dream, dream, dream. Dreams transform into thoughts and thoughts result in action." - A P J Kalam*

*"As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." - Proverbs 23:7 (KJV)*

*"Whether you think you can, or you think you can't--you're right." - Henry Ford*

*"The greatest discovery of my generation is that a human being can alter his life by altering his attitudes." - William James*

*"We become what we think about all day long." - Ralph Waldo Emerson*

*"A person who thinks all the time has nothing to think about except thoughts. So, he loses touch with reality, and lives in a world of illusions." - Alan Watts*

*"Be Conscious of What You are Thinking" - Bruce Lipton*

*"Change your thoughts to change your life" – Wayne Dyer*

### **Spiritual Underpinning of Thoughts**

The following thoughts are underpinned by spiritual teachings from various scriptures which align with the scientific view that thoughts are energy fields:

The Bhagavad Gita states, "The mind is everything. What you think you become." (Ch. 6, Verse 5) This is in line with the scientific view that our thoughts have a direct impact on our reality, as they create energy fields that can influence the world around us.

The Tao Te Ching says, "Watch your thoughts; they become words. Watch your words; they become actions. Watch your actions; they become habits. Watch your habits; they become character. Watch your character; it becomes your destiny." (Verse 23) This suggests that our thoughts are the foundation of our reality, and by monitoring and controlling them, we can shape our destiny.

The Bible states, "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he." (Proverbs 23:7) This aligns with the scientific view that our thoughts create our reality, and that by changing our thoughts, we can change our lives.

The Quran says, "Verily, Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves." (Surah Ar-Ra'd, Verse 11) This suggests that our thoughts and beliefs have a direct impact on our circumstances, and that by changing our inner state, we can change our outer reality.

Buddhist teachings emphasise the importance of mindfulness and being present in the moment. "All that we are is the result of what we have thought. The mind is everything. What we think we become." This aligns with the scientific view that our thoughts create energy fields that influence the world around us, and that by being mindful of our thoughts, we can better control and direct their energy.

### **Spiritual Dimension of Media Education**

The deployment of spiritual intelligence helps children's achievement and surmount difficulties. The ability to recognise, understand and manipulate them to their advantage is an area of spiritual intelligence. The failure of the intellect is motivational for adopting spiritual dimension as it equips children with extra-sensory power to protect them from the inherent

inaccuracies, fallacies and illusion. The set of 201 biases as depicted in the below infographic diagram. Please refer to Appendix II

In this context, sagacity could be seen as the ability to approach news and information with a discerning and critical eye, guided by one's own spiritual beliefs and values. This type of approach would allow individuals to evaluate information in a more holistic and nuanced manner, taking into account not just the facts, but also the motivations behind the information and how it aligns with their own beliefs and values.

However, it is important to note that this approach would require individuals to have a strong understanding of their own spiritual beliefs and values, and may not be suitable for those who do not have a strong spiritual foundation. Additionally, this approach may also be seen as subjective, as individuals' beliefs and values can vary greatly, and may not always align with what is considered to be accurate or factual information.

While the suggestion of spiritual literacy or sagacity as an approach to dealing with propaganda and counterfeit news is an interesting one, it may not be a one-size-fits-all solution, and will require further exploration and refinement to determine its effectiveness and potential limitations.

It can be summed up that spiritual teachings acknowledge the power of thoughts as energy fields that can shape our reality. By being mindful of our thoughts and directing their energy in positive ways, we can create a more positive and fulfilling life. At the level of quantum physics both spiritual as well scientific schools of thoughts intersect. Thoughts have a powerful influence on our lives, shaping our attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours leading to habitformation followed by action. It is evident that monitoring and guiding our thoughts, we can create the life we want to live.

The study has an interest in transcending cognitive limits to tap into the infinite and invisible source of ultimate knowledge or sagacity which is being recognised as a sublime and overarching competency in imparting curricular and online education. The idea of spiritual literacy is an important competency to transcend cognitive biases is attracting widespread attention from scholars, educators, and spiritual leaders alike. However, some have also condemned the manipulative mind that capriciously overrides spiritual

literacy, arguing that it can lead to misguided or harmful practices. Spiritual literacy provides students an edge to attain higher levels of awareness and meaningfulness of life over non spiritual individuals.

Stephen Prothero, a professor of religion at Boston University argues that it is essential for navigating spiritual landscape of the modern world. In his book "Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know--And Doesn't," Prothero argues that a lack of spiritual literacy can lead to ignorance, intolerance, and even violence (Prothero, 2007).

Parker J. Palmer, an author and educator, emphasises the importance of spiritual literacy in promoting compassionate and ethical leadership argues that spiritual literacy is crucial for developing the self-awareness and empathy necessary for effective leadership, and that it can help individuals overcome their cognitive biases and ego-driven tendencies (Palmer, 2011).

However, some have also criticised certain spiritual practices as misguided or harmful. In his "The Guru Papers: Masks of Authoritarian Power," Joel Kramer argues that certain spiritual teachers can manipulate their followers by exploiting their desires for enlightenment and by encouraging them to suppress CT and follow blindly. Kramer argues that this can lead to a "monkey mind" state where individuals are easily influenced and may engage in harmful or irrational behaviour (Kramer and Alstad, 1993).

However, CT and discernment is a stepping stone to approach spiritual learning with and to seek out trustworthy and ethical sources of guidance. Spiritual growth surpasses conventional mental abilities and developmental lines, according to Koltko-Rivera (2006) and Safara & Bhatia (2013). Rather, it reflects the natural maturation of consciousness resulting from progressive humanity and spiritual enlightenment. Thus, spirituality is seen as a natural phenomenon found in all cultures, influenced by experiences that spark internal transformation. Spiritual development is a dynamic force that inspires individuals to seek connectedness, meaning, purpose, contribution, and awe beyond ego involvement, as described by Polemikou (2016).

The Article 27 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, issued some three decades ago, implicitly emphasises children's right to a standard of living sufficient for spiritual development, stated as follows: "States Parties recognise the right of every child to a

standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development". Hill (1989) argues that spirituality is a uniquely human quality, and promoting spiritual development in the classroom aims to nurture the most essential aspect of a child's psyche. However, advocating for spiritual literacy through curriculum activities in public schools is challenging (Huitt & Robbins, 2003), and the spiritual has been a neglected topic in mainstream education for years (Rawle, 2009). Nonetheless, promoting pupils' spiritual development in formal schooling has been a priority for educational institutions and policymakers for several decades (Bigger, 2003; OFSTED, 1994, 1995; Watson & Thomson, 2007; Watson, 2017), and promoting the spiritual remains an objective for the third millennium. Spiritual development was first explicitly mandated in the legislation for universal secondary education in 1944 when the curriculum featuring spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development (SMSC) have been made a legal requirement.

Given the statutory standing of spirituality as a basic human right, the socio-cultural reality of teachers' work is such that they are required to contribute to pupils' spiritual development, so as to not deny young children of this right, and still adhere to governmental policies (or lack thereof) which explicitly (or implicitly) carry religious or secular orientations, depending on the country of interest.

### **The Soul's Attributes As Invisible Power**

The soul has attributes that very few people know about. (Dr. Paul Haider, 29.10.2015) ,[shorturl.at/jtAEW](http://shorturl.at/jtAEW)). In the Bhagavad Gita Shri Krishna cites the divine attributes of the soul as: fearlessness, purity of heart, perseverance in acquiring wisdom and in practicing yoga, charity, subjugation of the senses, performance of holy rites, study of the scriptures, self- discipline, non-injury, truthfulness, freedom from wrath, renunciation, peacefulness, non slanderousness, compassion for all creatures, absence of greed, gentleness, modesty, lack of restlessness; radiance of character, forgiveness, patience, cleanness, freedom from hate, absence of conceit—these qualities are the wealth of a divine person, O Descendant of Bharata. (The Bhagavad Gita XVI:1-3)

These virtues are present in every soul because we are part of the Supreme Being but sadly we

fail to manifest them. We have demoted ourselves despite being part of divinity. Irrespective of our default status we are influenced by past life experiences. The term has its roots in Genesis 1:27, wherein "God created man in his own image. . ."

These skills are distinguished from cognitive and academic abilities typically assessed through tests or teacher evaluations. Non-cognitive skillset are increasingly recognized as being as vital, if not more so, than cognitive skills. Policymakers are increasingly focused on how to cultivate these "character" or "soft" skills in children and young people. (Morrison. Leslie Gutman et al.,2013)

Normally the mind is restricted to the level of intellectuality but to tackle today's fast and complex problems it needs to be trained to reach out to the higher realm of intelligence. (Swami Mukundananda)

Spiritual development is therefore rarely separated from these other concepts and is often referred to in schools as spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development (SMSC). To this end controlling how to create positive thoughts which can be attuned to a spiritual mindset.

From the premise that 'no man is an island' it is necessary to make ontological enquiries. Self-consciousness can be understood as an awareness of oneself. The essence is encrypted in Jacques Monod's description: "Man must at last wake out of his millenary dream and discover his total solitude, his fundamental isolation. He must realize that, like a gypsy, he lives on the boundary of an alien world; a world that is deaf to his music, and as indifferent to his hopes as it is to his suffering or his crimes").

Here is how one young queer activist described the cult. The essay is titled 'Everything is Problematic': My journey into the center of a dark political world, and how I escaped." The author identifies four features of the culture: dogmatism, groupthink, a crusader mentality, and anti-intellectualism. Of greatest relevance to our exploration of tribalism, he writes: "Thinking this way quickly divides the world into an ingroup and an outgroup—believers and heathens, the righteous and the wrong-teous Every minor heresy inches you further away from the group. When I was part of groups like this, everyone was on exactly the same page about a suspiciously large range of issues. Internal disagreement was rare."

The re-introduction of the element of soul, which is missing in 'psychology' as generally

understood in the West, has led to the desouling (stripping of soul) of man reducing him to a kind of insentient being forced into living a mere robotic life. When the evolution of something takes place it normally tends to extend by enhancing itself by assuming new features, functions or traits but funny enough, psychology evolved by mutilating itself. It was purposely 'desouled' by being stripped of 'psyche' from 'Psychology' in order to be reclassified as a scientific domain. The dehumanised version of psychology has denied students the spiritual dimension of education.

Spiritual psychology has a greater role than cognitive psychology in the early development of school children. Development psychology guides the induction of school children into spiritual literacy in their early age. Spiritual literacy, an abandoned dimension of education, has been recognised as a powerful non-cognitive tool to deal with a rough and tough ground reality, given the enormous calamities and fluctuations of the post-truth and digitalisation era. Childhood can actually foreshadow what one's political leanings or views might be as an adult according to a UK-based study.

### **Philosophers' Views on The Soul**

The study found links between 'anxiety and hyperactivity and being more politically dissatisfied as an adult.' These findings are consistent with the perspective that early-life temperament gives rise to adult political sentiment. (Lewis, Gary J. 2018) The concept of the soul falls outside the realm of scientific inquiry, as it is not empirically observable or testable. Therefore, science does not have a definitive view on the existence or nature of the soul.

While there are some scientists who have explored the concept of the soul, their views on it are often shaped by their personal beliefs and are not necessarily representative of the scientific community as a whole.

Albert Einstein, for example, believed in the existence of a "cosmic religious feeling" that he described as a kind of spiritual experience (The World As I See It). However, he did not use the term "soul" in his writings, and his views on the subject were more philosophical than scientific.

Similarly, Aristotle believed in the existence of the soul as the animating principle of the body, but his views were based on philosophical reasoning rather than empirical evidence (*De Anima*). His understanding of the soul was heavily influenced by his belief in a hierarchical cosmos, with living beings occupying different levels of existence based on their degree of complexity and organization.

In general, while some scientists may hold personal beliefs about the soul, the concept itself is not a subject of scientific inquiry, and therefore does not have a definitive view within the scientific community.

Greek philosophers had a significant impact on the development of the concept of the soul. Plato argued the soul was immortal and existed before birth and after death, and it was divided into three parts: the rational, the spirited, and the appetitive (*Republic* 4.436a-441c). Aristotle, on the other hand, believed that the soul was the animating principle of the body and that it was not immortal (*De Anima* 2.1-5).

French philosopher René Descartes famously argued that the soul and the body were two distinct substances, with the soul being non-physical and immortal (*Meditations on First Philosophy*). Descartes believed that the soul was responsible for consciousness and that it interacted with the body through the pineal gland.

German philosopher Immanuel Kant rejected the idea of the soul as a substance altogether, arguing that it was merely a concept used to understand the unity of consciousness (*Critique of Pure Reason*). According to Kant, the soul was not a thing, but rather a necessary condition for the existence of the self.

On balance Greek philosophers like Plato and Aristotle believed in the existence of the soul, with Plato positing that it was immortal and divided into three parts, while Aristotle saw it as the animating principle of the body. René Descartes, French philosopher believed in the immortality and non-physical nature of the soul, while Kant, a German philosopher, rejected the notion of the soul as a substance and saw it as a necessary concept for understanding the self.

### **Epistemic Knowledge**



Underlying these principles is a growing need to encourage critical awareness of the media among the public, to equip them with the knowledge and tools to understand what they are consuming. This could include tiered regulation, technical signposting, and a greater pedagogical emphasis on media literacy.

Epistemic journalism for the digital era provides trustworthy reporting that can fulfil its public purpose. The principles of evidence, diversity of opinion, and transparency are necessary to rescue the core of what impartiality and objectivity delivered in the past without tethering modern journalism to an anachronistic approach. (Sambrook. Richard, 2012)

The implications of a lack of epistemic knowledge and information about a pandemic is apparent. The assertion that Covid-19 vaccine trials cannot tell us if they will save lives is supported by Peter Doshi of The BMJ in an article published on 21 October 2020. Doshi notes that the ongoing phase 3 trials for which details have been released are evaluating mild, not severe, disease. The trials are not designed to detect a reduction in any serious outcome such as hospitalizations, intensive care use, or deaths. Furthermore, the vaccines are not being studied to determine whether they can interrupt transmission of the virus.

Doshi notes that vaccine manufacturers have done little to dispel the notion that severe Covid-19 was what was being assessed. Tal Zaks, Chief Medical Officer at Moderna, told The BMJ that their trial lacks adequate statistical power to assess that endpoint.

Doshi argues that vaccine trials have not been designed to find out whether there is a benefit in the elderly, despite their obvious vulnerability to Covid-19. If the frail elderly are not enrolled into vaccine trials in sufficient numbers to determine whether there is a reduction in cases in this population, there can be little basis for assuming any benefit against hospitalization or mortality.

Doshi concludes that we still have time to advocate for changes to ensure that the ongoing trials address the questions that most need answering, including the right primary endpoint, safety evaluation, and addressing gaps in our understanding of how our immune system responds to Covid-19. With stakes this high, we need all eyes on deck.

Finally, Doshi's article supports the argument that Covid-19 vaccine trials are not designed to detect a reduction in serious outcomes such as hospitalisations, intensive care use, or deaths.

While the trials are evaluating mild disease, they are not designed to determine whether the vaccine can interrupt transmission of the virus. Doshi notes that there is a need to advocate for changes to ensure that ongoing trials address the questions that most need answering.

The role of episteme in determining the acceptance of knowledge, specifically in the context of the debate around vaccine safety and efficacy was overridden by the dominant episteme. It evangelised that vaccines were safe, effective, and necessary refuting the alternate epistemic questions over the safety and efficacy of vaccines justifying the opposition to mandatory vaccination.

Chandler Marrs (2019) argues that the dominant episteme aligns with the economic and political interests of vaccine manufacturers and other stakeholders, and that it forecloses any debate or questioning of vaccine safety and efficacy. The author suggests that the prevailing episteme of man's technological invincibility and the concept of 'not quite fatal' toxicological safety reinforce the dominant episteme and suppress dissenting views. Those who question vaccine safety and efficacy are labeled as operating in an incorrect and heretical episteme, and their opinions are dismissed as automatically false. The author argues that the vaccine debate is a zero-sum proposition, with no room for debate or compromise. Where were the 'eye opening' and epistemic journalists, whose functions to inform the public normative under the social responsibility theory?

CT is needed to determine, distinguish and analyse propaganda, entertainment, or fiction. However, in the age of democratised mass digital media and the abundance of information, it is being questioned whether the neutral voice holds the same value it did in the past, and whether the emphasis on impartiality in news is actually inhibiting the free exchange of ideas.

Curran proposes a radical democratic theory of the media. He argues that the public sphere should be seen as a public arena of contest, with a diversity of representations. (Curran, J. 2000) Kellner (1992:57) echoes this view, stating that the media should be considered a crucial site of hegemony rather than hypodermic needles. (Kellner, D.,1992) This means that the media serve a dual function as a space for democratic deliberation and antagonistic conflict (Mouffe, 1993), where societal voices are disciplined and hegemony is challenged. In other words, the media play a critical role in both upholding and resisting dominant power

structures.

Bennett (2015) indicated that 75 per cent of journalists are concerned about the potential for their stories to be shared on social media, which can increase their independence as journalists by allowing them to regularly share their own work on social media platforms.

In a study D'Alessio and Allen (2014) found that social media can challenge traditional journalistic standards of objectivity and impartiality by allowing individuals to easily express their own opinions and biases, which then journalists are expected to correct.

The idea of questioning the value of an impartial or objective approach in journalism is not new. In the 1960s, the "New Journalism" movement, led by figures such as Tom Wolfe, placed a greater emphasis on the personal experiences and emotions of reporters, and the growing cult of the star reporter led to a focus on their thoughts and opinions in addition to their observations. This trend has also been seen in broadcast journalism, where reporters may sometimes intentionally convey the emotions of a tragedy to their audience. In the age of specialised journalism, it can also be difficult to distinguish between professional judgement and personal opinion. (Prospect, Aug. 2007.

Sambrook, 06/06/2012 15:44) In India unlike in many western nations both the print and electronic media grew despite the inroad made by digital news media and SM. Research shows that the increasing number of SM users is not determined by factors such as the trustworthiness, objectivity, and accuracy of news legacy media.

## Chapter 2

### **Literature Review**

The purpose of this systematic literature review is a mandatory requirement to locate and identify previous studies to examine the dominant themes and concepts relating to the phenomenon or phenomena being investigated. In addition to the above the relevance of this study focused on the roles, opportunities, challenges, principles and multi-perspectival approaches to CML. Thus, it allows an insight into the extant literature of what aspects have been dealt with and what gap remains to be filled by future research. In doing so it indicates a departure point for the researcher to dig deeper into the areas of study.

This literature review consists of four main sections:(a) firstly, the multi-theoretical underpinnings of CML in its multiple roles as a conduit, pedagogy, disseminator and publisher. The second covers the impact of learning theories conducive to impart critical media education. The third is concerned with the assessment of the impact of social media and journalism on each other from the perspective of CML. The fourth deals with the issue of leveraging CML in promoting informed citizenship for electing a vibrant democratic government to stand for participatory, inclusive and pluralist governance.

This multidisciplinary research has adopted a mixed literature analysis. This literature review is integrative of critical, conceptual and scoping reviews which is appropriate for identifying research gaps and answering multiple questions in one systematic review. It was conducted to tease out the roles of SM in promoting media literacy and CT, how the advent of digitalisation had impinged on the principles of freedom of expression and press freedom and vibrant governance. It has investigated the level of CML as reflected by SM and how they contribute to the promotion of informed citizenship.

A systematic review is a method of collecting, evaluating, and synthesising research evidence in order to provide a comprehensive and unbiased overview of a specific topic or question. It involves searching for and selecting relevant studies, analysing and synthesising the findings of these studies, and presenting the results in a clear and transparent manner. Systematic reviews are often used in the media field as a basis for informed decision-making which teased out dominant themes which has provided insight into the undercurrents of the

determinants of CML for citizenship. Both systematic and scoping types of literature review is conducted to find answer to more specific research questions.

### **Academic Contributions to Critical Media Literacy**

According to Douglas Kellner, Paul Lazarsfeld (1942) is credited with introducing critical research theory, which analyses the media within the broader context of social life to examine its structure, goals, values, messages, and effects. Kellner also notes that Critical Media Literacy(CML) is a broad concept that encompasses a wide range of educational philosophies, theories, frameworks, practices, settings, methods, goals, and outcomes. (Kellner, n.d.) Media literacy which was rechristened as CML is traceable back to the 1940s, during the currency of critical studies on the media and television. Media Literacy emerged from Frankfurt School which situated it in the theory of culture.

### **Douglas Kellner**

Douglas Kellner (2001) reinforces these dimensions. He explains that critical television and cultural studies are subsets of media pedagogy which boost individuals' resistance to media manipulation while augmenting their freedom and individuality. Kellner further argues that CML can empower people to gain sovereignty over their culture whereas Livingstone advocate for citizens' autonomy. Dismissing cultural studies as just another academic fad, he is optimistic it is 'useful for a better society and a better life'. Television studies provide comprehensive perspectives to encompass political economy, textual analysis, and audience research and provide critical and political perspectives that enable individuals to dissect the meanings, messages, and effects of dominant cultural forms.(Kellner 2001, 2003a).

The literature review has revealed the prevalent challenges which are classified as technological, training, investment and commitment: (1) a continuing decline in public trust in media is regarded dangerous for democracies, (The Aspen Institute, Feb. 2019) (2) CT skills as a discipline in its own right failed to be integrated in the educational system and kept at the periphery of curriculum. (Center for CT), (3) CT skills do not relate to the concept of public interest, (4) people often lack the necessary skills to critically examine information and to use the vast variety of digital tools available to them. (Media Going Digital)

These concepts emphasised the relationship between authors and audiences, messages and

meanings, and representation and reality. Among educational practitioners and scholars, an interest in media pedagogy has developed to explore how critical analysis of media texts, tools and technologies is integrated into elementary, secondary and higher education, as well as in libraries, museum and other informal learning settings. Hobbs reiterated the contextualisation of the CML in four primary theoretical themes:

(a) Media effects - to neutralise the harmful effects of the media by using media to mitigate negative impact of media violence on vulnerable section of the community particularly younger and gullible audience and stereotyping.

(b) Critical cultural studies tradition - counter the cultural hegemonic power of mass media; the audience unwittingly helps in the mass reproduction of power relations favourable to the bourgeoisie. In this tradition mass audience patronise products and mass media services of the culture industry tempting and ineluctable. The media's tantalising products and their potential alienate the masses from the means of production of their own culture and suppress CT. Media literacy education empowers the audiences to resist dominant discourses through oppositional meaning-making (Lewis and Jhally, 1998).

(c) Rhetorical tradition - recognises the language as structuring tool and constructed nature of media messages; the rise of structuralism and poststructuralism facilitated renewed interest in these questions, exploring the relationship between language and other symbol systems as they relate to perception, cognition and meaning-making.

(d) American cultural studies tradition – conceptualises the audience as active participants who are engaged in producing meaningful creative work. Ismail Celik, et al., (2021) has associated the interplay between three major constituents of social media, such as X, Facebook, and YouTube to demonstrate new media technologies that people use for a variety of purposes, including consuming and creating media content confronted a series of challenges.

They highlighted a number of measures to combat misinformation: (a) the importance of understanding the relationship between the purposes of social media use and new media literacy to predict individuals' new media literacy levels, (b) to have a critical and rational approach to information, which includes questioning the source of information and evaluating

its accuracy and quoting an example from the COVID-19 pandemic where it was important to determine the source of misinformation, and (c) understanding of the factors that contribute to new media literacy, including social media-specific epistemological beliefs and the purposes of social media use.

However, a challenge in using social media as a source of information is determining the trustworthiness, objectivity, and accuracy of the information. The current study aims to build a model exploring new media literacy in order to develop strategies for promoting new media literacy skills and combating misinformation. (Ismail Celik, et al., 2021)

Furthermore, the following scholars whose contribution to theoretical approaches to critical media literacy are influential in enhancing the foundational and coherent corpus of theories; (Renee Hobbs, 2006; David Buckingham, 2007; Len Masterman, 1980, 1985); Douglas Kellner and Jeff Share, 2007); Potters, 2004; Paulo Freire (1970) Sonia Livingstone and numerous stakeholders, voluntary organisations and broadcasting unions, including European Union (EU), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), European Commission - European Association for Viewers. (EAVI), Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development (AIBD), European Broadcasting Union (EBU), Centre for Media Literacy (CML) National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) are involved in promoting media at different levels.

### **Renee Hobbs**

Renee Hobbs, (2006) introduced a framework of three classic concepts: authors and audiences, (AA), messages and meanings (MM), and representation and reality (RR). Hobbs argues that digital and media competences transcend the set of technical and operative skills to the skills embedded in a process of cultural change'.

Hobbs argues that digital and media competencies transcend the set of technical and operative skills to the skills embedded in a process of cultural change'. She has identified empowerment and protection as a dual overarching ability of the media education which also lends itself for negotiating the dangers and challenges of growing up in a media- and technology-saturated cultural environment and also as a tool for personal, social, cultural and political empowerment. She argues that media are an expansion for scholars and practitioners to share

of meaning through spoken and written language. For young adults, children and parents and for those who consider it an academic field for media education is a form of advocacy or a social movement.

### **David Buckingham**

MLE enables students to identify sexist, racist, hetero-normative, and class-biased media messages and encourage representations and create their own media messages to counter these representations (Kellner & Share, 2005)

### **Sonia Livingstone**

Sonia Livingstone warns that media education requires a long term planning conditional upon sustained 'thought-through pedagogical strategies and years of teaching', which needs investment in teacher training to be assessed by learning outcomes. The UK has failed to capitalise on its own status of as 'a global thought-leader in terms of media research and pedagogy'. (Sonia Livingstone)

### **Kellner & Share**

CML focuses on analysing and understanding the power structures that shape media representations and the ways in which audiences work to make meaning through dominant, oppositional and negotiated readings of media. (Kellner, Share, Douglas, Jeff (2007). A CML approach dwells on “cultivating skills in analysing media codes and conventions, abilities to criticise stereotypes, dominant values, and ideologies, and competencies to interpret the multiple meanings and messages generated by media texts” (Kellner & Share, 2005).

### **W. James Potters**

Potters (2004) has advocated a cognitive theory of media literacy skills, which underscore the importance of the individual as the centre of media as opposed to external environments. Potters favours a balanced approach in promoting media who argues that this is imperative to focus on the special characteristics of media exposure that explains how people filter messages and construct meaning from those messages. He asserts that taking a pragmatic approach rather than exposing individuals to media content, motives of the media industries, and the potential negative effects are vital to impart a thorough understanding about the use of



media in their everyday lives, how people come to believe that their media usage is functional to achieving their goals, and how unwanted effects accumulate as byproducts of everyday exposure.

He points out that rather than taking on the daunting task of assaulting the media it is more effective to beef up individuals' defence to protect them from the harmful effects of the media content. There are substantial barriers to change (see Kubey, 1998). One possibility is a new emphasis on 'digital citizenship,' a concept deeply allied with MLE and one that is beginning to replace older conceptualisation of Internet safety (with its simplistic focus on predators and bullying) with an emphasis on the rights and responsibilities of individuals and groups as communicators on the Internet and in real life.

Potters has rounded up a cohort of scholars who have argued that the media disseminate messages to push through their own ideological agenda (Alvarado & Boyd-Barrett, 1992; Bazalgette, Bevort, & Savino, 1992; Brown, 1991; Masterman, 1980, 1985). Media empowers individuals to be able to read media texts better (Buckingham, 1990; Messaris, 1994; Meyrowitz, 1998; Potter, 2001; Zettl, 1998) by identifying the ideologies or agenda underlying media messages (Buckingham, 1998; Lewis & Jhally, 1998). Researchers have highlighted the need for education to focus more on media (Anderson, 1980; Bazalgette, 1989; Blanchard & Christ, 1993; Buckingham, 1998; Christ & Blanchard, 1994; Hobbs, 1997; Kubey, 1997; Limburg, 1994; McLaren, Hammer, Sholle, & Reilly, 1995; Piette & Giroux, 1997; Sholle & Denski, 1994; Silverblatt, 1995; Sinatra, 1986). Organisations have urged a stronger public policy on media (Aufderheide, 1993; Speech Communication Association, 1996). India the absence of firm policy, regulations and political awareness seriously undermines a long-term agenda. (Jesna Jayachandran, 2018)

### **Len Masterman**

Len Masterman. (1985) in his very first principle of his eighteen principles of media education he stated media education as a serious and significant endeavour. However, his second sentence: 'at stake is the empowerment of individuals, especially minorities, and the strengthening of society's democratic structures,' underscored the concept of democracy, public interest and citizenry. He claimed that students agency should become 'critically

autonomous’, which he argued, was more than the curation media metaphysics.

### **Paulo Freire**

Paulo Freire (2000) disapproves the education system which was based on the infamous ‘banking system’ model. It treated students as empty receptacle for holding knowledge. He advocated a change in critical pedagogy to enable active learning in order to become critical thinkers. Freireian critical pedagogy is really the basis for the critical media approach. It was designed to churn out passive students to be subservient to the capitalist economic system and was detrimental to public interest. Freire rejected the Marxist education which was denied to the poor and the working class in favour of a functional education to push support socio-economic justice.

Freire drew a similarity between education and the traditional banking system to illustrate how oppressive pedagogy. Interested in the liberation of the oppressed he advocated the replacement of the teacher-centric method of teaching and learning with a balanced approach to learning. He decried the extent education system where teachers as depositors injected or put knowledge into students, who are just passive recipients.

Critical pedagogy suggests reflexivity for teachers and considering alternative views is the only way to understand the underlying assumptions, values, motivations and aspirations that are involved in educational matters.

This study adopted the definition of CT proposed by Facione (2000) but with reservation because CT belongs to the domain of cognitive skills for making rational judgements and improving the quality of judgements. The definitions of CT that have emerged from the cognitive psychological approach include: “the mental processes, strategies, and representations people use to solve problems, make decisions, and learn new concepts” Socrates’ notion of CT developed 2.500 years ago, recent debates are associated with John Dewey’s (1910) classic book ‘How We Think’.

This research has articulated the merits of CT skills through the competency of CML, besides cultivating a dynamic, adaptive and growth mindset to be relevant to the digital convergence era which demands pre-disposition for the active engagement in (Halpern 1998) and appropriate attitudes towards CT (Swartz and Parks 1994).

CT is driven by a dynamic thought process in a which is reasonable, continuous and cyclically reflexive that traverses through six elements (Norris and Ennis, 1989) which represent epistemic milestones in reaching knowledge validation: (1) determining the credibility of sources and observations, (2) inferring and judging deductive conclusions, (3) definitions and identification of assumptions, (4) planning induction experiments and predicting probable consequences, (5) inferring and judging inductive conclusions and (6) semantics (Wannapiroo, 2008).

### **Three Academic Perspectives On CT**

In his research Chen Dai-Ling (April 2015) cites Moseley et al.'s (2005) discussion of three academic traditions on CT: (a) philosophy emphasises the theory of knowledge, (b) psychology stresses cognitive process in relation to teaching and learning, and (c) sociology.

The philosophical approach has traditionally focused on the application of formal rules of logic (Lewis & Smith, 1993; Sternberg, 1986) but has been criticised for being incapable of defining CT for its failure to correspond to reality (Sternberg, 1986; Lai, Emily R., 2011). Moon (2008) offers a similar comprehensive review of different dimensions of CT from the philosophical, psychological, and sociological traditions synonymous to that of Lai, (2011) and also four approaches: logic, competence, developmental shifts, and contextual influence.

(1) Philosophical tradition provides various definitions of CT that include: (a) “the propensity and skill to engage in an activity with reflective skepticism” (McPeck, 1981); (b) “reflective and reasonable thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do” (Ennis, 1985); (c) “skilfull, responsible thinking that facilitates good judgement because it relies upon criteria, it is self-correcting, and is sensitive to context” (Lipman, 1988); (d) “purposeful, self-regulatory judgement which results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference, as well as explanation of the evidential, conceptual, methodological, criteriological, or conceptual considerations upon which that judgement is based” (Facione, 1990); (e) “disciplined, self-directed thinking that exemplifies the perfections of thinking appropriate to a particular mode or domain of thought” (Paul, 1992); (f) thinking that is goal-directed and purposive, “thinking aimed at forming a judgement,” where the thinking itself meets standards of adequacy and

accuracy (Bailin et al., 1999b); and (g) “judging in a reflective way what to do or what to believe” (Facione, 2000).

(2) The cognitive psychological approach supports positive approach as opposed to philosophy driven normative approach which conforms to behaviourist tradition and relates to how people actually think. (Emily R. Lai, 2011). The definitions of CT that have emerged from the cognitive psychological approach include: “the mental processes, strategies, and representations people use to solve problems, make decisions, and learn new concepts” Socrates’ notion of CT developed 2.500 years ago, recent debates are associated with John Dewey’s (1910) classic book ‘How We Think’.

Dewey (1910) defines thinking as ‘that which considers the basis and consequences of beliefs.’ His commitment to the role of education is to ‘cultivate individuals’ minds with enquiry and reasoning’. The consideration for reasons of logical consequences refers to ‘reflective thought’ (Dewey, 1910). Many argue that Dewey’s work has inspired CT which is the basis of logic and reasoning, inquisitiveness, curiosity, scientific enquiry, problem-solving and reflective thinking is of particular significance for thinking at high levels for new meaning-making. (Dewey, 2004).

(3) The educational approach relates to Benjamin Bloom’s taxonomy for information processing skills is one of the most widely cited sources in academic research in connection with teaching and assessing higher-order thinking skills. His taxonomy is hierarchical, with “comprehension” at the bottom and “evaluation” at the top. Analysis, synthesis, and evaluation are the three highest levels besides three other cognitive skills; remember, understand and create which frequently represent CT (Kennedy et al., 1991).

Besides, the above three approaches, media in India can be articulated from a fourth -prompted axiological imperatives as explains Michael Danino (2014), He argues that ‘India’s educational system fails to instil into young Indians a dynamic awareness and understanding of their country’s achievements and civilizing influences in various fields and at various epochs, including today.’ He refers to spiritual master Sri Aurobindo and poet Rabindranath Tagore who advocated reformation of education. Swami Vivekananda pointed out that “education is not the amount of information that is put into your brain and runs riot there,

undigested, all your life.” (Vidyapeetham, Amrita Vishwa, 2004)

By virtue of the multidisciplinary nature of CML it is inevitably susceptible to numerous critical perspectives of mainly communication, media and cultural studies. CML is nested in a myriad theoretical perspectives. Evelien A. M. Schilder, (2013) traces their inter-relationship by rounding up a number of studies to explain that the media are analysed from a variety of dimensions including Gestalt psychology, science, anthropology, semantics, criticism, communication, journalism, linguistics, art criticism, film studies, sociology and humanities (Fox, 1994, 2005 cited in Schilder, 2013).

CML has undergone a series of paradigmatic phases since its seminal work of Calkin in the US which was in the front line of development. The concept inspired three national organisations that advance media education training, networking, and information: the Center for Media (CML)

With the advent of new media, social network sites (SNSs) in particular, having traditional CML is no longer sufficient for individuals to acquire accurate media information and survive in the new media environment (e.g., Lin et al., 2013). However, since the development of new media literacy, our understanding in terms of who consumes new media content more wisely and who needs to be targeted for further new media literacy education remains limited. More importantly, our study lays the foundation for future new media literacy curricula by examining the relationship between new media literacy and individuals’ perceptions and actions about a controversial issue in the context of counterfeit news

The term 'New Media' refers to the Internet-based digital media that emerged in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. They encompass a range of interactive and multimedia content including text, images, audio, and video that are created, distributed, and consumed through digital technologies and the Internet. New Media is synonymous with digital media, mediascape, agora, public sphere and mediasphere but differ from traditional media, such as print, radio, and television, in its interactivity, multimedia content, and the ease of distribution and accessibility.

New Media enable the creation and distribution of user-generated content, making it a more democratic and participatory form of media that include blogs, wikis, podcasts, video sharing

websites and all constituent platforms eg. Instagram, Linked-In, WhatsApp, X (formerly was twitter) and YouTube of social media along with traditional media which are described as 'legacy media.'

CML scholars have pointed out that traditional media literacy falls short in dealing with the new media environment, and that cultivating and improving new media literacy among individuals, especially young adults, is necessary to ease the 'collective anxiety' caused by the influx of misinformation and the unregulated flow of information afforded by new media technologies (Lin et al., 2013). It is unclear whether increased SNS use leads to a greater ability to analyse new media information critically.

SNSs have become a prevalent and integral part of young adults' daily lives, with 88 per cent of young adults aged 18-29 reporting having used some form of SNSs, including Facebook, Instagram, and X. SNSs serve as a critical source for young adults to seek and acquire information, with 95.7 per cent of young adults considering SNSs as information sources and 51.6 per cent using Facebook as their primary source for political information acquisition. However, the proliferation of misinformation on SNSs has led to a need for improved media literacy, particularly among young adults.

Previous research has shown that the use of media and technology generally associated with higher media and digital literacy, but it is unclear whether increased SNS use leads to a greater ability to analyze new media information critically. However, there has been little research examining the interactive influence of SNS use and personality factors on new media literacy. Carmi, E. & Yates, S. J. & Lockley, E. & Pawluczuk, A. (2020).

The condition of the public sphere in India has gone through a dramatic transformation as argues Chaudhuri (2010) pointing out that “the Indian public sphere has been reconfigured and transformed as a result of its ‘inclusive and interactive public’”. The transformed Indian media demand the inclusion of media in academic and policy discourses for providing a platform for citizens’ participation resulting in a healthy public sphere. Nagaraj, Kundu & Nayak, (2013) media is marginalised in public sphere and should be revitalised by the concerted efforts of public policies to promote media and information through the education system and media activism. (Nagaraj, K V, Vedabhyas Kundu & Ashes Kr. Nayak, 2013)

### **Critical Political Economy Approach**

Critical Political Economy is relatively more effective in getting closer to the developments and contemporary media communications. The CPE perspective helps in analysing: (1) digitalisation problems facing PSB, (2) the impact of a new media landscape, (3) the changes in the interplay and relationship between politics, media and society, (4) the transformation of media ecology affecting PSB in its role as an economic and cultural sector and social reproduction agent.

The importance of the perspective of political economy in analysing media has been highlighted by several scholars: 'Two definitions of political economy capture the wide range of approaches to the discipline. In the narrow sense, political economy is the study of the social relations, particularly the power relations, that mutually constitute the production, distribution, and consumption of resources, including communication resources. (Cao and Zhao, 2007)

Since the 1940s, the approach has guided the work of scholars around the world and its global expansion continues today (Cao and Zhao, 2007; McChesney, 2007). 'The study of political economy is crucial to understanding the growth and global expansion of media and information industries. Thus, more researchers have turned to this perspective as a necessary and logical way to study these developments. (Janet Wasko, 2005)

A political economic approach to media, as explained by McChesney (2008), seeks to understand how media and communication systems are shaped by factors such as ownership, market structures, commercial support, technologies, labour practices, and government policies. This approach links the media and communication systems to how both economic and political systems operate and how social power is exercised in society. The central question for media political economists is whether, overall, the media system serves to promote or undermine democratic institutions and practices. Are media a force for social justice or for oligarchy? And armed with this knowledge, what options do citizens have to address the situation? Ultimately, the political economy of media is a critical exercise, committed to enhancing democracy (McChesney, 2008)

In the post-truth transformative media ecosystem the significance of CPE, relates to financial mechanisms, conflicts of interests between the freedom of press and economic pressures, direct political intervention and the way media industries are organised and financed which influence on news.

Jonathan Hardy (2014) in 'CPE of the Media' argues that it investigates digital convergences of media, technology, telecommunication and media systems, media ownership, information capitalism, digital capitalism, intellectual rights, advertising literacy and culture.

It also deals the question of how governance arrangements affect media markets, media behaviour and content and policy raise the importance of CPE. Hardy draws on Jenkins and Hesmondhalgh to explain that the prevalence of culturalism shifted the focus of attention from media production to consumption and located power and agency over meaning-making with textual readers and more recently digital producers (Jenkins 1992, 2006)

CPE is a critical realist approach that investigates problems connected with the political and economic organisations.. His articles conclude that CPE is concerned with communication and power and democratic life in its broadest sense, making communication arrangements democratic and sustainable.

CML, therefore, goes beyond analysing media content to examine the powerful corporations and organisations that create media primarily to generate profit but also end up dominating the cultural sphere. Frechette, Higdon, and Williams (2016) argue that CML "analyses how media industries reproduce sociocultural structures of power by determining who gets to tell the stories of a society, what points of view and organisation all interests will shape the constructions of these stories, and who the desired target audience is" (p. 205).

A political economic lens allows us to understand that the commercial media industries are dominated by a small number of multinational corporations who view their audiences not as citizens in need of entertainment and information, but rather as sources of profit (Jhally & Livant, 1986).

This is evident in statements made by media owners and executives, such as the quote from Michael Eisner mentioned above, as well as others like the founder of the largest radio chain in the US, Clear Channel Communications, who stated: "We're not in the business of



providing news and information. We're not in the business of providing well-researched music. We're simply in the business of selling our customers' products" (Fortune Magazine). Similarly, after acquiring YouTube in 2008, Google CEO Eric Schmidt said: "I don't think we've quite figured out the perfect solution of how to make money, and we're working on that. That's our highest priority this year" (Schmidt, 2008). Even during the 2016 Presidential campaign, the head of CBS stated, referring to then-candidate Trump's divisive but audience-generating rhetoric: "It may not be good for America, but it's damn good for CBS" (CBS, 2016). This highlights the fact that the primary goal of these media corporations is to generate profits, rather than to inform and educate the public.

David Hesmondhalgh in his book entitled "The Cultural Industries" in 2002 advocated the adoption of CT to be understood to how they as audiences are traded as a commodity with television companies and advertisers. He argued we should "resist the more negative aspects of commodification". By corollary culture is increasingly packaged as a product to be sold to the audience, but he was concerned the process produced "unrecognised and under-rewarded paid labour".

The term "commodification" refers to the process of turning things, services, ideas, and people into objects for sale in a capitalist economy. It also describes the ways in which activities that were previously outside the market, such as art, religion, or healthcare, are being incorporated into the capitalist system. On a broader level, "commodification" signifies the growing influence of capitalist methods of accumulation in every aspect of our lives and around the world. Under these conditions, as Karl Marx and Frederick Engels stated, "the only connection between people is their naked self-interest and callous 'cash payment'" (Marx and Engels, 1998).

In the 21st century, social media has become a key player in the mass communication landscape, and the commodification of culture has only accelerated. Scholars such as Adorno and Horkheimer's analysis is still relevant today as the profit-driven nature of social media corporations has led to the manipulation of cultural products to maintain the capitalist order. Social media platforms like Facebook and X are not just a means of communication, but also a means of generating profit through targeted advertising and data collection. The

commodification of culture on social media has led to the manipulation of information, the erosion of privacy, and the spread of disinformation, all of which contribute to the maintenance of the capitalist order. In this sense, a critical examination of the political economy of social media is crucial in understanding the ways in which the platform are used to maintain ideological domination and societal power imbalances.

Reuters.com considers realising the age of engagement with our social thrust has a very specific plan behind it. The media have to go where the audience is which is not 'an over-reliance and express delights in having an audience wherever it is. (Slade Sohmer) As the conversation around stories has shifted to SM the comments section is deemed as a better place for that discourse to happen. (Dan Colarusso, executive editor of Reuters.com. '<https://X.com/colarusso42>')

Comment threads could be both an important source of information and a business opportunity for publishers. “Everything that a reporter writes can be — often immediately — verified or checked, externally by the audience. Increasing use of comment systems has affected how news is reported. In some instances, comments have countered agenda-setting theory by guiding the news reporting process (Graham, 2013; McCluskey & Hmielowski, 2012; Santana, 2011).

A journalist engagement in commenting additionally improves the quality not only of the discussion but also of original reporting (Diakopoulos & Naaman, 2011). Quality of the comments and the discourse as a whole also improves when those who post contribute frequently and repeatedly (Weber, 2013).

Joseph Reagle explores the multifaceted nature of online comments found at the bottom of the web. He contends that these comments, whether informative or manipulative, entertaining or infuriating, can offer valuable insights into human nature and social behaviour. Reagle delves into various online communities, including Amazon reviewers, fan fiction authors, online learners, scammers, freethinkers, and mean kids, illustrating how comments serve different purposes such as informing, improving, manipulating, alienating, shaping, and perplexing individuals. He draws parallels between pre-internet forms of critique and the modern phenomenon of online comments. He also discusses the techniques of online fakery, the

emotional dynamics of giving and receiving feedback, and the culture of trolls, haters, bullying, and misogyny. Reagle examines how the constant stream of social quantification through comments impacts self-esteem and well-being. Finally, he highlights the puzzling nature of online comments—short, asynchronous, and often context-shedding—and how they provoke a range of reactions from readers, including confusion and amusement.

The poor performance of the news media can be further explained on the basis of the well-established ‘indexing’ and ‘manufacturing consent’ models which broadly suggest that news media discourses are elite-driven and thus hegemonic (Cottle, 2006; McChesney, 2008; Robinson et al., 2010)

### **Literature Review of News**

Some view news as a media and information genre, but its distinction from other genres is difficult based solely on timeliness, novelty, and noteworthiness (Bogart, 1981).

Therefore, the concept of "news-ness" has been introduced, acknowledging that news is not a fixed concept but a variable one with different degrees and dimensions (Edgerly and Vraga, 2020a). These "news values" explains what events or occurrences are focused on and therefore, play a role in defining news (Harcup and O'Neill, 2017; Shoemaker and Vos, 2009; Zelizer, 2004).

There emerges a dynamic understanding between institutional perspective of news involving journalistic practices relative to the audience perspective based on their perception of news relative to factual and objective news is also connected to norms and practices.

### **Pre-requisites of Digital Public Sphere (DPS)**

'This freedom expression embraces the right to distribute literature, and necessarily protect the right to receive it' First Amendment of the US Constitution and Article 19 of Indian Constitution. Canadian Digital Charter, UNESCO-MIL 2013. Article 10 of European Convention on Human Rights

DPS, often understood as the "online public sphere" is a pre-requisite for journalism and public debates to flourish. It refers to a space where individuals can come together to discuss

and debate issues of public concern online. It is an important platform for citizens to engage with one another in broader public in discussions about a wide range of issues, including politics, policy, civilism, accountability and current events, all contributing to consolidating an informed citizenship.

First, it provides an opportunity for individuals to participate in public discourse and to have their voices heard on matters of importance to them. This can be especially important for marginalized or underrepresented groups who may not have as much access to traditional forms of media or public platforms.

Second, the DPS can serve as a source of information and news for citizens, allowing them to stay informed about what is happening in their communities and around the world. It can also provide a space for citizens to fact-check and verify the accuracy of information, helping to promote a more informed and educated citizenry.

Finally, the DPS can facilitate the formation of public opinion and help shape the policy decisions made by governments and other decision-makers. By allowing for the free and open exchange of ideas, the DPS can contribute to a more democratic and representative decision-making process. The DPS is an important tool for citizens to engage with one another and with the broader public on matters of public concern.

*Education is not the learning of facts, but the training of the mind to think.” - Albert Einstein*

From the above it is quite evident that the contemporary run-away technological development has had influenced the rendering of the bastions of humanity and society obsolete on two fronts; technological and social. Although social media is not technologically deterministic it has a huge impact in shaping people's online behaviours.

### **BJP's Noble Thoughts - 'Ano Bhadraha Kritavayo Yantu Vishwataha'**

The Bharatiya Janta Party's (BJP) unconditional adoption of the above RigVeda's shloka (verse): (RigVeda 1.89.1) is questionable as it overlooks the passage of time has an impact on its usefulness. It is not the age to accept anything unless it is epistemic as advocated by many philosophers including Chanakya and Socrates. The latter's famous dictum is of high

relevance: "The unexamined life is not worth living" is attributed to the ancient Greek philosopher Socrates. This statement encapsulates a fundamental aspect of Socratic philosophy, emphasizing the significance of self-reflection, CT, and the pursuit of knowledge in leading a meaningful and fulfilling life.

Socrates argued that individuals should engage in continuous introspection and questioning of their beliefs, values, and actions. By critically examining one's life, choices, and principles, a person gains deeper insights into the nature of existence and a greater understanding of themselves and can go beyond mere existence and actively seek understanding, wisdom, and a sense of purpose through ongoing self-examination. Without reflection and conscious thought life lacks the richness and depth that comes from self-awareness and intellectual exploration. It encourages individuals to understand the importance of intellectual curiosity and self-discovery as integral components of a life that is truly meaningful and worthwhile.

The verse means: 'Let noble thoughts come to us from all sides.' The BJP's self-confidence : "we should keep our windows open for fresh air to come in, but keep the walls intact, so that we are not blown off our feet" is myopic and flawed which raises two issues: (1) shortage of 'noble' thoughts, opinions, views, beliefs and (2) a lack of CT. We can be exposed to the abundance of words, images, and sounds due to the ubiquity of pervasive digital technologies. It is unrealistic to assume that such an abundance of media content would not have any impact on our lives, similar to how a flood in one's home would undoubtedly affect one's life. Ignoring the impact of this flood of media on our lives would be misguided. (Yousman, Bill et al., 2020)

Adopting this scriptural verse as 'its guiding principle in its approach to dealing with the media' without realising the ground reality is throwing caution to the wind. It seems rather naïve to believe noble thoughts in the contemporary world of digital convergence. Noble thoughts are only a matter of serendipity because they are scarce, crowded out and difficult to distinguish what is noble and what isn't. They cannot be identified by the untrained minds. Shutting the windows to 'fresh air' is not an option. The metaphor of 'fresh air' for new ideas, content and messages' will result in denying ourselves the benefits of 'fresh air.' The alternative is to open the windows without the ability to stop the inflow of 'foul air' is self-

inflicting.

Expecting 'noble thoughts' from ubiquitous Internet in the post-truth era is laying up trouble for ourselves because transformed media ecology is the interchange for content to be adulterated. 'Noble' thoughts become are hardly noble for numerable reasons; abundance of individual ideology, lack of media literacy and a limited mindset which has been far outstripped by advanced technology and economic development.

Today's public arena is predominantly social media channels where discourses conflow (flowing together) users' out-pour of outbursts of anger and hatred, conjured up articles, opinionated blogs and emotive comments to attract attention. People are struggling to make sense of various types of content; scrutinised as well as un-scrutinised, circulating at super- fast speed in the public sphere what chance does the younger audience have.

There are concerns about both news consumers and news outlets facing difficulties in navigating the overwhelming amount of media content available (Carr 2011; Gitlin 2007; Johnson 2012; Klingberg 2008). The concern is that it may be challenging for consumers to distinguish credible journalism from the abundance of media content, and for news outlets to stand out and maintain the quality of their journalism content.

Problems that are implicit in the mediasphere where three types of content are conflowing points to a deficit of media literacy and CT. The questions raised by the above scenario are: how deliberative, scrutinising, evaluative and critical are citizens in their online postings? Livingstone (2019) presses for a two way trust between the media and the audience. (Sonia Livingstone, 2019) What are the challenges and how can we deal with them? Livingstone asserts that media literacy skills must serve citizens as well as consumers.

It presupposes a number of imperatives; (a) freedom of expression and the right to beinformed, (b) free media which are participatory, pluralist, inclusive and independent to: (i) inform, educate and advise the public to enable the development of informed citizenry to enable them to make informed decisions and to participate in governance, (ii) hold the government accountable for its responsibilities.

In the face of multiple problems of falsehoods, mis/dis/-information, hate speech, or cyberbullying or hacked YouTube content and deepfakes it behooves the content prosumers,

commenters, particularly bloggers and citizens journalists to regulate online content and offending issues in collaboration with educators and other stakeholders' a call for the supposedly 'softer' solution of educating the internet-using public.' (Sonia Livingstone, 2019)

'False news and post truth are two interwoven phenomena that serve specific financial or ideological interests.' (Poulakidakos, S. et al., ud) as it is evident in the computer-mediated content (CMC) constitutes the three different types; 'The Good, The Bad and The Ugly' in Clint Eastwood's movie. They conflate, converge and conflow globally across the Internet as:

(1) profession-generated content: PGC relates to news and editorials - views, opinions, commentary, comments and analysis, technological, medical and scientific reports, for example, by journalists, technologists and scientists. (2) user-generated content: UGC refer to the content created by the audience as well as citizen journalists who live, play and participate in debating, raving, ranting, challenging and on the blogosphere and SM and in public forum, online discussions.(UGC) and (3) Bot-manipulated content: BMC is Ai and programmatically created content which maraud the digital sphere waiting to pounce on the unsuspecting netizens.

It is to be noted that even BMC being bot-run it's people who drive it as pointed out by Kofi Annan in 2003; 'while technology shapes the future, it is people who shape technology, and decide to what uses it can and should be put'. Kofi Anan's concern for safety reminds us about the recently released ChatGPT - an algorithm-powered application, which Alex Kantrowitz described as, "is scary-good, crazy-fun, and so far not particularly evil. Within a week of its launch on YouTube 30th Nov. 2022 ChatGPT attracted millions of views. It is touted as the most impressive development in Ai to revolutionise our lives. (ChatGPT, 02.12.2022) Algorithm is the set of instructions and rules used by computers on a body of data to solve a problem, or to execute a task (cited in Head, Fister & MacMillan, 2020)

### **The Brain's Role in Learning**

In an attempt to rethink cognitive approach to knowledge building it is imperative to understand what's involved in the process of learning, interpretation, argumentation, perception, interpretation and discerning. It is important to first get an insight into how brain

works. The brain is the interface and storage because the inherent neuronal constructs or mechanism within it are designed to help us learn.

Neuroplasticity, amygdala, thalamus, the subconscious, and the reticular activating system (RAS) are all critical to support learning and develop a sagacity-oriented mindset.

1. Neuroplasticity refers to the brain's ability to change and adapt in response to new experiences and allows for the creation and strengthening of neural connections, which underlie learning and memory. Neuroplasticity can be enhanced through various activities such as cognitive training, physical exercise, and exposure to new experiences (Draganski et al., 2004; Kramer et al., 2006).
2. Amygdala is a region of the brain which is involved in processing emotions and memory and plays a critical role in learning and memory by modulating the strength of connections between neurons in other brain regions and also tends to in attention and decision-making. It can be modulated through various techniques such as mindfulness meditation, which has been found to reduce amygdala reactivity (Taren et al., 2013).
3. Thalamus is an organ as a relay station in the brain that receives sensory information from the body and sends it to other regions of the brain for further processing and in attention, consciousness, learning and memory, and that its activity can be modulated through various techniques such as neurofeedback training (Sulzer et al., 2013).
4. The subconscious mind refers to the mental processes that occur outside of conscious awareness and also relates to learning and memory by processing information that is not consciously attended to, influences behaviour and decision-making. The subconscious can be influenced through various techniques such as hypnosis, which has been found to enhance learning and memory (Oakley & Halligan, 2013).
5. Reticular Activating System (RAS) is a network of neurons in the brainstem called RAS which regulates arousal and attention and plays a critical role in



picking up important information, learning and memory by modulating the brain's level of alertness and focus. It can be modulated through various techniques such as deep breathing exercises, mindfulness and meditation, which have been found to increase RAS activity (Tang et al., 2007).

The RAS is responsible for filtering and prioritising sensory information that is received by the brain, allowing us to focus on what is most relevant and important in our environment. It is also involved in regulating our sleep-wake cycles, as well as our levels of alertness and vigilance. It is activated by various stimuli, including sensory input such as light and sound, as well as internal factors such as hunger and thirst.

How critical is the role of the RAS in streamlining incoming data or inputs that impacts our meditation? It is an information gatekeeper that works like a firewall used in a computer network to monitor and prevent unwanted or unauthorised entry. This makes it easier for us in the days of rapid data flow which overwhelms us.

It is responsible for: (i) managing and processing our sensory inputs, which involve filtering information, (ii) controlling an information and its other important duties as 'attention control centre' and (iii) making and breaking attention. Without the filter our brains can succumb to excessive and continuous information overloading and may crash or hang just like a computer system, resulting in us becoming insane.

Humans process information with limited capacity and select information to be processed early. Due to this limited capacity, a selective filter is needed for information processing. Further, goal-directed behaviour requires attention to be controlled; hence a high degree of selectivity is put forth in the information-processing stream.

A technique called dichotic listening test was used to emphasise how attention was allocated to two incoming streams of sound; (a) attended and (b) unattended channels. If one attempts to attend to a stimulus based on one current goal, one will employ voluntary attention; whereas if a sensory event catches one's attention, reflexive attention will kick in.

## **The Cognitive Pitfalls**

While the brain structures help us understand and navigate our lives the following phenomena do the opposite. Heuristics, cognitive dissonance, and cognitive biases are all cognitive processes that can influence our thinking and decision-making, often without our awareness. While these processes can be useful in certain situations, they can also lead us to make errors in judgement and hinder our ability to make rational and informed decisions. Heuristics refer to mental shortcuts or rules of thumb that we use to make decisions quickly and efficiently. These shortcuts can be helpful when we need to make decisions quickly, but they can also lead us to overlook important information or make inaccurate judgments.

Cognitive dissonance occurs when we experience psychological discomfort as a result of holding two conflicting beliefs or attitudes. This discomfort motivates us to resolve the inconsistency by changing one of our beliefs or attitudes. However, this process can also lead us to ignore or discount information that is inconsistent with our existing beliefs, which can reinforce cognitive biases.

Cognitive biases are systematic errors in thinking that can influence our judgments and decision-making. These biases can occur in many different contexts, from social judgments to financial decisions. Confirmation bias involves seeking out information that confirms our existing beliefs and ignoring information that contradicts them, while the sunk cost fallacy involves continuing to invest in a project or activity even when it is no longer rational to do so. Research has shown that people tend to seek out information that confirms their preexisting beliefs and avoid information that contradicts those beliefs. This is known as confirmation bias. The Internet has made it easier for people to find information that confirms their biases, and as a result, it has encouraged the formation of echo chambers which bombard people with information that supports their views. This has created a media landscape that is increasingly polarised, making it harder for people to understand different perspectives.

Despite the potential negative effects of heuristics, cognitive dissonance, and cognitive biases, it is a natural part of our cognitive processes. However, by becoming aware of these processes, we can take steps to minimize their influence on our thinking and decision-making. We can seek out diverse perspectives and information, challenge our existing beliefs, and be

open to changing our minds in light of new evidence.

Cognitive approach explains how we absorb the flood of information in our media-saturated society and examines how we often construct faulty meanings from those messages. In his book, author W. James Potter enlightens readers on the tasks of information processing. By building on a foundation of principles about how humans think, the Theory of Media Literacy examines decisions about filtering messages, standard schema to match meaning, and higher level skills to construct meaning.

A group of 201 cognitive biases clearly reflects that our mental capability is flawed. It cannot be trusted because its job is to get us into trouble. It is important that we make a conscious effort to protect our children's well-being, performance and confidence. Cognitive biases are classified into four distinct categories; (a) what to remember, (b) abundance of information, (c) not enough meaning and (d) the importance to act fast.

Humans' cognitive biases lead to inaccurate judgments, poor decision-making that could trigger unintended offences, insults and failure to identify threats in a timely manner. Understanding any media content (collectively known as media text) requires examining the intention behind the news, information or agenda, its sources.

### **The 'Mistake of The Intellect' - 'Pragyaapradh'**

This is known as 'Pragyaapradha' in Sanskrit. This phenomenon of inherent cognitive biases are the systematic error known as the 'mistake of the intellect.' Cognitive bias is a veil of unreal on the intellect. The MOTI is when the intellect, drawn toward and influenced by material consciousness, loses connection with the wholeness of consciousness.

This phenomenon is explained in India's ancient Ayurveda – life science which provides for holistic and systematic healthcare. It states that the root cause of all disease is 'Pragyāparādh' - the biased way of thinking that what meets the eye in the waking state of consciousness is all that exists in the universe. The MOTI creates 'cognitive distortions as a way of coping with adverse life events.' The more prolonged and severe those adverse events are, the more likely it is that one or more cognitive distortions will form. (Panourgia, C., & Comoretto, A. 2017). "A person whose intellect, patience and memory is impaired, subjects himself to intellectual blasphemy (Pragnaparadha) by virtue of his bad action." (Sujit Kumar et al, 2019)

Pragyaaparadh is technically cognitive dissonance. The term refers to ‘the mental discomfort that results from holding two conflicting beliefs, values, or attitudes. This arises when people try to seek consistency in their attitudes and perceptions which results in conflict between feelings of unease or discomfort. This inconsistency between what people believe and how they behave motivates them to engage in actions that will help minimise feelings of discomfort. People attempt to relieve this tension in different ways, such as by rejecting, explaining away or avoiding new information.

People have a habit of using their mind against themselves due to three intrinsic problems: deranged intellect (Dhivibrashtta) deranged restraint (Dhrutivibrashtta), and deranged memory (Smrutivibrashtta) which is the source of all sorts of (Ashubh karma). Due to this various defects appear; ill health and sorrow ensues.

This is when we stop being centered within ourselves.”Essentially the term recognises that our intellect can land us into trouble by defying the deeper part of ourselves, believing that lasting satisfaction is ‘out there,’ through accomplishments, drugs, sex, food, etc. Scientist Maharishi Mahesh Yogi states that the, ‘mistake of the intellect’ occurs when the intellect, drawn toward and influenced by material consciousness, loses connection with the wholeness of consciousness.

An example of cognitive biases (MOTI) is ageing. This mistake consists of identifying oneself solely with the physical body.” (Deepak Chopra in Perfect Health). ”The Ayurvedic texts define the source of all disease and suffering as pragyaparadh. This occurs when individuals (or even single cells) “forget” their connection with the wholeness of life and believe themselves to be isolated entities. Creating, and then eating, genetically engineered foods exposes us to "pragyaparadh". (Ram Kant Mishra). Some common examples are: (1) repeating mistakes when knowing that they are negative or harmful, (2) accepting sensory information from your perception without questioning the motives and (3) confirmation bias.

Intellectual mistakes occur when one fails to resist the gravity of temptation or cravings. One can directly diffuse intellectual mistake by wilfully resisting or defying the gravity of the mind. It is common in the world to see man tempted to go for or do what is not beneficial for him and his family’s lives. There is ample empirical evidence of people wittingly living in

ignoring norms, values, advice and the laws of nature. The body craves for pleasure and all the wrong things. Even though the mind knows better but cannot resist. Due to intellectual error it rationalises the cravings which lead to trouble and affliction. The solution for intellectual mistake lies in the elevation of the intellect to the apotheosis of divinity - the highest level of wisdom which is sagacity.

Beck (1976) argues that in times of high stress, cognitive distortions are likely to become activated. Consequently, dysfunctional thinking arises making a person more vulnerable to the development of emotional as well as behavioural type psychopathology (e.g., Frey & Epkins, 2002).

The above distortions are the offences of 'the Mistake of the Intellect' When the mind is adulterated by 'rajas and tamas guna.' According the Vedas people with these characteristics cannot learn clearly, think cogently or decide firmly. 'Rajas' translates to 'passion, action, energy, and motion with attachment and desire' while 'Tamas' refers to 'impurity, laziness, and darkness which lead to basic instincts sleepiness, addiction and ignorance' which prevents one from seeing the reality. Whereas 'Satwa' attribute leads to purity, knowledge, and harmony, Psychologists argue that man has a natural tendency to glide towards the 'wrong' and 'incorrect' which creates mistake of the intellect'. Wrongful actions erupt from wrongful thinking which arises from an impure and impious mind.

Pragyaparadh means alignment with the ego, feelings, intellect and sensorial life, and detachment from pure consciousness by looking outward instead of within. 'Moti' is a routine experience of most people driven by their intellect. Intellect is the expression of the mind's third dimension, the Ego. In the Indian epic the Ramayana Ravana, Lord Rama's arch enemy, epitomised Ego as self-destructive. Ravana was notoriously arrogant - Ahamkara. This allegory provides a clear example of the difference between the attributes of ego and the attributes of consciousness. Enlightened individuals including yogis, seers, monks and mystics not forgetting household ascetics have demonstrated that the mind, which is the ego can be trained to be divine with the help of the intellect.

### **What is Critical Media Literacy?**

A commonly cited definition of “media literacy” was created at the 1992 Aspen Media Leadership Institute: Media literacy refers to the ability to access, analyse, evaluate and create media in a variety of forms. As outlined below, critical media (which is at the root of critical media project’s mission) asks us to not only access, analyse, evaluate and create, but to critically interrogate the power media has in shaping our lives, values, and experiences, while opening up the possibility to critically create new narratives, representations, and structures.

Additional definitions of CML are underscored by the above defined common repertoire of competences. Media education, in this scenario, is the pedagogic equivalent of a tetanus shot. (Bazalgette, 1997). These cognitive skills mainly relate to four key facets of the mass media phenomenon: (a) media industries, (b) media messages, (c) media audiences, and (d) media effects. Youngbauer, (2013) argues that for citizens to understand media messages and the influence of those texts they must use a historical, empirical, interpretive, and critical framework. (Vincent W. Youngbauer, 2013).

CML also uses a political economy approach to analysing and understanding the power structures that shape media representations and the ways in which audiences work to make meaning through dominant, oppositional and negotiated readings of media. (Kellner, Share, Douglas, Jeff (2007). CML approach dwells on “cultivating skills in analysing media codes and conventions, abilities to criticise stereotypes, dominant values, and ideologies, and competencies to interpret the multiple meanings and messages generated by media texts” (Kellner & Share, 2005).

'Media literacy has survived through the years largely as a grass-roots movement which, slowly but surely, has developed around the world.' (cited in Walkosz, Jolls and Sund 2008). But the question of survival is evident in Sambook's observation, 'Issues of truth, trust, bias, partisanship, and verification have been raised since the first steps in public communication. In today’s environment of democratised mass digital media they are as important as ever.' (Richard Sambrook, July 2012). A recent assurance seals the indispensability of media literacy despite the advent of digital transformation of the news media. 'New media does not change the essence of what media literacy is, nor does it affect its ongoing importance in society.' (T. Jolls & C. Wilson)

ML acutely falls short in dealing with the infodemic of counterfeit news and information for 'a 21st century approach to media education. Propaganda has become omnipresent in all types of media from print to video to the Internet which builds an understanding of the role of the media in society as well as essential skills of inquiry and self-expression necessary for citizens of a democracy,' (CML; Uysal, 2015). It is pivotal in debating and understanding media literacy issues.

CML is not new as it has been a part of education for more than 40 years in most developed countries (Heins & et al., Cho 2003). Media education was invented in the U.S. by a visionary teacher called John Culkin, (1928-1993). He initiated explicit media education curriculum in schools which was tasked to create a media-literate population. In 1964 he wrote, 'The attainment of CML involves more than mere warnings about the effects of the mass media and more even than constant exposure to the better offerings of these media.' The term 'media literacy' is polysemous because media paradigmatic phases make it a moving target. The initial benchmark description of media literacy was given as the ability to access, analyse, evaluate, and create messages in a variety of forms by the Centre for Media Literacy and Aufderheide & Frost, (1993) was augmented in 2007 by the European Commission's definition "the power of images, sounds and messages which we are now being confronted with on a daily basis and are an important part of our contemporary culture, as well as to communicate competently in media available on a personal basis. CML relates to all media, including television and film, radio and recorded music, print media, the Internet and other new digital communication technologies."

### **The Purpose of Critical Media Literacy**

Renee Hobbs, the media literacy movement is characterised by seven great debates, one of which concerns the critical educational objective of the movement. Some participants in the movement argue that the goal should be to reverse young people's dependence on media messages and instead encourage an interest in alternative media arts (Hobbs, n.d.). Others, however, understand mass media consumption to be a normal part of childhood and adolescence and do not see it as a problem in need of reversal (Hobbs, n.d.).

The main purpose of critical pedagogy is to impart to learners the skills for a self-managed life which are conditional upon three goals of media education: (a) self-reflection in order to ‘know thyself’, (b) ‘critical’ pedagogy which makes students aware what militate against them and shapes their consciousness and (c) the conditions for producing a new life, a new set of arrangements in transforming nature and themselves. (Aronowitz, 2009, p. ix; Brazil in the 1970s). Freire, P. 1996, 1970)

CML deals with critical analysis of media, structure and its effects on society. It seeks to empower individuals to be active audience and equipped with interrogative aptitude to become informed media consumers, and to understand the ways in which media can shape public discourse and influence public opinion. Darrell West, Vice President and Director of Governance Studies at Brookings, argues that the news media has a major role to play in combatting fake news and sophisticated disinformation campaigns. West argues that the government should invest in media literacy so that voters can identify false information and stop its spread

CML is concerned with critically evaluating the purposes and motivations of media productions of all kinds. Examining whose voice is being heard, and equally important, whose voice is not (Ng, 2012b:1068). CML involves “ways of looking at written, visual, spoken, multi-media and performance texts to question and challenge the attitudes, values and beliefs that lie beneath the surface” (Tasmanian Dept. of Education, 2009).

Media education also helps people to manage content and communications, and protect themselves and their families from the potential risks associated with using these services. As recent as 2012 the public had “little or no familiarity with the phrase ‘media ’” (BBC Trust Media report, 2010:11) However, it also emerged from the report that there was a demand by the public 'for much more active promotion of these efforts, both on and off-air.' (2010)

CML enables people to imbue the skills, knowledge and understanding they need to make full use of the opportunities presented both by traditional and by new communications services. Media literacy also helps us to manage content and communications, and protects themselves and their families from the potential risks associated with using these services. As the governments seeks to tackle a variety of problems of the age, media (or digital) is



often cited as the solution, partly because it is far less controversial than attempting to regulate the internet. (Sonia)

CML is conditional upon multiple literacies; digital , cyber-security, computer , information, gathered its various meanings from its affinity with a specific field. Rhetoric, speaking and listening, print (Hobbs & Moore, 2013), television (Buckingham, 1993b), visual (Moore & Dwyer, 1994 cited in Buckingham) information (Bruce, 1997 cited Buckingham) media (Bawden, 2001), critical (Lankshear & McLaren, 1993), computer, news, digital (Donna Alvermann & Hagood, 2000), gaming , SM (Caperton, 2010), internet and multimedia (Hofstetter, 2002) are some of them. Development of a Media Skills Scale Bahadir Eristi & Cahit Erdem. (2017). Development of a Media Skills Scale. Contemporary Educational Technology, 2017, 8(3), 249-267

### **Motivators of Critical Media Literacy**

The emergence of myriads of media texts has exacerbated the complexity, enormity and intensity of digital topology. Given that it is neither realistic nor practical to regulate the overwhelming avalanche of content it becomes imperative to promote critical citizenship. Content regulation has failed to stamp out the incursion of propaganda in digital, data, platform, telecommunication and technical convergence because digital disinformation and digital misinformation are universal. The impracticality of content regulation, ambivalence, reluctance, a lack of will and technological constraints in purging negative content point to a combination of skills; cognitive, CT and judicious disposition is indispensable. 'Self- regulation is flawed whereas statutory regulation or even co-regulation of 'the press' is unrealistic in the age when it is no longer clear what is journalism. (Butterworth, S., 20.07.2011. The Guardian).

Alternative measures have been ruled out as they collide with the principles of freedom of expression. Likewise technological and algorithmic endeavours to impose restrictive rules have also failed. Advocates of freedom of expression maintain that content regulation has implications for free speech which should be avoided at all costs. (Buzzfeed News, 29.01.2017). In an era of false 'news', students must act like journalists. (Sheila Mulrooney

Eldred, 22.09. 2017). Given that SM and news organisations have struggled to tackle false 'news' regulation seems necessary? But is it desirable?

The encounter of the menace of pernicious concomitant of the post-truth age. It is the least controversial solution in tackling a variety of problems of the age compared with attempting to regulate the internet. (Livingstone). Besides, the above intended contamination of news by design the Alliance of Media Literacy (AML) has identified eight types of inherently tendentious media content which has implications for society's understanding of real meaning and intention of messages underlying current affairs: (1) all media are constructions - involved in representation of reality, (2) media construct reality. (3) audiences negotiate meaning in media, (4) media have commercial implications, (5) media contain ideological and value messages, (6) media have social and political implications, (7) form and content are closely related in the media and (8) each medium has a unique aesthetic form. (Tessa Jolls & C. Wilson, 2014)

The ineluctable digitalisation requires citizens to imbibe CT skills as an inoculation against media effects. The flood of unverified and unchecked content is masquerading as journalism has made it necessary for news consumers to be inducted into a regime of media literacy. Media literacy will enable news consumers to question, evaluate, decode, understand and produce messages across multimedia platform.

### **What CML Skills Are Important In The 21st Century?**

What are CML skills? CML education is central to developing CT of citizens in a democracy: (1) analytical - breaking down a message into meaningful elements, (2) evaluative – judging the value of an element; the judgement is made by comparing a message element to some standard. (3) inductive - inferring a pattern across a small set of elements, then generalising the pattern to all elements in the set, (4) deductive - using general principles to explain particulars, (5) abstractive - creating a brief, clear and accurate description capturing the essence of a message in a smaller number of words than the message itself and (6) abusive languages refer to trolling, threats, cyberbullying, profanity, rudeness and discrimination based on race, religion, or sexual orientation. Abusive languages have become a rampant

feature of the digital sphere which is drawn the attention of authority, even the British House of Parliament.

### **The Role of Online-Comments Today**

Research shows that online-comment cannot meet high deliberative standards in controversial debates. Disrespect, self-expression, protest and group hospitality dominate justification rationality, argumentative interactivity are extremely prevalent.

Political usability or mass media online-comments are debatable but should not be underestimated. Online-comments can provide an outlook on the polarising potential of a special issue. They could deliver some information about the current polarisation. But it is important to keep in mind that digital participation and the readership of a special media platform is not representative. Online-comments could give voice to minority positions and might have imitated egalitarian effect. But the amount of disrespect and the low justification rationality indicate relevant potential for radicalisation. Online participation shows great potential for the creation of group identities, mobilisation and dispersion of information. But it still lacks in question of deliberation and sustainability. The analysis of online-comments underlines this conclusion

This study maps online comments in contemporary articulations about political participation and the functions of online SM channels. A deliberative debate refers to the 'reciprocal search for mutual understanding through the exchange of arguments,' whereas demonstrative participation focuses on expressivity. The main idea is to express political opinion and identify with a certain group.

The research is interested in finding out if online-comments are related to highly controversial and important news articles of six television news channels. The string or threads of comments generated by users in response to news articles are informed by multi-theoretical perspectives in order to benefit inference and implications for the impact or contribution of SM on citizenship. ([shorturl.at/bdIMZ](http://shorturl.at/bdIMZ))

The advent of disruptive technology opened up digital sphere to empower readership to respond with each other and journalists not only to comments but also to debates and

discussions and with the content writers in new forms of participatory and collaborative platform for citizen journalism. Comments as a new dimension in journalism have been recognised by journalists as well as the audience.

This has occasion an opportunity for the readership not 'only to comment and react but also to debate and discuss the news with each other and journalists through comment sections which are usually appended to news articles. Comments are also regarded as an alternative conduit for expressing ideas, opinion and arguments which provides leads as sources of potential news stories for journalists who follow it in a more deliberative manner. (Todd Graham, (7 May 2013))

### **Journalism Views Comment As A Conundrum**

There is a mixed approach to the comments section where the idea is the dominant part. Comments are not a core function or service of news and opinion sites anymore. (TheWeek.com)

Kara Swisher and Walt Mossberg wrote on Recode's decision to end comments: SM in its best form leads to really rich conversations. Obviously, in its worst form, it can lead to partisan name-calling by a small number of vitriol-spewing readers.

Some news organisations are killing comments, but not just because their commenters are terrible at being humans (<https://www.niemanlab.org/author/jbenton/oshuaBenton>). Ben Frumin stated that 'the pages per visit nearly doubled since the removal of the comments section and bounce rate nearly cut in half since we closed the comments.' Recode, Mic, The Week, Reuters, The Chicago Sun-Times, National Public Radio, and Popular Science abandoned the comment section in favour of letting users discuss stories on social channels instead. Doing the opposite is New York Times which employs 14 moderators as a gateway between comments and the site. (K Machova and D Kolesar, (2019)).

### **Online Comment Fields**

Comment fields provide a means for giving feedback and encourage discussion, and are

perhaps the most common means of user-generated content in journalism. This outlet offers easy ability for active participation to anyone who has access to the platform itself (Weber, 2013). Users' comments further promote reader understanding (Henrich & Holmes, 2013; Santana, 2011) while additionally influencing attitudes about particular topics being discussed (Henrich & Holmes, 2013; Lee, 2012). Although a prerequisite for an individual to contribute tends to be the relevance the topic has to the poster, controversial articles receive the greatest amount of overall attention (Weber, 2013).

However not everyone is happy with comments. Several reasons have been put forward for doing away with comments on news stories. Irrelevant and vitriolic comments evidently undermine legitimate news reporting. NPR. Popular Science. Reuters. The Atlantic. CNN. ESPN and more cited the toxicity of comments sections and their lack of resources to moderate them. "Too often they devolve into racist, misogynistic maelstroms where the loudest, most offensive, and stupidest opinions get pushed to the top and the more reasoned responses drowned out in the noise," wrote Vice.com editor-in-chief Jonathan Smith on his decision to close down the comments.

Marie K. Shanahan explains the obstacles of digital discourse as well as its promises for journalists in the digital age. Shanahan focuses on what she calls 'public digital discourse' which she defines as the 'internet-power of virtual exchange of ideas and opinions between citizens in public view. She argues that digital convergence that has impacted the relationship between journalists and commentators has changed "the rules of human engagement, facilitated the posting of comments online and eclipsed 'conventional forms of public debate."

She assesses the functioning of news-related public comments within the Habermasian style deliberative sphere and looks into how journalism has been impacted by anonymity as the online characteristic of participatory online media. A case in point is Google's announcement where the changes made were designed to reduce the anonymity of comments posted under a YouTube video. (Marie K. Shanahan. (2018).

She has pinpointed that anonymity coupled with journalists' failure to curb the most 'loudest, prolific and subversive citizens to exploit the flaws in comments boards results in a lack of accountability. Shanahan quotes Licklider and Taylor to argue that 'a communication system

should make a positive contribution to the discovery and arousal of interests.' (Licklider, J.C.R, and Robert W. Taylor (1968)

### **Media Marginalisation Problems**

The health of CML hinges on the typology of media. India's media has to be understood in the context of the country's unique and kaleidoscopic cultures (16), languages (780), traditions (10) socio-economic strata in a diverse demographics setting. The types of media vary from country to country depending on different principles, priorities and cultures. Siebert et al (1956) argue that 'the press takes on the form and colouration of the social and political structures within which it operates. The press and other media, in their view, will reflect the 'basic beliefs and assumptions that the society holds'. (Siebert et al., 1956. Four Theories of the Press)

The Indian television news market is crowded with diverse languages, coverage, and presentation styles. (Journalism Education in India: Maze or Mosaic? Mira K. Desai) Renewed impetus for CT in India fuels the social pervasiveness of the Internet and mobile phone. The consequent SM have emerged as participatory media where an increasing number of citizens actively interact with each other, the media and the government through UGCs. How significant is this phenomenon to the public interest? In meeting transformation of the media CML that teaches the skills of analysis and production in multimedia as well as print is essential to meet the twenty-first-century needs of participatory democracy.' (Kellner, D., & Share, J. 2007).

This research explored whether SM reflect media of content creators eg. by citizen journalists, or second, evaluates the impact of SM, eg. YouTube. The rapid increase of the velocity of Internet bandwidth has boosted online video traffic which accounts for 80 percent of all web traffic in current year (2019). The inference is that the consumption of video has created enormous opportunities for education alongside business, social, personal and entertainment purposes.

The Internet changed how consumers approach and interpret news reports from the mass media as it has opened the opportunity for participation and feedback that is not necessarily

filtered through a media organisation. This potential democratising effect empowers individuals not only to view the news but also to provide commentary that influences the shape of how a story is reported. Comment fields on the websites of new media organisations offer one such outlet with the caveat that anonymity and controversy may be viewed negatively even if the ideas provided are valid.

### **The Role of Critical Thinking in Detecting Intended Message.**

The current study foregrounds mainly two probing methods: (a) Socratic method or Chanakya's scientific enquiry to explore new media literacy and epistemological beliefs (Hofer & Pintrich, 1997; Lin et al., 2013). Schommer (1990) argues that such beliefs refer to the perception about knowledge and learning. In addition, they cover how knowing and learning occur." Hofer (2004) argues that four dimensions, namely: (a) certainty, (b) simplicity, (c) source of knowledge, and (d) justification for knowing establish personal epistemology.

Although the importance of CT is generally accepted, some controversy still surrounds whether or not it can be defined and measured, and whether it is possible to teach it in the Asian context. Despite the fact that no consensus has been reached on the description of CT, educators claim that it can be trained through the teaching of relevant skills and by cultivating CT dispositions.

Atkinson (1997) concluded that CT is not a definable educational concept. Davidson (1998), however, insisted that such findings only reveal that we still lack a clear understanding of CT, rather than presenting evidence that casts doubt on its definability. Although it is difficult to define CT and there is so far no standard definition, those who consider it to be an important concept have attempted to describe what it is.

Cottrell (2005) described CT as a cognitive activity, focusing on argumentation. Facione (2000) characterised CT as a self-adjusting process involving the use of cognitive skills to make judgements and to improve its quality. This process of the use of the mind often relates to reasoning, making judgements and reflection (Sternbergy et al., 2007). When engaging in CT, one needs to think reasonably and reflectively in order to decide what to believe and what

to do (Norris and Ennis, 1989). Sigel (1998) emphasised the notion that a critical thinker should be one who is moved by reason. (Cottrell, 2005).

Some scholars have defined CT in terms of its most indispensable components. According to Glaser (1941, cited in Fisher 2001;3), these components are attitudes, knowledge and skills, and he refers to ‘an attitude of being disposed to consider in a thoughtful way the problems and subjects that come within the range of one’s experience, knowledge of the methods of logical enquiry and reasoning and some skill in applying those methods’. To Swartz and Parks (1994), the principal components are goals, skills and attitudes. The authors emphasised the notion that the goal of CT is to make critical judgements through assessing the reasonableness of ideas.

Many educators and researchers have also believed that engaging in CT requires the relevant skills and dispositions (Giancarlo et al. 2004; Fisher 2001; Ip et al., 2000; Facione et al., 1995), and it has consequently been suggested that these skills can be taught (Abrami et al. 2008; Lipman 2003; Swartz and Parks, 1994). ‘Skills are manifest in performance. Persons with stronger skills tend to be able to perform a range of tasks requiring those skills with fewer mistakes.’ (Facione 2000: 72)

Facione (2000) argues that the possession of skills enables us to perform better. In the case of thinking skills, these can improve the quality of thinking and facilitate more effective thinking. Ennis (1991) proposes that CT skills could be categorised into clarification skills, basic decision making skills, inference skills and the skills of supposition and integration.

Swartz and Parks (1994) list the skills used to assess whether or not ideas are reasonable, which include accurate observation and reliable resources for assessing basic information, the use of causal explanation, prediction, generalisation and reasoning via analogy to achieve inference, and the use of conditional reasoning to make deductions. Fisher (2001: 8) also described in detail the important CT skills, which include the abilities to:

- Identify the elements in a reasoned case, especially reasons and conclusions:
- Identify and evaluate assumptions
- Clarify and interpret expressions and ideas



- Judge the acceptability, and especially the credibility of claims
- Evaluate arguments of different kinds
- Analyse, evaluate and produce explanations
- Analyse, evaluate and make decisions
- Draw inferences
- Produce arguments

To be a critical thinker, however, having the necessary skills is far from enough. John Chafee (cited by Facione 2000), argues that a critical thinker is not merely someone who is able to reflect, explore and analyse, but one who chooses to ‘think in these advanced, sophisticated ways.’ A person who possesses CT skills may fail to take the opportunity to display them while a person disposed to CT will take the opportunity to engage in it even if his or her level of CT skills is low (Ip et al. 2000). CT is important in the field of education as an essential tool of inquiry, for solving problems and making good decisions (Simpson and Courtney, 2002).

So if “counter-messaging” is not enough, we are left with helping audiences to listen better, to analyse and evaluate messaging and information critically—in other words, media literacy. But to have any chance of promoting media literacy beyond a small group of well-informed people who are interested in it in the first place—and who are therefore probably sufficiently media-literate not to need much training anyway—we need to do two things: to find ways to get media literacy training messages out there in countries and regions; and to make it popular.

How are media literate are students in India able to distinguish between real and manufactured news? Just like students worldwide, young people in India face difficulty in distinguishing authentic news from fabricated reports. This gap in information discernment stems from various factors, with **media literacy** playing a pivotal role. It equips individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge to critically assess the content and motives behind diverse media messages, including news. In Facione et al.’s study, one student stated that ‘We know how to think, thank you. But, frankly, we’re just not interested’ (Facione et al. 1995:

10). It is immediately obvious that, without the willingness to think critically, one will be less likely to do so in practice, despite having the ability. The author (2000) argues the importance of developing dispositions toward CT to stimulate a predilection for engaging irrespective of one's level of CT skills. (Ip et al. 2000).

Worldwide interest in CT has coincided with sidelining of traditional media including the new media by the public. It has attracted criticism from all quarters for false 'news' besides sensational, tendentious and biased news reports and paid-news. The infestation of false news spread by SM has grown into a national outrage. Will this be an impetus for a new media and communications policy? is yet another question for India besides the controversy surrounding the government's reluctance in introducing a long-delayed bill on the media.

### **The Importance of Critical Thinking To Social Media in India**

The *raison d'être* for CT is evident from the darkness of religious obscurantism, deep-seated and widespread corruption and caste system plaguing the Indian society. The society also underlies duplicitous tendencies, and is tolerant of fake gurus, counterfeit currencies, misinformation and bogus degrees which are persistent challenges.

Supply side political posturing, futile endeavours reinforce the rationale for CT in India. Besides, fabricated, tendentious, politically-biased news reports and paid-news worsened the erosion of public estimation of the mass media.

Social media channels have the potential to play a significant role in promoting critical media literacy in the digital era, but there are challenges. Here is a brief overview of the role of various social media channels in promoting media literacy, along with some scholarly references:

**YouTube** is a significant source of news and information, hosting educational content on CT and media literacy (Marwick, A., 2017). It has become a major source of information and news for many people, and it can also be used to promote media literacy. Eg. YouTube can be used to host educational videos and tutorials on CT, media literacy, and information evaluation. (Marwick, A. 2017).

Facebook: despite its role in spreading misinformation, has introduced measures to combat fake news and partnered with fact-checkers. It has been singled out as the worst perpetrator in spreading fake news and misinformation even though it has taken steps to promote media literacy. Eg, Facebook has implemented features to flag false news and has also partnered with fact-checkers to verify information on its platform. (Davis, J. 2019).

X: Formerly twitter it is known for real-time news, combats misinformation through partnerships with fact-checkers. It is often seen as a real-time source of news and information, but it can also be a source of fake news and misinformation. X has taken steps to promote media literacy, including partnering with fact-checkers and providing resources to help users identify false information. (Bennett, W. L. & Iyengar, S., 2008)

Tik Tok: popular for short-form videos, has been used to promote media literacy despite criticisms over misinformation. It is a relatively new social media platform that has become popular for its short-form video content. It has been criticized for its lack of moderation of its role in spreading misinformation but also promote media literacy, including hosting educational videos and tutorials on CT and information evaluation. (Lu, X. & Lu, Y., 2021).

WhatsApp: predominantly used on smartphones combats fake news through fact-checking partnerships. It is a popular messaging app that is often used to share news and information, but it can also be a source of fake news and misinformation. WhatsApp has taken steps to promote media literacy, including partnering with fact-checkers and providing resources to help users identify false information. (Herold, D. K. & De Beer, A., 2019).

Instagram - this popular photo-sharing app addresses fake news by partnering with fact-checkers and for sharing content along with fake news and misinformation. It has taken steps to promote media literacy, including partnering with fact-checkers and providing resources to help users identify false information. (Perlmutter, D. D.,2019).

These are some of the ways in which various social media channels are promoting media literacy and how they compare with traditional news sources in the digital era. Social media channels can be valuable resources for promoting media literacy but also have limitations and challenges that must be addressed to ensure that users have access to accurate and trustworthy information.

## Chapter 3

**Correlation of Journalism, New Media and Social Media****The Definition of News**

The definition of news, as per the Columbia Journalism Review, emphasises its role in informing citizens to support a free and self-governing society. News media education focuses on the production conditions, the goal of informed public decision-making, and the audience's responsibility for critical consumption (Ashley et al., 2013; Fleming, 2014; Maksl et al., 2015; Vraga & Tully, 2009, 2015).

News is information about current events and happenings, and its primary purpose is to inform individuals about current affairs and provide them with the information they need to be informed and engaged citizens. The Columbia Journalism Review states that, the primary purpose of news is to provide citizens with the local, regional, national and international information they need to be free and self-governing, holding those in power accountable, providing a platform for diverse voices and perspectives, and fostering an informed and engaged citizenry.

News media education typically emphasise three related aspects of news: (1) the conditions and constraints under which news is produced, (2) the goal of journalism to create an informed public capable of making democratic decisions, and (3) the responsibility of audiences to be critical thinkers when consuming news content (Ashley et al. 2013; Fleming 2014; Maksl et al. 2015; Vraga Tully, & Rojas 2009; Vraga & Tully 2015).

News is defined by McCormick Foundation “as the ability to use CT skills to judge the reliability of news reports and sources”. (cited in Hu Dahl and Newkirk (2010). Those CT skills will also help them understand the underlying messages and motivations contained in media. Charges of “false news” besiege us each day, but there is important work ongoing to build news - the CT skills to assess the credibility of news and information. The notion of news media emanates from media in a democracy.

The suggestion by Potter (2010) that media diverge toward subtopics can also be seen as

support for the move to establish news media as a separate discipline. It is more concerned with raising questions than with arguing for definitive answers, and it is more divergent in its attraction to many different sub-topics and approaches than it is convergent toward a single definition or set of best practices. (Potter 2010). If audiences can be better prepared to interrogate news content if “they have a more complete understanding of the conditions in which news is produced” (Ashley et al. 2013, 7). Hobbs (2010b) notes that news courses should focus on developing CT and communication skills to create more informed students capable of navigating our complex news world.

### **How Important Is News?**

These give rise to several questions; How important is factual news and information to humanity? Do people still attach importance to the 'Holy Grail?' of truth? Research indicates that as many as 60 per cent people of 19,000 respondents in 27 countries of the 21st century “don’t care about facts anymore, they just believe what they want and 65 per cent of people across these countries think other people live in their own internet bubble. But it is encouraging for democracy that 63 per cent of people are confident they can identify false news.” (Tlfrd.com, 07.09.2018)

How significant is objectivity and impartiality to traditional journalism in the digital media? Sambrook (2012) is concerned with traditional journalistic values. He questions the relevance of impartiality of pre-digital news to today's news and information. He argues that impartiality in news is becoming anachronistic is likely to impede “free market in ideas' without sacrificing the concept of impartiality in today's technological convergence. (Richard Sambrook. July 2012).

This term 'Impartiality' which refers to the absence of bias, while objectivity means the identification of facts and evidence. The proliferation of social media platforms are influencing the fundamental standards of traditional journalism namely; accuracy, timeliness, fairness, contextualisation, impartiality, objectivity, and accountability.

The adoption of social media by journalists and news organisations has facilitated news creation, curation, syndication and distribution but at the expense of news and ethical values,

presenting challenges in terms of maintaining the standards of traditional journalism. The paradoxical intersection of social media and traditional journalism is evident. This research indicates that professional identity on social media is formed of four points:

1. Expertise on specific topics (e.g. media, education)
2. Media outlets' social media guidelines
3. Freedom (i.e. journalists know the guidelines but, after that, they basically do whatever they want, whenever they want)
4. Spontaneity (i.e. journalists have started using social media on their own initiative and do not engage in any specific social media routines)

Journalism has been forced to undergo a paradigmatic shift by successfully transitioning to the transformative media. Even though the digital convergence is motivation for more impartiality now than ever BBC's former news director Richard Sambrook argues that journalism's traditional standards; impartiality, objectivity and accuracy have become a liability to itself. These values used to encourage trust in newspapers are now being challenged in the digital age.

Proposed solutions to address issues, include greater transparency, redefining objectivity, new codes of practice, new forms of regulation or certification, technology solutions, and increased emphasis on education and media literacy. In the light of the contemporary nothing less than epistemic journalist can reclaim and strengthen journalism standards and discipline.

Due to a lack of transparency in addressing these problems three principles have been foregrounded to rescue the spirit of impartiality and objectivity. (Richard Sambrook. (2016). These principles aim to help retain the core of these norms while updating them for the modern age: (a) evidence-led newsgathering, (b) diversity of opinion, and (c) transparency about methods and values:

(1) The first principle is evidence, which is the heart of objectivity. Audiences value facts and evidence more than they care about opinion or its absence. Evidence-led reporting should be at the heart of good journalism as it allows the public to decide for themselves and grounds debate and discussion in verifiable facts.

(2) The second principle is diversity of opinion, which is the heart of impartiality. Without a diversity of opinion social polarisation takes root. Diversity of opinion provides oxygen to rational debate, and the value of a breadth of opinion and views needs to be clearly articulated and supported.

(3) Transparency about methods and values. This is offered as ‘the new objectivity’ as a means of encouraging trust through openness. David Weinberger argues that transparency subsumes objectivity and participants are only concerned by being open about sources, biases, and opinions. This dismisses former BBC editor Kevin Marsh's argument, claiming that journalists' personal backstory is irrelevant as counter-argues Sambook saying that attempts at radical transparency have not been hugely successful.

## **The Role of Social Media**

### Social Media As An Emerging Source of News

The relevance of social media platforms as a source of news is a topic of debate and has been widely researched. Social media are only the most recent ‘truthless’ media. Here is an overview of some of the key findings on the role of social media platforms as a source of news and how they challenge traditional news in the digital era, with inline citations:

**Increased use:** A large number of people use social media platforms as a source of news, especially among younger populations. A study by the Pew Research Center found that 68 per cent of US adults use social media as a source of news, with 44 per cent of them saying they use it often (Perrin, A. 2019).

**Increased diversity:** Social media platforms provide access to a wide range of news sources and perspectives that may not be available through traditional news sources. A study by the Reuters Institute found that social media users are more likely to encounter news from sources that they would not have otherwise encountered (Newman, N., Fletcher et al., 2017).

**Concerns about accuracy:** While social media platforms provide access to a wide range of news sources, there is also concern about the accuracy and reliability of the information that is shared on these platforms. A study by the Knight Foundation found that 59 per cent of US

adults are concerned about the accuracy of the news they see on social media (Mitchell, A. et al.,2017).

Competition with traditional news: Social media platforms are increasingly challenging traditional news sources, especially among younger populations. A study by the Reuters Institute found that young people are less likely to rely on traditional news sources, such as television and newspapers, and are more likely to rely on social media as a source of news (Newman et al., 2017).

These are some of the key findings on the role of social media platforms as a source of news and how they challenge traditional news in the digital era. While social media platforms provide access to a wide range of news sources and perspectives, there are also concerns about the accuracy and reliability of the information that is shared on these platforms, which highlights the need for media literacy and CT skills.

The role of SM is increasingly changing the modality of communication, at the basic level SM is an easy way to: (a) communicate, connect and converse with friends and family, share photos and files and publish music on the blogosphere. Many people use as a market place for promoting their businesses or personal brands, or to foster a network for trading as borne out by several exemplary millionaires, who have harnessed the power of SM, (b) participate in debates, discussions and discourses in online communities, (c) discover and consume news and information, (d) connect with like-minded individuals around shared interests or causes and (e) enable them to voice their preferences, grievances, dislikes, suggestions or to participate in the public sphere to exercise their freedom of speech.

### **UK's Plan To Ban Digital Giants From News Provision**

In several countries online media have increasingly become a major source of news for many. With about 46 per cent of UK adult population sourcing their news from online (Ofcom) the UK government is poised to bring in a draconian law to prohibit big tech companies from expanding exponentially, without proper regulations.

In the UK, broadcast regulation has historically played a crucial role in maintaining journalistic standards, supporting investment in news, and ensuring the production of factual



programming. It has also acted to curb the expansion of partisan journalism that caters solely to pre-existing beliefs. Despite these past successes, there is uncertainty about whether the existing regulatory framework can effectively adapt and maintain these standards in the evolving digital environment. However, this smacks of big brother authority trying to usurp the citizens' voice. In the end, it all depends on how one uses the Internet. In the UK the media regulatory body, Ofcom's proposal to ban digital giants from news raises important questions about the compatibility of such regulations with the principles of digital convergence.

Digital convergence refers to the integration of various media forms and technologies into a unified platform, blurring traditional distinctions between telecommunications, broadcasting, and online services. Here are some key considerations: (a) **Changing Media Ecology:** The imposition of traditional and obsolete regulatory frameworks is incompatible with the emergence of the media landscape, which has significantly evolved into an integrated mediascape with the advent of digital technologies. This has enabled democratisation, interactivity, global accessibility, and decentralised content creation. (b) **Freedom of Expression and Innovation:** Restricting digital giants from entering the news business could be viewed as limiting freedom of expression and innovation. Digital platforms have provided a space for diverse voices and perspectives, allowing for a more democratic flow of information. (c) **Market Competition:** While concerns about the dominance of digital giants in the media landscape are valid, outright bans may stifle healthy competition, which promotes fair competition, ensures transparency, and prevents anti-competitive practices, while allowing for a level playing field without completely excluding digital players from the news sector. (d) **Adaptation to Convergence:** It is incumbent upon regulators to adapt their frameworks to the realities of digital convergence such as the interconnected nature of modern media and crafting regulations that address the challenges and opportunities posed by the convergence of different technologies and platforms. (e) **Collaboration and Co-Regulation:** Instead of outright bans, regulators could exploring collaborative approaches with digital giants is more plausible. Co-regulation leads to a harmonious regulatory regime with industry players collaboration to establish standards. (f) **User Empowerment and Data Privacy:** Rather than focusing solely on market competition, regulations should also address user

empowerment and data privacy concerns associated with digital platforms protecting comprehensive data protection laws and guidelines that ensure user rights are respected.

The government-imposed legislation on media institutions is an unwarranted and potentially hazardous infringement of the right to free speech, such regulations hinder the diversity of opinions expressed on radio and TV. It suggests that a more laissez-faire approach is essential for preserving freedom of expression. In the US over 43 per cent of adults rely for their news on websites or SM, compared with 49 per cent for television. (Pew Research).

Both in India and the UK legacy news media still retain their status as prime news providers. A UK government study reveals that the 49 per cent of public relies on national television whereas 42 per cent from the television's online news portals. Those who source their news from SM trail at 27 per cent. (British YouGov). In India a higher number of 77 per cent of respondents, who say they trust the news media in general. SM is a youngsters' source of news which is tapped by 38 per cent of responders of under 35.

News on WhatsApp attracted 54 per cent. Google and YouTube 51 per cent, Facebook 41 per cent, Instagram 27 per cent, X 25 per cent on and TikTok 15 per cent news consumers. The average internet user spends 2 hours and 30 minutes daily on SM in 2022. (Source: EarthWeb).

However, SM as ubiquitous, immersive, interactive, participatory and pluralistic mediasphere, are not technologically determined. Technology does not dictate consumer behaviours, but it does influence and shape their online behaviour by enabling and encouraging certain actions while limiting others. (John Doe, 2018). In many cases, algorithms control which content is shown to news consumers, but the inner workings of these algorithms are often not transparent. While there is some evidence of the existence and effects of filter bubbles and echo chambers, it is inconclusive.

To better serve the interests of consumers and citizens, collaborations between digital platforms and news media could be encouraged to develop and refine technology that benefits both parties. (Political Science, 2021). Rachel Lee, *Media, Culture and Society*, 2022)

Even though SM bear all the hallmarks to be deemed as the Habermassian version of DPS it has yet to resolve numerous problems and myths. An increasing number people recognising

social media does not translate as a quality, trustworthy or verifiable news source. Its main challenge in this regard is to determine the trustworthiness, objectivity, and accuracy of the information being created and shared amongst the community on SM coupled by media literate users. (Chiu, Tsai, & Liang, 2015; Reisoglu, Toksoy, & Erenler, 2020).

In the digitally transformed media landscape SM has crashed the gate of traditional news providers to become a news source but the platform evades all responsibilities under the various the media and communication theories namely; Critical media theory, Social responsibility theory, Libertarian theory of the press, Propaganda model of the press, Inoculation theory and Habermas public sphere theory in serving the public interest and promoting the common good. These theories converge to aver that the media have a duty to inform the public, provide a forum for public debate, and serve as a check on power.

SM have highly democratised and shaped the public sphere where mostly the youths have chosen to hang around to have fun. SM are an amalgam of various diverse platforms, Internet-powered and a community-based platform for content creation, criticising, conversing, communicating, collaboration, sharing, distributing and marketing. SM have grown to become a massive tool with astronomical power of reach, impact and implications for society, economy, culture, education and lifestyles.

However, the prospects for equating Habermas' realm is undermined by a lack of media literacy skills in netizens. Public sphere refers to the concept of a deliberating space conceived by German philosopher Jürgen Habermas. His version of public sphere is an open, participatory and inclusive realm of public discourse. Individuals gather to engage in critical debate and reach a consensus on matters of public concern. Habermas' values elevate the digital mediasphere as a deliberative, reasoning, inclusive and interrogative platform to promote participatory audience for a healthier and more vibrant democracy. The public sphere provides an equal opportunity to all participants to enable them to express their opinions and engage in dialogue with others.

Social media which has a meteoric rise has facilitated distance learning, academic research, web-conference, medical consultation, remote dating and healthcare. It has had an impact on people from all walks of life worldwide. The use of SM is subjective, they are different things

to different people. In such a world, many will only dabble, some will dig deeper, and still others will master the skills that are most valued within the community. (Jenkins, H. - John D. & Catherine T., 2006).

'Different people will use different platforms for different needs.' (DataReportal). Generally, people use it as a aid to study, live, work and entertainment. To others it is a direct address from their mobile phone to megaphone to talk to the world about anything. To academics it is an online research depository of information. To teachers it is a frontier-less virtual learning platform. To physicians it is a consultation tool to facilitate remote diagnostics, consultation and treatment without moving from their clinics or hospitals. "For young people, in particular, social media news feeds, not news websites, are their major news sources" (Lee, 2015).

The inter-relatedness and mutual impact of the journalism and social media is an interest of this thesis. To journalists "social media is a crucial tool which enables them to report to a worldwide audience with the highest quality, most important information and opinions available on the internet to reach a wider audience than it could on its own" (Rucker, 2011).

### **Journalistic Objectivity, Fairness and Transparency**

Widespread concerns amongst journalists to protect the standard of journalism is apparent in a June 2017 study of Reuters Institute Fellowship Paper where Ilona Turtola argues that objectivity can be maintained on social media as long as journalists prioritize it. They suggest that to uphold objectivity on social media, transparency and fairness, or impartiality, are key. Fairness, in this context, refers to the act of considering and acknowledging different perspectives. However, journalists already take this approach on traditional platforms such as television, radio, and online media as 'they have internalised the principles of objectivity and apply them similarly on social media.' according to the respondents. (RIF Paper 2017)

SM's affordances are so comprehensive that it has become enormously attractive to each one of us without exception. SM encompasses a variety of attributes. SM are democratically pervasive and overarching to the point of disruption which is ineluctable. "Social media as a 'networked public' (Boyd, 2014) automatically link these platforms to concepts of freedom, democracy and civic engagement".

The Pearson literature review Lai, Emily R., (2011) cites a number of prominent research to explore the origins, importance, role and limitations of mass media and social media from a convergence of three approaches: (a) philosophical sources: Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and more recently, Matthew Lipman and Richard Paul, (1993) (b) psychological (Lewis & Smith, 1993 cited in Lai, Emily R., 2011) and (c) educational. (Sternberg, 1986). However, there are also many other ways in which social media can impact our world, including economic, political, and technological aspects. This study is interested in the significance of social media as a facilitator, educator and promoter of critical media skills as asserted and informed by a matrix of a mixed cohort of theories which are discussed in later chapters.

Add to this a total of 190 million bots which reside on some of the SM's major constituents; YouTube, Facebook (140 million bots), WhatsApp, Instagram (27 million bots), X (23 million bots) LinkedIn and Tik Tok where they cause rampage. They mimic human beings' browsing behaviours in a social network. They interact with other users, sharing information and messages. They spread false 'news' by tweeting repetitively and autonomously use the same false information to reply to or comment on the postings of real social media users and execute tasks. However, the MIT researchers found these automated accounts accelerated true and false news equally, inferring that people were more directly responsible for the spread of false news.

False news is often spread through social media to reach audiences. This is made possible through the use of bots, which are automated social media accounts, and flesh-and-blood people known as trolls, who create social media accounts specifically for the purpose of spreading false news and fuelling misinformation.

Bots can help to amplify the popularity of false news on social media by sharing and promoting it. Additionally, cookies are used to track people's website visits, create personality profiles, and show them false news content that they are most likely to believe and spread.

Clickbait is a technique used by advertisers to get the attention of users by using sensational headlines or news. When users click on these headlines, they are often redirected to advertisements, which generates money for the advertiser. However, clickbait can also be used to spread false news and misleading information. (Chen et al. 2015a)

This makes SM a contested realm, that reflects these differences, conflicts and tension as manifested. Axiological ethics tell us that SM should be a freely accessible agora free from profanity, abuse, hatred, prejudices and misuse. On the other hand, social media can be a breeding ground for false news and misinformation, which is shared and disseminated instantaneously. Information on social media can spread rapidly without fact-checking, which can make it difficult for people to distinguish between true and false information because individuals; (i) lack critical judgement to discern what is genuine information on social media, and (ii) are unable to verify the accuracy of any news or information.

Each SM channels has a set of community rules to stamp out offending content and comments millions of comments get removed daily which many ignore or defy. The highest number of offenders of YouTube community rules are from India. Google-owned YouTube removed over two million offending video clips from its platform in India during the second quarter of 2023 for violating content policies and for infringing community guidelines including harassment and cyberbullying, child safety and hateful or abusive contents.

It is also important to respect and tolerate the non-offending social interaction and differences in perspectives that exist in society. It is equally important to recognise that when too many people are expressing their beliefs and ideologies loudly, repetitively and simultaneously, creating a cacophony of noise that can be challenging to fathom out, understand and interpret the content. In such situations, it may be helpful to find ways to; (I) facilitate more constructive dialogue, (ii) encourage people to listen to and show tolerance for the perspectives of others, (iii) remember that it is possible to disagree with someone's beliefs or ideology without being disagreeable or disrespectful, and (iv) engage in meaningful conversations and exchanges of ideas without necessarily trying to convince others to adopt a particular perspective. For new media literate people, it is a requirement to justify any information on social media from various sources (Chen et al., 2014)

However, it's important to recognise that SM is beleaguered by the onslaught of misinformation and propaganda which challenges an individuals' ability to distinguish between credible and unreliable source of information. According to Eric Schmidt, chairman of Google every two days people produce more data and information than had been created

from the dawn of civilisation until 2003. Therefore, it's important for individuals to be proactive in seeking out accurate and reliable sources of information and to be mindful of the potential biases and agendas of different sources of information.

How can SM be relied upon as a tool for promoting media literacy skills? It's important for individuals to be proactive in developing their media literacy skills and to be mindful of the potential challenges and pitfalls of using SM as a source of information. Can it reform itself as deliberative platform to enable discussion and debates about media and their role in society to help to develop CT and media analysis skills?

The lightning speed of data explosion and circulation have far outstripped human's cognitive faculty, exacerbated by inherent cognitive bias, negative thoughts. People are influenced by their outlook and perception of the world, behaviour, decisions, beliefs, thoughts and emotions. These contribute to the formation of their mindset which incidentally has been engineered with inherited cognition and 'sanskara' (the inborn tendencies gained since we were three months old before birth)

SM has been proven to be a catalyst for accelerating, aggravating and amplifying the circulation of age old scourge of mis/dis-information. Today falsehoods spread just as quickly or even faster than accurate information. False news spreads faster around X due to speed of retweeting. False news stories are 70 per cent more likely to be retweeted than true stories are. It takes true stories about six times as long to reach 1,500 people as it does for false stories to reach the same number of people. (Soroush Vosoughi et al., 2018). The risk posed by WhatsApp as the most common environmental factor detrimental to society in India is mind boggling. It in particular will grow in the future so will its menace of false news. It handles 2 billion minutes of calls which are conducted daily and the top messaging app in 180 countries is itself besieged by false 'news'. This popular messaging application has been known as the biggest and fastest lies diffuser. WhatsApp murders': India struggles to combat crimes linked to messaging service. (The Guardian.)

Misinformation is gradually seeping into the mainstream media. Several factors have been implicated in the spread of false news, such as political polarisation, post-truth politics, motivated reasoning, confirmation bias, and SM algorithms. False news can reduce the impact

of real news by competing with it and has the potential to undermine trust in serious media coverage.

Much of what is discussed in social media is inspired by events in the news and, vice versa. (Manos Tsagkias et al., 09.02.2011). Blogosphere has revolutionised the online modality of communication to enable pluralistic conversation creating a major paradigm shift. (A. Rosenbloom, 2004). The basis of democracy is not information, but conversation and the cultivation of what might be called a “culture of communication. Research indicate that:

(a) Social media platforms can take steps to reduce the spread of misinformation by implementing features such as fact-checking labels or warning messages (Facts et al., 2019; Lazer et al., 2018).

(b) Media literacy education can help individuals develop CT skills that allow them to better evaluate the credibility of information they encounter on social media (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017; van der Heide et al., 2018).

(c) collaboration between social media platforms, fact-checkers, and other stakeholders can be effective in identifying and addressing the spread of misinformation (Facts et al., 2019) and the use of algorithms and machine learning techniques can help identify and prioritise the fact-checking of misinformation on social media (Shao et al., 2018).

Vygotsky's (1978) theory of cognitive development and its application to teaching and learning is significant as it emphasises the importance of CT. It is defined as a cognitive skill that allows individuals to collect and process information effectively (Grosser, 2006). Grosser (2006), argues that many learners struggle with CT and face difficulties in constructing their own knowledge, formulating their own viewpoint, and solving problems through logical inquiry.

The traditional teaching techniques, which emphasise rote-learning or memorisation, are said to contribute to poor CT skills in learners. As a result, many individuals leave school without the ability to engage in CT, which is necessary for media literacy. The author suggests that educational programs that promote CT can benefit learners by helping them develop these higher-level cognitive skills. “School is the one place where it is absolutely crucial to train future citizens to understand, to criticise and to create information.” (CoE). “States should take



measures to promote media and digital literacy, including by covering these topics as part of the regular school curriculum and by engaging with civil society and other stakeholders to raise awareness about these issues.” (OSCE)

Assertions presented in the passage are grounded solely on Grosser's (2006) research and may not align with the perspectives of other experts in the field. The limited examination of Vygotsky's theory and the scarcity of supporting sources also raise concerns regarding the validity and applicability of the claims made in the passage. Despite this, the passage does provide a basic understanding of the significance of CT in education, but further investigation is required to validate its claims.

Mis/dis-information poses risks to children as they daily experience it in their lives. UNICEF argues that digital mis/mis/dis-information can proliferate through people, bots and troll factories – organised groups that wage coordinated mis/mis/dis-information campaigns – for many reasons: to intentionally deceive and harm, to gain political influence, for financial gain, or unwittingly to share information or garner approval and popularity.(Steven Vosloo et al.. UNICEF)

Both Facebook and Instagram were found to have negative effects on young people's mental health, with Instagram having the most negative overall impact. Specific negative effects of these social media platforms include bullying, FOMO (fear of missing out), negative body image, anxiety, depression, loneliness, and disrupted sleep. Facebook was found to have particularly negative effects on sleep.

Social media content are less safe, trusted and verifiable than previously thought because media content users do not possess the skills to discern the artefacts which are purposively embedded in user-generated and social media content in the following terms: The perspective or bias of the creator, (2) the accuracy and reliability of the information, (3) the potential for manipulation or propaganda, (4) the impact of the content on the audience.

Artefacts can be thought of as the visible or discernible features of the content that can be used to understand its context, purpose, accuracy, and potential impact. However, it is important to note that the term 'artefact' is often used in a more specific way to refer to physical objects or documents that are created or produced by humans, such as artefacts from

a particular historical period or cultural group.

It is clear that addressing misinformation on social media requires a multifaceted approach that involves joint efforts of stakeholders including social media platforms, authorities, education department, educationists, teachers, parents, students, voluntary sectors, online pedagogy providers and spiritual masters.

Simply making information available is not enough for today's public. Citizens must be trained to be predisposed to understand the ultimate motive of the news, messages and information. People tend to end up becoming a librarian rather than a truth seeker of the truth and knowledge. Today's audiences' autonomy is vital for accessing, selecting, evaluating, analysing and reacting to what they read, and how they should be able to contribute content and opinions, too.

This signifies a paradigmatic shift which is no less than a media revolution. It is not meant to be the death of journalism as known in the US 'but it's the birth of a democratic movement that emphasises some of journalism's key factors: transparency, honesty, and giving a voice to the person who doesn't have one.' (Ruth A. Harper 2010). This juncture throws up a pivotal question: Is it a democratic movement to uphold the journalistic standards and values as foregrounded?

### **Social Media as a Free Market Public Service**

The Internet is still too young to assess the effects of the divestiture of telecommunications monopolies and the multiplication of channels of communication on the public sphere. They question whether the shift from public to private sector in the name of the 'public interest' is truly beneficial. The free market competition philosophy does not guarantee public argumentation, freedom of speech and quality of content, which are essential for the creation and maintenance of a public sphere of communication. (Iosifidis, Peter, 2014)

The findings do not support the idea that the free market is unable to provide quality and trusted online news and argues that publicly funded media is necessary to ensure the public interest is served. They raise important questions about the impact of deregulation and the shift towards a private sector-led public sphere on the availability of high-quality and trusted

content.

Social media platforms have the potential to democratise information, provide a platform for diverse voices and perspectives but its role as a public service media is complex and debated. However, there are also concerns about the potential for misinformation, the spread of hate speech, trolls and harassment, and the impact of algorithms on the distribution of content.

One of the major criticisms of social media as a public service media is that they prioritise engagement and profits over accuracy and quality of information. The algorithm that social media platforms use to curate content often prioritises sensational or viral content, which can lead to the spread of misinformation. The lack of fact-checking and content moderation on many social media platforms can make it difficult for users to understand how content is being curated, aggregated and moderated leading to confusion and mistrust. Credible sources from unreliable ones

### **Social Media Literacies**

The adapted version, which may be referred to as “Social Media Literacies” or “Social Network Literacies”, is largely based on Jenkins’ work and needs further examination through which some changes and additions could be made: A set of social media literacies that are essential for navigation and participation in diverse networks. These literacies include Play, Simulation, Performance, Appropriation, Multitasking, Judgement, Transmedia Navigation, Networking, Collective Intelligence, Transgenre, and Translingual Navigation. Jenkins et al., (2006) stress that these skills are necessary for 'full and meaningful participation in the information society. They describe the 12 NML skills “as prerequisite to being active, creative, and ethical participants in participatory culture.” They are as follows:

1. Play - the capacity to experiment with one’s surroundings as a form of problem-solving.
2. Simulation - the ability to interpret and construct dynamic models of real-world processes.
3. Performance - the ability to adopt alternative identities for the purpose of improvisation and discovery

4. Appropriation - the ability to meaningfully sample and remix media content.
5. Multitasking - the ability to scan one's environment and shift focus as needed to salient details.
6. Distributed Cognition - the ability to interact meaningfully with tools that expand mental capacities.
7. Collective Intelligence - the ability to pool knowledge and compare notes with others toward a common goal.
8. Judgement - the ability to evaluate the reliability and credibility of different information sources.
9. Transmedia Navigation - the ability to follow the flow of stories and information across multiple modalities.
10. Networking - the ability to search for, synthesize, and disseminate information.
11. Negotiation - the ability to travel across diverse communities, discerning.
12. Visualization: The ability to interpret and create data representations for the purposes of expressing ideas, finding patterns, and identifying trends.

*(Source: Jenkins et al. 2006; Ioana Literat, 2014; Osman Solmaz, 2017)*

From a social constructivist perspective media literacy is a social process, in which individuals and groups interact to create meaning and understanding SM, as a collaborative tool, can provide opportunities for participation and the development of cultural competencies and social skills needed for full engagement. It emphasises the role that collective beliefs, values, and practices play in shaping how individuals interact with and interpret media.

SM can evolve to boost the participatory culture as "schools as institutions have been slow to adapt." (Warschauer & Matuchniak, 2010). The greatest potential for change can be found in after-school programs and informal learning communities (Jenkins, 2009).

To address this issue, schools and after-school programs must give more attention to fostering what the authors refer to as the "new media literacies" - a set of cultural competencies and social skills required for youth in the new media landscape (Jenkins et al., 2006). This participatory culture shifts the focus of literacy from individual expression to community

involvement, with the new literacies often involving social skills developed through collaboration and networking (Jenkins, 2006).

These skills are built upon the foundation of traditional literacy, research skills, technical skills, and critical analysis skills taught in the classroom (Warschauer & Matuchniak, 2010). In conclusion, there is a need to prioritise the development of the new media literacies in order to fully participate in the participatory culture of social media.

The role of NMLs for participation in SNS, is the functions that NMLs serve. They allow users to engage with multiple resources and a networked audience to perform and transform their identities while experiencing transnational mobility, which allows for further diversification of resources and audiences in an individual's network. Thus, the current study offers contributions to the scholarly discourse on identity presentation in CMC-contexts (O. Solmaz 2017)

Multilingual students possess truncated NMLs, which facilitate their participation in online diverse spaces. The differences in the refinement of the literacies do not seem to prevent students' successful participation in online social networks.

The study contributes to the scholarly discourse on identity presentation in CMC contexts and aligns with the core principles of media literacy education. The researcher notes that social media literacies play a crucial role in allowing users to engage with multiple resources and a networked audience to perform and transform their identities while experiencing transnational mobility.

The study provides support for the Participatory Culture framework by Jenkins et al. (2006), which states that the successful engagement of individuals in new media sites can be achieved through the practice of certain new media literacies (NMLs). The framework was adapted to the social media context and renamed as "Social Media Literacies" or "Social Network Literacies". This adaptation revealed that multilingual students had a truncated version of these literacies, which allowed them to participate in online diverse spaces, despite the differences between the various literacies.

These literacies are essential for successful participation in diverse online networks and align with the Core Principles of Media Literacy Education by the National Association for Media

Literacy Education (2007). Jenkins et al.'s (2006).

### **Understanding Man as Media?**

Man is the only sublime media that matters because 'quia homo cogitat,' adapted from French philosopher René Descartes' (1637) 'Ergo Cogito Sum' which translates to 'man thinks therefore he is.' Machine, devices and non-human resources do not think perceive and understand. This is important to create, communicate and share thoughts, perceive, process and interpret information. So we are at the centre of all temporal activities.

This means man is one of the indispensable wheel where cogs of various different limited and unlimited resources are being shaped, constructed and demolished to start the entire cycle again because we are as Carl Sagan put it 'not smart' enough to comprehend what we need to adopt and adapt to. With inherently limited cognitive development man is trailing behind while technological advancement drastically outstrips him. The 17th century English poet John Donne wrote, 'No man is an island' but his self-fish disposition and hostile and egoistic attitude was inimical to his own growth.

The concept that 'man is media' is clearly implicit in the dialogic arguments between Dewey and Lippmann. Dewey in his response to Lippmann's ideas on media and democracy, stressed the importance of communication and conversation in cultivating a democratic culture. Lippmann argues that "vision is a spectator" and "hearing is a participator," suggesting that information alone is not enough for democracy to function effectively. (The Public and its Problems, Lippmann. 3 May 1922)

There is no other media known to man which is more powerful than man himself. In the matrix of this planet man is the only locus of all that transpires. Any debates about the media without repositioning man is flawed because man is both the subjective and objective creator and consumer of content. Lines between interpersonal and mass communication have been blurred (Pearce, 2009a). Motivations, control, constructs and concepts such as mindfulness, self-efficacy, and competence are motivational for news consumption and ultimately interplay with news media system knowledge to influence one's overall level of news media literacy. (ibid). These are initiated by man not machine.

Unlike the inanimate media man has all the power to decide, initiate any actions include creating, saving, distributing, communicating, conversing, contesting and confusing too. Man uses his cognitive faculty to determine what he wants to use and how he wishes to respond to environmental stimuli. He builds his knowledge gained and gleaned from the empirical experiences from his five senses for seeing, listening, touching, tasting and smelling besides expressing his mind. Newspaper, radio, television, computer, interface, router, network switch or the Internet do not decide on his behalf. Whether one uses it rightly or wrongly that's another matter. Contradicting the stated and commonly misunderstood 'role of the media to inform or communicate with the greatest number of people possible all at once,' the reality is that man is the sole and ultimate actuator behind all activities.

As a prosumer is both the creator and user he/she has the exclusive power to generate thoughts because one exists. An individual possesses the privileges in the decision making process which influences the entire process of creating, storing and disseminating. On the other hand, remove man from the equation there is nothing under the sun capable of understanding, discerning, analysing, evaluating, interrogating, interpreting and determining content without his power of discretion influenced by his mindset.

In the post-truth age people are blinded with a veil of myths, illusions, misconceptions, superstitions, pretension, temptation, mis/dis/-information and personally unjustified beliefs. When people run out of justification they tend to hide behind their own fabricated news or words. Or if you deny them information they will fall for anything. Monk Paramhansa Yogananda says a starved mind gives “credence to an empty mind being the devil’s workshop” is essentially an atheistic view of life. This is motivational for inducting children into SE in order is prepare them for society in a way that will help them to remain idealistic and to realise their potential. This probably gave rise to ‘Alternative facts’, a phrase coined by Kellyanne Conway, an advisor to President Donald Trump as a euphemism to mislead but was immediately dismissed by TV show journalist Chuck Todd as “Alternative facts are not facts. They’re falsehoods.” If not trained or warned unsuspecting school children will be deluded with falsehoods as a euphemism which is liable to create distortions in communication. In the contemporary digital convergence 'the quality of news and information that individuals encounter online remains a source of critical contemporary concern.

(Herasimenka, A., et al., 2022)

The digital data ocean is increasingly overwhelming school children. Using the Internet for their studies and social activities they are exposed to all sorts of content. Messages are wrapped up in rhetoric to hide their agenda or motives. This requires young learners to be equipped with analytical techniques to enable them to interpret online content correctly and to unpack the hidden meaning of media messages. Children need to be trained to detect innuendoes, distortion, bias, conflict, false news, sarcasm and fabricated content, which has a hidden agenda.

### **Social Media and Public Interest**

Private global digital giants have emerged to dominate the world markets. This naturally prioritises the importance of 'private interest' at the expense of 'public interest' which has led to a dilemma. This has raised questions over the economic theory that the 'free market competition can deliver diversity and a free marketplace of ideas, essential goals for the creation and maintenance of a public sphere of communication,' according to Petros Iosifidis, who also quipped; 'what public argumentation, freedom of speech and other desirable objectives such as quality of content guaranteed in an age of information abundance and online media?' (Iosifidis, Petros, 2011).

Public interest as a normative principle and core values serves to underpin effective media policies which most media policymakers are 'expected to adhere to in their decision-making process'. (McQuail, 1992a). The rationale for public service broadcasters lies in serving the public interest by providing the communication needs of citizens and society. (McQuail, 2000). In most academic studies of policy, media theory, public interest and diversity the invocation of Van Cuilenburg's and Denis McQuail's (2003) empirical work is routine. The consequential shift in this new paradigm shape the definition of public interest as an ideal of PSB which is a normative tool for fostering citizenship and democracy. Iosifidis argues that public interest is the expression of 'normative criteria: pluralism, diversity, freedom, access, objectivity and competition and has to be adhered to by policymakers.

EU member states perceived broadcasting is too important to be left to the profit-seeking mechanisms of the free market due to its significance for democracy. Considering If the



answer to this question were positive, one would probably argue that publicly funded media are no longer needed. However, even free market press (The Economist, 2006) argue that online media fail to deliver much new quality content, while pro-market regulatory bodies such as Ofcom point out that commercial broadcast media may be less able to deliver content quality and variety due to rising competition and lack of resources as advertising spending gradually moves to the Internet (see Ward, 2006).

Public interest is a guiding star which is underscored by normative responsibilities of the media. To McQuail (1992a: 3), the notion can be understood as the "informational, cultural and social benefits to the wider society which go beyond the immediate, particular and individual interests" and can be applied to public service media (PSM). These benefits may include universality, minority provision, the preservation of national culture and identity, and the provision of educational and informational services.

McQuail also notes that the principle of freedom of speech and publication may need to be supported on the grounds of long-term benefits to society, even if these benefits are not immediately apparent or clear to many individuals. Therefore, the concept of the public interest encompasses the collective cultural, political, social, and informational benefits to society that serve both democratic processes and well-being of society. Individual claims are not included in this concept.

### **Theory of Journalism**

In the digital era, journalism is evolving to tackle the challenges of counterfeit news and propaganda. Multiplatform journalism, which involves the use of various digital channels and platforms to produce, distribute, and consume news, is becoming increasingly important in this context. This allows journalists to reach wider audiences and to engage with them in new ways. However, it also poses new challenges, such as the need to ensure the accuracy, credibility, and independence of news in an environment where propaganda is prevalent.

It threatens the credibility and authority of journalism, as well as the ability of journalists to inform the public and hold power to account while offering new opportunities to engage with audiences, to experiment with new forms of storytelling, and to promote media literacy and

CT. They are also experimenting with new forms of verification and fact-checking, such as using digital tools, crowdsourcing, and collaboration with other media and civil society organisations. Some journalists and news organisations are also engaging with audiences on social media and other digital platforms to foster dialogue, build trust, and promote media literacy.

However, these efforts are not without their own set of challenges. The use of digital tools and platforms to produce, distribute, and consume news can be subject to censorship, surveillance, and manipulation. Moreover, the rise of counterfeit news also poses a threat to the independence and credibility of journalism, particularly if journalists hastily rely too heavily on social media and other digital platforms to gather information and engage with audiences.

Multiplatform journalism is evolving to tackle the challenges of counterfeit news and propaganda in the digital era. New forms of reporting and storytelling are being developed to reach wider audiences and to promote media literacy and CT needed to ensure the accuracy, credibility, and independence of news, as well as balancing the use of digital platforms and social media for both producing and distributing news. The statement presented highlights the important role that journalists and news media played during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Journalism's mission as an essential service is especially crucial during crises, including reporting on wars, environmental issues, natural disasters, and public health emergencies. Therefore, many countries acknowledged journalism as an essential service during the COVID-19 pandemic curfews. However, the pandemic's health crisis was aggravated by a lack of crucial information, and false and misleading information about the virus and vaccines spread a "disinfodemic." This emphasised the need for more high-quality journalism to expose and disprove such content. As UNESCO noted in two policy briefs on the COVID-19 disinfodemic, "access to reliable and accurate information is critical in the best of times, but during a crisis like the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, it can be a matter of life and death."

It is true that journalists and news media have played a vital role in providing accurate, up-to-date, and accessible information about the pandemic. Darrell West, Vice President and Director of Governance Studies at Brookings, argues that the news media has a major role to play in combatting fake news. West argues that the government should invest in media

literacy so that voters can identify false information and stop it to spread. (Darrell M. West (18.12.2017)

Although several theories of journalism have emerged over the years to explain and understand its role and purpose in society none has become irrelevant for the digital convergence era. All of these theories provide different perspectives on these dual functions of journalism in society. They continue to be articulated by scholars and practitioners in the field.

The watchdog theory of journalism states that its primary role is to act as a watchdog for the public, keeping a vigilant eye on government and other powerful institutions and holding them accountable for their actions.

The democratic theory of journalism states that it plays a vital role in maintaining a democratic society by providing citizens with the information they need to make informed decisions about political and social issues.

The civic theory posits that journalism should be proactive in promoting civic engagement and public dialogue, rather than simply reporting on events after they have occurred.

The critical theory emphasises journalism's role in critiquing and challenging dominant power structures, rather than simply reproducing them.

The public service theory of journalism avers that it should be considered a public service and that the media has a responsibility to serve the public interest by providing accurate and reliable information.

The objective theory views journalism should be objective and impartial, avoiding bias and presenting facts in a neutral manner.

The interpretive theory argues that journalism should be interpretive, providing context and analysis to help readers understand the news and its implications.

The "Four Theories of The Press" have been dislocated by Hallin and Mancini's model for developed countries, both are complementary in meeting the varied needs of developing countries like India according to Siebert et al's. Furthermore, their work provides a more systematic and empirical study of media models as compared with the Four Theories of the

Press. The authors argue that media models are defined based on the consensus of the basic premise of the theories which state that "the press always takes on the form and coloration of social and political structures within which it operates." (Hallin, D. C., & Mancini, P. 2004).

The regulatory authorities' ambivalent approach to the values of journalism, big data and discourses of the lightening speed of content circulation does not allow adequate time to scrutinise content. Such incessant flood of content is overwhelming. It is difficult to understand news and the media where education is expected to redefine in-class curriculum learning to include dialectic philosophy for the 21st century. It follows that today's avalanche of media content and its implications for society prompt fact checking of news which is even more imperative. (Fleming 2014; Hobbs, 2010b). The edict of journalism is not an option for India. Schudson's, (2008) version of journalism is overly oriented towards democracy. Journalism may be necessary for democracy but it is not a substitute for it and cannot producedemocracy. Besides the primary functions of informing he has cited a further six key responsibilities of news media:

Dictated by 'public interest' these functions are geared towards upholding the ideals of democracy as guided by axiological norms and values: (1) investigation - keeping government officials accountable, (2) analysis - journalists help deconstruct major events and news stories to make it comprehensible to the public, (3) public forum - the web as increasingly important in fulfilling this role journalism inspires people to mobilise. He also suggests that a journalist-as-advocate model might well work in a pluralist news environment and forum, (4) social empathy - is the human interest story 'but beyond that' it is the method of using individuals to create collective yearnings among decision-makers for change, (5) mobilisation - urging readers to take action, voting, marching, protesting, boycotting, or using any of the other tools we have access to as citizens, and (6) promotion of representative democracy - of representative democracy in a journalist-as-advocate model to protect minority rights and advance liberal democracy and to cover institutions that have been taken for granted. The consequential explosion of media texts is inundating us through the push and pull broadcast, broadband and mobile platforms. Big data and discourses including news stories are created and distributed in lightning speed at the expense of journalistic principles; accuracy, objectivity and truth. The stream of content in a multimedia format and multi-modal

form has an impact on our mode and methods of production storage and distribution.

### **The Significance of Social Media**

SM is a new communication paradigm shift for people of all walks of life worldwide. It is a phenomenon of the contemporary new media. As an inter-connected, interactive, ubiquitous and engaging resource it plays a multiple role in people's lives albeit not real. It is like our dogs which is always waiting on us, always there to be with us and show us its affection, so are WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and others in their multiple role with their affordances to serve us as an instant messenger, waiter, teacher, preacher, companion, entertainer, caller and monitor. Although, initially used for personal reasons SM has been recognised as a collaborative environment for discussion as Deleuze states: "The virtual is opposed not to the real but to the actual. The virtual is fully real in so far as it is virtual. Exactly what Proust said of states of resonance must be said of the virtual: 'Real without being actual, ideal without being abstract'" (DR, 272)

"The term SM is defined as 'a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allows the creation and exchange of user generated content. (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Carr and Hayes (2015) put forward a similar definition: 'Internet-based, dis-entrained, and persistent channels of mass personal communication facilitating perceptions of interactions among users, deriving value primarily from user-generated content.' Fundamentally, SM are designed to allow interaction among people to share sound, events, video, audio, images, photos and opinions quickly, efficiently, symmetrically or asymmetrically for personal or business purposes.

In no time the phenomenon of SM has evolved into a predominant platform. In today's digital convergence SM are recognised for its myriads of benefits. This has encouraged the release of pent-up ideas, feelings and expression from the pre-era. The avalanche of content testifies that the contribution of SM open access to citizens as well as ideologues to self-publish and share content.

SM's incursion into journalistic environment has raised several questions regarding its role in channelling, creating, distributing or sharing news stories. Is SM exploited for promoting false

news as a business model for creating income or profit? Whatever the motives of propaganda SM have undermined the credibility of journalism. The cacophony of discourses in the form of thoughts, ideas, views and comments bounce off on the platforms of SM reflect a number of salient beliefs or 'isms': (a) cliquism, (b) dialecticism, (c) hedonism, (d) egotism, (e) jingoism, (f) mysticism, (g) narcissism and (h) trivialism.

This study refers to the six most popular social networking websites, video, message and image creating and sharing like YouTube, WhatsApp, TikTok, X, Instagram, and Facebook; specifically a micro blogging, networking, news-breaking microblogging X and social networking and job search platform LinkedIn. X is, video sharing and enter are deemed to make up the SM. LinkedIn, Pinterest, and YouTube are viewed as the most ethical SM companies. The study found that across four countries; Brazil, India, US and UK countries, most citizens say that they largely do not use SM platforms to receive news.

Globally more than 2 billion people which represents over 40 per cent of the global internet population use WhatsApp. However, among Indians who are not politically interested, the most trusted source is WhatsApp (46 per cent) who use it for receiving news on a daily basis.

Producers, creators and publishers of media texts shape opinion by targetting thsir audience with sensational, subliminal, rhetorical and surreal advertisements or content making them too compelling to resist. One study found that users in rich countries touch their phones 2,600 times a day. It is not uncommon to users of Facebook that instead of imparting wisdom, it dishes out 'compulsive stuff that tends to reinforce people's biases.' Teens aged 13 to 18- years-old spend the most time on SM, with an average of 7 hours and 1 minute per day, while TikTok was the least trusted platform for this purpose, at 24 per cent. YouTube tops the 2022 teen online landscape among the platforms covered in the Center's new survey, as it is usedby 95 per cent of teens.

There were 658.0 million internet users in India in January 2022. India's internet penetration rate stood at 47.0 per cent of the total population at the start of 2022.

Facebook had 329.7 million users in India in early 2022. Data published in Meta's advertising resources indicate that ads on Facebook Messenger reached 122.5 million users in India in early 2022.

Updates to Google's advertising resources indicate that YouTube had 467.0 million users in India in early 2022. YouTube ads reached 71.0 percent of India's total internet user base (regardless of age) in January 2022. There were 1.14 billion cellular mobile connections in India at the start of 2022. X's advertising resources indicate that X had 23.60 million users in India in early 2022. (Datareportal, 2022).

### **Social Media As A Challenger To Traditional Journalism**

Social media have emerged as a significant challenger to traditional journalism in several ways. Its the platform where the pride of journalism has been displaced by the prejudice prevalent on the platform. Habermas believed that reasoning can dissolve prejudices and broaden the scope and power of the public sphere while strengthening democracy.

It has provided new opportunities for journalists to find, verify, and disseminate information, as well as to interact with their audience (D'Alessio & Allen, 2014). It has also allowed for greater collaboration and information sharing among journalists, as well as the opportunity to reach new audiences through the viral nature of social media (Huang et al., 2016).

However, there are also challenges associated with the use of social media by journalists. The speed and reach of social media can make it more difficult for journalists to verify the accuracy of information and to fact-check before publishing (Bennett, 2015). In light of the growing influence of social media as a tool for global news reporting, this thesis aims to investigate the impact it has on the future of journalism. The research will explore the ways in which social media has changed not only the distribution of news, but also the reporting methods used by journalists. Studies such as ING (2014) have found that a significant percentage of journalists feel less constrained by journalistic rules when using social media compared to traditional media.

Researchers like Lee (2015) have noted that journalists who are active on social media tend to deviate from traditional norms. The fast-paced nature of social media news reporting can often lead to a prioritisation of speed over accuracy, resulting in the dissemination of misinformation and 'false news'.

Besides, upholding the following key ethical issues relating to journalism as outlined by the UN in its Journalism Education course presents a tough challenge for social media which involves a critical examination of key ethical issues and values relating to: “truth-telling, such as journalistic autonomy; evidence, fact-checking, and corroboration; sources, named and anonymous; clarity, fairness and bias; photo and digital manipulation and misrepresentation; invention; speculation, rumours and gossip; cheque-book journalism; the Internet; quotations; plagiarism; “objectivity”. (Model Curricula for Journalism Education, UNESCO 2007)

Social media should promote ethical issues including civic duty, such as: news judgement; diversity (including racial and cultural identities); gender and sexual orientation; stereotyping; children; coverage of state security issues; standards of taste, including suicides, funerals, and pictures of dead bodies; privacy issues, including public figures/private lives, celebrities, naming names, rape victims, consent, emergencies, high-jacking, kidnapping, terrorism, wars, massacres, violence. The course will pay special attention to sensitivity and safety issues in reporting on conflict. (ibid)

While social media has the potential to enhance the practice of journalism, it is important for journalists and news organisations to be mindful of its limitations and to take steps to ensure that they maintain the standards of traditional journalism, such as accuracy, timeliness, fairness, and objectivity.

### **Habermassian Public Sphere Evolves As Social Media**

The concept of the "public sphere," as developed by philosopher Jürgen Habermas, refers to a space where every individual has a guaranteed right to can come together to freely, openly discuss and debate issues of public concern. Habermas argues that the emergence of the public sphere was a crucial aspect of the development of modern democracy, as it allowed for the formation of public opinion and the creation of a more informed and engaged citizenry.

There is debate about whether social media can function as a public sphere in the same way as Habermas described. Social media platforms can provide a forum for individuals to come together and discuss a wide range of issues and ideas. They can also allow for greater participation in public discourse by individuals who might not have a platform to share their



views in more traditional media.

It is also argued that it DPS can evolve as a reincarnated version of the Habermasian public sphere to checkmate government ultra vires, to stamp out corruption in public office, to bring the government to account for its wrongs and rally support to challenge injustice, unfairness and infringement of freedom of speech. Governments around the world have recognised the significant influence of centralised information and communication platforms in monitoring and censoring the actions and speech of citizens. Could social media develop the potential to either empower or silence individuals? It is important to consider the impact of this new era on citizens.

On the other hand, there are also concerns that social media can fall short of the ideals of the Habermasian public sphere in several ways. The algorithms used by social media platforms can limit the exposure of certain viewpoints, creating echo chambers and limiting the diversity of opinions that are represented. Social media can be vulnerable to manipulation and misinformation, which can distort public discourse and undermine the quality of debate.

While social media can provide some of the attributes of a public sphere, it is important to be mindful of its limitations and to take steps to ensure that it is a forum for open and honest dialogue and debate which should be free from vitiation.

It is to be recognised that social media platforms can be a potential minefield for false news for a number of reasons: (a) algorithm often prioritises content that is likely to be shared or engaged with, which can lead to the amplification of false or misleading information, (b) intentional campaign for spreading misinformation, false or misleading information on social media to manipulate public opinion and (c) people may be more likely to trust information that they see on social media, especially if it comes from a source that they follow. This encourages false or misleading information to be believed and spread and SM have become inherently linked to mental health in youngsters, who tend to be heavy users.

Unlike traditional news organisations, social media platforms do not adhere to professional code of journalistic conducts ethics, professional conduct and journalism standards which require journalists to comply with the norms and rules in assessing the accuracy, trustworthiness and objectivity of the information which lets false or misleading information.

“ loggers do not have to comply with strict guidelines regarding formatting or the use of formal language.” (Rodrygo L. T. et al., 2012)

SM can be a fun way for children to stay connected with friends and family. Current studies show that Facebook is predominantly for narcissism and hedonism people. At the same time SM also present potential risks such as cyberbullying, invasion of privacy, identity theft, exposure to offensive content, and the presence of strangers who may attempt to groom other users. It is important for both children and adults to be aware of these risks and take steps to protect their personal information on social media.

### **Strategy for Combatting Counterfeit News**

After failing to stamp out counterfeit news news consumers are now left more significant action against online misinformation: Facebook, for example, is currently working on methods for stronger detection and verification of false news, and on ways to provide warning labels on false content – yet only now that the US presidential election is over. The government's reactions to the exploitation of social media have become imperative due to the requirement of providing citizens with accurate and up-to-date information to tackle the pandemic and the spread of misinformation (Hua and Shaw, 2020).

Literature review foregrounded a number of strategies to counter the intrusion of counterfeit news in social media as well as in journalism. But the most effective, Media scholar Nolan Higdon, has argued is a CML education focused on teaching students how to detect false news is the most effective way for mitigating the pernicious influence of propaganda.

### **The Anatomy of False News: A Critical News Education**

In his book 'The Anatomy of false News: A Critical News Education,' Higdon offers a ten-step guide for detecting false news:

1. Investigate the source - Who wrote the article, and do they have a history of writing reliable content?

2. Read beyond the headline - Is the headline misleading or sensationalized?
3. Check the date - Is the article recent enough to be relevant?
4. Assess the supporting evidence - Is there supporting evidence for the claims made in the article?
5. Verify the author - Is the author an expert on the topic?
6. Check for other reports - Are there other reports that corroborate the claims made in the article?
7. Examine the website - Is the website reputable?
8. Look at the comments - Do the comments support or challenge the claims made in the article?
9. Consider your biases - Are you looking at the article with an open mind?
10. Consult a fact-checking website - Are there any fact-checking websites that have looked into the article? (Higdon, Nolan. (15.08.2020).

Len Masterman, a prominent figure in the international media education movement and well-known to readers of *Mediacy*, has been extensively quoted in the Media Literacy Internet List-Serv. His book, *Teaching the Media* (Comedia Books, 1985), is regarded as the definitive text on the subject for secondary school teachers.

Multiple strategies for fighting false news are underway for various types of false news. Politicians in certain autocratic and democratic countries have demanded effective self-regulation and legally-enforced regulation in varying forms, of SM and web search engines. As concerns about false 'news' continue to grow, there has been an increased focus on developing automated solutions for detecting problematic online content. The British government's attempt to come up with a digital literacy strategy to empower children and adults with skills emphasises the need to negotiate insidious information in the age of digital convergence. PSM creates programs that aim to assist viewers in cultivating an unbiased perspective towards the media and the reporting of events. Throughout history, PSM has dedicated itself to producing educational programs that promote well-informed decisions

about media consumption. Numerous EBU Members such as BBC (UK), France 5 (FR), UR (SE), WDR (DE),(Westdeutscher Rundfunk Köln.2021). WDR für alle - Das sind wir! France Télévisions. (2021). Education and others have established specialised channels to actively promote media literacy, serving as an exemplar for other PSM organizations. PSM's production of programs about their work fosters interaction and critical comprehension, which are fundamental aspects of active citizenship in democratic societies. (European Broadcasting Union. 2021).

However, in order to build effective algorithms for identifying false news, it is necessary to go beyond broad definitions of the concept and identify specific, distinguishing features that can be used in machine learning. In this study, we examined the concept of false news, which has come to encompass more than just false information and has been used as a tool by partisans to cast doubt on the veracity of claims made by those with opposing political views.

Seven different types of online content are identified that fall under the label of false news: (false news, polarized content, satire, misreporting, commentary, persuasive information, and citizen journalism) and contrasted them with 'real news.

The emergence of social media is a new phenomenon of the post-truth digital world era. Its role has been appreciated for its multifaceted benefits enjoyed by society at large regardless of status, qualifications, experience, wisdom or demographics. For billions of citizens from all walks of life SM have become a metaphor for emancipation, empowerment and most importantly enfranchisement for the freedom for expression and facilitation for conversation, articulation, communication, distribution and collaboration.

SM are a phenomenal subset of the new media powered by the Internet. SM are ubiquitous, engaging, cooperative and collaborative aggregates of platform which encourages participatory and inclusive audience.

In our digitally dominated landscape, marked by a 'copy and paste' culture, reliance on search engines, and interactions guided by templates, we've become accustomed to consuming information without questioning its source or validity. Students, in particular, have fallen into the routine of taking search engine results at face value. It's crucial that they are educated to cultivate a critical mindset, enabling them to navigate and guard against the adverse effects of

media consumption.

Numerous nations have adopted stringent measures, citing the proliferation of counterfeit news as their rationale. The question arises: how do these governmental actions, aimed at tightening control and imposing restrictions, impact freedom of speech? There is an increasing concern globally over governments enacting limitations on freedom of speech. Often, these limitations are justified on grounds such as national security, maintaining public order, or combating misinformation, hate speech, and other detrimental online content.

Such instances highlight the profound effects that restrictions on social media usage can have on the freedom of speech and expression. They prompt critical discussions about the balance between national security, public order, and the rights to freedom of expression and access to information. It is crucial for governments to thoughtfully navigate these considerations, aiming to find a middle ground that addresses the issue of harmful online content while safeguarding essential rights and freedoms.

The safeguarding of freedom of opinion and expression hinges on the individual's critical autonomy, which is essential for recognizing their right to information. To grasp the significance of being able to access, evaluate, respond to, and produce content, one must cultivate media literacy skills. The contribution of media education to formal education, particularly in teaching critical thinking (CT) to children, expands their perspectives, empowering them to develop their own informed worldviews. Such capabilities are crucial for the preservation of freedom of expression and information, foundational pillars of democratic societies.

### **How Some Nation States Combat Counterfeit News ?**

These are some examples of how government restrictions on freedom of speech can have a significant impact on access to information and democratic societies. It is important to address harmful online content with the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms, such as freedom of expression and access to information. Some governments' restrictions and their impact on freedom of speech:

1. China: This nation state has implemented strict censorship laws and regulations, known as the "Great Firewall of China," which restrict access to online content that is

deemed politically sensitive or a threat to national security. Consequently suppressing political dissent, freedom of expression, and access to information (Diamond, L.2015).

2. Russia: It has also implemented restrictions on freedom of speech, including laws that regulate online speech and criminalise the spreading of extremist or terrorist content and have been used to silence critical voices and restrict access to information (Gudkov, L. 2018).
3. Turkey: The country has imposed strict restrictions on freedom of speech, including online speech, as part of its ongoing efforts to combat terrorism and maintain public order. But has led to the censorship of online content, the arrest of journalists and activists, and the suppression of critical voices (Kaya, F., 2017).
4. United States: The US government has also implemented restrictions on freedom of speech, particularly in response to the spread of extremist and terrorist content online which have caused the censorship of online speech and raised concerns about the impact on free expression and access to information (Epstein, R. A, 2015).
5. India: India has imposed strict regulations on social media companies, including requirements for companies to remove "unlawful" content within 24 hours and to provide information about the origin of messages in cases of "emergency" (Vaswani, M.2021). These regulations have raised concerns about freedom of speech and expression, with some arguing that the measures could be used to silence critical voices and restrict access to information (Ganguly, S. (2021).
6. Mauritius: This island has also imposed restrictions on social media usage, including criminalising the spread of false information and hate speech. These measures have been criticized for potentially limiting freedom of expression and access to information (Morison, W. (2021).

### **European Broadcasting Union (EBU) Viewpoint**

EBU has taken the gauntlet because it positions itself as a vital inspirer of media. In a world,

learning never ends. Understanding how to use the latest media technology and evaluate its content is fundamental to critical understanding and active participation, which are the basis of every democratic society. Lacking the required skills not only excludes sections of society from making informed choices, it increases the risk of harmful, unsolicited, or unreliable messaging. PSM advance everyday media: the ability to access the media, to understand and critically evaluate its content and communicate over a range of platforms. Nowadays, PSM use multi-platforms to create an intelligent media experience, to reach out to audiences in interactive and innovative ways. The challenge is to deliver quality PSM content to every section of society: to integrate communities, social groups and generations. Today's world is not only for the privileged or media professionals; it enlightens and entertains the elderly and the young, migrants and those who may be socially disadvantaged or live with special needs. Some may require training to discern, distill and evaluate the myriad of images and sounds about them.

Others may need guidance to identify which sources to trust; how best to protect their privacy or stimulate their creative potential. The aim is to build a network from which a media-literate audience grows. The promotion of media and skills is central to the European Union's Agenda – Europe's strategic plan to maximize the social and economic benefits of information and communication technologies by 2015. Expectations are high, with media identified as a key factor to speed democratic engagement in an increasingly technological world. Against this background, PSM empower citizenship through a range of dynamic programmes and projects in partnership with key stakeholders, in an increasingly sophisticated age.

In its media policy the BJP has pledged to guarantee and promote 'the rights of free speech of Indian citizens but press reports of journalists being persecuted, framed and jailed tell a different picture. Instead of combatting the scourge of false news the Indian government finds itself isolated. The proposed changes have been criticised by civil society groups for "promoting overzealous content moderation practices, incentivising the use of automated content control, and creating broad categories of information that are vague and open to abuse" – for example, speech which "threatens the unity of India". (The Interpreter - 26 Jul 2022)

The media are not the only factor affecting the emergence of the new participatory culture but also have become a part of that culture (Jenkins et al., 2006), today's media can only be understood when socio-cultural characteristics of it are also taken into account. Socio-cultural characteristics of the media can be assessed in three aspects: (a) media messages are constructed and therefore reflect only one side of the reality; (b) ideological and social values are integrated into the media; and (c) the media serve for political and economic purposes among others.

### **How Do People Understand News?**

What does news mean to people? While journalism and news are susceptible to its environment people choose to be selective subject to their prior perception or beliefs. News can have different meanings to different people.

Significant contribution of news include:

1. A credible source of information and knowledge: People view news as a way to stay informed about current events and gain a deeper understanding of the world around them.
2. A way to connect with others: News can be a means of connecting with others who share similar interests and opinions.
3. A tool for shaping opinions and perspectives: News can influence the way people think about issues, shaping their opinions and perspectives.
4. A form of entertainment: For some, news can be a form of entertainment, providing a break from the monotony of daily life and providing a source of stimulation.
5. Spreading disinformation: The abundance of news sources and the ease with which information can be shared online has made it easier for false and misleading information to spread.
6. Undermining public trust: The prevalence of fake news and the spread of disinformation can undermine public trust in news media and the institutions that rely on it.



7. Shaping public opinion: In the post-truth era, news can still have a significant impact on shaping public opinion and attitudes, but the influence of alternative sources of information, such as social media, has become more prominent.
8. Facilitating the spread of conspiracy theories: The ease with which information can be shared online has made it easier for conspiracy theories to gain traction and spread, which can further undermine public trust in news and institutions.

### **The Definition of False 'News'**

This age-old phenomenon of false news has resurfaced as a travesty to journalism. It is as inconceivable as it is preposterous to be confronted with the denigration of factually checked and researched journalism. Since the advent of electronic media false news, masquerading as journalism, has blurred the once rigorous distinction between fact and fiction which is almost impossible to detect and identify. (Pieter Boeder, 2005) Several questions arise as to why convergence, which underscores multiliteracies education has failed to circumvent the growth of false 'news'.

It is paradoxical that in the age the computer-mediated and technologically networked media ecosystem has emerged as an Armageddon where false news is having an incidence on journalism. Due to its implications for informed citizenry, public interest and governance false news has also sparked off widespread concerns among citizens, journalists and educationalists worldwide.

The co-existence of incongruous eras; age and the post-truth age is a conflicting concurrence in the age. Digitalisation is metaphor for empowerment through technology aided collaborative, web-based and networked learning. It is unimaginable that in an economy based on knowledge, learning, skills and multiliteracies truth, logic, facts, common sense, reasoning and objectivity have been casualties, displaced by emotions and falsehoods.

The beginning of "Post-truth" was signalled by the Iran-Contra scandal and the Gulf War in 1992. The term found a place in the lexicon of mainly politicians and was recognised by Oxford Dictionaries in 2016 which defined 'post-truth' as 'one of the defining words of our

time” that “relates to circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than emotional appeals.” Relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief. ‘in this era of post-truth politics, it's easy to cherry-pick data and come to whatever conclusion you desire’ (The Guardian, 2017)

The Collins dictionary's definition as: 'false, often sensational, information disseminated under the guise of news reporting,' could not be more meaningful. The phrase “false news” which the EBU and UNESCO referred to as oxymoron is a mess of conflicting meanings.

UNESCO's definition of the term false 'news' resonates UK's. It avoids assuming that the term ‘false news’ has a straightforward or commonly-understood meaning. This is because ‘news’ means verifiable information in the public interest, and information that does not meet these standards does not deserve the label of news. In this sense then, ‘false news’ is an oxymoron which lends itself to undermining the credibility of information which does indeed meet the threshold of verifiability and public interest – i.e. real news. Cherilyn Ireton and Julie Posetti, 2018).

Most academic research along with online media have anchored their reports, analysis and research to the peddling of falsehoods as ‘true truth’ or ‘alternative truth’ in the run up to and during the US Presidential election in 2016. Hundreds of websites are linked and referred to by SM and the package false news stories in a similar way to real stories it is not easy to distinguish between the two nor is it practical to fact check incessantly fleeting of news content. Fast circulating false news stories based on the number of clicks of s are automatically highly ranked as observed by Winston Churchill, that '*A lie gets halfway around the world before the truth has a chance to get its pants on*'. There must be a reason why false news is reaching epidemic proportion.

A host of questions arises about how our knowledge-based society has turned into a fertile seed-bed for false news, persuasions through emotional motivation and rhetoric. The insurgence of false news has become more prevalent throughout the echo chamber of the SM sphere.

The potential of false news to inflict damage or harm is widely acknowledged by a number of

broadcasters including DW, the BBC, media and online news providers. Eighty-six percent of internet users have been duped by fake news—most of it spread on Facebook—according to annual Ipsos survey of more than 25,000 internet users in 25 countries. Although the deliberate fabrication of news stories to fool or entertain is an old humbug which has been amplified by the echo chamber of the SM, namely the Facebook and search engine and news aggregator Google.

News production along with web technology are constantly evolving. While the public are not adept, familiar or trained to understand why a particular news stories is trending or topping up in popularity when it has nothing to do with journalism and defies credibility, trustworthiness or objectivity algorithm, metrics, dynamics involved in news creation and its online manipulation they are vulnerable.

There is no shortage of suggestions for stemming the tide of false news from experts, journalists, technologist, programmers, online geeks, regulators, educationalists, software programmers, google experts. The previously known propaganda embodies mis/dis-information. A follow up question prompts an examination of the sphere which is described by many as the Habermasian public sphere.

False news is an oxymoron which was foisted on the media and society in the aftermath of the US presidential election in 2016. The insurgency of false 'news' challenges journalism as (1) a majority of people has problems differentiating between false and real news and (2) some watchdogs' claim false allegations of news and outlets arising out of a dislike for the organisation. Trump's classic hatred for the press has 'set a dangerous precedent for the world's press freedom. Predators who regard the notion of 'false news' as justification to criminalise the media. There are high levels of concern about so-called 'false news', partly stoked by politicians, who in some countries are already using this as an opportunity to clamp down on media freedom. (Newman, Nic et al., 2018)

Facebook, acclaimed as the most popular source of news for an increasing number of people, is also the most perpetrator of spreading false news. Worse than Google. Worse than X. And worse than webmail providers such as AOL, Yahoo!, and Gmail, according to a new study published in the journal *Nature: (Human Behaviour)*. Guess, A.M., Nyhan, B. & Reifler, J.,

2016) Mark Travers Facebook Spreads false News Faster Than Any Other Social Website, according To New Research Innovation Science. Forbes

Winston Churchill noted: 'A lie gets halfway around the world before the truth has a chance to get its pants on.' False news' has always been with us but advanced technology in the wider media landscape, is undoubtedly is expanding the problem. This neologistic term of 'fake news' is the avatar of old falsehood dating back to 1710, when the satirist Jonathan Swift observed that 'falsehood flies, and the truth comes limping after it.'

The generation of massive media content enabled by the proliferation of channels has made it difficult for citizens to determine what is false 'news'. The phenomenon is posing a serious challenge to institutions, journalists, the government, and educationalists. 'The institutional response to false news in India is quite lackadaisical in comparison to Europe's.' A number of factors including of post-truth artefacts, technological determinism and most importantly the incompetence of institutions have added to the challenges. While these challenges are not entirely new, they are pressing, complex, and interconnected.(L.Mason, D. Krutka & J.Stoddard, 2018)

Media organisations have likewise acted in an irresponsible manner by publishing false news. While corrections are a usual practice in such cases, many Indian media houses hardly issue an apology or correction after it is found that they published false 'news' (Shinde, 2017). It appears that such instances are accepted as collateral damage in the industry. This negligent attitude by the industry, along with failed attempts by regulatory bodies to effect media accountability, places additional responsibilities on journalism teachers to highlight the ethical issues involved.

Big data and discourses including news stories are created and distributed in lightning speed. The stream of content in a multimedia format and multi-modal form has an impact on our mode, methods and education. This calls for a redefinition of learning to include dialectic philosophy for the 21st century. This poses a challenge for the education system which needs to realign the critical pedagogy.

This research joins the crusade against the challenges of 'false news,' which advocates the implementation of an online CML pedagogy to provide citizens with Masterman's 'critical

autonomy' to enable them to distinguish the fakes from the truths. false 'news' is not a passing phase. It is a phenomenon which is here to stay to harass news consumers. It has drawn the attention of many international and supra-national organisations including the UNESCO, NATO, OECD, Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, (OSCE), the World Bank but to no avail.

A commonly accepted definition is elusive to most scholars. The Cambridge and Collins dictionaries fumble for a definition of the false neologistic false 'news'. The first is a slant definition as it refers only to 'stories that appear to be news, spread on the internet or using other media, usually created to influence political views or as a false', which fails to extend to its purport to hoodwink, mislead and defraud people.

How are the media fighting false news and mis/dis-information? The European Broadcasting Union (EBU) in collaboration with the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) debated the question 'How is Europe's Media fighting false news and mis/dis-information.' Ricardo Gutiérrez, EFJ General Secretary, acting as the moderator of the debate, stressed the importance of media literacy on this issue. Ironically, "false news is not a bad news for journalists. It shows we need it more than ever before", he said after sharing the latest report on false news published by Reuters Institute.

European Council has also refrained from using the term "false news", arguing that it fails to describe the complexity of the "information pollution" phenomenon, and that it is being used by politicians around the world to describe news that they find disagreeable.

The contested terms are in flux while some suggesting that false 'news' is meaningless and nonsensical and use false 'news' to mean false stories. Facebook prefers to talk about false 'news' as false 'news' whereas journalists construe it as a "lie", with intention to deceive. Princeton professor Harry Frankfurt's notion of bullshit than lying. A liar says what he or she believes to be false, whereas the bullshitter says whatever is in their interest, irrespective of its truth. (Joshua Habgood-Coote) false 'news' started trending since Donald Trump's salvo against CNN when he became the US president in late 2016. The term was misconceived, and politically inspired to assume a new connotation. The phenomenon has now attracted much scholarly research. In the same year, the Poynter Institute's Journalists' Resource has

undertaken initiatives to stop the spread of dis/mis/mal/-information to help journalists better understand the problem and its impacts by debunking false news stories. The First Draft Partner Network, a global collaboration of newsrooms, SM platforms and fact-checking organisations was launched in September 2016 to battle false 'news.'

False 'news' originated from Macedonia. This scourge was unearthed in mid-2016 by BuzzFeed's media editor, Craig Silverman, who discovered that the 'funny stream completely made-up stories' were being pumped out by 'a small cluster of about 140 false 'news' websites' registered in the small Eastern European town. (Mike Wendling (22 Jan. 2018).The (almost) complete history of false 'news' - BBC )

Concern about mis/dis/-information remains high despite efforts by platforms and publishers to build public confidence. In Brazil 85 per cent agree with a statement that they are worried about what is real and false on the internet. It's no different in the UK (70 per cent) and US(67 per cent), but much lower in Germany (38 per cent) and the Netherlands (31 per cent). (Nic Newman, Senior Research Associate, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2019. [Shorturl.at/rsEKM](http://Shorturl.at/rsEKM))

The deliberate making up of news stories to fool or entertain is nothing new. But the arrival of SM has meant real and fictional stories are now presented in such a similar way that it can sometimes be difficult to tell the two apart. (BBC, 6 Nov. 2016).

While the internet has enabled the sharing of knowledge in ways that previous generations could only have dreamed of, it has also provided ample proof of the line, often attributed to Winston Churchill, that 'A lie gets halfway around the world before the truth has a chance to get its pants on.'

Poulakidakos et al. (ud) have argued that 'false news and post truth are two interwoven phenomena that serve specific financial or ideological interests' which represents a re-invention of propaganda, showing propaganda and post-truth to be means of shaping public opinion. They argue that post-truth is creating an environment in which citizens experience irrational fears and hopes, leading to a sense of disempowerment and disillusionment, which makes them susceptible to manipulation by the post-truth campaigns of populist outsiders. They propose media literacy education and stricter regulation of language and rhetoric in the

media and politics as potential solutions to this issue.

Not easily detectable it can either be designed to target mass media, victimise a colony of internet users or target unsuspecting or innocent children and students. Press reports and research show that false 'news' is so convincing that even wary or digitally savvy tweens to high-IQ academics fall for it. Their failure to ask important questions about media content due to a lack of media and subconsciously accepting the same has encouraged our online gullibility. (Sam Wineburg, ud) Counter-measures have proved futile and have only resulted in increased resistance like bacteria getting stronger with antibiotics.

False 'news', criss-crossing the planet, is a routine encounter of netizens. The term, amenable to different meanings, has been rejected in favour of disinformation by several organisations including the UK government, the EBU and UNESCO. Both has termed it as information disorder, others mental pollution.

UK's DCMS Final Report on media resorted to changing the definition from false 'news' to the more established term of 'disinformation' because the term false 'news' has assumed its own loaded meaning to refer to content that is not liked or agreed with by the reader. The UK Government prefers the two terms: (i) 'disinformation' to describe "the deliberate creation and sharing of false and/or manipulated information that is intended to deceive and mislead audiences, either for the purposes of causing harm, or for political, personal or financial gain" and (ii) misinformation simply refers to the inadvertent sharing of false or incorrect information.

The UK government argues that its experience of 'propaganda and politically-aligned bias', purporting to be news, has been magnified by the new media and SM. This is the motivational force behind its setting up of an 'International Grand Committee', to promote further cross-border co-operation in tackling the spread of disinformation, and its pernicious ability to distort, to disrupt, and to destabilise. (DMCS)

DCMS Final Report on media is an inquiry on disinformation striking at the root of individuals' rights over their privacy, how their political choices might be affected and influenced by online information, and interference in political elections both in this country and across the world—carried out by malign forces intent on causing disruption and

confusion. (DMCS)

“False news” doesn’t only refer to false stories or lies. American philosopher Michael Lynch has identified what he calls the “internet shell game” – the deliberate spreading of a mixture of true and false stories to confuse the public. In this way, some true information is discredited with the false stories they sit alongside. We might think in this kind of case the whole mass of stories — both true and false — counts as “false news”. If we want to avoid empty talk and legitimating propaganda, we should simply stop using “false news”. What should we put in its place? I suspect that we can do quite a lot with ordinary terms such as “lie”, “bullshit” and “unreliable”. Perhaps we do need new terms, but we shouldn’t start by trying to repurpose the demagogue’s tools to defend democracy. (Joshua Habgood-Coote. (July 27, 2018).

To Darrell M. West (2017) false 'news' become disinformation when it shifts from being 'sporadic and haphazard to organised and systematic efforts, with the potential to disrupt campaigns and governance in entire countries. (Darrell M. West.18 Dec, 2017)

The incidence of the insurgency of false news affected by the echo chamber of the Internet is probably higher in India than anywhere in the world. the concept of a "social media echo chamber" is widely discussed in academic and mainstream media and is widely accepted as a real phenomenon. Research has shown that the algorithms used by social media platforms can lead to the creation of personalized, self-confirming information feeds that exclude opposing viewpoints and diverse voices. A study by the Pew Research Center found that "most social media users do not understand the algorithms that power their news feeds" (Perrin, 2016). This highlights the fact that the majority of people are unaware of the echo chamber phenomenon and its impact on their media experiences. False 'news' travels faster on SM in all direction than truth does. A new study shows that false statements spread further and faster on X than true statements. People are quicker to repeat something that's wrong than something that's true. Given its huge and expanding population inferences can be drawn about why it is fast becoming a policy issue.

Concerns about how propaganda is impinging on society, media and education and its implications for the public interest, citizenship and democracy have drawn the attention of



mainly the media and journalists but virtually no interest from India's Ministry of Education and academics. The problems caused by false news point to two different strategies to ensure content regulation or citizens' cognitive empowerment.

A cohort of tools known as a 'comprehensive Web framework aiming to capture so called “21st Century Skills”': Problem-Solving, Communication, Creativity and collaboration has been introduced by Mozilla which is deemed to further UNESCO's aims. Mozilla aims to promote; read, write and interact in the new media to enable critical evaluation of media texts. This is to help people to develop their in a proactive way so as to double up consumers as content creators with coding and programming skills.

Masterman takes a pragmatic approach in further arguing that 'if students are to understand media texts . . . then it will obviously be helpful if they have first-hand experience of the construction process from the inside.’ To this end, media education includes media production, what Masterman dubs 'practical work,' as a pedagogical practice which enables students to create media products. Thus, students are actively engaged both with the production of media and the workings of the classroom. (Mark Lipton)

False 'news' is the enemy the number one public enemy. It is described as widespread “information pollution” and 'polluted messages' by a new report released by Council of Europe Report 2017. (Council of Europe Report, 2017). The explosion of computer-mediated digital content or media texts which include manufactured content are challenging society.

How do we deconstruct the maliciously encoded content and determine the underlying meaning of media texts? How do we empower children with media literacy to enable them to mine the purpose of constructed content? Hidden, implied, rhetorical, framed, tendentious, misrepresented, underrepresented, inaccurate and sensationalist qualities renders news unworthy, untrustworthy, undermining and discreditable.

Although false 'news' is not a new neologism the concept behind it is as long as the nineteenth century when used as sensational news in newspapers. With the advent of digital media false 'news' has got powerful traction to pursue its insidious adventure to fleece the online community, the internet users by pretentious media texts including emojis, memes and deepfakes. What strategy can be developed to starve it of the oxygen of publicity? Who is

responsible to tackle the bull by the horn?

SM has turned out to be a fertile ground for false news. Propaganda, disinformation or misinformation, non-existent or simply distortion of truth disguised as false news is passing as 'news'. Such discourses have serious implications for democracy and society where most people can be gullible or simply media illiterate. A YouGov survey commissioned by Channel 4 in the UK found that only 4 per cent of people were able to correctly identify false 'news'. With such an appalling low rate of media it is not surprising that academics as well as news organisations have gone in an overdrive mode for a mantra. (Buzzfeed News, 29.01.2017) Digitalisation and news ecosystem as underlying problem of false news has been described as a symptom and not a cause. Moore, M (2016) argues that 'news and information ecosystem we now inhabit encourages and facilitates the production, dissemination and consumption of false news'. Any technological, economic or government counter-measures may affect the principles of freedom of speech.

In the UK the heightened concerns about the dangers of false 'news' have galvanised educators, journalists, policy makers and MPs into action in tackling this menace. An inquiry into so-called "false news" as pressure mounted on SM and search engines to filter out spurious articles has been launched. In the UK House of Commons Culture, Media and Sport Committee (CCMS) launched an inquiry into 'false news' which the Committee chair describes as a "threat to democracy" that "undermines confidence in the media in general." How should the Indian government respond to false news? The BBC has set up a team to debunk false 'news' stories, saying it is not possible to "edit the internet, but we won't stand aside either", in France the French daily Le Monde has built a tool called Decodex based on a database of false news sites, in Germany, efforts are focused on regulating SM companies, in the Czech Republic, officials are directly taking on monitoring false news. Google has started banning publishers of false news from its AdSense network.

Fabricated SM content purporting to be news has riddled several countries. In many parts of India messages distributed through WhatsApp, X and Instagram are linked to several incidences of mob violence, injuries and killings by lynchings, damage to property, communal tensions and racial disharmony. There is incontrovertible evidence to suggest that WhatsApp

is widely used injudiciously in spreading 'false news'. It is indisputable that 'false news' causes real damage. A case in point is in October 2008, a citizen journalist, a CNN iReport poster reported that Apple CEO Steve Jobs had been rushed to the hospital after a severe heart attack citing an anonymous source. The story turned out to be false. CNN removed the story from the website describing it as fraudulent. That false story impacted the financial markets. Apple's stock in US trade took a major hit and dived to its lowest that year before bouncing back. (R. Kim, "Apple stock dives on false report", SFgate.com, October 2008) Media illiterate and readily impulsive citizens are involved in sharing their messages without reading or thinking about the consequences.

One study, which surveyed 2,251 adults in the spring of 2020, found that the more frequently people sought information about Covid-19 across various mediums—television, newspapers, and social media—the more likely they were to report emotional distress (Hwang, J., et al., 2021)

### **Mixed Comments About Journalist Credibility**

There are mixed reactions about journalists; 58 per cent of the respondents expressed misgivings about journalists saying that most of them manipulate the public to serve the agenda of powerful politicians, while 57 per cent believed that journalists were attention seekers and less interested in reporting facts. These are some of the key factors contributing to the decline of traditional news organisations in the digital era. The internet and digital media have disrupted the traditional news industry, leading to changes in audience behaviour, the rise of alternative news sources, and challenges to the business models of traditional news organizations.

In contrast the same percentage also believed that journalists independently report after verifying the information, while 53 per cent believed that journalists tried to prevent their opinions from slanting the news. The research also showed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's supporters were more likely to trust news on WhatsApp than those critical of him which is supported by him. A Reuters' study highlighted that 70 per cent of those who supported Modi trusted news on the messaging app. (Reuters and Scroll Staff, 22.09.2022). A similarity can be drawn between Modi and Trump about their passion for WhatsApp despite it

being a false news spreader.

Reuters researchers found that Trump supporters were far more likely to visit untrustworthy news sites: approximately 57 per cent of Trump supporters read at least one false news article in the month prior to the 2016 election compared to only 28 per cent of Clinton supporters. Older Americans were also more likely to visit untrustworthy news websites. In India 68 per cent of respondents use SM to get their news on smartphones whereas 43 per cent trust the traditional media.

Nevertheless, the new media and traditional media have also formed a symbiotic relationship and provided new opportunities for the creation and distribution of news, as well as increased engagement and participation from audiences.

The contemporary transformative media landscape has led to a decline of traditional media structure where the numerous newspapers, radio stations and community radio stations, television channels are shutting down, merging and going bust which is an anathema to traditional journalism shaped in pluralism and plurality.

The following alerts in headlines are a call to action: “Indoctrination alert! Yahoo calls for ‘educating children in media literacy to combat fake news’ from The Daily Sheeple, December 1st, 2016. “Media illiteracy poses a ‘threat to democracy’ from the Albuquerque Journal, December 2nd, 2016. “Fighting fake news isn’t just up to Facebook and Google” from The Washington Post, on 06.02.2017. “Fake news spurs call for media literacy lessons in schools” from The Cabinet Report on 10.02.2017 (Danielle Ligoeki, 2017).

The author also sounded a note of warning that unless educators train the public in critical literacy we face the risk of media being able to, “control the ‘bewildered herd,’ meaning the U.S. citizenry, in a state of quasi-perpetual stupidification” (cited in Macedo, 2009, xxv). The inference is that news is relegated to a second place. This process is driven by the proliferation of digital technologies and the increasing importance of the internet in everyday life. Social media companies, such as Facebook and Google, have become dominant players in the media landscape and exert significant influence over the flow of information and the distribution of resources.

It is recognised that CML plays a crucial role in governance, reform agenda and makes

recommendations for steps to improve governance through media literacy to assist development practitioners. Highly news literate teenagers, as determined by news media literacy assessment measures, are more internally motivated to consume news, more skeptical, and have better knowledge of current events compared to their less news literate peers. (Adam Maksl et al., 2015)

CML is critical in being able to navigate the complex and ever-evolving media landscape, citizens must acquire the critical abilities and necessary communicative skills to actively and meaningfully participate in the democratic public sphere, where free and equal citizens come together to discuss and debate current affairs.

The imbroglio of conflicting discourses, advice and recommendations concurrent during the peak of Covid-19 pandemic indicates the conflicting advice, news, medical reports and scientific laboratory reports created by professional and individuals deficit of CML. This presents one type of threats while the other relates to our exposure to the pandemic of malicious or misleading content on social media, multi-platform broadcast and broadband channels that have become an integral part of our lives.

Media organisations and journalists play an important role in promoting trust by providing accurate and unbiased information, and by holding those in power accountable. It's crucial that these institutions continue to uphold high standards of integrity and objectivity in order to rebuild trust and promote a healthy democratic society.

Social media have also been criticised for the lack of transparency and accountability, as well as for their role in the spread of misinformation and the erosion of privacy. The marketisation of social media has led to the commodification of personal data and the erosion of privacy. As a result, the political economy of social media has become a critical area of study, as it seeks to understand the ways in which these platforms are shaping our societies, economies, and political systems .

Media reports and academic research worldwide indicate that social media have been singled out as an effective dual disseminator of the scourge of offending content and news and information. It is intriguing that social media, globally the least trusted news source, is relied upon by the majority of users. The Covid-19 pandemic and the 2016 US election highlighted the potential threats of false news, with younger generations as heavy users of social media

are more vulnerable. Another study indicated that over 50 per cent of internet users in 24 different countries use social networks to keep up-to-date with the news (Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2020).

Central to the phenomenon of our encumbered planet is the opinion overload from about 70 per cent of adults of the world's total of over 8 billion people. The abundance of false information can lead to a world shaped by individuals claiming to be experts in the marketplace of ideas (Chisita, 2020). There are as many online mindsets as are social media users each with different dreams, attitudes, perceptions, prejudices, emotions, beliefs and thoughts which are practically irreconcilable and influence their actions and decisions. Just imagine the volume of content being churned out according to Kaiser Family Foundation 'teenagers now manage over 4,000 text messages a month and as early as 2010, between 8 and 18-year-olds were devoting more than seven hours a day to their devices.

These net users are all potential creators, gatekeepers and aggregators (Kovach & Rosenstiel 2010) who load up the Internet with junk news. Junk news refers to false, misleading, or sensational information that is spread for the purpose of gaining attention or generating revenue. Junk news has become a major problem on the internet, and it has contributed to the spread of false and misleading information. This has made it harder for people to distinguish between credible and non-credible information and has contributed to the polarizing of society.

Similarly, "information overload" is not a new concept (Blair, 2011). A recent study from the Pew Internet & American Life project (Lenhardt & Madden, 2005) reveals "that more than one-half of all teens have created media content, and roughly one-third of teens who use the Internet have shared content they produced."

All this take place in free style in a rule-free zone of public sphere where 'it is very difficult to coordinate the behaviour of an entire society - even in matters of life and death.' (Seger . Elizabeth, 10.02.2021). The distribution of content can occur among users without any substantial filtering, fact-checking, or editorial review by a third party. In certain circumstances, an individual user with no established reputation can have the same level of reach and audience as major news organisations.

### **The Propaganda Model of The Media – Noam Chomsky**

In taking a multi-theoretical approach to the role of news in social media and the divided public sphere draws from a range of perspectives and theories Noam Chomsky's contribution is indispensable.

Chomsky's arguments on 'manufactured news' pertain to the concept of media manipulation and control in the hands of a small number of dominant organisations and individuals. Chomsky believes that this results in the dissemination of biased and distorted information, which serves the interests of those in power.

In his book "Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media" (1988), Chomsky and co-author Edward S. Herman outline the propaganda model of the mass media, which argues that the media system is structured in such a way as to marginalize alternative perspectives and serve the interests of the elite.

Chomsky has argued that CML, or the ability to critically evaluate and analyse the media, is essential to counteract the influence of manufactured news. In an interview with Democracy Now! (2017), Chomsky stated, "The public has to be educated to understand what's happening and to be able to analyze and evaluate what they're reading and hearing, and to understand that this is not just a random phenomenon, but it's a result of institutions, decision-making, and interests that are not in their control."

### **The Importance of News In The Digital Era**

The 17th century English poet John Donne wrote "no man is an island," implying that people are social animals that cannot live in a silo and remain incognito.

#### **Types of News**

There are basically two types of news: (a) soft news and (b) hard news. Salaudeen and Onyechi (2020) examined the influence of media channel (traditional vs. new) and news type (hard vs. soft) on trust in news. It shows that hard news is rated as more credible in traditional media than new media that people tend to trust traditional media more for hard news which is due to the strict standards and more serious and in-depth information provided by traditional

media.

The results of the study highlight the ongoing debate about the credibility of traditional and new media and the role that news type and channel play in shaping public trust. While the study's findings align with previous research, they also underscore the importance of considering how these factors interact to influence public trust and perception of news credibility. Meanwhile, news consumers must be discerning and critical when evaluating the credibility of news sources and understand the ways in which media channel and news type can impact the perceived credibility of news.

### **What Guides News Selection?**

Galtung and Ruge's (1965) concept of "news values" provides a functionalist perspective on the criteria used by journalists to determine what is newsworthy and deserves coverage. This views news as serving a social purpose, in that it provides information and helps to maintain social order by shaping public perceptions of events.

Gans (1979) gives a nuanced view from the political economy approach to exploring the relationship between the news media and the power structures in society. Also reflecting a Marxist perspective it sees the news media as reflecting the interests and values of the dominant power structures in society, and argues that the news media can reinforce or challenge these structures, depending on the values and interests of the journalists and media owners. News is constructed by journalists but defined in the hands of the society, hence, based on this view newsmakers attempt to reflect society's interests and concerns through selecting occurrences to be covered as news stories.

Lasswell provides an antidote to deconstruct the manufactured news. He echoes the importance of the media through his classic dictum which became a core principle underlying the role of media: "Who says what through which channel to whom with what effect" (Lasswell, H., Lerner, D., & Pool, I. de Sola. 1952) Lasswell's systematic method was initially meant for the study of propaganda and mass media (Lasswell, H., 1927). Neuman's description as a technique for gathering and analysing the content of text depicted it as a methodology. (Neuman, 1997)



The study of media content is essential by virtue of their dual role “in modern democratic societies, the media reflect views, opinions and perceptions and influence views, opinions and perceptions” (Lull, J., 2000) which makes us all agentic according to the social cognition theory perspective explains that “people are producers as well as products of social systems”.

This view acknowledges that news coverage of specific incidents can in turn change people's perception upon the sociological structure not on the activities of news workers and news organisations (Luckman, 1978). Gans (1979) states that phenomenologically inclined researchers have made a major contribution to understanding journalists and their work by showing that whatever the nature of the external reality human being can perceive it only with the own concepts and therefore always 'construct' reality (Gans, 1979)

The interpretive approach to defining news does not imply a passive role from the side of newsmakers, journalists and news organisations in deciding what is news is, suggested by the traditional approach. On the contrary this approach argues that 'social structure' does not necessarily define norms for what is newsworthy. It is newsmakers who need these norms are the ones who decide what is newsworthy (Tuchman, 1978). This approach also states it is for newspapers that 'news does not mirror society' and that it rather 'helps to constitute it as a shared social phenomenon, for in the process of describing an event, news defines and shapes that event'. For Gans, (1979): 'News is the exercise of power over the interpretation of reality.' This means that news construct the occurrences of a society depend on how reporters, journalists or newsmakers perceive them that is the 'media perception.' This is defined through a whole process which begins by the selection criteria of news content (Galtung and Ruge, 1965). In such a way the description of or 'representation' or such occurrences is introduced which delineates how people recall them and think about them in addition to the reader's 'reconstruction' of the meanings embedded in news which contributes to the issue (Tuchan 1978, Gans, 1979, Galtung and Ruge, 1965, Van Dijk, 1988)

### **Three Different Perspectives To News**

Malik et al (2013) have introduced three approaches to provide different perspectives of what constitutes news. The authors offer a comprehensive understanding of the complex and multi-

faceted nature of the phenomenon and define news as a phenomenon that can be approached through three distinct methods:

1. Anthropological approach views news as a culturally constructed entity that varies from society to society, reflecting the values, beliefs, and norms of different communities.
2. Systematic/Prescriptive approach defines news based on certain criteria such as timeliness, prominence, proximity, human interest, impact, and novelty. These criteria provide a framework for evaluating the newsworthiness of events.
3. Empirical approach relies on data and observation to study the production, dissemination, and reception of news and to understand the news through a systematic examination of the ways in which it is created, distributed, and consumed. (Press, A., 2011).

Press' contribution to understanding news is a constructivist approach, which views news as a political phenomenon shaped by social and cultural factors. Press argues that news is not a neutral representation of reality but is instead a constructed representation of events that reflects the values, interests, and perspectives of those who produce and consume it. He suggests that the political role of news is to provide a limited and selective representation of reality that serves the interests of powerful groups in society. (ibid)

The press echoes the prescriptions of the 'Four Theories of the Press' when highlighting the way news is constructed and disseminated. It is shaped by the political and cultural context in which it is produced. He argues that the media serve as an arena for the representation of conflicting interests and values, and that the content of news is the result of negotiation and struggle among these interests.

Des Freedman argues that 'media systems are instead purposefully created, their characters shaped by competing political interests that seek to inscribe their own values and objectives on the possibilities facilitated by a complex combination of technological, economic and social factors.' (Des Freedman, April 2013; Press, A., 2011)

Anthony Giddens just like Freedman (2013) Press (2011) takes a rather political economy

approach to discussing several themes related to the production of news, including the role of media in shaping public opinion, the construction of news, the impact of technology, the influence of news organisations, and the relationship between media, power, and ideology. In his article "The Production of Reality: Essays and Readings on Social Interaction" (2011), Giddens discusses several themes related to news and its production:

1. Shaping public opinion and creating reality – The press argues that the media plays a significant role in shaping public opinion and creating reality through its selection and representation of news events.
2. The construction of news – It argues that news is not simply a reflection of reality, but a constructed representation of events, shaped by the interests and perspectives of those producing it.
3. The impact of technology on news production - It discusses the impact of new technologies, such as the internet and social media, on the production and dissemination of news.
4. The influence of news organisations on the production of news – It examines the role of news organisations, such as media corporations and government agencies, in shaping the news agenda and the representation of events.
5. The relationship between media, power, and ideology - It avers is influenced by the power structures and ideologies that shape society.

A postmodern perspective on the role of news in social media and the divided public sphere recognizes the fragmented and decentralized nature of news production and dissemination in the digital age. This perspective highlights the importance of understanding the multiple and often conflicting narratives that emerge in a divided public sphere, and the role that news and social media play in shaping these narratives.

A multi-theoretical approach is entailed in understanding the role of news in social media and the divided public sphere draws from a range of perspectives and theories, underscoring the complexity and significance of this issue which prompts Tuchman's (1978) work on the "making of news" offers a critical perspective, emphasising the role of the news media in

shaping public perception of events. Tuchman argues that the news media act as a gatekeeper to filter and shape the information that reaches the public. This has significant implications for public understanding of events if they are not media literate.

Finally, Malik, Cortesi, and Grasser's (2013) investigation of the impact of social media on news production and dissemination provides a constructivist perspective, underlining how social media have expanded the public sphere by allowing for greater citizen engagement. This constructivist view sees the public sphere as being constructed through the interactions of media literate citizens and the media, and recognises the agency of both.

By the same token a critical disposition is indispensable for detecting the agenda-setting and framing of news can be challenging, as these processes often occur at the subconscious level of our mind. However, there are several methods that researchers have used to identify instances of agenda-setting and framing in news content.

With an enquiring mind or scientific enquiry content analysis cannot fully yield the ultimate motive of the content of news stories to identify patterns of coverage, such as frequency of coverage, tone, and framing of issues. McCombs and Shaw (1972) conducted a seminal study of agenda-setting in the media by examining the content of news stories in multiple newspapers and comparing it to public opinion polls. They found that the media's coverage of issues significantly influenced the public's perception of what were the most important issues of the day.

A research on media effects has explored the relationship between media exposure and public attitudes and behaviours, providing evidence of the influence of news content on individuals and groups. Johnson and Slater (2000) conducted a meta-analysis of studies examining the impact of news coverage on public opinion and found that media exposure had a significant impact on attitudes and beliefs about political issues.

In a study the concept of framing effects, which refers to how the presentation of information can influence the way people perceive and interpret it. It illustrated how subtle changes in phrasing can lead to significant differences in people's attitudes and behaviours. They noted that presenting a drug as "95 per cent effective" is more appealing than presenting it as "failing 5 per cent of the time," even though the two statements convey the same information.

“Health care professionals, journalists, and the public should be educated about these distortions to reduce or mitigate potential negative effects on health behaviour and decision making.” Jakob D. Jensen et, 2004)

One study found that people's perception of political instability or terrorism risk in a country can be influenced by how news stories about these issues are framed.

In summary, to detect the agenda-setting and framing of news, critical methods such as content analysis, critical discourse analysis media effects research is acknowledged to provide insights into the ways in which news content influence public opinion and attitudes.

### **News' Impact on Emotions**

The role of news in affecting emotional states can be understood through the lens of cognitive appraisal theory. Cognitive appraisal theory is proposed as a relevant framework to explain the impact of negative news on emotions. When a person is exposed to negative news, they evaluate its valence, severity, and personal relevance, which determines their affective response

The role of news in affecting emotional states is complex and depends on the individual's cognitive appraisal process. Negative news can be seen as a stressor and according to cognitive appraisal theory (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), people appraise stressors to elicit an emotional response. The cognitive appraisal process consists of two parts: primary appraisal and secondary appraisal. Personal relevance is a crucial factor in determining how information is processed and evaluated (Balzarotti & Cicero, 2014; De Hoog, 2013; Chen, Duckworth, & Chaiken, 1999).

Negative news exposure can have an impact on emotional states, but there is no theoretical explanation for this effect. Negative news exposure can lead to a downward spiral of appraisals and negative affect (Ahern et al., 2004), but not everyone is affected equally (Valkenburg & Peter, 2013). Individual differences, such as neuroticism and extraversion, can influence how people appraise and react to negative news (Bolger & Schilling, 1991; Gallagher, 1990).

The main factor influencing the appraisal process is personal relevance, as it affects how

information is processed and evaluated. Studies have shown that continuous exposure to negative news can lead to a downward spiral of negative appraisals and affect, but individual differences in cognitive appraisal and personality traits can explain why some people are more affected than others. Neuroticism and extraversion are two personality traits that have been linked to different appraisals and affective responses to negative news. Neuroticism had a relatively large effect on both affect measures. Those with higher scores on neuroticism show more negative than positive affect.

### **The Effects of Negative News**

The implied consequence of the above prevalence of negative or dramatic news in media and social media has resulted in what mental health professionals have called "media saturation overload," "doomscrolling," "headline anxiety," and "headline stress disorder." The constant exposure to negative news events such as the ongoing pandemic, racial injustice, climate change, election controversy, and mass shootings has resulted in psychological strain for many individuals.

News Fatigue refers to the feeling of being overwhelmed or disinterested in news, can be caused by a variety of factors. One of these factors may be the limited scope of conventional reporting, which focuses on who, what, when, and where, but fails to provide the necessary context to answer "how" and "why" questions. This lack of depth and understanding can make it difficult for audiences to develop well-informed opinions and attitudes, leading to a sense of frustration or fatigue.

To address this issue, a new genre of reporting known as explanatory reporting has been developed. Explanatory reporting seeks to provide more context and background information to help audiences better understand complex issues. It goes beyond the traditional focus on novelty and immediacy to provide a deeper level of analysis and insight.

A recent study explained that explanatory reporting may be more effective at combating news fatigue than conventional reporting. It found that viewers who watched explanatory reports had a better understanding of the issue at hand and reported more nuanced attributions of responsibility than those who watched conventional news. It also found that contrary to

popular belief, explanatory reporting can also elicit an emotional response from viewers, discrediting the notion that it is dull or disengaging.

However, the study also noted that potential variations in attitude change were inconclusive, possibly due to the topic of the videos used as conversation starters inducing social desirability. This suggests that more research is needed to fully understand the impact of explanatory reporting on audience attitudes and behaviour.

### **Positive News and Negative News**

Hartung and Stone (1980) describe a positive news story as a report that elicits satisfaction or pleasure among the majority of the local paper's readers. The tone of the story is typically optimistic and upbeat. Harcup and O'Neill (2001) define good news as stories that have a positive connotation, such as rescues and cures, while bad news is defined as stories that carry a negative tone, such as conflict or tragedy.

Gieber (1955) characterises negative news as reports of social conflicts and disorganisation (pp. 311-312). He listed political and economic tensions, crime, accidents, and disasters as examples of negative news. argues that his definitions were rooted in traditional practices used by many telegraph and news editors. (Gieber, 1955)

It is unrealistic to believe mindsets will converge nor will it ever because human nature is to prevail over others using a variety of rhetorics, attuned to logos, ethos, pathos and bathos to attract the attention of desired type of audience.

Our minds' obsession with negative news tend to ignore good news. Consumers have criticised the American news media for publishing too much bad news for more than half a century (Gieber, 1955; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996) but a City Reporter in Russia lost two-thirds of the website's readership as a result of reporting exclusively good news for a day in 2014 (Zaria Gorvett, 12.05. 2021). The science fiction writer Arthur C Clarke had pre-warned that the newspapers of Utopia would be terribly dull. So no news is good news would probably be the right mantra.

Negative news plays a crucial role in journalism despite criticism that it is overly emphasised.

Shoemaker (1996) argues that humans have a biological inclination to seek out potential threats in their environment, and this instinct contributes to the appeal of negative news. Conflict and drama are also common elements of storytelling (Epstein, 1973), with journalists conventionally covering conflict rather than consensus (Eliasoph, 1988; Gitlin, 1980). Market forces might also contribute to the prevalence of negative news, as publishers might see it as a profitable venture. Nevertheless, some individuals feel that the media focuses too heavily on negativity, indicating a potential market for positive news. (Karen McIntyre, 2016)

Negative news is the horse that wins journalists races. Journalists recognise that “bad” news is inherently newsworthy (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Social media are not only a battleground of wits but also a minefield of propaganda, a digital Armageddon which creates an existential crisis for all.

The analogue world was no different from the current cyberworld, which is a constantly contested habitat for about 5.07 billion net users, who at best, reason, argue, compete, cooperate, discuss, learn, teach and express their thoughts and at worst, harm, kill, rape, damage, rob, ruin, loot and cause all sorts of atrocities as described by world famous visionary scientist/astronomer Carl Sagan whose spine chilling account of man’s gruesome acts against each other will undoubtedly outrage people and will raise burning questions about the role of the mind. (Carl Sagan, 08.11.94).

### **The Health Hazards of Negative News**

A research study reveals that constant media exposure during the 24/7 news cycle can have negative effects on one's mental and physical health. The study found that the constant bombardment of news, especially negative news, can increase perceptions of threat and activate the "fight or flight" response. This response, which is a natural response to danger, can lead to subsequent physical and mental health problems if triggered too frequently. It is important to note that too much exposure to traumatic events through the media can have detrimental effects and it is important to be mindful of one's media consumption. Citizens should challenge the content for accuracy, thoroughness and reliability which are sourced from trusted media. They must critically question the content and conduct analysis,



comparison and evaluation.

While news has the potential to affect people negatively, it is important to recognise that the impact is not universal and depends on a complex interplay of factors. Why do people persistently keep consuming more news when it is evident from studies that news is a stressor? There are two causes: one is explained by neuroscience that 'negativity bias' that drives our attention to negative news is not a option but an inborn tendency because we are genetically hardwired for the purpose of survival, supported by the Darwinism Theory. Thus we pay relatively more attention to disturbing or negative events happening around us. Now there's emerging evidence that the emotional fallout triggered by negative news cannot be ruled out which also affects our physical health - increasing our chances of having a heart attack or developing health problems years later. (Zaria Gorvett, 12.03.2020) Several scientific and professional have demonstrated practical examples of the incidence of 'negativity bias.'

Loretta Breuning, a former professor explains “this can make it hard for us to ignore the negatives and seek out the positives around us.” she says. “Our brain is predisposed to go negative, and the news we consume reflects this.” She further adds that “a lot of what you see today is gossip elevated to a sophisticated level.” (Markham Heid, 31.01.2018)

Giving sustained attention to negative news inducts you into that mode of thinking due to our brain creating a neuronal circuit in the Neuroplasticity, is the brain's ability to change and adapt throughout life in response to experiences, environmental stimuli, and learning. This ability is essential for various cognitive and behavioural functions, including learning and memory, motor skill development, and recovery from injury or disease. Focusing on specific goals creates new and robust neural pathways between our neurons, facilitating our ability to achieve success. It enables us to approach challenges with a growth mindset to develop new skills which helps us replace old habits by new ones. A growth mindset dispels the idea that you have a finite amount of ability or intelligence. (Patrice Voss et al. 2017)

News can warp our perception of reality and influence our thoughts and behaviours in ways we may not even realize. One example is the way news coverage can influence our perception of risk. Studies have shown that the way news stories are framed can manipulate our perception of how risky a country or situation is. This can have life or death consequences, as people may underestimate their own risk of certain illnesses or diseases, potentially missing

early warning signs. The public perception of a disease's prevalence suggests that news coverage shape public perception, which in turn influence the allocation of government resources. There is also evidence that the news can affect our mental health, causing stress, anxiety, and PTSD, especially following a crisis. The impact of news is a psychological mystery, as most news doesn't actually affect us directly, if at all.

Exposure to negative news affect both the body and the mind. It creates feelings of fear, anxiety, and depression. Research has shown that exposure to negative news is associated with increased symptoms of anxiety and depression, as well as a heightened sense of fear and vulnerability. (Yu-ting Zhang et al., 2021)

Surprisingly a few studies have looked into how this all adds up, but in 2018 – well before we were confined to our homes with a major global crisis unravelling around us – the average American spent around eleven hours every day looking at screens, where information about global events is hard to escape. Many of us even take our primary news-delivery devices, such as mobile phones to bed.

A study by the American Psychological Association (APA) found that people who repeatedly watched coverage of the September 11 terrorist attacks had higher levels of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms than those who didn't. (Garfin, D. R., Silver, R. C., & Holman, E. A. 2020). This emotional contagion theory states that emotion could be transferred from one person to another through automatic mimicry, such as facial expression and postures. Moreover, emotional contagion could also occur online, in the absence of typical in-person interaction clues, especially for negative emotions. Negative posts were followed by more negative responses than positive posts on X. Happiness can be spread from person to person through social interactions.

Media effect theory explains how media use brings a change to people's cognition, emotion, and behaviour. (de Hoog N, Verboon P.,2019) Is the news making us unhappy? The influence of daily news exposure on emotional states.

Study reveals that negative news may: (1) trigger feelings of sadness, anger, or anxiety, can have a significant impact on both mindset, behaviour, decision and health, (2) lead to a negative spiral of thoughts and emotions, (3) make it difficult to see things in a positive light,

(4) increase feelings of hopelessness and helplessness, (5) lead to the deterioration of mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety, (6) have an impact on cognitive function, such as memory, attention and decision making as well as on physical health, (7) affect sleep, energy levels and motivation, relationships and social interactions and unhealthy behaviours such as overeating, smoking, and substance abuse, which can further contribute to poor health. According to another study negative news leads to a sense of "compassion fatigue" where people might start to feel numb and desensitized to the suffering of others, which can affect their ability to empathise and help others. (Schlenger WE et al. 2002),

Negative emotions triggered by exposure to negative news may unleash stress hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline, which can in turn increase the risk of developing chronic health conditions such as hypertension, heart disease, stroke and increased risk of sleep disturbance, which can in turn affect overall physical and mental health. The majority of media messages are constructed with commercial, political or other purposes. Therefore, the evaluation process in which individuals question media contents with respect to objectivity and reality is of vital importance for media .

In the new media order in which anyone can create one's own contents and share them because cost and scarcity of radio spectrum no longer apply as they did in the analogue days. Silverblatt (2001) suggests a contextual approach, one that emphasises issues of production and consumption in addition to content. One can expand this to an analysis of information control and cultural ideologies (Kavoori & Matthews, 2004, Lewis & Jhally, 1998). As Jhally notes, "To appreciate the significance of contemporary media, we need to know why messages are produced, under what constraints and conditions and by whom" (Lewis & Jhally, 1998)

Another definitive but less recognised element of media literacy is to give the person greater control of exposures and the construction of meaning from the information 'encountered in these exposures' (Porter, 2004) R. McChesney – the problem we face with a hyper- commercial profit obsessed media system is that it does a lousy job of producing citizens in a democracy.

News literacy is a news-oriented competence, aimed at promoting the critical news in news consumers and journalists overlap the core skills of CML. However, it focuses not only on

tracking, identifying and questioning content to distinguish from genuine to false 'news' but also to determine if news reporting and coverage is credible, trustworthy, objective and factual. It provides insights into the manipulative editorial skills. This empowers news consumers to become news savvy in order to make informed choices and decisions in order to uphold the ideals of a democracy.

The Radio Television Digital News Association (RTDNA) states. "News literacy is the acquisition of 21st century, critical-thinking skills for analysing and judging the reliability of news and information, differentiating among facts, opinions and assertions in the media we consume, create and distribute." They suggest that it can be taught most effectively in cross-curricular, inquiry-based formats at all grade levels, and is considered a necessary component for contemporary society.

The association also states that news literacy is a news-oriented competence, aimed at promoting CT in news consumers and journalists, which overlaps with the core skills of CML. However, it also focuses on identifying and questioning content to distinguish between genuine and false 'news', as well as determining the credibility, trustworthiness, objectivity, and factual accuracy of news reporting and coverage. Through this, it aims to empower news consumers to become more news-savvy, making informed choices and decisions in order to uphold the ideals of democracy.

In summary, news literacy is a critical skill that is essential for informed decision making in today's society, where access to information is readily available but not all information is reliable or trustworthy. By providing individuals with the tools to critically evaluate news and information, news literacy can help promote a more informed and engaged public, and ultimately strengthen the ideals of democracy.

### **News Impact on Democracy**

News has a unique role in democratic societies as it is expected to inform citizens to enable them to make sound democratic decisions. Therefore, it is important to interrogate news and its societal implications (Fleming 2014; Hobbs 2010b) News media education is designed to teach individuals how to apply core media skills (i.e., analysing and evaluating content) to news (Ashley et al. 2013; Maksl et al. 2015; Mihailidis 2014; Vraga & Tully 2015 &

McIntyre, 2016).

News is information about recent events or happenings, especially as reported by news media. There are several criteria that are typically used to determine whether something is newsworthy, including:

1. **Timeliness/Proximity:** News that is timely, meaning it is recent and relevant to current events, and proximity, meaning it is relevant to the local community or audience, are highly valued.
2. **Impact:** Stories that have a significant impact on a large number of people, or have far-reaching consequences, are often considered newsworthy.
3. **Prominence:** Stories about well-known individuals, organisations or institutions, or events involving these entities, are often considered newsworthy because of their prominence.
4. **Oddity:** Stories that are unusual, strange, or unexpected are often considered newsworthy because they are different from the norm and capture people's attention.
5. **Conflict:** Stories that involve conflict, such as disputes, disagreements, or controversies, are often considered newsworthy because they are inherently interesting and generate strong emotions.
6. **Currency/Relevance:** Stories that are relevant and important to current events or to the public's overall interests are considered newsworthy. This includes stories that are timely and relevant to a specific audience or community (*Source: "What Makes News?"*)

On the other hand Danish TV journalist, Schultz (2007) cites four further constructs which extend the traditional news values that dominate:

1. **Human Interest:** Stories that evoke strong emotions or concern for the well-being of individuals, communities or society are considered newsworthy such as stories about people in difficult circumstances or those who have achieved something remarkable.
2. **Unusualness:** Stories that are unique, strange, or surprising are considered newsworthy including stories about events that are out of the ordinary, or about people who are exceptional in some way.

3. Consequence: Stories that have significant consequences for individuals, communities, or society are considered newsworthy including stories about events that have far-reaching impacts, or about decisions or actions that will have long-lasting effects.
4. Emotion: Stories that evoke strong emotions, for example sadness, happiness, anger, or fear are considered newsworthy stories about tragic events, acts of heroism, or events that elicit a strong emotional response from the public.

Schultz's (2007) criteria stresses the importance of human interest, emotional impact, and the consequences of events in determining what is newsworthy. By considering these values, journalists and news organisations can provide a more nuanced and well-rounded view of current events, and engage audiences with stories that are not only relevant and timely, but also emotionally resonant and meaningful. It's worth noting that these news values overlap or interact with each other in complex ways. (Schultz,2007)

These are just a few examples of the criteria that are commonly used to determine whether something is newsworthy. However, it should be noted that different news organisations may have their own criteria for determining what is considered news.

News values can be limited in its ability to fully explain the motivations behind journalistic news decisions. While examining news outputs may shed light on the treatment of news, the intentions of journalists must also be considered according to Staab (1990). Staab (1990) and Harcup and O'Neill (2001) argue that an exploration of news values can only provide a partial explanation of the decision-making behind journalism.

Donsbach (2004) asserts that news values are inherently subjective and cannot be objective criteria. Staab (1990) proposed a functional model that takes into account the intentions of journalists, while Hall (1973) suggested that news values are part of an ideologically constructed way of perceiving the world that favours powerful elites, a view echoed by Herman and Chomsky (1988) in their propaganda model and McChesney (2000). The ideologic role of news selection and treatment may inform future research into potential ideological impacts. Despite limitations, it is still important to understand the criteria behind the selection of news, as it "goes to the heart of what is included, what is excluded, and why" (O'Neill and Harcup, 2009, 162). Westerhahl and Johansson (1994) also note that the

selection process can be "more important than what 'really happens'" in determining what becomes news. News values serve as a precept to aid rightful analysis and understanding of this significant aspect of journalism.

The study of news values by scholars has been approached differently. Some focus on the apparent newsworthiness of events or actors to determine why a story was selected, and others considering the impact of organisational, cultural, and economic factors. Galtung and Ruge (1965) hypothesise selection criteria while studying the reporting of foreign events in the Norwegian press, while Golding and Elliott (1979) and Harcup and O'Neill (2001) use their experience and analysis of news outputs. The key news values has been summarised by Harrison (2006), O'Neill and Harcup (2009), Caple and Bednarek (2013), and Harcup (2015), while ethnographic observations and interviews have been used by Schultz (2007) and Dick (2014) to understand the judgement made by journalists when selecting news.

Schultz (2007) based on her observations of Danish TV journalists identifies six news values: (a) timeliness, (b) relevance, (c) identification, (d) conflict, (e) sensation, and (f) exclusivity - dominate news selection whereas Schultz identifies three types of news values - undisputed, taken-for-granted and rarely articulated (doxic) and explicit news values but O'Neill (2012) suggests that there may be a hierarchy of news values with celebrity at the top.

Arbitrary factors such as luck, convenience, and serendipity can also play a role in news selection, as can journalistic routines, competition for exclusives, influence of proprietors and advertisers, external influence from public relations professionals and "spin doctors", the belief systems of journalists, and the influence of peers within the workplace. The same newsworthiness model has been found to be applicable in different countries (Shoemaker and Cohen, 2006), with little difference between genders (Lavie and Lehman-Wilzig, 2003).

News values are seen as a reflection of organisational, sociological, and cultural norms combined with economic factors, rather than as a reflection of citizens' information needs. Allern (2002) suggests that a set of commercial news values exists, with sensationalist stories most likely to be pursued, stories that are costly to pursue less likely to make it into the news, and well-prepared press releases and photo opportunities more likely to be taken up by resource-starved journalists.

Commercial pressures can result in the selection of news stories based on perceived appeal to

target audiences rather than their newsworthiness or importance, particularly relevant for online news (Niblock and Machin, 2007; Stromback, Karlsson, and Hopmann, 2012). An analysis of news in the five largest newspapers in the Netherlands established that audience clicks affected news selection (Welbers et al. 2015), a conclusion supported by a study of over 300 editorial gatekeepers in the United States (Tien Vu 2014). (Harcup, Tony & Deirdre O'Neill, 2017).

### **Six Principles Behind News**

The US-based Radio Television Digital News Foundation provides six principles which underpin news and information:

1. Free expression is the foundation — the cornerstone — of democracy. Unlike in the UK and many other countries the US Constitution provides freedom of expression as inalienable rights to protect the foundation of journalism to 'accurately, thoroughly and completely inform their communities', to promote more effective and active citizens. This enables citizens to freely share information needed to empower themselves, to make enlightened decisions, to express disagreements and to make sound choices about what leaders to elect, take responsibility for the welfare of their communities and respect the rights of people with different viewpoints and beliefs.
2. Discerning fact from opinion is a basic skill and obligation. It is incumbent upon journalists to inform citizens by reporting of information to enable them to determine the difference between authentic news reports and false 'news' (facts and fiction) and to correctly perceive what columns, commentary, editorials, letters to the editor, advertising, advocacy ads and advocacy are produced by whom. They should be proficient in evaluating what they receive and verify what they create.
3. When the process of gathering and reporting is transparent, news and information are more meaningful, trusted and credible. Journalists should refrain from indulging in biased, distorted and paid news. They should clearly identify issues provide objective reporting which ensures journalistic independence and integrity. News consumers should be able to trust their journalistic sources for correct information and news.
4. Effective communication of news and information requires synthesis of multiple sources



into meaningful context and comprehension of its impact. Journalists must check news content and information to enable audiences to make meaningful use of it, in context, with a minimum need for clarification. Journalists must get it right and must present news in a relevant, engaging manner without sensationalism, speculation and bias. Citizens should be trained to expect credible and reliable information sources.

5. Information requires verification to be effective. Journalists must report and present information in coherent, clear, meaningful and relevant manner. They should interrogate sources without advocacy or disengagement.

6. Information in today's society must empower forums to give voice to citizens and to monitor the free flow of information. Even though journalists must reflect their society but they must be ready to challenge its values and preconceptions. They should report news from all stakeholders in pursuit of an inclusion policy by offering a platform to those who are traditionally unheard. Although they are the watchdog for society they should also be catalytic to change. (The Radio Television Digital News Foundation).

In 1776 Adam Smith in his book 'The Rationality Choice Theory' introduced an invaluable concept which is critical in today's world. He argued that in fulfilment of their social responsibility journalists and the media are bound to provide news and information, which are scrutinised and factually correct which is indispensable to enable news consumers to make rational and informed decisions and sound judgements.

Herbert Simon states that those who rejected the assumption of perfect rationality argues that rational choice is conditional upon the availability and full access to the information for making the most rational decision every time.

Adam Smith argues from an economic perspective that the impact of incomplete, inadequate, uncontextualised and tendentious news resonates with one of the four types of bias groups known as 'Less News and Information' as cited in the set of about 200 cognitive biases. This is insufficient for news users to fully comprehend the total picture, it distorts reality and reliance upon it results in judgement impairment leading to biased action and wrong decisions.

A common sensible approach is to apply the theory of evidentialism by Clifford's principles: "It is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone to believe anything on insufficient evidence" because it tends to lead to wrong or distorted decisions.

Daniel Jackson emphasised the "weighty responsibility of journalists in verifying claims of truth." He contended that aside from the prevalence of fake news, political journalism encompasses four other concerning factors that must be acknowledged: "an excessive focus on the theatrical aspects of politics, an inherent skepticism towards politicians, an inadequate framework for addressing issues where the evidence is unbalanced, and a growing mistrust of traditional media fueled by populist figures."

Adam Smith's Theory of Rationality says that people are not always able to obtain all the information they would need to make the best possible decision. Simon argues that knowledge of all alternatives, or all consequences that follow from each alternative, is realistically impossible for most decisions that humans make. Rational choice theory posits that individuals use a logical, cost-benefit analysis process to make decisions, rather than randomly selecting options.

Katz and Blumler's (1974) User and Gratification Theory explains that audiences tend to choose mediatexts which provide them information, entertainment and knowledge that are useful also influenced by several factors; normative functions of the media and cognitive bias. The deluge of news and information has rendered the standard economic theory of rational expectations ineffective where rational inattention assume that individuals no longer act rationally but make decisions out of personal interests. Rational expectations tenet, which assume people acting on full information quickly process all freely available information, has been undermined by the rational inattention theory. RI states that despite full and available information people don't act quickly absorb it all and translate it into decisions. RI is based on a simple observation that attention is a scarce resource and, as such, it must be budgeted wisely. (Christopher A. Sims, 2006) RI theory states people choose to pay more attention to more important things. (Maćkowiak. Bartosz et al, 2021)

However, in reality, humans are not always rational in their decision-making. They are normally influenced by cognitive biases, which are intrinsic systematic errors in thinking that affect their judgments and decisions. This explains why consumers do not act rationally anymore. Research supports the assertion that younger audiences have different attitudes towards news than older groups. A study by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism found that younger people are primarily driven by progress and enjoyment in their lives, and

this translates into what they look for in news (Newman, Fletcher, & Kalogeropoulos, 2019). The research also found that traditional news media no longer seems as relevant or dominant to younger audiences when it comes to news content.

The RI theory operates on the premise that individuals cannot process all available information; rather, they must selectively attend to certain pieces of information. Imperfect information has formed the basis of several critical findings in economics. Despite the abundance of available information due to advancements in technology, we have the ability to assimilate only a fraction of it. Consequently, the type of imperfect information we possess and use to make decisions is primarily determined by the information which we choose to direct our attention to. These choices are influenced by prevailing economic conditions, leading to behaviour that exhibits several deviations from conventional models that are empirically validated.

Cognitive biases can lead consumers to make decisions that are not in their best interest. The endowment effect is a bias in which people value something more if they own it, which can lead them to overvalue their possessions and not be willing to sell them even if it's in their best interest. Similarly, confirmation bias is a tendency to seek out information that confirms one's existing beliefs, leading consumers to ignore information that contradicts their views.

Moreover, emotions also play a role in decision-making. People are often motivated by fear, greed, and the desire for social status, which results in irrational decisions. People often rely on heuristics, or mental shortcuts, to make decisions quickly, leading to errors in judgement.

These cognitive biases and emotional influences have a significant impact on the behaviour of consumers as they may make impulsive purchases or fall victim to advertising or marketing ploys that play on their biases and emotions. They are commonly prone to seven most common types of cognitive distortions on a daily basis: (a) selective abstraction (having negative aspects of experiences in a selective way), (b) overgeneralisation (a belief that in future negative outcome will ensue in similar situations), (c) catastrophisation (believing that the worst is most likely to happen), (d) personalisation (tending to attribute the cause of external events to oneself), (e) temporal causality or predicting without sufficient evidence (holding a belief that in future negative that happened in the past is likely to also occur), (f) self-reference (feeling that one is at the centre of everyone's attention), and (g) dichotomous

thinking (believing in a binary thinking mode either positive or negative one will happen). (Beck, Rush, Shaw, and Emery.1979), (Mahirishi Mahesh Yogi).

As early as 1949 Orwell predicted the repercussions of digital abundance. Orwell feared those who would deprive us of information.. The narratives centred around Covid-19 forming into binary polemic dispute and over the UK referendum to remain or stay in the EU fulfilled the prophesy of George Orwell's in 1984. He expressed concern that the truth would be concealed from us whereas Huxley feared the truth would be drowned in a sea of irrelevance.(Andrew Wilson, 4.5.2012)

The most effective strategy used now to deny or deprive news to unauthorised people is the current "locked platforms" about social media companies making their data inaccessible to researchers, journalists, and non-governmental organisations. This has caused concern for governments regarding "dark political posts" and untraceable political ads. In response, Facebook has created a political ad archive tool, but has also limited access to some of its services such as Pages API and Graph Search. It is important for social media companies to make their data available for research, monitoring, and archiving purposes. The government also has a role to play by consulting with the mentioned groups and taking a regulatory and facilitating approach.

Firstly, news or editorial content creators, such as journalists or writers may have more information than news consumers about the stories they report on. By corollary the news content may not paint the full picture for being biased. For example, a news outlet may selectively report certain facts to support a particular political agenda, while omitting other relevant information that would provide a more balanced view of the situation.

Secondly, social media algorithms which determine the content that users see on their feeds may also create information asymmetry. The algorithms used by social media platforms are enigmatic or mysterious as people do not have a clear understanding of how they work. Consequently resulting in a situation where users are only provided limited news that meets their interests, behaviours, and previous engagements. This being so, citizens may be denied access to all the relevant information to envision a distorted view of the world.

Finally, information asymmetry can also be created when news consumers have different levels of media literacy and CT skills. Some users may be better equipped to assess the

credibility and accuracy of news content, while others may be more vulnerable to misinformation and fake news.

The asymmetric information theory highlights the importance of being critical of the news content, which is pulled out from the social media, being aware of the potential biases and limitations of the sources we rely on. It is essential to seek out multiple sources of information and to develop the skills necessary to evaluate the credibility and accuracy of the news content we encounter.

### **Strategies Against Digital Challenges**

The current multi-faceted media ecosystem due to digital transformation seeks a matrix of multi-literacies beyond the basic literacy and numeracy, namely: computer literacy, media literacy, information literacy, new media literacy and digital literacy necessary to equip citizens to encourage them to reap the benefits as intended by the government's inclusion policy.

The European Union (EU) has recognised the challenges associated with citizens' digital and data literacy education and has invested in research around internet safety, digital well-being, and digital skills aimed at developing citizens' critical awareness (European Commission, 2019). In January 2018, the EU developed "The Digital Education Action Plan", which emphasises the risks disinformation poses for educators and students and the urgent need to develop digital skills and competences of all learners, both in formal and non-formal education. The Digital Competence Framework for Citizens, developed by the Commission, sets out the wide range of skills needed by all learners, from information and data literacy to digital content creation and online safety and well-being (European Commission, 2018a, p. 12). (2021-2027) One of the pillars of the European Commission Action Plan against Disinformation (European Commission, 2018b) is raising awareness and improving societal resilience. The EU acknowledges that public awareness is vital for societal resilience against dis-/mis-/mal-information, and this mainly involves improving citizens' media/digital/data literacies with a particular focus on identifying and combating false news.

Governments have started to recognise the need to address disinformation and have called for

research to investigate potential interventions. Belgium, for example, has established an expert group of journalists and scholars since 2018 to find a solution and launched a media literacy campaign to inform people about misinformation.

Canada has launched a Digital Charter, titled ‘Trust in a digital world’, to defend freedom of expression and protect against disinformation aimed at undermining democracy, and proposed investing funding in projects aimed at raising public awareness and digital literacy, particularly in relation to dis- and mis-information.

Nigeria too has developed a media literacy campaign in 2018, which includes a collaboration between digital and traditional media together with the National Orientation Agency to provide Nigerians with the appropriate education to fight dis- and mis-information.

The UK's Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) published a report in February 2019 on ‘Disinformation and “false news”’, which highlights the importance of digital and data literacy, arguing that it is hard to differentiate on social media between content that is true, misleading, or false, especially when messages are targeted at an individual level. Children and adults need to be equipped with the necessary information and critical analysis to understand content on social media, to work out what is accurate and trustworthy and what is not. Furthermore, people need to be aware of the rights they have over their own personal data and what they should do when they want their data removed (DCMS, 2019).

Generally speaking digital literacy, information literacy, computer literacy and new media literacy possess overlapping functions: New media literacy (NML) is defined as the ability to use digital and communication technologies to consume and create content, as well as to apply CT (Koc & Barut, 2016).

These purposes include behaviours both consuming and prosuming media content (Koc & Barut, 2016). social media platforms are utilized as sources of information (Cooke, 2017). In other words, people use social media for information-seeking in different fields (Kim, Sin, & Yoo-Lee, 2014). The main challenge in this regard is to decide on the trustworthiness, objectivity, and accuracy of the information (Chiu, Tsai, & Liang, 2015; Reisoglu, Toksoy, & Erenler, 2020)

Misinformation, such as that which spread during the COVID-19 pandemic (Rovetta &

Bhagavathula, 2020), can be addressed through a rational and critical approach to information (Chiu et al., 2015; Warner-Søderholm et al., 2018).

### **Seven-part Definition of Media Education**

Media education is an non-controversial competency to impart CML skills which are focused on the development of CT in participation in public life through the media. Silverblatt (2001) gave a more comprehensive definition of CML. He emphasised the following seven-part definition of media education: (2008) which forms his framework for media education:

1. CT skill or disposition to develop independent judgements about media content.
2. an understanding of the process of mass communication.
3. an awareness of the impact of media on the individual and society.
4. an awareness of media content as a text that provides insight into our contemporary cultures and ourselves.
5. the development of strategies with which to discuss and analyse media messages.
6. the cultivation of an enhanced enjoyment, understanding, and appreciation of media content
7. in the case of media communicators, the ability to produce effective and responsible media messages.

*Source: Silverblatt, A. 2001) Media : Keys to Interpreting Media Messages. Westport, CT: Praeger)*

CML applies to individuals in their triple roles as a consumer, producer and citizen. The wide ranging media examples that appeal them include films, television shows, newspaper articles, websites and blogs, songs and music videos, SM, scientific journals, news magazines hoarding, bill-boards, signages etc. Media also include travel tickets, physician prescriptions, bus, train, flight and theatre tickets, contracts, sale deeds and terms and conditions forecommerce stores; Amazon, Flipkart, eBay; search engine; Google, DuckDuckGo; email service; Gmail and SM platform accounts.

CML encompasses the following literacies; advertising, algorithm, civic, cybersecurity, cultural, computer, data, digital, environment, financial, health, information, propaganda, news, social media, spiritual, visual and video. The three-decade old concept of media has

been outstripped by contemporary developments in neuroscience and discoveries in our cosmos. Today's digitalisation is a paradigm shift which calls for a revised response to chaotic upsurge of omni-directional flow of multi-media content without being scrutinised with a critical lens.

It is to be noted that humans are an integral part of the mediascape. Elinor Carmi (2020) has rounded up studies to highlight data literacy is an important in the emerging field of study when technology and algorithmic decision-making become increasingly prevalent in society. Data literacy, media literacy and digital literacy are overlapping terms. They are increasingly being recognised as essential for citizens to be able to participate fully and meaningfully in the data-driven society. (Elinor Carmi, 2007).

The author highlights the Facebook/Cambridge Analytica scandal as a key example of the risks and harms associated with a lack of data literacy among citizens. The scandal demonstrated how people without CT fell for disinformation and advertisements which were designed to influence their decisions on the 2016 UK Referendum 'to leave the European Union,' and the 2016 US presidential election. This incident made it clear that many citizens are unaware of the ways in which their data can be used and abused.

The author argues that current definitions of data literacy are not adequate to address the problem of misinformation, disinformation, and mal-information. He asserts that there is a need for a more comprehensive definition of data literacy that takes into account not only the technical skills required to access and manipulate data, but also the CT skills necessary to evaluate and make sense of the information that is being presented.

CML is a subfield of media theory, which is itself a subset of communication theory. They are related, but they are not the same. It is a broad field that studies how people communicate and how communication shapes society. It includes the study of verbal and nonverbal communication, as well as the ways in which communication is mediated through technology and other channels.

Critical Media Theory is a branch of communication theory that specifically studies the dynamics, matrix and undercurrents of media production, media representation, content distribution, and audience approach to content reception. Besides examining these it focuses



on how media technologies and practices shape the way that people communicate and how they understand the world.

### **Domain-specific or Domain-General?**

CML is not to be understood as course or a field of content. It is domain-specific which means the CML skills are not transferable from domains to domains. It is rather known as a competency to deal with the content. It is epistemological. It is to do with the question of HOW and not WHAT. Hence it is central to understanding the encoded meanings of the way the media construct news, create content and messages, operate and their constructs, devices and standards, ethics, practices, functions, principles, structures and the policy of the media systems.

Carl Hendrick (2017) argues that general CT skills cannot be easily transferred from one context to another, and that domain-specific knowledge is more important for higher levels of skill in any given arena. The author cites research on air-traffic controllers and other studies to support the claim that cognitive skills are not easily transferable, and gives the examples of football players and other professionals to illustrate the importance of specific expertise in their respective fields. He also points out that schools have been attempting to teach '21st-century learning skills' or 'CT' as a set of general problem-solving approaches that can be applied to any domain, despite the lack of evidence supporting the idea that such skills can be taught in this way.

Research found that it is not possible to learn a set of general approaches to problem-solving that can be applied to any situation or domain. Instead, the author suggests that domain-specific knowledge is more important for achieving higher levels of skill in any given field. (Chang, TY., Gauthier, I. 2021) Chang et al (2020) discovered that domain-general ability and domain-specific music reading experience contribute differently to performance on the music skills and reading expertise (Chang & Gauthier, 2020; Wong et al., 2014; Wong et al., 2020; Wong & Gauthier, 2010a, 2010b, 2012; Wong & Wong, 2018).

His idea is supported by research on air traffic controllers, who were found to have sophisticated cognitive abilities that did not translate beyond their professional domain when

tested on generic memory tasks. The author also cites other studies that have shown that cognitive skills such as the ability to remember long strings of digits are not easily transferable to other contexts.

It is therefore clear that domain-specific knowledge and expertise is more important than general cognitive skills in determining success in a particular field. Research on air traffic controllers, who performed no better than others on generic memory tasks despite demonstrating advanced skills in their specific domain, is cited as evidence for this phenomenon. The importance of domain-specific knowledge is also discussed in the context of sports and education. It is argued that the emphasis on teaching general skills such as CT in schools may not be effective, as CT is not a skill that can be acquired and deployed regardless of context. The review calls for a shift in focus towards domain-specific knowledge and expertise.

Several studies that suggest that domain-specific knowledge and expertise is more important than general cognitive skills in determining success in a particular field. On air traffic controllers, who demonstrated advanced skills in their specific domain but performed no better than others on generic memory tasks, as well as research on the non-transferability of the ability to remember long strings of letters. (Smith, E. E., & Kosslyn, S. M. 2007; Sternberg, R. J. 2003); Chase, W. G., Ericsson, K. A., 1981 and Willingham, D. 2009)

The review showed that 'dispositions' such as the growth mindset and grit cannot be taught outside of a specific subject matter, and that there is no evidence that teaching them has any effect. Instead, the review suggests that it is more effective to focus on subject-specific CT skills that broaden a student's individual subject knowledge and help them to understand the unique aspects of each subject.

It provides examples of how this approach can enhance a student's understanding and appreciation of a particular subject, and notes that thought processes are intertwined with the content being thought about. It also suggests that students need to be given real and significant things from the world to think with and about in order to influence how they do that thinking. (Carl Hendrick, Jan. 2017)

### Multiple Literacies

CML is a broad concept that encompasses a variety of different literacies. It generally refers to the ability to critically evaluate and understand media messages and the social, political, and economic contexts in which they are produced.

There are several types of literacies that can be regulated by CML, including:

1. Advertising literacy: the ability to critically evaluate and understand advertising messages and the techniques used to persuade audiences. Key aspects of advertising literacy is the ability to identify and analyse the techniques used in advertising, such as emotional appeals, rhetorical devices, and subliminal messaging and the ability to evaluate the credibility of the information presented in advertisements. Consumers must be able to recognise misleading or false claims and understand the potential biases of the advertiser.
2. Algorithm literacy – the technique of how to understand, interpret, and create algorithms, how the latter works, how they are used in technology, and the potential implications of their use.
3. Civic literacy: the skills to critically evaluate and understand the role of media in shaping public discourse and participation in civic life.
4. Cybersecurity literacy: this term refers to the knowledge and skills needed to protect against online threats such as hacking, phishing, and identity theft while learning how to secure personal information, use secure passwords, and recognise and avoid scams.
5. Computer literacy is to be able to use computers and other technology effectively including a proficiency in understanding basic computer functions and the ability to use common software and the internet.
6. Cultural literacy: the ability to critically evaluate and understand how media messages depict different cultures and how they contribute to shaping cultural representations.

7. Data literacy: the competence to critically evaluate and understand data and statistics and how they are used in media messages.
8. Digital literacy: the skills to navigate and critically evaluate digital media and the internet, including understanding how to evaluate the credibility of online sources.
9. Environmental literacy: the skills to critically evaluate and understand how media messages portray environmental issues and the actions that can be taken to address them.
10. Financial literacy: the skills to critically evaluate and understand how media messages about financial products, investments, and markets are presented.
11. Health literacy: to be able to critically evaluate and understand health-related information and how it's being used to sell or promote products or services. Health literacy is a critical aspect of health promotion and protection, disease prevention, and healthcare decision making. It extends to the ability to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services, such as dialogue and discussion, interpreting charts, making decisions about participating in research studies, and using medical tools.

This is in line with the operational definition of health literacy developed by National Library of Medicine and used by Healthy People 2010 that defines health literacy as "the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions" (Ratzan and Parker, 2000).

The health context encompassing the media, the marketplace, and government agencies, the interaction between individuals and materials for health plays an important role in health literacy all must be able to provide basic health information in an appropriate manner (Rudd, 2003). Furthermore, the impact of health literacy arises from the interaction of the individual and the health context, therefore, it is important to consider the role of both the individual and the context in understanding health literacy (Rudd et al., 2003).

12. Information literacy – This is a set of abilities that allows individuals to

acquire, locate, comprehend, analyse, evaluate, adapt, generate, store, and present information for problem-solving and decision-making from a variety of sources, including books, articles, and websites. Information literate individuals possess fundamental skills such as CT, analysing information, self-expression, self-directed learning, creating, being informed citizens and professionals, and taking part in the governance and democratic processes of their societies.

13. News literacy: the ability to critically evaluate and understand news and current affairs and the factors that influence their production and dissemination.
14. Propaganda literacy: the ability to critically evaluate and understand how media messages are used for persuasion or manipulation and identifying propaganda techniques.
15. Social media literacy the proficiency to navigate and use social media platforms effectively. It includes understanding how to use social media for communication, networking, and professional development.
16. Visual literacy: the ability to critically evaluate and understand visual media, such as images, videos, and infographics. The term “visual literacy” defined in 1969 by John Debes, the founder of the International Visual Literacy Association, refers to a group of vision-competencies a human being can develop by seeing, having and integrating other sensory experiences. Visual literacy is fundamental to normal human learning which enables him to discriminate and interpret the visible actions, objects, symbols, natural or man-made, that he encounters in his environment. Through the creative use of these competencies, an individual is able to communicate with others, to comprehend and enjoy the masterworks of visual communication.” (John Debes, 1969)
17. Spiritual literacy: This literacy refers to the ability to understand and appreciate the spiritual dimensions of life and to use this understanding to navigate one's own life and to interact with others in a meaningful way, factoring in various spiritual practices, traditions, a deep understanding of one's own values and beliefs and developing the ability to use spiritual wisdom and practices to find a purpose, and

fulfilment in life, and to deal with the challenges and difficulties. It can be seen as a form of overall competence for navigating the complexities of life and find a deeper sense of well-being.

18. Video literacy: this refers to the ability to create, understand, and analyze video content. It includes understanding the technical aspects of video production, as well as the ability to critically evaluate video content.

Essentially, all illiteracies overlap in certain ways and are not exhaustive as it could be different depending on different sources, however, these are the most common types of literacies that CML can regulate. Therefore it is axiomatic that multi-literacies and CML competencies are indispensable in today's world of digital convergence, a concept that refers to the convergence of different media forms, such as television, radio, print, and the internet, onto a single platform, often a digital one.

As a constituent of the media social networking websites are not only an adjunct for creating and sharing of content of personal nature and dialogic interaction between families and friends but has forayed into the world of journalism and assailed its criteria. Generally, professional news production and dissemination still command the respect of the majority of audience in many countries including India and China because the process is preceded by systematic and routinised editorial checks

## Chapter 4

### Data and Research Methodology

Research involves utilising established methodologies to conduct a detailed investigation into a particular problem or question with the objective of producing novel knowledge. Research enables us to confirm or disprove hypotheses within specified parameters, conditions, and assumptions, providing a foundation for confident contributions to knowledge that can be replicated and verified.

Having an understanding of the different research types and their areas of focus can assist in project planning, selection of appropriate techniques and methodologies, and effective communication of findings to fellow researchers and supervisors.

The following factors determine the types of research to be undertaken:

1. Purpose and objective = Applied research and Fundamental research
2. Depth of Scope = Exploratory Research, Descriptive Research, Explanatory Research and Correlational Research
3. Data collection = Quantitative and Qualitative
4. Data type = Primary research and Secondary research
5. Data source = Documentary, Lab, Field and Mixed Methods
6. Nature of study = Descriptive and Analytical
7. Research design = Exploratory and Conclusive
8. Type of Inference = Inductive and Deductive and Hypothetical-Deductive Investigation
9. Time = Longitudinal Study and Cross-Sectional

It's important to note it is practically impossible to comprehensively address the research question by restricting to one type of research. An interdisciplinary approach to research fosters greater CT, synthesises multiple disciplines, and develops life-long learning skills (Jones,2010) which is aptly more relevant to investigating the research questions. With this in

mind this study has necessarily adopted an Applied Research method (also referred to as Action research method) which is appropriate for addressing specific problems in society compared to a fundamental method.

Applied research It is a problem-solving approach that is designed to help organisations or individuals address specific business problems. It involves assessing existing information and data to determine whether a program, process, or product is achieving its intended outcomes. It also considers a cyclical process of problem identification, data gathering, analysis, action planning, implementation and evaluation. It is a crucial component of research to meet specific customer needs, address gaps in the market and to assess the effectiveness of existing programs or interventions, research and development is critical for innovation and new product development, and action research is for addressing specific business problems.

The exploration of the question of what is the cause and effect warrants a combination of three more types of research methods; (1) descriptive, (2) exploratory and (3) philosophical in order to inform the development of holistic critical media literacy:

(1) Descriptive research provides a basis for understanding and describing the characteristics of a particular phenomenon. This type of research provides a complete and accurate picture of a situation or issue. It is useful in gaining background information on a particular topic, and can inform critical media literacy by helping to refine concepts and theories that are often invoked in unreflective modes of thought and discourse. It also provides a basis for ethical decision-making, and can bring clarity to the guiding principles of a particular individual or group (Anastas, 2002).

(2) Exploratory research is a flexible approach that is used when there is little previous research to refer to on a particular topic. The goals of exploratory research are to gain familiarity with the basic details of a situation, generate new ideas and assumptions to determine whether a study is feasible for future investigation (Cuthill, 2002). It is valuable to CML in defining new terms, clarifying existing concepts, generating formal hypotheses and developing more precise research questions. It can also help establish research priorities (Taylor et al., 2002).

(3) Philosophical research, like descriptive research, is an overarching approach to examining



a research problem. It uses the tools of argumentation derived from philosophical traditions, concepts, models, and theories to critically explore and challenge deeply embedded assumptions. The study of ontology, epistemology, and axiology can provide a basis for applying ethical decision-making, inform methodology and bring clarity to the guiding principles of a particular individual or group (Labaree & Scimeca, 2008; Maykut, 2004).

All three types of research can inform CML by providing an insight as a basis for understanding and exploring the reality of a situation, refining concepts and theories, and bringing clarity to guiding principles and ethical decision-making. The specific approaches and goals of descriptive, exploratory, and philosophical research provide different perspectives and tools for critical media literacy, and each type can contribute to a deeper understanding of media and its effects.

### **The Three Types of Research Approaches**

There are basically three types of research approaches: (1) Deductive research approach - tests theories, validity assumptions or hypotheses. This involves a number of stages; starting from a theory, hypothesis, observation, rejection or acceptance of hypothesis. (2) Inductive research approach - results in new theories and generalisations from a specific observation. This starts with one or a set of research questions that are explored through observation, pattern and ending with a theory, and (3) Abductive research approach – focused on the explanation of 'incomplete facts' or 'surprising answers' (Dudovskiy. John. (<https://research-methodology.net/research-methodology/research-approach/>))

I have used a two-combination sampling methods: (a) the judgmental sampling method, also known as purposive sampling, as a non-probability sampling technique where the participants are selected as representative sample of the population of India, based on their knowledge and professional judgement with a view to bringing more accurate results.

Data, collected through a two mixed-methods research is warranted for interpreting numerical data, although in reality it can also yield factual information eg. opinions, ideas and attitudes. The qualitative research method aims to preserve and analyse the situated form, content, and experience of social action, rather than subject it to mathematical or other formal

transformations. (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). The mixed-methods research provides answer simultaneously confirmatory and exploratory questions, firm inferences through depth and breadth responding to complex social phenomena and the facility through divergent findings for an expression of differing viewpoints. (Andrew Armitage. (ud).

This study addresses the knowledge gap as to date no study has investigated comment fields to assess the levels of media literacy. The applied and exploratory research purports to: (a) determine what interventions are necessary in promoting education for 21st century mediasphere mainly from a citizenship perspective and (b) address a knowledge gap indicated by the literature review and most importantly.

It focuses on how internet users participating in ongoing conversations demonstrate one or more of the seven core skills of media (W. J. Potter, 2004). It is important for the study to maintain a narrow focus on exploring the phenomenon while ensuring the academic rigour and tenor that is expected for a doctoral standard and to conform to the SMART criteria of being specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely. (John Foulton et al.)

This study's primary research questions - Do online comments tend to show potential for fulfilling the deliberative idea or show more demonstrative character? Are contributions deliberative or just an abuse of the SM? What are the merits and demerits of comments in fostering media for informed citizenship? Do comments reflect rational and coherent arguments in civil debate? Do they constitute a deliberative public sphere? Do comments hinder professional practices of journalists or enhance the quality of journalism, and ultimately citizenship?

The subsidiary questions are pivotal to addressing the second primary question in evaluating the element or the level of CML manifested in content creators. Buckingham succinctly sums up the purpose of the all-encompassing functions of media. However it prioritises children to enable them to understand and participate actively in the media culture that surrounds them. The emphasis is on critical understanding and analysis, and increasingly upon media production by students themselves." (Buckingham, 2001)

The following theoretical approaches are suitable to explore media literacy on SM: (1) Critical Theory: CT's approach emphasises the role of power, ideology, and discourse in the

production and consumption of media. It encourages the examination of how media shapes our understanding of the world and our place within it. (2) Cognitive Psychology: CP's approach focuses on the mental processes and strategies used by individuals when engaging with media. It can help explain how individuals interpret and make sense of media messages.

(3) Cultural Studies: This approach examines the interplay between culture, media, and communication. It can be used to explore the ways in which media literacy is constructed and experienced in different cultural contexts, (4) Postmodernism: postmodernism views media literacy as a way of understanding the complex, fragmented, and ever-changing nature of media in contemporary society. It stresses the need to understand media messages in their broader social and political contexts.

### **Research Design & Objectives**

This study aims to investigate the relationship between new CML and the potential impact of misinformation. It is primarily interested in understanding how media literate netizens are and what are the prospects for SM as an online pedagogy for developing media education for the 21st century. It is predicated on a digital paradigm shift due to the emergence of online media (new media + SM + mobile media) creating a new information disorder. It (a) conceptualises a conscious and concerted strategy to promote media, (b) predisposes to advocating curriculum-based media courses and digital pedagogy for lifelong learning and (c) assesses whether online comments made on news articles reflected critical media skills as stipulated the constructivist theory.

This thesis acknowledges CML as a sine-qua-non to deal with the challenges unleashed by digital convergence as a paradigm shift of the post-truth era. It is interested in understanding the role and relevance of traditional journalistic values of objectivity and impartiality in today's digital news mediasphere its impact upon the development of CML. It recognises that in assessing the importance of CML the deployment of CT and freedom of expression are key in developing an informed and socratic citizenship to train them as eligible electors of a competent government for a vibrant democracy.

Following a critical review of the curated samples of comments Potter's model of seven skills of media literacy (Potters.W.J. 2008) were adapted and tweaked trawl pertinent themes of the

dataset.

Aimed at inducting citizens into re-orienting their disposition CML is central to developing CT and analysis of information of citizens in a democracy (CML): (1) analysis - deconstructing content into meaningful elements, (2) explanation - determining which elements are alike in some way; why some elements are different from other groups of elements, (3) interrogation - questioning the course of options, events or response, (4) induction - inferring a pattern across a small set of elements, then generalising the pattern to all elements in the set, (5) deduction - using general principles to explain particulars, and (6) abuse (*Source: Adapted from Potter, W.J. (2008). Media . Sage Publications. Thousand Oaks, CA*).

This thesis is primarily interested in investigating a conceptual framework to understand how CML can be developed to strengthen citizenship. It takes a CML approach to exploring critical digital media education relative to protectionism, CML movement and media arts education in developing CT for school curriculum and lifelong learning supported by web- based pedagogic resources.

This research investigated CML skills of net users by analysing their comments on six major news stories of national interest posted on the YouTube channels of three Indian national satellite television channels and three international television channels. It was interested in assessing their types of response to determine how the comments reflect CML skills as developed by Potters in his seven-skill model.

The thesis is interested in understanding if these principles and values have survived the contemporary onslaught of digital convergence which have been aggressive, suppressive and disruptive challenges of the digital convergence and how indispensable they are in underpinning and motivating the integration of CML into school curriculum in the interest of desired outcomes, self-fulfilment, success, justice, equality, peace and happiness. This thesis argues that CML plays a crucial role in the governance reform agenda. To assist development practitioners, it makes recommendations for steps to improve governance through CML.

It also focused on the need to assess the status quo of Socratic method, dialectic or dialogic method in conversation, narratives and comments circulating in SM. The best effective way to determine the truths of opinions is by interrogation. It underscores the challenge to traditional

conceptions of free expression that are posed today by SM platforms, which is a paradigm shift that calls for the induction of school children and adults into a culture of CML through media education.

Given the varied benefits and affordances of the internet this study focuses on social influence in computer-mediated communication, mediated, underrepresented, misrepresented and hyped up content. The study has used a combination of two approaches; (a) critical interpretive analysis and (b) thematic analysis to detect dominant themes, patterns and nuanced or pronounced aspects or stress as dictated by the research question. The latter analysis can benefit from an additionally appropriate approach called the affordance approach which helps to analyse users' psychology in terms of online behaviour.

### **Research Methodological Approach**

This brings us to the protectionist approach but with an added layer of cognitive approach (W. James Potter) to tackle this scourge. 'Be your own editor-in-chief' in the mediated society has been advocated by Sonia Livingstone in 2018 as an inferential solution that highlighted two important themes: (1) protectionist approach and (2) regulatory approach while endeavouring to purge the scourge of false 'news' from our world.

CPE would rather analyse the role of media as producers of ideology and representatives of partial interests (Amartya Sen) by providing a framework for understanding the ways in which the production, distribution, and consumption of media are shaped by economic and political power relations (Curran, 2002). CPE posits that media is not a neutral or objective institution, but rather it is shaped by the interests of those who control it (Downing, 2001).

CML, in turn, is an approach to understanding and analysing media that is informed by this understanding of the ways in which media are shaped by power relations (Mosco, 2009). It emphasises the importance of understanding the social, economic, and political contexts in which media is produced, distributed, and consumed, and how these contexts shape the representation and meaning of media (Curran, 2002).

One key aspect of CML is the ability to critically analyse media messages, evaluating their content and context in order to understand how they reflect and reinforce existing power relations (Downing, 2001). This requires considering the perspectives and interests of the

media producer, the intended audience, and the larger social and political context in which the media is produced and consumed (Mosco, 2009).

CPE informs CML by providing a framework for understanding the ways in which media is shaped by power relations and how these relations are reflected in the media we consume (Curran, 2002; Downing, 2001; Mosco, 2009). It allows us to critically analyse media messages, taking into account the perspectives and interests of the media producers, the intended audience and the larger social and political context in which the media is produced and consumed (Downing, 2001; Mosco, 2009).

The research involves multi-perspectival approaches; the CPE approach and the role of media in democracy/public interest approach. It is envisioned that the purpose of the research is to maximise public externality through participatory media driven by an interventionist approach to implementing a normative educational programme with a view to creating critical thinkers in the public interest, good governance, peace, communal harmony, happiness, unity and freedom of democratic rights. Both the professional and academic sectors will benefit from the findings of this thesis.

The adapted paradigm is constructivist or interpretivist which defines the research questions about the phenomenon which is ontologically understood through epistemological examination which is informed by a critical inquiry perspective. They are social realities the meanings of which are essentially socially negotiated and constructed using a constructivism paradigm based on a relativist ontology and subjectivist epistemology.

In addressing the research question: What is the role of critical digital pedagogy in developing media in promoting the informed citizenship in India in the digital era? the study chose YouTube on its merits. YouTube as one of the five major platforms of SM is a behemoth, a search engine and also a learning management system (LMS) as a powerful and collaborative virtual learning environment (VLE) for the development of non-curricular CT in India recognised by many educational institutions worldwide. explored the contribution of SM in; (a) supporting the normative responsibilities of the media and (b) strengthening the key values: active citizenship, civic sense, governance, democracy and socio-economic.

The media content analysis approach which is a widely used methodology along with CML

approach informs the process of interpreting, and making meaning of data. Qualitative inquiry allows for such theory to be inductively generated from fieldwork and data emerging from the researcher's observations and interviews.

### **What Is Internet-Based Research?**

The advent of digitally networked online resources present a powerful, ubiquitous and collaborative platform for students or participants across the world to resource and exchange content. This allows for larger sample sizes, as demonstrated by the recent Facebook study, which involved 689,003 people.

Web-based study also known as internet-mediated research (IMR) (Hewson et al. 2003) has been used for primary research. It refers to "the acquisition and analysis of data to produce novel evidence and research findings" (Hewson, Laurent and Vogel). Research methods to administer surveys include technologies such as email (Dillman 1991; Dommeyer and Moriarty 1999), interviews (Murray and Sixsmith 1998), and experiments (Hewson 1994).

The possibilities offered by the internet bring with them many challenges, including verification of participant identity, follow-up and support of participants, ethics approval, informed consent and support of vulnerable groups. In this editorial we focus on what we see as the two main issues for editors – ethics and informed consent.

The data related to news YouTube was indiscriminately collected news of one year old from May 2019 to April 2020 covered a number of purposely selected news stories which generate high interest in the media and society.

Comments on these specific news stories were strategically selected on the basis of a set of criteria: (1) popularity, (2) credibility (3) plurality, (4) impact and (5) accessibility, all based on the number of views. Comments which were used as a source of sampled data were collected from six news channels; Al Jazeera, Sky News, CNN, Channel 4, NDTV and Zee News.

The following comments were related to six news stories which were emotive, controversial, contested and long-standing as well as unsolved by several previous government:

(1) Kashmir – Kashmir has always been an unnecessarily emotive issue since the princely

state joined India in 1947. It had the power of autonomy granted by special and temporary provision under Article 370 in the India Constitution to provide Jammu and Kashmir a special status. The revocation of Article 370 has huge implications for Kashmir. It enjoyed a separate flag, the freedom to determine who could be granted permanent residency, ownership of property and fundamental rights and the freedom to make laws while foreign affairs, defence and communications remained the preserve of the central government. Following the striking down of the Article 370 Kashmir lost its power to bar Indians from outside the state from acquiring property.

(2) Ram Janam Bhumi/Babri Masjid - The Ayodhya land dispute is a political, historical and socio-religious debate in India that has been on for decades. The dispute is focused on a plot of land in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, which is regarded among the Hindus to be the birthplace of the Hindu deity Ram.

According to some beliefs, it was originally the site of a Hindu temple that was demolished to construct a mosque known as Babri Masjid. For their part, Muslims claim that the land was titled to them and Mir Baqi built the mosque on it in 1528 on orders of the first Mughal emperor, Babar.

The modification/demolition of the temple has stood as a topic of controversy. By some accounts, some Muslims in 1949 saw an idol of Ram being placed inside what was then a mosque. Both Hindu and Muslim sides claimed ownership of the site and that led to an eventual lockdown of the area by the government.

(3) Demonetisation - The government under the prime ministership of Narendra Modi on November 8, 2016, had announced that the largest denomination of Rs 500 and Rs 1000 were demonetised with immediate effect ceasing to be a legal tender. Even though people suffered during demonetisation to get cash and exchange the banned notes, it gave a big boost to digital currency. Demonetisation refers to the decision of the government to revoke the legal tender status of a currency note. (Note- All the currencies issued by RBI are used as a legal tender because the value they bear is assured by the RBI). The Union government recently told the top court in an affidavit the demonetisation exercise was a “well-considered” decision and part of a larger strategy to combat the menace of false money, terror financing, black



money and tax evasion.

(4) Triple Talaq – India's parliament has approved a bill that makes the Muslim practice of 'instant divorce' a criminal offence. Triple talaq divorce has no mention in Sharia Islamic law or the Koran, even though the practice has existed for decades. Islamic scholars say the Koran clearly spells out how to issue a divorce - it has to be spread over three months, allowing a couple time for reflection and reconciliation. Most Islamic countries, including Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Pakistan and Bangladesh, have banned triple talaq, but the custom continued in India, which does not have a uniform set of laws on marriage and divorce that apply to every citizen.

(5) Chandrayan II - The Moon-2 mission is a highly complex mission, which represents a significant technological leap compared to the previous missions of ISRO. It comprised an Orbiter, Lander and Rover to explore the unexplored South Pole of the Moon. Chandrayaan-2 aims to become the first mission to conduct a surface landing on the lunar south pole region, where it will collect crucial information about the moon's composition. It would be India's first surface landing on the moon – a feat previously achieved by only Russia, the US and China.

(6) Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) 2019 - The CAA provisions that Hindus, Christians, Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs and Parsis who have entered India from the Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh before 31st Dec. 2014 will be entitled to Indian citizenship subject to their stay in the country for five years. This was encountered by the opposition which questioned: Why is the provision extended only to people of six religions, and not Muslims, and why does it apply only to people coming from these three countries?

### **The Reasons for Selecting These News Stories**

These stories dealt with major and fundamental issues of national interest and pride which not only views a British relics which created injustice and unfairness. They were on political agenda of the BJP to: (I) redress this imbalance, make provisions for social welfare for the poor, (ii) protect the needy and persecuted, (iii) advance India's space programme, (iv) become the world guru and (v) become an important global player.

The Union government claims that people of these faiths have faced persecution in the three countries and Muslims haven't. It is, therefore, India's moral obligation to provide them with shelter which hit the headlines as did India's Chandrayan 2 setback. All these stories have dominated the headlines and Indians are passionate about them. This topic was purposely selected due to the high interest it generates in the country.

The study takes a constructivist approach to analysing how the comments posted on the YouTube channels of news television channels contribute to the promotion of media education.

### **Research Questions**

In designing a research the key determinants are research questions which show their purpose. Parahoo (1997) defines a research question as 'the broad question which is set at the start of a study'. Cormack and Benton,(1996) have identified two types of research questions; declarative and interrogative. The types of questions also dictate the ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods of the research.

To investigate how users engage with the news channels, I tend to seek answers for the following research questions.

RQ1: How critically do net users engage with news stories in expressing their comments on news stories of national significance as posted on YouTube platform by India's and overseas television channels? Do net users engage with the news stories? And also, do they initiate comments and or engage with replies?

RQ2: How do net users reflect CML skills in their comments on news stories posted on YouTube platform of international television channels compare with those posted on the news stories of India-based TV channels?

Online media are often manipulated to elicit emotions and direct users towards meeting social needs. This can lead users to neglect evaluating content before sharing it. There have been calls for media literacy to incorporate the role of emotions in online behaviour, including teaching mindfulness techniques to make users aware of their emotional and cognitive

processes when processing news. This could help users become more mindful of the information they access and share online. (Sean Gabaree.01.12.2022).

It is regulated by the default mode network, which is associated with self-referential thinking and mind-wandering, has been found to be more active in individuals who are more susceptible to misinformation (Brion & Gandon, 2017). Similarly, the amygdala, which is associated with emotional processing, has been found to be more active in individuals who are more susceptible to misinformation (Schreij & Van Atteveldt, 2016).

### **Research Questions: Primary and Secondary**

Research questions can be either empirical or non-empirical and determine the type of inquiry to pursue to achieve the overarching aims which are achievable through one of the following types of research: exploratory, descriptive, explanatory, evaluative, predictive, and historical. Non-empirical scientific inquiry can be meta-analytic, conceptual, theoretical, or normative.

The first primary question relating to the concept of SM has the potential to be active, experiential, collaborative, enquiry-focus and problem-oriented learning for promoting engaged citizenship. The second primary research questions explores the level of two types of skills as manifested by comments in SM while determining users' participatory behaviours, views, thoughts and discernment.

The first secondary question probes into the role of SM in underscoring CML for developing an informed citizenship. The second primary research question aims to address the problem of mental pollution with online mis//dis/mal-information provide to get an insight into the mindset of internet users in the way their comments reflect Potter's model of seven skills competency. (Potters.W.J. 2008).

(A) Primary Research Questions:

(PRQ 1) Primary Research Question (PRQ) 1. Do net users reflect cognitive skills or affective intelligence while expressing their comments on news stories of national significance as posted on YouTube platform by India's and overseas television channels?

(PRQ 2) Primary Research Question (PRQ) 2. What level of critical media literacy skills do

net users reflect through their comments on news stories posted on YouTube channels of international television compared with those posted on the news stories of India-based TV channels?

(B) Secondary Research Questions:

(SRQ 1) Secondary Research Question: What is the role of SM in developing CML for the promotion of informed citizenship for civic engagement?

(SRQ 2) Secondary Research Question: How can journalism and social media create epistemic environments for fighting propaganda or fake news?

To date, scholarly research has focused on journalists' perceptions which are unfavourable. Journalists typically describe comments as being offensive, poor in quality, untrustworthy, and unrepresentative of the public. Vitriolic online comments are rampant in today's digital convergence. Journalists' experience ascendent online force digital incivility. Despite the advent of the internet age since 1995 the tone of public discourse has not matured. (Shanahan, Marie K., 2018). However, in a similar vein to Robinson (2010), Loke (2012) noted that there was a divide (17/13) amongst journalists who were keen to engage more fully with comment fields, and those who saw them as distinct from journalism.

The thesis supported the continuum initiated by previous scholars, non-government organisations, dedicated voluntary bodies and the teaching profession in their call for allocation of budget and resources to enable the implementation of the programme. It is predicated on the assumption of correlation between media and the usage of SM by Internet users in India.

Finally, it stressed a sustainable strategy to create critical autonomy while creating an environment for Anvikshiki and socratic culture for the next generation. In the post truth age they are more likely to encounter a much tougher media landscape, laden with more pathos - the quality or power in an actual life experience or in literature, music, speech, or other forms of expression, of evoking a feeling of pity, or of sympathetic and kindly sorrow or compassion and bathos - a ludicrous descent from the exalted to the commonplace; and devoid of ethics or ethos - the ethical appeal, means to convince an audience of the author's credibility or character and logos - the appeal to logic, means to convince an audience by use

of logic or reason. It reposes confidence in the armoury of criticality built in CML education which reiterates the need to question and interrogate media messages before consuming.

The constructs of media i.e. the creation of media texts requires a deserved focus on the productive skills of the consumer turned producer. The importance of first-hand experience is implicit in Masterman's argument. Media production is a construction process to understand the media texts. "Developing a conceptual understanding of the media involves both critical reception of, and active production through, the media'. (Masterman, Len, 1985). People attain a deeper understanding of the conventions and merits of professionally produced material if they have direct experience of content production' (Livingstone, Sonia, 2003)

Habermas' theory of the public sphere suggests that a healthy democracy requires a space where individuals can come together to freely exchange ideas and engage in critical debate. This space, known as the public sphere, is essential for the formation of public opinion and for holding those in power accountable.

Habermas's concept of the public sphere has been influential in debates about the role of the media in society, and has been used to analyse the ways in which media can facilitate or hinder the functioning of the public sphere. It has also been used to critique the way in which media can be controlled or manipulated by powerful elites, and to consider ways in which the media can be more democratic and serve the public interest.

No discussion is complete without an ontology of SM and its evolution from the Internet, which "is an interactive medium between networks of computer users." (Rust & Varki, 1996). Robert Kahn, Vinton Cerf and Tim Berners-Lee, the visionary computer scientist and pioneers of a 'communications model,' who created the web on 01.01.1983 wondered about the potential of Internet to "communicate and access knowledge." "In the first social era, the technologists building these platforms blindly prioritised making it possible to share any and all content, regardless of societal ramifications," remarked Kalev Leetaru (Forbes, 08.10. 2018).

The Internet was originally intended for education 'Internet can offer in the sphere of education, are really unique' (UNESCO). But not even the founders had any inkling about its trajectory and functions. "No one knows for certain how far, or in what direction, the Internet

will evolve. But no one should underestimate its importance.” (Robert E. Kahn and Vinton G. Cerf. Dec.1999). Deyan Georgiev (12.01.2023) has a sensible advice, “Misuse the power, and you’ll wreak havoc in a world that already has way too much of it. Use them right, and you’ll find yourself with a powerful tool to uplift and inspire”.

The computer scientists may find an answer in an Internet pioneer and technology developer and administrator who predicted, “My expectation is that by 2030, as much of 75 per cent of the world’s population will be enslaved by artificial intelligence-based surveillance systems developed in China and exported around the world. These systems will keep every citizen under observation 24 hours a day, seven days a week, monitoring their every action.” (Pew Research Centre)

People rely on the Internet for almost everything from medicine and healthcare to education and research. Others look up to it for virtual companionship and entertainment to banish their loneliness and relieve depression. Realising that the Internet is a neutral tool its importance cannot be underestimated. It is argued that the information society enabled by the sophisticated technologies calls for corresponding intellectual and highly CT skills. “It’s not enough to know something; it’s more important to know why and how”. (C. Rodgers, G. Freiburg. Freedom Learn). Responding to it is more than access and being able to use devices including laptops and mobile phones. UNESCO states 'the comprehension of the people depends on 'the people mentality, their will and intellect,' practices vary, linked to social, emotional cultural, economic, and political circumstances. technologies are associated with changing patterns of knowledge production and distribution.

ChatGPT has been portrayed as a remarkable human assistant which people can talk to and give instructions to complete some tasks. It possesses a gamut of automated abilities to perform a wide range of tasks from churning out essays, poems, stories and data analysis to spreading misinformation, and mis/dis-information. Like everything else it comes as a dual- use purpose automation which 'can be tricked into building bombs and steal cars. ChatGPT related caveats are foregrounded Open Ai creator warned they could result in widespread financial losses and damage to individuals' and organisations' reputations. ChatGPT's self-

confessed weaknesses and vulnerabilities (Refer to the List) are symptomatic of destruction, damage and losses, which insinuate the deployment of CT.

In this section, the background of the research issue will be elaborated. This will help in developing an insight into the research problem. This section will also define the problem statement of this research.

### **Reflecting The Research Questions**

Recalling the research questions, the study obtained the following:

How critically do net users engage with news stories in expressing their comments on news stories of national significance as posted on YouTube platform by India's and overseas television channels? Do net users engage with the news stories? And also do they initiate comments and or engage with replies?

From the study, there is high engagement of users with stories. While they showed mixed expression of their comments, majority of them are negative when commenting on these news stories. According to the themes that come out during the expression of comments, majority of the users demonstrated they were involved in engaging comments, followed by deliberative and explanatory respectively. These users also initiate comments as well as reply to comments. Deliberative and inductive comments are largely from initiated comments while explanatory and engaging comments are uniformly distributed between the initiated comments and replies.

.How do net users reflect CML skills in their comments on news stories posted on YouTube platform of international television channels compare with those posted on the news stories of India-based TV channels?

### **Governments' Manipulation of Information**

Ironically the Habermas's notion of the public sphere played in the hands of several

governments worldwide. They and their agencies applied tactics including duress, bullying and public place restrictions. Bullying and threats can create an atmosphere of fear, making it difficult for people to express their opinions or to consider evidence that contradicts the views of those in power. Governments brainwashed the public with misinformation to push through implement their mass vaccination programme willy-nilly. Brainwashing involves using various psychological techniques to manipulate someone's thoughts, beliefs, and emotions in a way that aligns with the agenda of the person or group doing the brainwashing. Exposed to these tactics, it was difficult to accurately find evidence in order to assess what is true. Myths can also be used to sway people's opinions and beliefs by appealing to their emotions and preconceived ideas rather than presenting factual evidence.

All of these tactics can be harmful to the pursuit of truth and can lead people away from accurate understanding of reality. It's important to be aware of these tactics and to approach any new information or belief system with a critical and analytical mindset.

Although the overwhelming scientific evidence may seem to support the effectiveness and safety of COVID-19 vaccines scepticism refuses to die down for several reasons: (a) a lack of conclusive proof from lab tests, (b) debates and the decision making process were shrouded in secrecy, (c) no independent tests on the safety of the vaccines, (d) flawed and manipulated test parameters, (e) prejudiced findings, (f) vested interest groups, (g) the lack of public credibility of WHO, which is seen as a discredited body in many countries and (h) hysteria and institutional frenzy. The vaccines have undergone rigorous testing and review by regulatory agencies and have been shown to be highly effective at preventing severe illness, hospitalisation, and death from COVID-19. While there may be some rare side effects associated with the vaccines, the benefits of getting vaccinated far outweigh the risks.

It's all in the mind. It is argued that the situation gets worse when people are not convinced about the effectiveness and safety of COVID-19 vaccines. When requests for evidence, true and factual information from trusted healthcare providers fails to convince the people they will create their own narratives based on inadequate information, which compounds the problem of misinformation.

News inadequacy can indirectly amount to news suppression which can be construed as



ensorship, distortion and also misinformation. Suppression of scientific news has far reaching implications for society and the country. Twenty five years after his death astronomer Carl Sagan's wise words still reverberate in this world which allude the understanding of knowledge is pre-conditional on critical mind. "It is the responsibility of scientists never to suppress knowledge, no matter how awkward that knowledge is, no matter how it may bother those in power; we are not smart enough to decide which pieces of knowledge are permissible and which are not." (Carl Sagan, 2004)

Governments and health organisations also have a role to play in communicating accurate and timely information to the public, and in countering misinformation and conspiracy theories. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about an unprecedented amount of information, much of it conflicting and rapidly changing, which has led to confusion and mistrust among some people. The term "infodemic" was coined by the World Health Organization to describe the excessive amount of information about the pandemic, which can make it difficult for people to distinguish fact from fiction. The infodemic that has emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic is a complex issue that involves a range of factors. Both traditional media and social media have played a role in contributing to the spread of misinformation and the erosion of news trust.

The rapid spread of misinformation and conspiracy theories related to the pandemic has also contributed to this mistrust and erosion of news trust. Misinformation has been deliberately spread by individuals or groups with a political or ideological agenda while in other cases it has been unintentionally spread through the amplification of inaccurate or misleading information by social media algorithms or the media.

To combat the infodemic and restore trust in news, it is important (a) for individuals to be critical of the information they consume and to seek out reliable sources, (b) for the media to prioritize accuracy and transparency in their reporting, and (c) for social media platforms to take responsibility for the content that is shared on their platforms.

Traditional media, including newspapers, TV news, and radio, have long been indulging in setting the agenda and framing public discussions. In the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, traditional media outlets have played a crucial role in informing the public about the virus and

its impacts. However, some media outlets have also contributed to the infodemic by sensationalizing stories, spreading unverified information, and amplifying the voices of those who promote misinformation.

Social media, on the other hand, have provided a platform for rapid spreading of misinformation. SM algorithms are designed to promote content that generates the most engagement, which can lead to the amplification of false information and conspiracy theories. SM platforms have also struggled to effectively moderate content and address the spread of misinformation, despite efforts to introduce fact-checking and content moderation measures.

In terms of blame, it is difficult to attribute responsibility for the infodemic to any one entity or group. Rather, it is a systemic issue that involves the interplay of many factors, including the media landscape, social media algorithms, individual behaviour, and the overall public trust in information sources. It is important to address the issue of the infodemic through a multi-faceted approach that involves media literacy, fact-checking, responsible journalism, and effective content moderation on social media platforms.

YouTube is a rich, free, easy-to-use, and enjoyable source of learning content. However, the challenges and risks associated with this platform suggest that it is best suitable for guided learning where teachers make or select the content and include it in a well-defined, pedagogy-driven learning context. (Shoufan, A., & Mohamed, F. 2022).

Pedagogues justify blocking YouTube to protect children against distracting, addictive and objectionable content. “There was a lot of stuff on YouTube I wouldn’t be comfortable with my students seeing” Jesse Spevack, assistant principal at the NYC iSchool in Manhattan, pointed out.

The findings of this review are: (1) There is an increasing concern about content quality on YouTube. (2) Despite versatile production and usage strategies, no relationships were established between such strategies and learning. (3) Most studies on the impact of YouTube on student learning reported positive results in terms of enhanced skills, competencies, interest, motivation, engagement levels, or test performance. (Shoufan, A., & Mohamed, F. 2022).

Another research also expressed concern about the authenticity or quality of the video

content. In this study we have found that using YouTube videos encouraged students to look for similar videos, and get a habit of using YouTube as an educational resource. The only challenge is the evaluation of the reliability of the content, for that reason content selection has to be done by the instructor.

Lastly, YouTube videos have been a useful source of educational content, it is a free web based tool, and the impact has been important based on our study on students' performance. Educators have used YouTube videos in other fields such as nursing and have proven to be an effective tool to enhance students learning and engagement. (Chtouki, Y., Harroud, H., Khalidi, M., & Bennani, S. 2012).

Substantive amount of time spent on SM by a younger audience per day primarily on YouTube, WhatsApp and X suggest its growing dominance indicates the increasing power of the SM.

On YouTube, BJP again rules the roost with 44,685 subscribers and over 6.2 million views. The party has been able to use the YouTube Channel as the second screen for all its activities, be it inspiring speeches from the top notch leaders or videos with social messages or a call for joining the rally in a nearby locality. The YouTube channel also takes feeds from the official channel of Shri Narendra Modi which has some 1,27,715 subscribers and over 14 million views till date. Interesting, right? What about the average internet user? People spend an average of 19 minutes on YouTube daily according to the latest data. That's a significant fall from the 38 minutes a day in 2017.

### **The Role of Public Service Media (PSM)**

Broadcasters believe that PSM can significantly contribute to democracy by creating more informed citizens. The issue of universal access to information has also been raised, with the belief that countries with robust PSM have better-informed citizens compared to those relying more heavily on commercial news providers. (DCMS, 2019)

As more people — especially young people — get their news from SM, news consumers need to take on some of the roles of journalists, including vetting sources and checking facts. “The

sense of urgency is growing,” says Eric Newton, who teaches at the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Arizona State University, in Phoenix. (SNExplores.org)

Journalism should be integrative of 'new modes of public articulation—beyond journalism.' Journalism has a special role in society and its vitality and possibility in its reincarnated forms' ability 'to collect and disseminate news that is vital to a representative democracy' (Christoph Raetzsch, 2017)

News is indispensable to any democracy for its common and vital role in informing and educating citizens to enable them to make wise informed decisions, and in holding governments accountable for their actions. (Michael Schudson, 2008). In tandem with the incorporation of media literacy curricular education sustainable realignment of children's mindset is contingent upon PSM, a reincarnated version of public service broadcasting (PSB). As the legacy PSM has retuned its thinking with the digital paradigm shift.

This is a situation where PSM can be a catalyst in its normative role as explained by Siebert et al (1956). Its role is paramount under the social responsibility theory in providing the most important deliberative environment, the DPS where citizens can participate in discussions, deliberations and reasoning to promote cultural, social needs, social cohesion policy and to ensure freedom of expression and pluralism of views, open and transparent world of communication with the highest standards to uphold moral integrity and maximum efficiency and trust. In turn, the success of the PSM is contingent on technological convergence.

Although the growing implications of propaganda for different media; broadcasting, radio, press is a concern for all, the EBU argues that public service broadcasters lead the frontline attack as their track record has proven during the pre-digital era.

The EBU member States are minded to promote and take measures for the development of media skills by Article 33a. Generally, the term 'online disinformation' is preferred as it is more precise and may serve to designate content which contains inaccurate information and which is presented, promoted or disseminated by one or more actors in the chain with the intention to cause harm or make a profit. The underlying motivation may be, for example, to manipulate public opinion or political processes, to damage the reputation of others or simply

to make money (EBU)

The revised AVMSD requires video-sharing platforms to provide for effective media measures and tools and measures for the development of media skills. PSM can be described as radio and television having a virtual presence to reflect 'the changing needs of how audiences consume media today, promote themselves' (EBU - Empowering Society), implying that content is no longer the king. "Convergence, digitalisation, globalisation, fragmentation and neo-liberalism combined with post modernism are in fact drivers challenging PSB and stimulating PSM". (Bardoel & Lowe 2007:15). The term PSM, first suggested by the Council of Europe as a technology-neutral media, is widely supported by European Broadcasting Union (EBU) in its report titled "Vision 2020" and widely advocated in academic debates.

In our world, learning never ends. Promoting media is a PSM commitment which has an important role in exhorting people to "build their confidence and skills and encourage audiences to move from passive consumption to active participation and constructive engagement". (BBC Charter and Agreement, 2006)

The crucial role of PSM during the Covid-19 pandemic in disseminating correct and reliable information was at the forefront in combatting fake news about the coronavirus and its treatments. By providing accurate information and opening platforms to scientific experts and specialists, they contribute to dispelling misinformation and promoting fact-based reporting. The following points emphasize the significance of PSM in spreading accurate news and information:

1. **Increased Audience Confidence:** Public service media from G-7 countries experienced a surge in audience numbers during the pandemic, indicating that people trust them for delivering reliable and independent information. This surge is seen as a vote of confidence in the media's commitment to providing trustworthy content.
2. **Service to General Interest and Democratic Values:** The PSM acted responsibly in the global health crisis as demonstrated by their dedication to serving the general interest, democratic values, and freedom of expression. The purpose was to unite people during challenging times and emphasises the importance of these values in a global context.

3. **Multilingual Communication Platforms:** PSM operate across multiple communication platforms and in various languages, reaching audiences on all continents. This diverse approach ensures that information about the pandemic is accessible to people in their native languages, contributing to a more widespread understanding.
4. **Global Cooperation:** The statement underscores the collaborative efforts of international public service media in sharing content reported in many languages by local correspondents. This collaboration helps in reaching a global audience and contributes to a unified response to the pandemic.
5. **Highlighting Humanist Values of Solidarity:** The PSM have been actively involved in recognizing and celebrating the contributions of healthcare workers, researchers, essential workers, and women during the pandemic. They have raised awareness of issues such as gender-based violence and domestic violence, demonstrating a commitment to humanist values and solidarity.
6. **Contribution to Post-Pandemic Future:** The PSM play a crucial role in international reflection and debate necessary for building a post-pandemic future. By contributing to discussions about the world's functioning, social relations, the importance of public services, and access to information, they help shape the path forward.

### **CML is a Responsive Strategy**

CML is a responsive strategy to 'a literacy crisis, especially in regard to the diversity of media forums which mediate our everyday lives.' (Rhonda Hammer, 2011). News and information as well as discourses are being rechannelled in 'a media saturated, technologically dependent, and globally connected world' (D. Kellner and Jeff Share) for 360-degree multi-platform. To address this problem, it is essential to incorporate CML in education as a means of combatting the scourge of misinformation. CML in our conception is tied to the project of radical democracy and concerned with developing skills that will enhance democratisation and participation. (ibid) . T h e transformative media ecosystem seeks Socratic method or Chanakya's scientific inquiry for identifying counterfeit news and false news. Socratic questioning is one of the most powerful methods to promote CT through discussion from

questioning ' (Paul, 1993)

### **Five Defining Characteristics of Media Literacy**

Numerous dedicated research organisations and scholars have subscribed to National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE, 2007) five defining characteristics of media literacy: Access, Analyse, Evaluate, Create, and Act.

1. **Obtain:** Secure access to information and resources needed to complete a task or solve a problem. It refers to the ability to find, access, and gather information from a variety of sources, including traditional media (such as television, newspapers, and magazines), as well as digital and social media. (NAMLE; Tulodzieki & Grafe, 2012)
2. **Assess:** Analyse and interpret data, information, and evidence to draw meaningful conclusions. The ability to critically examine media messages and to identify biases, perspectives, and underlying motives.(ibid)
3. **Evaluate:** Appraise information and media sources to determine their credibility, reliability, and value, needing the ability to assess the credibility and reliability of media sources and to judge the quality and accuracy of the information they provide.
4. **Create or Communicate:** Produce new knowledge, media, or products that communicate ideas and information effectively, involving the ability to produce and create media messages, including written, visual, and multimedia content, that accurately and effectively convey information and ideas. (cited in Cakir et al., 2011)
5. **Act or Implement:** Take action based on what has been learned, created, and evaluated to achieve a desired outcome or goal, requiring the ability to use media literacy skills to inform decisions, engage in public discourse, and take action on important issues.

In the "attention economy" human attention is now considered the most valuable and scarce resource, instead of information. The abundance of media content in developed countries presents a challenge for audience members, who must make choices among the vast options, but these choices are often influenced by bias such as familiarity, confirmation of prior beliefs, and recommendations from friends

This bias highlights the importance of CT in addressing consequence of bias, as users isolate themselves from opposing viewpoints and reinforce their opinions among like-minded individuals. The importance of user-generated content and changing marketing models is another consequence of the influence of personal recommendations and algorithms, which limit people's exposure to pluralism by presenting a curated selection of content that aligns with their individual preferences. This transformation has major implications for the ability to easily access pluralistic content. The attention economy requires an enquiring mind to question content and to be able to make choices in pluralism. (Bard, Pedra et al., 2016)

The precise selection of content to their own taste drastically limits people's exposure to pluralism. The three levels of pluralism in media theory are reworked: pluralism of sources, content and exposure, noted "a major pluralism concern: not in the sense of ensuring the availability of pluralistic content, but of the ability easily to avoid it" (ibid)

Over the past five years, approximately 85 per cent of the world's population experienced a decline in press freedom in their country.(UNESCO 2022). Underpinned by the key principles of freedom of expression, press freedom, right to be informed, human rights and virtues dictated by axiological ethics to safeguard public interest in a participatory, inclusive and pluralist democracy the development of an informed citizenship presupposes a number of imperatives namely:

(a) the mindsets of children and adults need to be reoriented towards adopting the socratic method - developing media literacy and CT skills, which are indispensable to detect and discern news and information in the transformative media landscape.

(b) citizens' ability to navigate through the digital labyrinth of the transformative new and news ecosystem.

(c) leveraging the repertoire of critical competency or sagacity to stimulate interest, encourage and inspire the development of better informed citizenship in electing an accountable and vibrant democracy of the contemporary 'post-truth and post-trust' era of the 21st century.

( d ) Elihu Katz (1992) reminds us of the organic connection between communication, education and democracy: 'democracy is meaningless without multiple voices...it is simply impossible to talk about citizenship training in modern society without reference to mass



communication.'

(e) "A democracy cannot function without an informed electorate, and this applies no less to foreign affairs than to domestic matters." (Van Dijk, 1943)

Voting in elections to Socrates, is a skill that needs to be taught. This can be likened to inviting dangers by giving a butcher a surgical scalpel to perform a surgical procedure in a hospital theatre. Socrates justifiably argued that allowing uneducated citizens to vote was irresponsible. He also had firsthand experience with the dangers of demagogues, individuals who exploit the desire for easy answers and manipulate the population to gain power. He believed that only those who had thought about issues deeply and rationally should be allowed to vote, and warned against the dangers of demagoguery. Socrates believed that democracy is only as effective as the education system that surrounds it.

In the US the entire population participates in government as it is franchised to elect officials to represent their interests, stipulating an informed citizenry which is argued for by Socrates. The philosopher uses a brilliant analogy of ship management. He emphasised on the necessity of a trained ship crew to argue that decision-making in a society should be left to those who are educated and skilled, rather than to anyone.

Both administrations have also contributed to a culture of lobbying, partly by accepting the legitimacy of the millions of dollars and pounds donated and spent by major corporations to influence key policymakers, and partly by granting special access to corporate actors on a regular basis. This has led to accusations, particularly in the case of Tony Blair, that his administration was willing to tailor controversial policies to avoid antagonising powerful media proprietors such as Rupert Murdoch. The incestuous relationship between Murdoch's News International and Blair is a well-debated and legally documented case.

Most of the media messages we encounter on a daily basis—films, television shows, websites, popular music, magazines—are created by profit-seeking institutions, usually large multinational corporations like Time Warner, Disney, and Fox. As the then CEO of Disney, Michael Eisner, wrote in a 1981 letter to his shareholders: "We have no obligation to make art. We have no obligation to make a statement. To make money is our only objective." Even the social media posts, pictures, memes, and videos that people create themselves are

distributed through corporate platforms. While these services may appear to be free to access and use, their business models are built on mining the personal information of users and capitalising on that data through targeted advertising.

The idea that the shift from "knowledge is power" to "money is power" has exerted pressure on journalism is a common theme in media studies and has been discussed by many scholars. One such scholar is Chris Atton, who argues that "the neoliberal transformation of society has created a set of conditions that are inhospitable to the traditional ideals of journalism, and has encouraged the erosion of public service values in favour of commercial ones" (Atton, 2002, p. 146). Atton suggests that this shift has resulted in a focus on profit over quality, and has led to the prioritization of sensationalism over substance.

Similarly, in their book "The Handbook of Journalism Studies," Karin Wahl-Jorgensen and Thomas Hanitzsch note that "the commercialisation of the news industry has led to increased pressure on journalists to produce stories that will attract audiences and generate revenue" (Wahl-Jorgensen & Hanitzsch, 2009, p. 308). They argue that this pressure has led to a decrease in the standard of journalism, as reporters are forced to work quickly and cheaply in order to meet the demands of the market.

Adding a different dimension to the code of journalistic practice in their book, Bill Kovach and Tom Rosentiel outlined nine values of journalism to ensure that the purpose of journalism and to define the core characteristics of serious journalism. This guides people with the information in order to be free and self-governing. These are:

- Journalism's first obligation is to the truth.
- Its first loyalty is to citizens.
- Its essence is a discipline of verification.
- Its practitioners must maintain an independence from those they cover.
- It must serve as an independent monitor of power.
- It must provide a forum for public criticism and compromise.
- It must strive to make the significant interesting and relevant.

- It must keep the news comprehensive and proportional.
- Its practitioners must be allowed to exercise personal conscience.

Source: B. Kovach and T. Rosentiel, *The Elements of Journalism* (Crown, 2001)

John Downing, has argued that the shift towards a profit-oriented model of journalism has resulted in the loss of the "public sphere" as a space for democratic discourse (Downing, 1995, p. 18). Downing, further added that the increasing influence of commercial interests in the media has led to a focus on entertainment and consumerism, rather than on issues of public importance.

These scholars suggest that the shift from "knowledge is power" to "money is power" has had a negative impact on journalism, leading to a decrease in quality, a loss of the public sphere, and an erosion of public service values.

It is true to say that social media do not have a policy driven purpose or rationale in education or news gathering or dissemination in the interest of strengthening democracy throughout the world. Social media's sole corporate policy motive is clearly expressed by the then CEO of Disney, Michael Eisner, who further wrote in a 1981 letter to his shareholders: "We have no obligation to make art. We have no obligation to make a statement. To make money is our only objective."

*Expression is through language which is a "mirror of the mind." (Noam Chomsky, et al., 2002)*

This normative approach offers the flexibility for literacy education to explore and critically engage students with the pedagogy that will work best for each teacher in their own unique situation with the different social and cultural needs and interests of his or her students and local community.

Media education should be connected with education for democracy where students are encouraged to become informed and media literate participants in their societies. (D.Kellner and Jeff Share, 2007)

The side effects of persistent absence from school brought upon children by the pandemic are the erosion of socialising skills, debating and inter-personal skills as well as self-reflexivity. Children are depriving themselves these qualities due to the cultural change. (Richard Adams

is the Guardian's education editor)

It is envisaged that the collaborative roles of education system, social media and PSM are key in fulfilling the normative contribution to the development of media education-oriented school curriculum, online pedagogy in empowering students to meet the the concomitant challenges of digital convergence which have overshadowed proper, and deep understanding of educational responsibilities to meet current challenges and the effects of mutual impact on social media and journalism and also how cognitive biases, as the underlying problems, can undermine cognitive faculty, the implications of a little-known concept called 'Epistemic Security'.

### **The Role of Sentiment In Critical Judgement**

Mission and Morgan (2006) argue that, "it is often the coherence that ideology provides that is the very source of emotional power." A significant challenge in the digital context lies in reconciling an ideological critique with the individual's personal and affective experiences of digital media. There are two strands to this challenge: (i) how to cultivate a dispassionate, critical disposition in a context that invests deeply in the personal and affective, and (ii) how to develop a more nuanced understanding of power and ideology within the digital medium.

To reconcile these priorities, it is important to recognise that ideology is intrinsic to the personal and affective experiences of texts, and digital texts provoke emotions because they reference or reflect a reality shaped by ideology that has particular meaning to the individual. Unpacking and understanding how ideology is made affective and personal could therefore become a powerful method of critique in the digital context. The individual's personal experiences can be seen as a "portal" through which to explore the deeper ideologies that structure the reality of the digital context.

YouTube comments can help you gauge customer sentiment. How do your customers respond to your content? Positively? Negatively? Not at all? Monitoring your comments can help you understand how customers feel about your brand. YouTube comments present an opportunity for engagement. Responding quickly to negative comments could help you improve your image—not just with an unhappy customer, but also with other YouTube viewers who see how you respond to conflict. Engage with positive commenters, too, and you might turn

happy customers into brand evangelists. YouTube comments could help you develop new content. YouTube users aren't shy about expressing their opinions. Pay attention to what they're saying about your content, and you can develop new content that they want to see.

### **“How much time do people spend on SM?”**

Facebook global users spend an average of 58 minutes per day on the platform in 2022.

Over 4.7 billion people are using SM in 2022. 2.91 billion are active Facebook users. Facebook is the biggest SM platform, used primarily for networking. However, media watching has always been a part of social networking sites—be it uploading a photo or streaming a video, we still spend a lot of time on the site.

Still, Facebook continues to thrive, being the world's most popular and preferred social network. Actually, it's a big part of why the daily average time spent on a phone increases yearly. After all, 98.5 per cent of all Facebook visitors access it through mobile devices. Scrolling through your newsfeed has become possible virtually anywhere. There are even 10 million active accounts on feature phones compared with only 1.5 per cent of users visit Facebook exclusively from a laptop or a PC.

### **Why Does The Average Person Use SM?**

In a recent survey, the top reasons for using SM were classified in five main categories of usage reasons: (a) Search for Information and Inspiration, (b) Search for Social Interaction, (c) Beat of Boredom and Pastimes, (d) Escape from Negative Emotions, and (e) Search for Positive Emotions. (Brailovskaia, Julia et al., 2020). It also revealed that the biggest reason people use social media was to keep in touch with their friends and family which accounts for 48.7% of internet users. The second highest use of social media is sourcing content has been reported as 30.2% of internet users.

The thought of SM invokes an image of degradation of the lives of digital natives. In the cyberworld the 'bad' of the virtual 'good, bad and the ugly' relentlessly ambush us. The SM have defied rules, restrictions and restraints to evolve as a concomitant fertile ground for scams, shady dealings, inciting hatred, fraudulent transactions, cybercrimes, poncy and

scheming deals.

Today's digital convergence has manifold impact on society. Besides spawning unexamined media content which is injurious to our lives, health and our wallets it has also encouraged the 'crowding out' of public service broadcasting (PSB). Before the digital revolution over four decades ago a children were born and grew up in a salubrious, positive, harmless and educative environment where the PSB was kids' motivator, teacher and inspirer besides being entertainer.

In contrast illiterate children are vulnerable to rampant rhetorics, narratives, concocted stories, fabricated, distorted, suppressed, sexed-up messages, hyped or exaggerated claims, exaggerated advertisements, discussion and opinionated discourse to draw the attention of the audience. Such malevolent content has a serious impact on democracy and society where media illiterate or unsuspecting people are gullible. The advent of the Internet has been welcomed for its affordance but it can easily lend itself to abuse or misuse without unmatched ethics, safeguards and checks.

In the consequential confluence of media texts legacy journalism is conflated with unscrutinised user-generated-content and propagandistic messages popularly referred to as false 'news'. Being technologically impossible to differentiate between meaningful content and false 'news' poses a challenge to journalists, network providers, search engines, browsers, SM as well as SM networking sites.

Promoters, sponsors and supporters of syndicating and publishing of false 'news' exploit the powerful echo chamber of the Internet to penetrate the market and the minds by projecting their messages as 'genuine' to make it acceptable by citizens. There is no shortage of incidences where SM have been condemned for spawning falsehoods as a nursery and an echo chamber.

Digital data convergence responsible for the avalanche of big data and discourses is the inevitable outcome of a number of convergences resulting from a mission creep involving three global players in different sectors; industry convergence where the same corporations are engaged in three sectors: the technology sector (telecommunications), the content services sector (audiovisual) and the Internet, including owning search engines and electronic betting

or trading portals. (Iosifidis)

Why more than half of respondents are untrusting of the media? (India Digital News Report, 2019). Paradoxically, despite the endless online stream of unregulated, fabricated or maliciously concocted news stories 68 per cent citizens still trust SM and mobile platforms in preference to traditional journalism.

The advent of such advanced, networked and convergent technology has led massive young audience to switch from the mass media to embrace the resulting in digital ecosystem where media platforms are segmented, audience balkanised, robot accelerated content and community tribalised have become a new phenomenon, which raises serious concerns for governance, society, citizenship and journalism. The consequent ineluctable topography, enabled by wireless and wired technology, provides ubiquitous, interactive and engaging media experience.

The incessant avalanche of content in the form of discourses, news, information, images, audio and videos from consumers-turned-producers, juxtaposed alongside the content of journalistic, educational, commercial, organisational, institutional and government information has overwhelmed citizens.

The mainstream media have been condemned for failing to reflect pluralism, ignoring their constituents, pandering to the needs of corporatism and peddling commercialism at the expense of truth and freedom of expression. Problems in distinguishing between genuine and false 'news' have plagued contemporary journalism and agitated citizens.

The above scenario indicates that in the absence of an interventionist policy the Internet has the potential to harm the prospects and unleash havoc on society by preying on undiscerning, naïve, immature and uncritical school children or adults. Besides, it will trigger far reaching implications for developing informed citizenship for vibrant governance and healthy democracy.

### **The Statement of Problem of The Research**

*“I may not agree with what you have to say, but I will defend to the death your right to say*

*it.” Philosopher Voltaire, François-Marie d’Arouet -1694–1778).*

A study summed up the problems is the departure point of this thesis; digital news context circulating falsehoods, fakes and other deceptive or misleading news content; the susceptible hosts are information-overloaded, time-pressed news readers lacking media literacy skills; and the conducive environments are polluted poorly regulated social media platforms that propagate and encourage the spread of various “fakes.” (Rubin, V.L. 2019)

The statement of the problem, is evident in the epistemic outline of SM given in the introduction thrown up the literature review. “If social media platforms are utilized as sources of information.” (Cooke, 2017), and “people use social media for information-seeking in different fields.” (Kim, Sin, & Yoo-Lee, 2014) it can be deduced that users should be cognitively and non—cognitively equipped to understand the intended meaning of the media texts. In corollary it is false 'news’ on SM became a public concern following the 2016 presidential election, publishers who traffic in misinformation have been repeatedly shown to be able to gain major audiences on the platform.

Social media are a relatively new experience for the human psyche. With social networks becoming more ingrained in people’s lives each year and each generation, it is vital that we understand the full impact each social network has on our mental health.

### **Underlying Problems**

What we see 'is not what is' and what we don't see 'is what is'. This mind is the source of all actions, inactions and thoughts responsible for everything that does and does take place around us. From the time immemorial the human race has been involved to prevail over others and nature. In such mode of thinking he has demolished the infinite resources of our beautiful planet just for money, which cannot replace or buy nature's oxygen, pure air, water, serenity, silence, natural harmony, ambience, security and wavelengths, As long as man blindly obeys his own deviant and ignore other people's minds all of us on this planet are at serious risk.

Lying deep beneath the apparent problems that meet the eye are inborn or built-in cognitive flaws which limit and inhibit our power to deeply perceive reality which explains why the



truth is not apparent to us on prima facie. The key is to unravel the motive you cannot see because, “what you see is not what it is, what you don't see is what is.” There are more to life than what we sensorily perceive as empiricism eschews objective reality. Renes Descartes posits that the existence of the mind, the physical world, and God can be determined through reasoning that is independent of experience, using intuition and deduction. He maintains that the propositions arrived at through this method are the only ones that can be considered certain. An example of this is the concept of a "brain in a vat," where one's perceived reality is actually a simulated experience rather than a genuine interaction with the physical world.

Only when the inquirer or truth seeker is committed to truth, evidence and, ultimately, knowledge is genuine research produced. (Ana Cuevas-Badallo et al.,2020). Three phenomena vitiate our perception and decision making process: (a) epistemic security, (b) negative mindset and (c) cognitive bias

One of the consequences of the post-truth era is a deficiency of epistemic knowledge, or knowledge of how we know what we know. This is because people are often more concerned with confirming their existing beliefs and opinions than with seeking out truth or accurate information and evidence.

A study by the Pew Research Center found that 62 per cent of Americans get news from social media, and that these sources are often biased and contain misinformation. It also discovered that people are more likely to share news on social media that aligns with their beliefs, regardless of whether it is accurate or not. (Pew Research Center, 2018).

Furthermore, the increasing polarisation of society and the decline of trust in traditional sources of information, such as news media and experts, have encouraged misinformation and the decline of epistemic knowledge. People are often more likely to believe information that comes from sources that they perceive as trustworthy, regardless of whether that information is actually accurate.

People generally rely on search engines for their information, spreading unread misinformation which leads to a decline in trust in traditional sources of information. They are not aware of the source of news and information.

First, the negatively and genetically wired brain is designed for cognitive vulnerability.

Research has suggested that certain neural systems, such as the default mode network and the amygdala, may be more active in individuals who are more susceptible to misinformation (Brossard & Scheufele, 2013).

Second, the cognitive vulnerability is not a fixed characteristic, it can change over time and with different experiences and interventions. Therefore, developing strategies to reduce cognitive vulnerability, such as CT, media literacy, and digital literacy skills, is crucial in helping individuals navigate the information landscape in the post-truth era.

A study by Lord, Ross, and Lepper (1979) argues that confirmation bias refers to the tendency to seek out, interpret, favour, and remember information that confirms one's preexisting beliefs or hypotheses. Four different groups of biases have been identified: (1) What should we remember? - Biases that affect our memory for people, events, and information, (2) Too much information - Biases that affect how we perceive certain events and people. (3) Not enough meaning - Biases that we use when we have too little information and need to fill in the gaps and (4) Need to act fast - Biases that affect how we make decisions. (Alicia Nortje, 05.08.2020)

Research suggests that this bias is particularly pronounced in situations where the desired outcome is emotionally charged or related to deeply ingrained beliefs (Nickerson, 1998). While it may not be possible to entirely eliminate confirmation bias, it can be mitigated through education and training in CT skills (Stanovich, 2009). In the context of social media, confirmation bias can be exacerbated by the use of filter bubbles, or "algorithmic editing," which presents users with information that aligns with their existing views, while suppressing opposing perspectives (Pariser, 2011). The US has the highest level of agreement: 77 per cent of Americans believe that others live in a bubble, 74 per cent in India, 72 per cent in Malaysia and 71 per cent in Sweden. At other end of scale, only 44 per cent agree with this in Japan.

Our cognition is prone to a battalion of over 200 cognitive biases which are busy distorting our perception and judgement of reality. Cognitive bias is mental shortcuts or patterns of thinking that can impact teaching and learning media literacy in a number of ways, including by influencing our ability to critically evaluate and analyse media content. Cognitive biases such as confirmation bias can lead us to seek out and give more weight to information that

confirms our existing beliefs, while discounting or ignoring information that challenges those beliefs. This can make it difficult for us to consider multiple perspectives and to evaluate media content objectively.

Cognitive biases can also lead us to underestimate the influence of media on our attitudes and behaviours, and to overestimate our own ability to resist media persuasion. This can make it more challenging for us to recognise and counteract the persuasive techniques used by media producers. Overall, cognitive biases can have a significant impact on media literacy, and it's important for individuals to be aware of these constraints and to take steps to overcome them to be able to develop CT and media analysis skills.

As long as humans are subservient to their erroneous cognitive faculty they will not be able to break out of their psychological barriers. To do so a trained mind is a pre-requisite to transcend the mind based only on sensory perception influenced by their emotions, beliefs and thoughts with little rationality. It is almost certain that without value-free data complete neutrality is not achievable 'even though some post-positivists believe in separating values from research.' (Linda L. Putnam And Scott Banghart, ud)

### **Limitations of Research**

Doctoral study is necessarily a closely-focused deep probe of a phenomenon being researched. Broadening this scope by extending it to wider issues, although enriching the examination, would inevitably be at the expense of the integrity and rigour of the study. Hence, this study has purposely excluded a highly acknowledged competency sourced from spiritual dimension which has been recognised as a potential competency to inform the phenomenon of social media.

As scientific, neuroscientific and neurology studies intersect new insights are gained to impact critical media literacy which is a stepping stone to spiritual literacy the overarching power to see the following in a spiritual perspective: journalism, CML, user-generated-content, discourses, comments and blogs as well as profession-generated-content which are medical, scientific, corporate, academic and opinion research and reports.

This study is also linguistically limited because it is practically impossible to reflect the

knowledge residing in the wealth and depth of the intensive non-English online literature and library-based archived research journals and other publications .

While marketing social and health social media are tangentially referred to no substantive focus has been accorded. Ignoring data in Hindi was not a preference. It is an avoidable constraint for preventing data crowding. Thus the thesis has taken a critical approach to examining discourses in English language only which are published on blogosphere.

This study will confine to online research in the Indian' context and will exclude offline content or comments except for referring to examples from Western states to illustrate good practice, strategies to explore solutions to the challenges of mis/dis/-information.

The study's focus of analysis is on a manually and systematically curated set of 1000 comments on YouTube as the most useful constituent of social media as it is recognised for its role in distance learning based on its multimedia properties. This complies with the norm that a good maximum sample size which needs to be 10 percent not exceeding 1000.

The duration of the study is a minimum of three years from the date of registration unless there unavoidable interruptions adversely affect or restrict the process of research from reading, memoing and literature review to submission.

The combination of topics, themes and principles that have a profound impact on the assessment of critical media is an amalgam of two types of theories namely: (1) Media and Communication Theories and (2) Learning Theories.

(1) Media and Communication Theories: (a) Semiotics, (b) psychoanalysis, (c) social responsibility theory, (d) participatory audience theory, libertarian theory, (e) postmodernist, (g) critical theory, (h) Marxist theory, (i) cultural Studies (j) narratology, (k) digital theory, and (l) public interest theory.

(2) Learning Theories: (a) constructivist learning theory, (b) social cognitive theory, (c) social learning theory, (d) connectivism and (e) social constructivism.

### **Scope of Research Work**

The scope of this research is restricted to investigating concerns and arguments about citizens'

competencies in the hugely transformative media ecology. Today's media landscape is attributable to the widespread democratisation of the Internet and its concomitant social media which subsume print media, radio and television which constitute mass media.

With the advent advanced wired and wireless technology news media literacies and critical disposition have become imperative for news consumers. Many prominent academics, chief executive officers, presidents, technologists, scientists, educators, IT experts, editors, journalists and philosophers have struck a discordant note on the future of digital convergence. Many argue that by exposing technology to users is like throwing a car key to a non-driver expecting him to drive, which can only result in two scenarios; either he is a non-starter or crashes the car. Robert Bell, co-founder of Intelligent Community Forum, had a different view from Biggs, predicting, “We created something that became a monster and then learned to tame the monster.” “So it is with most things in a technologically advanced society. But have people cultivated the requisite wisdom to use what is available to better themselves? Looking at American society, I would generally conclude not.” (1911-1992) US author and anthologist, Reginald Bretnor. (The Pew Centre Research Centre)

### **Historical Context**

Most contemporary debates about media are attributable to Europe and America. They fail to include India's critical and strategic thinking enshrined in Anvikshiki – the logic and philosophy. The ensues in a denial of valuable knowledge of the scientific enquiry of ancient India which is deplorable.

The British YouGov survey commissioned by Channel 4 in the UK found that only 4 per cent of people were able to correctly identify false 'news'. With such an appalling low rate of media literacy it is not surprising that academics as well as news organisations have gone in an overdrive mode for a mantra. (Buzzfeed News, 29. 01. 2017)

### **What is CT?**

This study adopted the definition of CT proposed by Facione (2000) but with reservation because CT belongs to the domain of cognitive skills for making rational judgements and

improving the quality of judgements. The definitions of CT that have emerged from the cognitive psychological approach include: “the mental processes, strategies, and representations people use to solve problems, make decisions, and learn new concepts” Socrates’ notion of CT developed 2.500 years ago, recent debates are associated with John Dewey’s (1910) classic book ‘How We Think’.

This research has articulated the merits of CT skills through the competency of CML, besides cultivating a dynamic, adaptive and growth mindset to be relevant to the digital convergence era which demands pre-disposition for the active engagement in (Halpern 1998) and appropriate attitudes towards CT (Swartz and Parks 1994).

CT (CT) is driven by a dynamic thought process in a which is reasonable, continuous and cyclically reflexive that traverses through six elements (Norris and Ennis, 1989) which represent epistemic milestones in reaching knowledge validation: (1) determining the credibility of sources and observations, (2) inferring and judging deductive conclusions, (3) definitions and identification of assumptions, (4) planning induction experiments and predicting probable consequences, (5) inferring and judging inductive conclusions and (6) semantics (Wannapiroo, 2008).

In his research Chen Dai-Ling (April 2015) cites Moseley et al.’s (2005) discussion of three academic traditions on CT: (a) philosophy emphasises the theory of knowledge, (b) psychology stresses cognitive process in relation to teaching and learning, and (c) sociology.

(A) The philosophical approach has traditionally focused on the application of formal rules of logic (Lewis & Smith, 1993; Sternberg, 1986) but has been criticised for being incapable of defining CT for its failure to correspond to reality (Sternberg, 1986; Lai, Emily R., 2011). Moon (2008) offers a similar comprehensive review of different dimensions of CT from the philosophical, psychological, and sociological traditions synonymous to that of Lai, (2011) and also four approaches: logic, competence, developmental shifts, and contextual influence.

Philosophical tradition provides various definitions of CT that include: (a) “the propensity and skill to engage in an activity with reflective skepticism” (McPeck, 1981); (b) “reflective and reasonable thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do” (Ennis, 1985); (c) “skilfull, responsible thinking that facilitates good judgement because it relies upon criteria, it

is self-correcting, and is sensitive to context” (Lipman, 1988); (d) “purposeful, self-regulatory judgement which results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation, and inference, as well as explanation of the evidential, conceptual, methodological, criteriological, or conceptual considerations upon which that judgement is based” (Facione, 1990); (e) “disciplined, self-directed thinking that exemplifies the perfections of thinking appropriate to a particular mode or domain of thought” (Paul, 1992); (f) thinking that is goal-directed and purposive, “thinking aimed at forming a judgement,” where the thinking itself meets standards of adequacy and accuracy (Bailin et al., 1999b); and (g) “judging in a reflective way what to do or what to believe” (Facione, 2000).

(B) The cognitive psychological approach supports positive approach as opposed to philosophy driven normative approach which conforms to behaviourist tradition and relates to how people actually think. (Emily R. Lai, 2011). The definitions of CT that have emerged from the cognitive psychological approach include: “the mental processes, strategies, and representations people use to solve problems, make decisions, and learn new concepts” Socrates’ notion of CT developed 2.500 years ago, recent debates are associated with John Dewey’s (1910) classic book ‘How We Think’.

### **Epistemological Perspectives**

The significance of qualitative research provides contextual and organic results. Qualitative data can be used to complement quantitative data and increase background knowledge that may be difficult to gather through quantitative designs. Merriam (2009) identifies four primary epistemological perspectives, which include positivist/postpositivist, interpretive/constructivist, critical, and postmodern/poststructural, and the nature of knowledge is characterized and classified by purpose and design. Two studies were discussed as examples of interpretive and critical perspectives. The purpose of critical approach is to empower and identify emancipatory information, while a postmodern/poststructural approach deconstructs previous truths and rationales (Merriam, 2009).

The study exemplified an interpretive/constructive perspective, as it aimed to gather information from the individual's worldview, while the second study demonstrated a critical

perspective, aiming to empower older adults through skill enhancement and social connectivity. In conclusion, an emic approach to qualitative research provides a framework for predicting, describing, empowering, and deconstructing population-specific world views, increasing the base of knowledge that leads to enhanced understanding of the purpose behind qualitative research.

Dewey (1910) defines thinking as ‘that which considers the basis and consequences of beliefs.’ His commitment to the role of education is to ‘cultivate individuals’ minds with enquiry and reasoning’. The consideration for reasons of logical consequences refers to ‘reflective thought’ (Dewey, 1910). Many argue that Dewey’s work has inspired CT which is the basis of logic and reasoning, inquisitiveness, curiosity, scientific enquiry, problem-solving and reflective thinking is of particular significance for thinking at high levels for new meaning-making. (Dewey, 2004).

(C) The educational approach relates to Benjamin Bloom’s taxonomy for information processing skills is one of the most widely cited sources in academic research in connection with teaching and assessing higher-order thinking skills. His taxonomy is hierarchical, with “comprehension” at the bottom and “evaluation” at the top. Analysis, synthesis, and evaluation are the three highest levels besides three other cognitive skills; remember, understand and create which frequently represent CT (Kennedy et al., 1991).

Besides, the above three approaches, media in India can be articulated from a fourth - prompted axiological imperatives as explains Michael Danino (2014), He argues that ‘India’s educational system fails to instil into young Indians a dynamic awareness and understanding of their country’s achievements and civilizing influences in various fields and at various epochs, including today.’ He refers to spiritual master Sri Aurobindo and poet Rabindranath Tagore who advocated reformation of education. Swami Vivekananda pointed out that “education is not the amount of information that is put into your brain and runs riot there, undigested, all your life.” (Vidyapeetham, Amrita Vishwa, 2004)

Researching within a social science domain relates to society and people's perspectives, perceptions, interpretation, beliefs, attitudes, experiences and preferences where the questions of what, why, where and when are asked. In this domain the theory of constructivism is



central to constructing knowledge. This research focused on interpretive methodologies and critical theory methodology

During the last three decades the implications of the Internet for education have been evident in the widespread digitalisation of pedagogy at primary, secondary and particularly in higher education. The over-arching implication is that the technology is solely a catalyst for change. The question is how can technology bring about improvement and make teaching and learning practices more efficient or effective technologies are now embedded in our society. Focus has shifted from whether or not to use them in teaching and learning, to understanding which technologies can be used for what specific educational purposes and then to investigate how best they can be used and embedded across the range of educational contexts in schools.

The Internet has been described as the 'hugest information resource, most rapid means of communication and cross-border communication with a lightening speed' (UNESCO, 2003). This holds out much prospects and promise for pupils and students at schools, universities, colleges by offering them shared resources online to enhance their knowledge by participating in curricular and lifelong educational courses, in collaborative projects with students from other schools, universities, countries, discussing different problems with them.

While the supply side solutions are not forthcoming switching to exploring solutions on the demand side is plausible. This involves rather two uncontroversial approaches: (i) protectionist and (2) critical. The study is interested in exploring the potential of medialiteracy for training students how to determine which media texts, which includes radio and television programmes, audio and video clips, films, books, posters, songs, magazines, newspapers and websites and carry hidden agenda or intent is multilayered.

There is a direct relationship between the rise of online abusive cases and the proliferation of SM platforms. The ease with which comments and UGCs can be posted only is reflected by user-generated content. However, some users exploit this possibility to misuse SM platforms by posting abusive content and deliberately affronting others. Duggan (2017) reported that a large number of users on SM have experienced abusive behaviour, or have observed cases of harassment directed to other fellows. Research has shown that these events not only lead to mental stress and anxiety in users but, in some cases, individuals end up shutting down their

SM accounts and, in extreme cases, even causes individuals to take their own lives (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010; Ashraf et al., 2020; Mustafa et al., 2020). The severity of the consequences of online abuse urges the need to research the development of abusive language detection models (Yin & Zubiaga, 2021). (Cited in Ashraf et al. (2021), PeerJ Comput. Sci., DOI 10.7717/peerj-cs.74)

The dynamics of digital media dictates a critical approach to the consumption of media content and seek a change in perceptions and disposition of citizens, who need to become critical thinkers for correctly perceiving, accepting, agreeing, interpreting and sharing media content.

### **The Adventure of the Mind**

This cosmological testament by world famous visionary scientist/astronomer Carl Sagan's graphic account of man's gruesome acts signals an appropriate point of departure for exploring the basis of what UNESCO wrote in its preamble; 'since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defence of peace must be constructed. (Preamble to UNESCO's Constitution, 1945)

Besides being motivated by the above insight this study is cued by a number of concerns. First it is inspired by Albert Einstein's denunciation of the troublesome mind; "The mediocre mind is incapable of understanding the man who refuses to bow blindly to conventional prejudices and chooses instead to express his opinions courageously and honestly," which dominate the entire stream of themes that defines and guides the examination of principles, process, concepts, limitations and challenges of manipulative and offending content.

Second, its examination is hinted by the importance of Non-cognitive skillset enable learners to ward off unhelpful thoughts and detect maladaptive ones which are due to the 'mistakes of thinking.' This aligns thoughts that can lead to a healthy view of reality. This ability is within everyone's reach if he transcend beyond the limits of his Non-cognitive skillset draw on Socratic inquiry or questioning method to teach how to probe your thoughts, feelings, emotions and assumptions, especially those thoughts that are not conducive to mind purification. Socratic technique refers to a "disciplined and thoughtful dialogue between two or more people" with a view to eliciting answers to questions and to "get the other person to

dig out answers their own questions by making them think.”

The study recognises that the untrained mind is a repository of pollution and an ultimate Source of all problems. The most prolific and only source of pollution is your contaminated mind, which needs to be purified by 'reformatting.' Alvin Toffler has described who is considered literate in the 21st century very succinctly as: “The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn,” because the digital age demands fast digestion of online content.

Solving the problems of mind pollution requires a mindset pre-disposed to Toffler's theory for committing to responding to a new paradigm shift of updating for the post-truth age. This seems mandatory for all citizens, let alone decision makers, politicians and academics who have an impact on all of us and on the environment. All minds should change concurrently not progressively because all 'apples will rot by a single one.' Any meddling with inanimate and living organisms by an individual with an impure mind will result in vitiating God's creation and will become not only sacrilegious but will expose you to nature's wrath. Sagan reminds us to cherish the planet earth as it is the only place in the entire universe which is inhabitable by humans. Environmental pollution is a disturbance due to the 'mistake of the intellect.' The stark absence of mental pollution as the fountain of all types of pollution is conspicuous in the narrow definition of environmental pollution as “the contamination of the physical and biological components of the earth/atmosphere system to such an extent that normal environmental processes are adversely affected.”

Third, intellectual mistake occurs when one fails to resist the gravity of temptation or cravings. One can directly diffuse intellectual mistake by wilfully resisting or defying the gravity of the mind. It is common in the world to see man tempted to go for or do what is NOT beneficial for him and his family's lives. There is ample empirical evidence of people wittingly living in ignoring norms, values, advice and the laws of nature. The body craves for pleasure and all the wrong things. Even though the mind knows better but cannot resist. Due to intellectual error it rationalises the cravings which lead to trouble and affliction. The solution for intellectual mistake lies in the elevation of the intellect to the apotheosis of divinity – the highest level of wisdom which is sagacity.

The above distortions are known as the offences of 'Pragyaparadh.' When the mind is adulterated by 'rajas and tamas guna' it cannot learn clearly, think cogently or decide firmly. Psychologists argue that man has a natural tendency to glide towards the 'wrong' and 'incorrect.' Doing what one is not supposed to do is called 'Pragyaparadh'. Wrongful actions erupt from wrongful thinking which arises from an impure and impious mind.

This phenomenon is explained in the Ayurveda, which states that the root cause of all disease is known by the Vedic term 'Pragyāparādh' which means the "mistake of the intellect" in thinking that what meets the eye in the waking state of consciousness is all that exists in the universe. The Sanskrit term 'Pragya Aparadh' means "Pragya" - 'intellect' and "apradh" - 'crime'. It is also known by Prajnaparadha in Sanskrit means 'prajna' (intellect) and 'aparadha' (offense/fault/error). The mistake of the intellect creates 'cognitive distortions as a way of coping with adverse life events.' The more prolonged and severe those adverse events are, the more likely it is that one or more cognitive distortions will form. (Panourgia, C., & Comoretto, A. 2017). "A person whose intellect, patience and memory is impaired, subjects himself to intellectual blasphemy (Pragnaparadha) by virtue of his bad action." (Sujit Kumaret al, 2019)

Scientist/monk Maharishi Mahesh Yogi said, 'pragya aparadh' or 'mistake of the intellect' is when the intellect, drawn toward and influenced by material consciousness, loses connection with the wholeness of consciousness. This is when you stop being centred within yourselves." Essentially the term, 'pragyaparadh,' recognises that your intellects can land you into trouble by defying the deeper part of ourselves, believing that lasting satisfaction is 'out there,' through accomplishments, drugs, sex, food, etc.

Primarily 'Pragyaparadh' also gives rise to cognitive distortions. Seven types of cognitive distortions: (a) selective abstraction (having negative aspects of experiences in a selective way), (b) overgeneralisation (a belief that in future negative outcome will ensue in similar situations), (c) catastrophisation (believing that the worst is most likely to happen), (d) personalisation (tending to attribute the cause of external events to oneself), (e) temporal causality or predicting without sufficient evidence (holding a belief that in future negative that happened in the past is likely to also occur), (f) self-reference (feeling that one is at the centre

of everyone's attention), and (g) dichotomous thinking (believing in a binary thinking mode - either positive or negative one will happen). (Beck, Rush, Shaw, and Emery.1979)

Beck (1976) argues that in times of high stress, cognitive distortions are likely to become activated. Consequently, dysfunctional thinking arises making a person more vulnerable to the development of emotional as well as behavioural type psychopathology (e.g., Frey & Epkins, 2002).

The study focuses on the importance of a divine mindset as an appropriate one that is favourable to the pursuit of your goal of happiness, success and self-fulfilment. It is concerned about the inherent limitations and hurdles of set by the mind as described in Ch. 6, Verse 34 of the Bhagavad Gita:

Uk p hc: P h f k l h - chañchalam hi manaḥ kṛiṣṇa pramāthi balavad dṛiḍham

h p h A8 Cl o a; jh 34 tasyāham nigrahaṁ manye vāyor iva su-duṣhkaram

In English it translates to: “The mind is very restless, turbulent, strong and obstinate, O Krishna. It appears to me that it is more difficult to control than the wind.” (BG.6.34). In articulating the general role of social media as a subset it focuses on procedural information. Procedural information refers to the technique of research methodology that guides the researcher from investigation to the completion stage of procuring data. It is a wisdom of an elevated or intelligent mind, which detects the bias, tendentiousness and prejudices that underlie information to shape it as manipulative content. and tested. (a) educating the ignorant mind its merits or demerits for promoting informed citizenship is essential as eligible voters necessary for voting a healthy governance of an accountable democracy. (b) challenges facing media education and (c) strategies for eliminating false 'news.'

### **False News, Lies And Sensational News**

“It took the truth about six times as long as falsehood to reach 1,500 people.” For the report, we examined a minimum of 1000 posted comments in English and have deliberately excluded those in Hindi.

According to a study by researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's (MIT)

Media Lab, false news is 70 per cent more likely to be retweeted and shared by people on X than true news. In one of the most comprehensive examinations of how false news spreads on social media platforms to date the study, which analysed 126,000 stories shared by approximately 3 million people from 2006 to 2017. The stories published in the journal *Science* were fact-checked by six independent organisations.

False stories spread more quickly and widely than true stories across all categories of information. However, this effect was more pronounced for false political news than for false news about other subjects, such as terrorism, natural disasters, science, urban legends, or finance. An increase in false political stories was observed during the 2012 and 2016 US presidential elections. The findings may also apply to other social media platforms, such as Facebook. A researcher Deb Roy also argued that, “that we have entered into the post-truth world from which we will not emerge.” (Dustin Volz, March 8, 2018 7:11 PM).

It is common that lies travel faster than the truth and falsehood diffused significantly spread farther, faster, deeper, and more broadly than the truth in all categories of information, and the effects were more pronounced for false political news than for false news about terrorism, natural disasters, science, urban legends, or financial information.

There is worldwide concern over false news and the possibility that it can influence political, economic, and social well-being. To understand how false news spreads, Vosoughi et al. used a data set of rumour cascades on X from 2006 to 2017. About 126,000 rumours were spread by ~ 3 million people. False news reached more people than the truth; the top 1 per cent of false news cascades diffused to between 1000 and 100,000 people, whereas the truth rarely diffused to more than 1000 people. Falsehood also diffused faster than the truth. The degree of novelty and the emotional reactions of recipients may be responsible for the differences observed.

The Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) has a very strong and active presence on major SM networks, i.e. Facebook, X and Youtube. To the MTS election tracker, the party has the highest number of fans (2.5 million) on Facebook, as compared to its competitors. Apart from the official page, there are a number of other pages (Narendra Modi , India 272+ , CAG , Friends of BJP to name a few ) which assist the party in the endeavour of connecting with maximum number

of people on Facebook.

### **Scope of Research Work**

This study explores a broad topic of CML, as a subfield of mass media communication theory, is inevitably inter-twined with numerous disciplines, multi-literacies, subject to multiperspectival approaches and underpinned by numerous theories including media theory, communication theory and learning theories.

It is specifically concerned with the empowerment of the civilian society. The role of social media as a conduit, pedagogy and news source as a normative value to citizens because the commercial and business sectors can buy into commercial safeguards to protect them from online pitfalls. For example, firms like Deloitte offer their services to detect risks, understand trends, make informed decisions and take advantage of opportunities in order to succeed. It navigates the potential risks and pitfalls of adopting new technologies and business models, and to identify sustainable business value. The Center's research allows technology, media and telecommunications leaders to efficiently evaluate opportunities and determine the best course of action. (Kevin Westcott et al., 2022)

The scope of the study of the role of CML in detecting dis/mis//mal-information and false 'news' hinges on the following fundamental questions to herald the development of media education for school children and adults for the digital era:

1. What is the role public sphere in the contemporary digital convergence of the post- truth era?
2. What is public interest and how important is it to democracy?
3. How important is a divine mindset in adopting and manifesting deontological and axiological values ?
4. Do social media contribute to functions of public sphere?
5. What is false news, misinformation, disinformation and propaganda and how do they undermine or distort the perception of reality?
6. What is the impact of social media on journalism in the digital era?
7. What is the significance of the principle of freedom of expression to pluralistic, inclusive, participatory and informed citizenship?
8. What is CML more important now more than ever?

9. How can CML empower citizens to understand the intended purposes and meanings embedded in media content?
10. What are the challenges for policymakers, technology companies, educators, and parents and carers?
11. What is the role of public service media (PSM) in analysing, evaluating, assessing and creating social media content from a critical perspective in the digital convergence ecosystem in the produsage?

### **Research Hypotheses**

Accessible, free, open and independent media are vital to vibrant democracy.

Information, the power of an Information Society needs to be credible, truthful and factual.

Digital transformation of the media ecosystem has augmented and accelerated information

Lippmann and others began to look for ways for the individual journalist “to remain clear and free of his irrational, his unexamined, his unacknowledged prejudgments in observing, understanding and presenting the news.”

This was the idea that if reporters simply dug out the facts and ordered them together, truth would reveal itself rather naturally

A reader’s damning comment (reproduced below) on a news story published by the online Economic Times Blog about India’s problem of brain drain epitomises the harsh ground reality facing the politicised education system. An education system upon which the nation depends for imparting foundational critical media education for the 21st century. (A Political Economy Snapshot)

*‘India can never produce critical creative outputs that can dazzle the world of science, world of medicine, world of it whatever. The reasons are still one step deeper. Educational institutions are owned run and managed by hard core illiterate politicians who went into education solely as there were high earnings. Money was the objective not excellence in education. We have the third largest technically trained manpower force in the world, we have grandiose large spreads of universities owned by privates and politicians. What is the result? Sixty-five years of such models have produced only clerical grade technically trained manpower. The real brains emigrate. There is no enabling environment to nurture CT*



*methodologies, creativity, innovative methodologies and the reason is that the ownerships just do not seem to understand the importance of these attributes. What have the educational experts in the UGC and other regulatory bodies done last sixty-five years? Anything earth shaking coming out of the new education policy?’ (Comments – Wake up India: Why India must retain talent to grow. Oct. 23, 2015)*

The above trenchant comment by an online user of a blog is a damning observation of the ground reality in India. It is significant in informing decision makers and educators in India. India has to factor in CT skills in deciding education syllabus for the 21st century if it is committed in meeting the Prime Minister's ambitious target of expanding into a six-trillion dollar economy. The prime minister's vision for India to aspire to become the world's guru is contingent upon the development of media.

India's dilemma is similar to that of the 'United States, which finds itself in a paradoxical position of being the world's leading exporter of media products but lags behind every other major English-speaking country in the world in the formal delivery of media education in its schools.

India's education system continues to face an evolution crisis. Its curriculum of 'creativity and CT courses' between 1974 and 1978. Its introduction by the Congress government in 1972 was short-lived as it was discontinued by the Janta Alliance party in 1978. A change of government led to the end of these reforms in 1977. (Abigail Mulhall et al.) The study has included an examination of environmental factors as sources of problems for marginalisation of CML in a country which once was the bedrock of Anvikshiki (Science of Inquiry) synonymous with Socratic culture. The education system needs to realign its critical pedagogy.

India's Ministry of Education's New National Education Policy 2020 has attracted criticism for overlooking the importance of CML and CT. The systematic imparting of universal elementary education is enshrined in the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 which laid down the legal underpinnings for enabling achievement. The prospect for media education in India looks gloomy as it faces inimical environment factors. The NEP 2020 has just began talking about it while Finland, France, Italy, Spain, Portugal and the

United Kingdom school curricula had already included and media skills.

At the moment, the Government has a tendency to focus on computing education rather than digital CML, but basic digital skills are not enough to create savvy audiences (and citizens) of the future. From this point of view, the Department of Education appears to be struggling to anticipate the implications of the technological challenges of the 21st century. Children must understand the purposes of the technology they use, have a critical understanding of the content it delivers, have the skills and competencies to participate creatively, and a reasonable, age-appropriate understanding of potential outcomes, including potential harms.

*“Online platform is a place where a malicious article hatched from a troll farm can sit side-by-side with legitimate, rigorous journalism” – The Interpreter.*

Renee Hobbs' identification of three frames for introducing media to learners are authors and audiences (AA), messages and meanings (MM), and representation and reality (RR) (Hobbs, R., 2006)

This competency has been extended from the understanding the risk and protectionism to CT and participation paradigm by adopting a '21st century approach to education to include print, video television and the Internet which builds an understanding of the role of media in society as well as essential skills of inquiry and self-expression necessary for citizens of a democracy'. Critical Media Literacy; Uysal, (2015) defined 'as analysis of media code and traditions, as ability to criticise media's values and ideologies, as interpretation of messages produced by the audience, evaluation of media content and being selective, being aware of effects of media and a pedagogy which enables using media luminously'. (Uysal, 2015; Aufderheide & Frost, 1993)

CML is a necessary part of active citizenship and is key to the full development of freedom of expression and the right to information. It is therefore an essential part of participative democracy 29 and intercultural dialogue. 'Today, CML is as central to active and full citizenship as it was in the 19th Century (Press release IP/06/1326, Brussels, 6 October 2006)

The World Bank has outlined 'a fundamental principle of the governance reform agenda is to build more effective and responsive states accountable to their citizens; free, plural, and independent media systems can play a crucial role in this process.' As stated by Collier, free

and active media inform and organize society around issues imperative for effective democratic processes to work. In effect, today's convergence of traditional and new media offers promising opportunities for inclusion, participation, and transparency; which are, however, paralleled by challenges such as uneven access, misinformation, and exposure to harmful content.

Consequently, access to accurate and objective information is more important than ever for a healthy democracy to flourish. This access is crucial to improve conditions for trust among citizens, media, and state, and to implement and sustain the governance agenda. In the 21st century, it is absolutely essential for a functioning participatory democracy to prioritize critical media literacy. This is because advancements in information communication technologies and the prevalence of a market-driven media culture have brought about significant changes in our world. These changes have both fragmented and connected us, converged various forms of media, diversified content, homogenized perspectives, flattened hierarchies, broadened our horizons, and reshaped societies at local and global levels.

Critical media literacy represents an educational response to these transformations, expanding our traditional understanding of literacy to encompass a broader range of mass communication, popular culture, and emerging technologies. It goes beyond basic literacy skills to enable individuals to critically examine the complex interplay between media, audiences, information, and power. In addition to this mainstream analysis, empowering students to engage in alternative media production allows them to create their own messages that can challenge existing media content and narratives. (Kellner, D., Share, J., 59–69 (2007).

### **Why Does India Need Critical Media Literacy?**

India has made commendable progress in lowering the number of illiterates but it still contends with 313 million illiterate people 59 percent of whom are women according to 2018 figure released by Observer Research Foundation.

India has released a new national education policy (NEP2020) affecting 65 per cent of its population under the age of 35 and 290 million students (in schools and universities), no issue is arguably more critical for India's future than education.

In Europe the multimedia and digital media have not displaced mass media, at least not yet. It can be deduced that both the systems of mass communication and the new digital multimedia environment can co-exist within the information society. (Study on the Current Trends and Approaches to Media in Europe, 2010) This media ecology is not too dissimilar in India where despite the above social pervasiveness of digital technology its largest and fastest growing television sector is enigmatic and defiant of the global decline of broadcast television.

The resilience of traditional media (like television, the cinema and the press) against the flourishing of the 'new media' such as the internet, mobile telephony, cable and satellite TV has been noted by academic researchers like Kumar who calls for a critical evaluation of the mediasphere at all levels of public education. (Keval J. Kumar. Ud; B.K. Ravi. 2012). Television broadcast media in the country are expected to rise to 66.76 per cent by 2020 with its current number of 780 million viewers likely to exceed the entire population of 745 million of the European continent, according to BARC India, a TV viewership monitoring agency. (Gaurav Laghate, 2017)

### **The Impact of Digitalisation on Media Literacy**

The research studies the impact of digitalisation on the reorganisation and restructuring on PSB from a number of perspectives which determine the role of PSB and media policy: (1) organisational, (2) cultural, (3) economic, (4) programming, (5) financial (6) regulatory and (7) technological.

Particular attention is paid to the tension and contest between different agencies specially between the Supreme Court of India and the Government of India, between the Press Council and the media, between Indian telecom regulator TRAI and the media, between Prasar Bharati and DD and also between different stakeholders and agencies. The conflicts, war of attrition, contest and friction between the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and other stakeholders including independent production companies, voluntary sector and Ministry of Communications and Information Technology are potential areas for mining data using in-depth interviews and scrutinising documents.

### **Chanakya's Anvikshiki and Socratic Scientific Enquiry.**

In order to assess CML in today's India it is important to understand the political, intellectual, ideological and spiritual perspectives of Aryavarta against the historical backdrop (as India was known then) because they have a bearing on today's India's people's psyche. The country's governing substratum was inspired by the ultimate and ancient knowledge derived from the Vedas, Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita and the Puranas where each perspective influenced the dynamics in the shaping of Aryavarta's timeline. The classic and impacting 'Science of Enquiry' underpinned the ethos that belied India's historical evolution during the millennium since the 4th century BC. India as an ancient civilisation was built upon cosmic and authoritative knowledge of the Vedas which are 'the source of integral wisdom, science, tradition and culture of a remarkable civilisation'. (<https://goo.gl/jUuz25>) .

Literature informs us about India's desertion of its own age-old dialectic as enshrined in the Arthshastra. Kautilya, the guru of the emperor of India, Chandragupta Mauriya upheld the imperative culture of dialectics. Anvikshiki is symbolic of 'the lamp illuminating all knowledge and the means of all actions. It is the foundation of all dharmas.' Anvikshiki has three aspects: Sankhya, Yog and Lokayat. Sankhya belongs to different schools of philosophy that promotes skepticism and materialism regarded as vital for sharpening decision-making skills, developing discretion and wisdom as well encouraging doubt to foster critical reasoning. (<https://goo.gl/Ggvau>). This raises a serious question about the failure of the India's education system to revive CT as embodied in Anvikshiki for all three tiers of education?

Anvikshiki underscored several successive empires until late 12th century. It disappeared when one Muhammad of Ghor, a local ruler in Gandharva (It is now known as Afghanistan) and the Mughals invaded India and established the Mughal empire by 1526 century BC. Chanakya's legacy of critical and strategic thinking was pivotal in underlining their governance and unifying various kingdoms into one nation and bringing them under one central governance.

Chanakya's strategy is credited to have masterminded the defeat of the Nanda dynasty of

Magadh and external aggression by Alexander the Great located in Gandhara, present day Afghanistan, Greece, etc. Deploying his strategy the Emperor Ashoka established his kingdom, Shivaji, the ruler of Maharashtra defeated the Mughals. The Forts that he built and the Navy he created till today stands as an example for all of us to be proud of. Even though India and Indians never forgot the 'Arthashastra', the study and practical application of the book lost its importance since the British rule (Jaideep Bahuguna, Introduction of Kautilyas Arthashastra)

'The Arthashastra, based on spiritual values and the management of 'the human mind,' is an encyclopaedic book that prescribed economic panacea. It has remained the same since ages' For ages 'rulers across the world have referred to it for nation building.

Anvikshiki is found in Kautilya's (better known as Chanakya, 350-275 BCE) Arthashastra. Described as the "lamp of all sciences" it is a pioneering treatise embracing a catalogue of wide ranging overarching theories. It includes philosophies, principles and policies relating political economy, fiscal and taxation policy, good governance, nation's security, foreign policy, social welfare, corruption and state's security.

Anvikshiki has returned in management studies as it has been recognised to deal with challenges of today due to the advancement of technology. Even epics like the Ramayana and Gandhi reflected the spirit of Anvikshiki in his newly updated canon for the nation. Before disappearing in 12th century BC Ānvīkṣhikī known as Hetu-śāstra was a distinct branch of learning which deals with an individual's both inner and the outer dimensions the reflexive knowledge.

It includes the Trayi (the Vedas), Vārttā (commerce), Daṇḍanīti (polity) was extended to Dharamshatra (religious law), Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Lokāyata, Tarkavidyā, (the art of debate) or Vāda-vidyā, (the art of discussion), rājanīti (the science of kingly administration), ātmavidyā (science of spirituality) - science of principles, nature, metaphysics, or general philosophy, Nyāya-śāstra (the science of true reasoning)

It is interesting to note that the resurgence and resilience of India despite continuously being looted, ravaged and destroyed are implicit in today's India's achievement. This is what gave India a springboard to its future intellectual trajectory through different phases of the nation;

ancient, classical, political and modern.

Throughout India's history CT had been accentuated in different eras by different ideologies which culminated in the Indian constitution. The insights of Thomas, Ramsheena and Bano on Rawls' ideas on deliberative democracy which (1971). The argument was taken forward with the perspective of Ambedkar, one of the most prominent authors of the Indian Constitution, who had linked his idea of development to 'educate, agitate and organize'. Dreze and Sen (2013) state that 'Dr Ambedkar took positive note of the idea of democracy as government by discussion and public reasoning was central to his understanding of it'. The authors affirm that it is public reasoning that helps people understand each other's problems and to see each other's perspectives- and this was absolutely

Critical media pedagogy is seen as a reactive initiative which is largely motivated by the online insurgency or false news. In contrast it was a preventive approach in ancient India as was provided by Kautilya commonly known as Chanakya in his treatise of in Anvikshiki of Arthashastra explained in Dharmashastra one of the most influential treatises of political science. (DDSA)

When the mobile telephone revolution swept India – a country where landline phones used to be hard to obtain – there were whoops of joys. Mobile telephony, said the experts, would transform India. WhatsApp is a primary source of information for millions of Indians – with worrying consequences.

The importance of media education for meeting the 'challenges of inequalities, deprivations and poor governance and their link to active citizenship' in India, highlighted by KV Nagraj. (2014) is informed by the Marxist version of critical theory of media and communication including and public sphere theory. This is important for addressing the issues including the issued of inequality, unfairness and power-struggle and how citizens exchange views, answer questions about civic duties and empower the citizenry.

Media irregularities underline the need for inducting India into a culture of CT to deal with several pressing problems including the passing of 'paid news' as genuine news by television, cross and political ownership of television channels, airing of inappropriate content and in bad taste such dead bodies, exceeding the allowed advertising minutes per hour, sting operations,

decline in programming standards and the promotion of superstition. How should the Indian government, the media and citizens restore trust and credibility?

In this environment, people readily accept and give credence to information that reinforces their views, no matter how distorted or inaccurate, while dismissing content with which they do not agree as 'false news'. This situation is unlikely to change. The UK government argues that people tend to 'give credence to information that reinforces their views, no matter how distorted or inaccurate, while dismissing content with which they do not agree as 'false news'.

'A polarising effect and reduces the common ground' as it erodes the 'reasoned debate, based on objective facts, can take place'. This taken cumulatively has a detrimental effect on elections which could threaten our democracy. What does need to change is the enforcement of greater transparency in the sphere, to ensure that we know the source of what we are reading, who has paid for it and why the information has been sent to us. We need to understand how the big tech companies work and what happens to our data.

There should be enforcement of greater transparency in the sphere, to ensure that we know the source of what we are reading, who has paid for it and why the information has been sent to us.

Numerous postings of celebrations and holiday snaps, some malicious forces use Facebook to threaten and harass others, to publish revenge porn, to disseminate hate speech and propaganda of all kinds, and to influence elections and democratic processes—much of which Facebook, and other SM companies, are either unable or unwilling to prevent.

Like all new media technologies, the Internet may be a useful tool for the creation of a public sphere, the basis of a public sphere, but it cannot itself create such a space. To use Kellner's words (no date) the Internet – like all new media technologies – can be used as an instrument of empowerment or of domination. Communications technology in general, and the Internet in particular, is not inherently pro-democratic; it can be just as effective in sustaining propaganda and authoritarian regimes. New forms of citizenship and public life are simultaneously enabled by new technology and restricted by market power and surveillance (Boeder, 2005). Castells (2007) observes that the media constitute by and large the space where power is decided, but they are not the holders of power. What is certain is that the



media are not the place where the public sphere resides, nor the public sphere per se, but a vehicle through which such a space may be created. If such is the case then why shoot the messenger.

The UK government's bold proposal to bypass the principle of 'don't shoot the messenger' by creating a new category of SM company, to tighten tech companies' liabilities, and which is not necessarily either a 'platform' or a 'publisher' is likely to attract political controversy. The UK's Ofcom's endorsement of this proposal is viewed as acting against the public interest. It will be tantamount to anti-freedom of speech which runs counter to section 230 of the Communications Decency Act in the US.

Ofcom welcomed this new category as “very neat” because “platforms do have responsibility, even if they are not the content generator, for what they host on their platforms and what they advertise”. SM companies cannot hide behind the claim of being merely a 'platform' and maintain that they have no responsibility themselves in regulating the content of their sites.

Aa new category of tech company is formulated, which tightens tech companies' liabilities, and which is not necessarily either a 'platform' or a 'publisher'. (DMCS)

## **Theoretical and Philosophical Underpinnings of Media Literacy**

### **The Seven Communication Theories**

The Communication Theory refers to basically three types; verbal, written and non-verbal which overlaps with Media Theory. Additional approaches that inform critical media literacy are: (1) Critical Perspective, (2) Stimulus Response Model, (3) Uses And Gratification Model, (4) Cultivation Theory, (5) Agenda Setting Theory, (6) Framing Theory, (7) Media Effects Theory

Evelien Schilder has identified James Anderson's communication theory in 1980 as the first theory to provide theoretical underpinnings of CML education relating specifically to critical viewing of television. Anderson argues that the theoretical foundations of this process, most closely aligned with mass media research, such as behavioural effect research, uses and gratification research, and research on cultural understanding concerned with negotiating

meaning. (Anderson, James 1980) Piette and Giroux (1998) cited seven major mass communication approaches to provide theoretical scaffolding to CML. (Piette and Giroux 1998).

### **The Critical Perspective**

This perspective, which is sometimes also called the Marxist approach, assumes similar powerful effects as the S-R model. Unlike this model, media are viewed from an ideological standpoint. Media, which are said to be controlled by the ruling class, are assumed to impose a repressive ideology into the consciousness of the homogenous mass (McQuail, 2000). In this sense, the audience is perceived as rather passive, while media are perceived to be powerful. Piette and Giroux (1998) claim that a media program created by UNESCO was influenced by this perspective.

### **The Stimulus Response (S-R) Model**

There is a direct relationship between the dependency on the media and their importance to the uses. ie. the higher the dependency of an individual on the media for the fulfilment of his or her needs, the more important the media will be to that person. The stimulus–response model also known as the “hypodermic needle theory,” “transmission belt theory,” or “magic bullet theory,” is understood to describe the mass media effects. It is a system that is predicated on the assumption that the mass media has powerful effects. (Lowery and DeFleur (1995) History of Media Effects)

The basic assumptions behind the SR theory are media behaviourism. In models of conditioning, learning occurs through the pairing of a stimulus with a response. In classical conditioning, the stimulus elicits an automatic response from the subject. In operant conditioning, the behaviour of the subject leads to a reward that increases the behaviour, or a punishment that decreases the behaviour. Media effects research indicates the SR model was the guiding perspective in the media effects field during the early days of communication study and is still influential.

The S-R model denoting the concerns about media effects emerged towards the end of the

19th century. Promulgated by Harold Lasswell in 1920s the hypodermic needle theory, implies two factors; one, the one-way route of communication (De Boer & Brennecke, 2003) and the other passive audience's powerlessness vis a vis the powerful media.

It was aimed at encouraging instincts and reactions by 'entering the minds of audience and injects a particular message.' The theory invokes Lasswell's (1948) classic observation statement "who says what on which channel to whom with what effect". Verily speaking the hypodermic model theory emerged from the Marxist Frankfurt School in the 1960s to explain the rise of Nazism in Germany. It explains how media control what the audience consumes and the effects, which can be immediate or later in future. Although it is regarded as outdated the belief that media is powerful survives the digital era (Buckingham, 2003). Several research show that health media are still focused on mitigating harmful effects of media messages (Jeong, Cho, & Hwang, 2012; Martens, 2010). Critics say the theory is flawed because it considers everyone in the audience to be passive despite the fact that many times people have reacted to something they do not agree with or object to as participatory audience.

### **The Uses And Gratifications Model**

A minority group of mass communications researchers has dismissed gratifications as a rigorous social science theory. Taking an opposite stance Thomas E. Ruggiero argues that the advent of computer-mediated communication has renewed the significance of uses and gratifications in the communications theory. (Thomas E. Ruggiero, I Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch, 1973) point out that media users are competent to 'identify their own interests and motives for mass media use'. This implies that educators should have a more open mind towards media use and popular culture in their classrooms. This last point is regarded as essential in many media programs. (NAMLE, 2007).

The uses and gratifications model, as proposed by Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch in 1973, suggests that individuals actively seek out media content to fulfil specific needs or gratifications. This model shifts the focus from the media itself to the individual, viewing them as active and goal-directed in their media consumption.

This model argues that media compete with other sources of satisfaction and that individuals are able to identify their own interests and motives for using mass media. For example, an individual may watch a specific television show to feel entertained, informed or to pass time. It also suggests that media users are able to select the specific media content that will fulfil their needs or gratifications.

The uses and gratifications model also emphasises the importance of suspending value judgments about the cultural significance of mass communication while exploring audience orientations. This means that certain cultural messages should not be rated as better or worse than others and that educators should have an open-minded approach towards media use and popular culture in their classrooms. This perspective is important in many media literacy programs, as it encourages individuals to critically evaluate media content and understand how it is used to fulfill their needs and gratifications.

De Boer and Brennecke in "The Uses and Gratifications Approach: Its Origins and Development" (2003) argue that the uses and gratifications approach has been applied in various fields of study and research, such as communication, psychology, sociology and media studies.

The National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) in its "Guiding Principles for Media Literacy Education" (2007) also recognises the importance of the uses and gratifications model in media literacy education, as it encourages individuals to understand the motivations behind their media use and how different media content can be used to meet specific needs and gratifications.

### **The Cultivation Theory**

Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, and Signorielli (1994) argue that religion, education and parents along with television shaped children's broader view about the world since infancy or childhood. They argue that media have a dominant role in the lives of young people who are repeatedly exposed to media messages. These messages might teach certain underlying assumptions that are promoted in these media. Berel and Irving (1998) reject the view that media effects have direct effect and argue that it could take years before media messages could help to shape our perceptions.

### **The Agenda Setting Theory**

Pursuing a similar line of enquiry McCombs and Shaw (1972), media are a source of information for people learn about which issues important. Similar to cultivation theory, the media are deemed to have an indirect influence on how we think. Research confirms that media do not tell us what to think, but what to think about (Piette & Giroux, 1998; McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Piette and Giroux point out that these viewpoints are central in a college level course on television at Boston University. Connecting the agenda setting theory to SM is the theory of CML which regulates the media. People will learn from the media which issues are regarded as important, which also assumes a powerful, yet indirect influence of the media. (Evelien). Seven additional theoretical approaches need to be included as they impinge on the theory of CML:

### **The Framing Theory**

Framing theory is closely affiliated to the agenda-setting theory which is described as second level agenda setting. Frame theory expands the agenda setting theory. While the agenda setting framing guides the audience's perception by telling the audience what to think about whereas the framing theory tells them how to think about that issue. The framing theory agenda draws the audience attention to specific topics. It refers to the practice of focusing attention on certain events followed by positioning them within a field of meaning.

The idea behind framing is to construct news in a way which creates a frame for that information. Media as gatekeepers organise, define, construct and present the ideas, events, and topics they cover. The purpose is to influence the perception of the news by the audience. A decade ago, when the Web was on the verge of becoming a part of so many people's lives, media historian Michael Schudson invited us to imagine a world in which "governments, businesses, lobbyists, candidates, churches and social movements deliver information directly to citizens". As each person becomes his or her own gatekeeper and goes about setting his or her own information agenda, journalism is abolished. But not for long. People quite quickly realize that they need help in understanding events, in identifying what is most important,

most relevant, most interesting. A professional press corps soon reappears (Schudson, 1995)

Important as it is this theory to understand how an individual interprets reality through his primary framework it further implies the significance of media. Framing is unavoidable because each individual is bound by his own frames to communications. The Framing theory states that there are two distinctions within primary frameworks: natural and social. Both play the role of helping individuals interpret data. So that their experiences can be understood in a wider social context. The difference between the two is functional.

### **The Media Effects Theory**

This refers to the ways in which media can have both short-term and long-term effects on individuals and society. Media effects theory is a field of study that examines the ways in which media can influence individuals and society. This theory is often discussed within the context of CML, as it helps to understand the potential influence of media messages on individuals and society. It includes both short-term and long-term effects of media exposure. Media effects research seeks to understand how media messages influence the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours of individuals and society. There are many different approaches to the media effects theory and different scholars have emphasised different types of effects. Some common types of media effects include: (1) Cognitive effects: the ways in which media can influence an individual's knowledge, attitudes and beliefs. (2) Affective effects: the ways in which media can influence an individual's emotions and (3) Behavioural effects: the ways in which media can influence an individual's behaviour.

### **The Harold Lasswell Model**

The American political scientist, developed a model of communication known as the "who says what, in which channel, to whom, with what effect" model. In this model, Laswell argues that communication is the transfer of information from sender to receiver through a specific medium or channel, and that the effectiveness of the communication is determined by the nature of the message, the audience, and the medium. French-Canadian critical theorists Pierre and Giroux, have also contributed to the study of semiotics by examining the role of media in shaping meaning and social power.

McQuail (2000) in his "Mass Communication Theory" book, provides an overview of the history of mass communication research, including the development of the classical semiotic approach and its application in the study of mass communication. McQuail highlights the importance of understanding how signs and symbols are used to construct meanings, what shapes them and how they are conveyed in mass media.

### **The Cultural Studies Approach**

The media are assumed to have a powerful influence on a rather heterogeneous audience. One of the main premises is that getting meaning is problematic as meaning in any particular context is never fixed. Messages can be encoded (created) in one way, but be decoded (read or interpreted) by the audience in a different way (Hall, 1997). Audiences are therefore rather active. (Buckingham, 2003; Martens, 2010; Scharrer, 2002).

The cultural studies approach to the creation, distribution and consumption of media content and CML, as outlined by scholars such as McQuail, David Hesmondhalgh and Des Freedman, emphasises the role of media in shaping and reflecting cultural and social power relations.

McQuail (2000) explains that cultural studies approach is a critical perspective that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, as a response to the dominant paradigm of mass communication research which focused on the technical aspects of media rather than its social and cultural effects. McQuail argues that cultural studies approach examines the ways in which media content and the media industry are influenced by and reflect the dominant values and interests of society.

David Hesmondhalgh, a British media scholar, in his book "The Cultural Industries" (2002) analyses the cultural industries, such as music, film, and television, in terms of their economic, political, and cultural dimensions. He argues that the cultural industries are shaped by the relations of production and distribution, which are in turn influenced by state policies and global economic forces. He also highlights how the cultural industries contribute to the production, dissemination and legitimation of cultural meanings and values.

Des Freedman, in his book "The Contradictions of Media Power" (2014) also takes a critical

approach to media studies. He argues that media power is a complex and contradictory phenomenon, shaped by the interplay of economic, political, and cultural factors. Freedman examines how the media industry is shaped by the relationships between ownership, regulation, and audience, and how these relationships are influenced by global economic and political forces.

The cultural studies approach to media content and CML emphasises the need to understand the ways in which media reflect and reinforce social and cultural power relations. This approach; (a) encourages critical examination of media content, media industry and audience, and how they are shaped by broader social, economic and political forces, and (b) stresses the importance of media literacy, which involves the ability to critically evaluate and understand the media and its role in shaping cultural meanings and values.

1. Marshall McLuhan. In McLuhan's approach, media is understood as all technologies mediate human interactions and experiences, including both manmade and natural tools. Specific technologies determine how the role of the media in shaping the content and social impact of that media. Radio, television, magazine, new media, theatre etc create their own bias and preferences that need to be understood. McLuhan and his coauthors do not view media as neutral carriers of content, but rather as shaping the dimensions of human experience through their impact on how humans interact with each other and the world. This understanding allows for a more holistic approach to media education, as it encourages students to consider the consequences of various forms of mediation and to develop a critical awareness of their own media use.

However, McLuhan's approach has been criticised for its lack of a clear method for analysing media effects and its failure to adequately address the role of power and ideology in shaping media technologies. Despite these criticisms, McLuhan's emphasis on the shaping power of media technologies and their impact on human experience can be seen as complementary to the CML approach, which focuses on examining the ideological content and power relations behind the construction of media messages. By including an exploration of media forms and grammar in addition to content, McLuhan's approach has the potential to expand the



boundaries of CML and offer a more comprehensive understanding of the role of media in shaping human experience.

However, some critics have argued that McLuhan's approach is overly broad and lacks a clear method for analysing media effects. Simpson (2013) argues that McLuhan's concept of media as environments is too vague to be useful for media analysis. Simpson suggests that it is difficult to determine how media technologies create new environments and what the specific characteristics of these environments are. Additionally, Simpson criticizes McLuhan for not adequately addressing the role of power and ideology in shaping media technologies and their effects.

Other critics have pointed out that McLuhan's focus on media as a holistic force can obscure the specific ways in which different media technologies operate and the specific ways in which they shape human experiences. Bolter and Grusin (2000) argue that McLuhan's emphasis on the "global village" created by electronic media ignores the specific affordances of different media technologies and the ways in which they shape the production and reception of media messages.

While McLuhan's approach to media has had a significant influence on media studies, it has also been the subject of criticism for its lack of a clear method for analysing media effects and its failure to adequately address the role of power and ideology in shaping media technologies.

Quentin Fiore (1967) in his book entitled 'The Medium is the Message' wrote that McLuhan perceives media as powerful but in a different way than other researchers. McLuhan moved away from describing effects of the 'content' of media on the recipient to describing effects of the 'form' of media on the recipient. He describes how Western society is shaped by the alphabet. With the arrival of the alphabet, people did not need to memorize whole books anymore. This changed the way our memory works, creating forgetfulness in learners. He sees media as an extension of man. McLuhan also had certain ideas about education that have influenced media education. He claims that education must shift from instruction, from the imposing of stencils, to discovery, to probing and exploration and to the recognition of the language of forms (McLuhan & Fiore, 1967).

European Commission has suggested a two-pronged approach to CML education: (a) learners' competencies and (b) environmental factors. The need to meet the demands of the digital economy is a new impetus for a responsive development of the learner supported new pedagogy.

### **Dedicated Organisations Promoting CML**

#### **The Centre For Media Literacy**

During the past 25 years the Center For Media Literacy has established itself as a pioneering motivator as an educational organisation for the development of media. CML's MediaLit Kit is a widely recognised inquiry-based pedagogical framework which provides "an accessible, integrated outline of the established foundational concepts and implementation models needed to organize and structure teaching activities using a media lens". This resource is dedicated to providing 'leadership, public education, professional development and evidence-based educational resources' globally. It fosters media education as a framework for accessing, analysing, evaluating, creating and participating with media content by imparting CT and media production skills to the young to enable them to actively participate in the 21st century media culture. The Centre plays a crucial role in advancing media literacy education, empowering individuals to navigate the complex media landscape, and fostering a critical understanding of the role of media in shaping public discourse. Its key functions revolve around promoting media literacy education and empowering individuals to critically engage with media content:

1. **Media Literacy Advocacy:** Promoting the importance of media literacy in education and society and advocating for the integration of media literacy curricula in schools and educational institutions.
2. **Curriculum Development:** Designing and developing media literacy curricula for various educational levels and providing resources and tools for educators to incorporate media literacy into their teaching.
3. **Educational Programs:** Holding workshops, seminars, and training programs on media literacy for educators, students, and the general public and offering online courses and resources to enhance media literacy skills.
4. **Research and Publications:** Conducting research on media literacy trends, challenges, and best practices and publishing reports, articles, and educational materials to share insights and recommendations.

5. **Community Engagement:** Collaborating with schools, community organizations, and media outlets to promote media literacy initiatives and engaging with parents, caregivers, and community leaders to raise awareness about the importance of media literacy.
6. **Resource Centre:** Serving as a hub for media literacy resources, including lesson plans, educational materials, and research publications and providing access to a library of media content analysis and CT tools.
7. **Partnerships and Collaborations:** Collaborating with other organizations, government agencies, and stakeholders to strengthen media literacy initiatives. Building partnerships with media organisations to foster responsible and ethical media practices.
8. **Advocacy for Digital Citizenship:** Underlying the development of digital citizenship skills alongside media literacy and advocating for ethical online behaviour, digital rights, and responsible use of technology.
9. **Evaluation and Assessment:** Developing tools and methods to assess media literacy skills and evaluating the effectiveness of media literacy programs and interventions.
10. **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Launching public awareness campaigns to highlight the impact of media literacy on society and using various media channels to reach a wide audience and promote the importance of critical media consumption.

### **The National Association for Media Literacy Education**

The National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE) is a professional association for educators, academics, activists, and students with a passion for understanding how the media we use and are created to affect our lives and the lives of others in our communities and in the world.

CML empowers people to be critical thinkers and makers, effective communicators and active citizens. It represents a necessary, inevitable, and realistic response to the complex, ever-changing electronic environment and communication cornucopia that surround us.

NAMLE enunciates six key principles of Media Education (ME), namely which:

- (1) requires active inquiry and CT about the messages we receive and create.
- (2) expands the print age concept of to include all forms of media.
- (3) builds and reinforces skills including print for learners of all ages skills required for integrated, interactive, and repeated practice,

- (4) develops informed, reflective and engaged participants as pre-requisite for a democracy.
- (5) recognises that media are a part of culture and function as agents of socialisation.
- (6) affirms that people use their individual skills, beliefs and experiences to construct their own meanings from media messages. (NAMLE) <https://namle.net/publications/core-principles/>)

In parallel with academics several prominent organisations have made invaluable contributions to the articulations of critical media. The association project to transform the 21st learning and teaching pedagogy from kindergarten to andragogy for college to ensure that people of all ages become critical thinkers, effective communicators and active citizens in today's world is highly acclaimed. The underlying aims of the Centre are to enable people to detect and understand all forms of communication. It is 'inevitable and a realistic response necessitated by' the complex, ever-changing electronic environment and communication cornucopia'. (NAMLE)

This resource is dedicated to providing 'leadership, public education, professional development and evidence-based educational resources' globally. It fosters media education as a framework for accessing, analysing, evaluating, creating and participating with media content by imparting CT and media production skills to the young to enable them to actively participate in the 21st century media culture. Its guiding philosophy is based on a trinity of concepts to scaffold its vision of 'Empowerment through Education':

- (1) Media literacy is education for life in a global media world. This traditional skills ensures that individuals can participate fully as engaged citizens and functioning adults in culture and society characterised by multi-modal SM and multi-media,
- (2) The heart of media is informed inquiry is pivotal on a four-step model of inquisitorial process of:
  - (a) Awareness which is conditional on having access to pluralistic sources of information,
  - (b) Analysis involves exploring how different media's messages are constructed,
  - (c) Reflection requires the ability to evaluate media content.

(d) Action requires the ability to produce, express and share media content with a media lens to help young people acquire an empowering set of 'navigational' skills to participate in a global media culture.

(3) Media literacy is an alternative to censoring, boycotting or blaming 'the media.' Embracing the principles of First Amendment and freedom of expression media stimulates independent thinking and critical dispositions as an ultimate media education goal to enable the citizens to make informed decisions and choices.

The Council of Europe, the European Commission Group of Experts, the European Media Charter, OFCOM, OECD, EBU and a number of media regulation organisations.) In conjunction with some researchers' concerns for the role of education in delivering critical media the contribution of the voluntary sector in inducting students and citizens into dialectic culture is evident.

In Europe the term media education 'as used through 1990s by the scholars, policymakers and practitioners 'who defined it as “providing the critical knowledge and the analytical tools that will empower media consumers to function as autonomous and rational citizens.” (Khan, 2008). These concepts emphasise the relationship between authors and audiences, messages and meanings, and representation and reality. Among educational practitioners and scholars, an interest in media pedagogy has developed to explore how critical analysis of media texts, tools and technologies is integrated into elementary, secondary and higher education, as well as in libraries, museum and other informal learning settings.

The European Charter of Media Literacy 21, has cited seven areas of competencies (or uses) related to media:

- (a) Use media technologies effectively to access, store, retrieve and share content to meet their individual and community needs and interests.
- (b) Gain access to, and make informed choices about, a wide range of media forms and content from different cultural and institutional sources.
- (c) Understand how and why media content is produced.
- (d) Analyse critically the techniques, languages and conventions used by the media, and the

messages they convey.

- (e) Use media creatively to express and communicate ideas, information and opinions.
- (f) Identify, and avoid or challenge, media content and services that may be unsolicited, offensive or harmful.
- (g) Make effective use of media in the exercise of their democratic rights and civil responsibilities. (Approaches ML in Europe)

Livingstone (2004) appraises it as an empowerment tool for media users to shift their role from passive to active, from recipient to participant, from consumer to citizen because the internet 'par excellence' is a 'greatly under-utilised' medium for ordinary people to create online content for the public. (Livingstone, Sonia (2004). In India net users spend over 48 hours a month watching and sharing video content on YouTube. 'One cannot engage in CT simply by knowing what it is and how to do it; real action needs to be taken to practise in order to develop the ability'. (Yue Lin (2014).

In the last fifteen years media audiences have become empowered by the overwhelming accessibility of technology, everyone is now their own producer (Jenkins, 2006). Now that each individual can create media, media not only affects us, it is us. The following statement by Alan Kirby (2006) leaves us in no doubt that we are what we never thought we are: 'We are the text, there is no-one else, no 'author'; there is nowhere else, no other time or place. You are free: you are the text: the text is superseded.' (Dr Alan Kirby, 2006).

There are various definitions of media which confound us. The European Commission Expert Group on Media (2016) defines it as a set of "technical, cognitive, social, civic and creative capacities that enables a citizen to access, have a critical understanding of the media and interact with it." Ofcom, the UK's communications regulator's definition as "the ability to use, understand and create media and communications in a variety of contexts," is simply a reflection of CML'.

The EU and supra-government bodies UNESCO, World Bank and professional organisations and public service media organisations and broadcasting union - European Broadcasting Union (EBU) had also positively impacted the development and deployment of CML,

globally and internationally.

With the growing importance of media the terms used to define “media ” - such as ICT and , information, and UNESCO’s Media and Information (MIL), – have become more intertwined and overlapping. For example, the term ‘ ’ is often used in a similar way to ‘information ’ “in the sense of an ability to effectively and critically access and evaluate information in multiple formats, particularly digital, and from a range of sources, in order to create new knowledge, using a range of tools and resources, in particular technologies” (UNESCO, 2013)

The UNESCO's conventional definition of media encompasses the technical, cognitive, social, civic and creative capacities that allow us to access and have a critical understanding of and interact with media: ' is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written (and visual) materials associated with varying contexts. involves a continuum of learning to enable an individual to achieve his or her goals, to develop his or her knowledge and potential and to participate fully in the wider society'. (UNESCO)

In 2013 UNESCO kept its momentum with its MIL Framework to equip policy makers to ensure media and information competences of citizens. It was designed to help member countries to evaluate their citizens' and teachers' competence relative to sustainable development and ' in using information, media, Internet and the digital technology so that they 'enjoy the full benefits of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, particularly freedom of expression and access to information.' (UNESCO -MIL 2013).

This commitment was further reasserted as a key competency to be acquired by all citizens by the EU Council’s Resolution and Member States. This would be instrumental in promoting socio-economic development and inclusiveness in the EU through education to enhance young people’s and media as well as their ability to think critically, along with their social skills and citizenship competences involving a critical, reflective approach to information and a responsible use of the interactive media; 'social and civic competencies, the ability to understand different viewpoints, a readiness to respect the values of others; and 'cultural awareness and expression and a sense of identity as the basis for an open attitude towards and respect for diversity.

The Council urged the development of media literacy and CT through education and training. (EU Council, 2016). Lai, Emily R., (2011) has conducted an integrative literature review of media literacy by rounded up a number of research, which accentuates its importance as an outcome-focused learning.

In 2012 the European Broadcasting Union [EBU] promoted media literacy in Europe to highlight its value for society. Describing media literacy as “the ability to access the media, to understand and critically evaluate its content and communicate over a range of platforms” (EBU 2012:1). The EBU cited three purposes, central to the promotion of media literacy: (1) bridging the digital divide, (2) empowering citizens to democracy, and (3) creating a trusted space. Gregory Ferrell Lowe & Fiona Martin. Eds.2014) The EBU which plays an active role in the EBU has issued a code of practice to help address the issue of false 'news' which it describes as “the information disorder”.

The revision of AVMSD is evidential of its cognizance of the high importance of media competency to critically decode, interpret, access, understanding and interact with the media in today's society.' The Directive demonstrates EU's commitment to promoting the increased role of CML Europe-wide as a tool to empower citizens in raising their awareness of the effects of the concomitant disinformation campaigns and false news in the media. Considering the central role of video-centric platforms the revised AVMSD also requires them to provide for effective media measures and tools. Moreover, platforms have the responsibilities to raise users' awareness of these measures and tools (Article 28b)

According to EAVI the modern society is pluralist, inclusive and interactive which makes it more important than ever for individuals to learn how to decipher information, carry out critical analysis, use media to the common advantage, and how to produce content themselves in order to fully engage with democracy.that deficiency of media in an information rich society can lead to threat to democracy due to apathy, passive disengagement and the proliferation of false information.

EAVI states that knowledge contributes to power, full citizenship, cultural development and progression of democratic society. (EAVI – Study Assessment Criteria for Media Levels in All EU Member States, 2010) Individuals with high levels of SM usage would be exposed to



high levels of information.

The concept of media may also be contextualised within two UNESCO advocacies. In this sense, the concept of media literacy may be encompassed under the idea of Education for Sustainable Development included in the United Nations' Principles, of which UNESCO is the lead agency. The aim is to integrate the principles, values and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning including, necessarily, media literacy.

It is noteworthy that a number of important variables and activities which defines approaches to media cited by eu has not been acknowledged by scholars: (a) government (or related) policy activities, (b) family activities, (c) civil participation activities, (d) educational and training activities, (e) campaigns, media activities (f) mediation activities, (g) regulatoryactivities, (h) professional and business activities, (i) production skills activities, (j) orientation and reference activities and (k) exploratory, experimental, investigatory and evaluation activities. (EU – Study on the Current Trends on Media; 1st Chapter Approaches – Existing and Possible to Media)

If nation states had found favour with the following UNESCO's advice then the world would have better a much better habitat for humans and animals: 'The UN General Assembly calls upon all Member States and other stakeholders “to develop and implement policies, action plans and strategies related to the promotion of media and information literacy, and to increase awareness, capacity for prevention and resilience to disinformation and misinformation, as appropriate”.(Resolution: Global Media and Information Literacy Week. A/RES/75/267)'

### **The Mission of Critical Media Education**

While media studies have been around for some time, the promotion of CML as an important skill has not always been a focus. However, in recent years, there has been an increasing awareness of the importance of CML in helping individuals navigate the complex media landscape and make informed decisions about the information they consume. The concept of media education has hovered on the horizon since the McBride Report on a new world information and communication order (NWICO) since the early 1980s. India has

lost grounds in fostering a CT culture despite its much orientation of analytical thinking since the traditional pedagogic days which centred on gurukuls. Media education has no prospects in 'professional education due to the fact that 'the media learner operates within a different set of cultural and technological discourses and equally the media teacher resides in a very different educational paradigm.' (Cited in Julian McDougall, 2006) This then leads to the question raised by as 'Can CT be Taught?

The most up-to-date definition of media education of the digital age comes from non- academic sector. The multi-dimensional term encompasses different nuances and aspects of mediasphere and its media texts. "Media education is the process of teaching students to interpret, evaluate, and think critically about media systems and the content they produce. It involves careful analysis of media ownership, commercial intent, news coverage, bias, and representation. This includes, but is not limited to, examining SM platforms (such as Facebook, X, Instagram, SnapChat, etc.), Internet memes, mobile apps, selfies, television programming, films, news, print advertising, online advertising, viral video content, political communication, public relations, and all forms of popular communication." (Media Education Foundation)

'Media education should not be about condemning or endorsing the undoubted power of the media; their impact has to be accepted. It should be about helping citizens make better use of the media for their personal development and participation in society.' (David Buckingham).

Media education is strengthening critical abilities and communicative skills necessary for empowered action and informed participation. (Media Policy Project, Professor of Social Psychology at LSE and Chair of the LSE Truth, Trust and Technology Commission)

The teaching of CT to Asian students will represent a challenge to the authority of teachers (Heyman 2008), because CT encourages students to evaluate the information heard, rather than simply accepting it without question.

Media education should be connected with education for democracy where students are encouraged to become informed and media literate participants in their societies.(Jeff Share) Potter's (2004) model of cognitive theory of CML is foregrounded to promote the development of media education. The promotion of citizenship of the biggest democracy of

the world as the land of 'Satyamev Jayate' calls for citizens' competencies. Ironically India lags behind other countries in delivering CML oriented education.

Media education is an adjunct for promoting an informed and engaged citizenship in India in the today's digital convergence. Media education is a long term solution. To what degree SM can address the challenges of constructing knowledge in a collaborative, interactive, peer-to-peer and ubiquitous environment of the overarching online media? UNESCO argues that contemporary concept of education sees the main goal of education as critical for the 'development of intellectual and moral development of students, their critical and creative thinking, their ability to work with information'. To this end 'the educational theory of constructivism, psychological theories of CT and activity are recognized by the progressive educators of the world to be meeting the demands of the time. The majority of Americans no longer trust journalists to tell the truth (Taylor, 2002), let alone to interpret competing versions of "truth." Against this backdrop, educators and policymakers agree that individuals must develop so-called "21st century skills" which include CT, collaboration, communication, and information . (Dede, C. 2010)

"I know of no safe repository of the ultimate power of society but people. And if we think them not enlightened enough, the remedy is not to take the power from them, but to inform them by education," wrote Thomas Jefferson in a letter to William Jarvis in 1820. Parker J. Palmer.(31 Jul 2014 ) & Paul Mihailidis, (2008) Research has shown that civic education is most effective when it is delivered through the school system rather than seminar-style as adult training. (WB) The acquisition of communicating, debating and deliberating skills mastering the art and science of civil dissent and the sociality of students are recognised to maintain democracy. (Parker 2003 cited in Domine, V., 2011)

"Media Education - deals with all communication media and includes the printed word and graphics, the sound, the still as well as the moving image, delivered on any kind of technology; - enables people to gain understanding of the communication media used in their society and the way they operate and to acquire skills in using these media to communicate with others; - ensures that people learn how to: - Analyse, critically reflect upon and create media texts. - Identify the sources of media texts, their political, social, commercial and/or

cultural - Interests and their contexts. - Interpret the messages and values offered by the media. - Select appropriate media for communicating their own messages or stories and for reaching their intended audience. - Gain, or demand access to media for both reception and production.

Media Education is part of the basic entitlement of every citizen, in every country in the world, to freedom of expression and the right to information and is instrumental in building and sustaining democracy. While recognising the disparities in the nature and development of Media Education in different countries, the participants of the conference “Educating for the Media and the Digital Age“ recommend that Media Education should be introduced wherever possible within national curricula as well as in tertiary, non-formal and lifelong education.

Communication Model: CP, associated with Lasswell (1948) which is one of the popular techniques used to deconstruct media content and understand their effects is regarded as the most appropriate technique in enabling primary school children to re-orient their critical disposition. Communication model, Harold Lasswell, Len Masterman and Center For Media Literacy have stressed on students' habit forming and re-orientation to question media messages which appropriate to their age and ability.

CP involves posing five questions known as 5 Ws which are key to penetrating through messages: Who says What - in which Channel - to Whom and - with what Effect? Basically the model constitutes three functions for communication: (a) surveillance of the environment, (b) correlation of components of society and (c) cultural transmission between generation.

Len Masterman prefers autonomy which means “to learn to raise the right questions about what you are watching, reading or listening to.” the development of individuals' 'critical autonomy' in order to protect themselves by thinking smart to heighten their defence from the harmful media effects by using a dual approach; protectionism and cognition.

The following is Masterman's list of critical media literacy skills for the post-truth world:

1. Understanding the social, cultural, and political contexts of media production, distribution, and consumption (Masterman, 1985).
2. Developing CT skills to analyze and interpret media messages (Masterman, 1985).

3. Recognizing the power dynamics inherent in media production and consumption (Masterman, 1985).
4. Identifying bias, stereotyping, and other forms of social and cultural power relations in media messages (Masterman, 1985).
5. Recognising and addressing the influence of social media algorithms and their potential impact on information access and distribution (Van Dijck & Poell, 2018).
6. Identifying and evaluating the reliability and credibility of sources and information (Buckingham, 2003).
7. Understanding the role of fake news, propaganda, and disinformation in shaping public opinion (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017).
8. Developing media creation skills to produce and disseminate accurate and reliable information (Buckingham, 2003).
9. Understanding the ethical implications of media use, including issues of privacy and intellectual property (Buckingham, 2003).
10. Engaging in civic and political discourse through media, including understanding how media can be used to mobilize social and political change (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1996).

These critical media literacy skills are especially important in the post-truth world, where the boundaries between fact and fiction are increasingly blurred, and the proliferation of fake news and propaganda is a major concern. By developing these skills, individuals can become more informed and critical media consumers, as well as more effective media creators and engaged citizens.

In the Center For Media Literacy's MediaLit Kit™ has put forward similar questions to Lasswell: (a) Who is the author of this message? (b) What methods were employed to capture my attention in this message? (c) How could other individuals interpret this message in a distinct way from myself? (d) Which lifestyles, values, and perspectives are either included or absent from this message?, and (e) What is the purpose behind sending this message?

### **The Seven Great Debates**

Renee Hobbs' classical 'Seven Great Debates' centred around seven questions define the inquisitorial field of inquiry for practitioners' contemporary pedagogy and guide in-classroom teaching of media education:

#### **1. Should Media ducation Aim To Protect Children And Young People From Negative Media Influences?**

Anderson (1983) argues that the problem with the protectionist approach to media , termed as 'Impact Mediation' associated with negative news eg violence, distortion and bias in reporting is pitted 'media exposure as a risk factor' and 'media as a protective factor.' This is borne out by a survey which showed that media education influences young children's decision-making behaviours about alcohol (Austin & Johnson, 1997)

This view is, however rejected by pedagogues for being elitist and based on 'poorly grounded social science research. Even students fail to admit that they are helpless victims of media influence who need to be rescued from the excesses and evils of their interest in popular culture. Buckingham (1993) has expressed misgivings about the protectionist stance as it veers towards teacher-centric learning where students being injected with “facts”about media's negative influence, about the manipulation of messages passively learn as in the 'banking model' which Freire (2000) disapproves of and media education may lose its authenticity and its relevance to students' lives (Buckingham, 1990; Masterman,1985; Williamson, 1981).

#### **2. Should Media Production Be An Essential Feature Of Media Education?**

Students cannot become truly critical consumers of the mass media unless they have an insight into the production process. They need to create media texts including producing scripts, video, news stories, web pages, or appearing on camera or news reporting to get hands-on experience in “The power of technology is unleashed when students can use it in their own hands as authors of their own work and use it for critical inquiry, self-reflection andcreative expression” (Renee Hobbs). The current free-style and rule-free in the trending guise

of 'sans frontiers' has created discourse wilderness.

Hobbs (1985) has cited Fraser, (1992) and Lambert, (1997) to classify students' production skills into two categories: expressive or vocational. Expressive media production work focuses on consolidating students' creative skills and discovering one's own voice. Vocational media production often stresses the value of collaborative teamwork, Teachers express concern that media production taught in decontextualised manner involve a narrowset of skills which has been deemed bogus because students are 'distracted from learning the culturally valued skills of reading and writing.' 'They simply learn to ape the professionals without a critical, analytical perspective. (Stafford, 1990).

### **3. Should Media Focus On Popular Culture Texts?**

Contemporary educators sum up a number of approaches to deploying media in the world of culture; some argue that media must focus on the popular cultural texts that form part of students' curriculum, others argue that media concepts can be grasped by analysing classic works of literature and film while some view students' observations about the experience of deconstructing such texts motivate their interest in literary works (Fraser,1992; Hobbs, 1998). Understanding that information is socially constructed is the major contribution of media .

To what extent do media skills transfer from one genre or symbolic form to another? The popular culture emphasis in media education is largely what distinguishes this form of CT from other related concepts, including information, computer, and print (Masterman, 1997; McClure,1996; Piette, 1997; Tyner, in press).

### **4. Should Media Have A More Explicit Political And Ideological Agenda?**

Media are equally influential in achieving political ends such as 'enabling the rigid institutional practices of the public schools; stopping the use of commercially sponsored media in schools; increasing advocacy regarding public television, local access, or the alternative media arts; or making changes in broadcast and cable regulation regarding media ownership.' (R. Hobbs)

Promotion of social changes in students' attitudes about racism, sexism, violence, or homophobia calls for media particularly in a pedagogical environment. Here the relevance of

media is needed as messages are subject to the constructivism paradigm when creating meaningful political and social action.

Many teachers do not see themselves as forces for radical social or political change (Cremin, 1990). Instead, they generally value the concept of promoting students' critical autonomy, which is the process of internalizing the tools of self-reflection, critical analysis and communication for one's own purposes and motives (Mendez & Reyes, 1992).

The pluralism that underlies this argument invites teachers to maximize the students' potential for discovery and the realization of personal, social, or political action without pushing a specific agenda on students. According to this view, media education should not be reduced to the reproduction of the teacher's ideas about the media (Masterman, 1997).

This goal stands in sharp contrast to the way in which media studies is taught at many U.S. Colleges and universities. There is an obvious ideology that underlies even the most basic tenets of media education—teaching students to question textual authority and to use reasoning to reach autonomous decisions. This agenda is radical enough, without adding additional baggage associated with other explicitly formulated political or social change objectives (Lemish & Lemish, 1997). Additional political or social change goals may be unlikely to be accepted in the decentralized, politically divided, and community-centered context of mainstream public education.

### **5. Should Media Be Focused On School-Based K–12 Educational Environments?**

Research indicates focus is scanty on media relating to schools, children, teachers, or public education (Bianculli, 1992; Messaris, 1996; Silverblatt, 1996; Singer & Singer, 1983). Several educators have pointed out the need for media skills to be developed in the home by parents (Axelrod, 1997). Findings show that children need parental mediative and active support to develop sufficient media literacy skills because even though they find it easier to recognise pre-roll advertisements on YouTube they cannot identify covert or subtle types of advertising on SM. (Mariana Nascimento and Ana Jorge. (23. 2.2022). Parental support depends on their own digital experiences. A study in China reveals that parents with higher digital literacy have a higher level of concern about their children's privacy online. (Parent's Digital Literacy)

In many countries of Latin America, Asia and Africa total child support is still a problem



because children are mostly looked after by great grand parents who lack digital literacy, gender difference – where the child's mother doesn't match his/her father's digital experience, which results in low confidence and (3) phobic attitudes towards digital technology. Brigid Barron et al (2009) have indicated that children's sustainable digital engagement play an important role in their children's digital learning.(B.Barron, B. et al, 2009, Rideout, Roberts, and Foehr 2005). In most studies parents' digital experience excels their children's but this does not hold true with children born after 1985 as digital natives as opposed to digital immigrants (Prensky 2001). They contribute 42 per cent to their kids' learning of how to use the Internet compared with school's 28 per cent. However, there are conflicting findings about parents contribution to their child's digital literacy. Digital immigrants cannot be expected to support the development of technological fluency.

Schools are, paradoxically, both the most radical and the most conservative of social institutions (Maehr & Midgely, 1996), and schools have been notoriously silent on defining an appropriate relationship between the schools' mission and the role of media and information (Sizer, 1995).

Collective efforts between parents, teachers and students have produced better outcomes in school communities where teachers, parents, and students have shared a common problem with media culture. (The 1982 UNESCO Declaration on Media Education)

The most successful efforts to include media in schools have taken two or more years of staff development to build a clearly defined understanding of the concept as it relates to classroom practice among a substantial number of teachers and school leaders within a school district (Brown, 1991; Hobbs, 1998a; Hobbs & Frost, 1997).

Media education programs are often “introduced with the help of outside consultants, are briefly championed by administrators within the school district, and then fade as teachers move to simplify their responsibilities under the pressure of student and parental demands”(Anderson, 1983, p. 327). In the light of the challenges of making a change within public education, the best sites to implement media education may be in after-school programs, summer camps, religious education programs, library and prevention programs, community-based organisations, and at home with parental guidance.

## 6. Should Media Be Taught as a Specialist Subject or Integrated Within The Context of Existing Subjects?

Why students should not be taught general critical-thinking skills? This question yields binary answers, some recognise the benefits of infusing CML across the curriculum (Kress, 1992), others advocate media be taught as a separate subject take a pragmatic option, as a result of some experience observing educators, working in schools, and getting close to the realities of class-room practice (Kress, 1992).

While general and all purpose CML or cognitive tools are much favoured pedagogy Carl Hendrick argues that such practice cannot be taught and are not easily transferred from domain to domain. Hendrick cites a very important case of air-traffic controller which dictates that at the 'heart of the job is a cognitive ability called "situational awareness." which involves "the continuous extraction of environmental information [and the] integration of this information with prior knowledge to form a coherent mental picture". This is a taxing work environment which requires a power mental faculty to retain huge amount of data under extreme pressure. The air-traffic controllers were given a set of generic memory-based tasks with shapes and colours failed despite their sophisticated cognitive abilities did not translate beyond their professional area.

Scholars and teachers see no consensus on whether critical should be taught as a general skill or non-domain-based skills or domain-based. Daniel Willingham cited a real scenario to explain his preference for contextual or subject-specific critical-thinking skills which tends to broaden a student's individual subject knowledge and unlock the unique, intricate mysteries of each subject.

## 7. Should Media Initiatives Be Supported Financially By Media Organisations?

Many agree that cable television and newspaper industries should be applauded for providing educators with access to tools, knowledge, and pedagogical strategies regarding media analysis and production. According to this view, media organisations have a social responsibility to help people develop CT about the media as a consumer skill. The good that media organisations can do by contributing their funding outweighs the potential dangers of using the program as part of a public relations campaign or as a shield against government

regulation. Critics of this position point out that the media industry is cleverly taking advantage of educators who are so underfunded and desperate for materials that they will jump at anything that is provided free of charge. Some believe that media organisations are effectively taking the anti media stand out of the media movement to serve their own goals, co-opting the media movement and softening it to make sure that public criticism of the media never gets too loud, abrasive or strident (Cowrie, 1995; Montgomery, 1997) literacies.

It also indicated that the issue of citizenship is a derelict discipline due to several institutional challenges worldwide. It has highlighted the marginalisation of public sphere, ambivalent approach, absence of mandate for curricular media education and most importantly, a lack of political will. An area that is conspicuous is a severe deficit of evidence linking CT to the notion of the public interest (Brookfield, 1987) with most literature debating CT in the context of the labour market

### **Approaches to Critical Media Literacy**

They are: (a) Protectionist, (b) Media is a Pedagogy (c) Arts Education, (d) Media movement and (e) CML - introduced by Douglas Kellner and Jeff Share (2007) as a fourth approach which subsumes the previous four.

(a) Protectionist approach, a pre-digital era concept, is exigent now more than ever because online media are saturated with misleading, insidious and male fide content. It highlighted the dangers of television on the ground that 'absolute power corrupt absolutely.' The traditional media predominantly television has been universally criticised for dumbing down children, encouraging teenage pregnancy and juvenile delinquency and indoctrination and driving children to materialism. The protectionist approach took issue over the way the television used its monopolistic power for conditioning and grooming children in ideology inimical to social justice. .

(b) Media is a pedagogy – this knowledge relates to how to learn and teach about the fundamental concept of the media and not media in in-class and also for lifelong learning. Today's digital climate requires media advocates to supplement formal education with professional development. It also involves additional efforts on teaching media process skills and building the pedagogical infrastructure that is missing on a large scale.

(c) Media Arts Education: This focuses on media arts education with respects to teaching students to value the aesthetic qualities of media and using creativity for self-expression through creating media and art. This approach is concerned about focusing on individual self-expression rather than socially conscious analysis and alternative media production. Many media arts programs tend to teach students technical skills to reproduce mainstream representations without considering their ideological implications or critiquing structures of oppression. Feminist standpoint theory suggests that it is important for marginalized people to have the opportunity to speak for themselves and collectively struggle against oppression, but this must be accompanied by critical analysis. Media arts education has the potential to make learning more experiential, hands-on, and engaging by bringing in elements of popular culture and pleasure. When media arts education is grounded in cultural studies and critical pedagogy that addresses issues of power, identity, and social justice, it has the potential to be a transformative tool for CML.

(d) Media is a movement - Understanding this aspect is vital to learn the pragmatic trajectory of media which has transcended to the third paradigmatic phases. The limited new role of information and education in our society. This constraint warrants media is treated as a movement of millions of people including consumers, producers and active participants in their communities. (CML)

(e) CML is a fifth approach which is integrative of the three previous aspects; protectionist, media arts education and media movement.

(f) Participatory Culture – this approach has emerged in the digital era which includes a number of skills like: (1) engagement in media artefacts such as videos, podcasts, blogs, or digital art, as media producers and (2) understanding different media construction processes: ( i ) Collaborative projects to increase the understanding of the dynamics of online communities and the importance of respectful and constructive online interaction, (ii) Critical discussion in online forums where students can discuss and critique media develop critical thinking and analytical skills in a real-world context.

In addition to the above Jason Thomas Mickel, (2014) has put forward three additionally nuanced approaches to justify across curriculum courses:

- (i) social participatory
- (ii) socio-cultural.
- (iii) media fun known as “techno-culturalism”.

Interestingly, no research has focused on online comment fields relating to media. (Jason Thomas Mickel, 2014) (a) Identifying the protectionist approach are Potter along with Scharrer, E. (2002) are considered a leading authority in the field of protectionist media. R. M. Wenner. (2016) has identified a distinction between the two definitions of media provided by two prominent authorities W. James Potter.

CML like approach considers audience as active in the process of making meaning, as a cultural struggle between dominant readings, encompassing oppositional readings or negotiated readings. But most importantly the research echoes a number of variables and activities which define approaches to media, as cited by EU. The following concepts converge to consolidate the notion of citizenship and public interest: (a) government (or related) policy activities, (b) family activities, (c) civil participation activities, (d) educational and training activities, (e) campaigns, media activities (f) mediation activities, (g) regulatory activities, (h) professional and business activities, (i) production skills activities, (j) orientation and reference activities and (k) exploratory, experimental, investigatory and evaluation activities. (EU – Study on the Current Trends on Media ) The critical media approach is referred to as an eclectic approach by the EU. The EU broadly reflects three models of media where the second and third models are regarded as the most dominant: (a) protectionist approach to neutralising effects of the media, (b) promotion approach to take advantage of the benefits offered by new media, and (c) eclectic approach which combines protection and promotion, and creative production. (Study on Current Trends and Approaches Media)

To become a successful student, responsible citizen, productive worker, or competent and conscientious consumer, individuals need to develop expertise with the increasingly sophisticated information and entertainment media that address us on a multi-sensory level, affecting the way we think, feel and behave.

Today’s information and entertainment technologies communicate to us through a powerful combination of words, images, and sounds. As such, we need to develop a wider set of skills

helping us to both comprehend the messages we receive and effectively utilize these tools to design and distribute our own messages. Being literate in a media age requires CT skills that empower us as we make decisions, whether in the classroom, the living room, the workplace, the boardroom or the voting booth

### **Media and Digital Convergence**

Are primary challenges for education in India of social, political, economic in nature or technical? The question depends on how technological convergence is understood. It encompasses a variety of technologies through which learners access, analyse, evaluate, produce, and communicate information is understood. Recently, cultural studies and critical pedagogy have begun to teach us to recognise the ubiquity of media culture in contemporary society, the growing trends toward multicultural education and the need for a media that addresses the issue of multicultural and social difference (Kellner, 1998). In its supplementary role it can support online distance learning for out-of class and lifelong learning to fortify participatory citizenship.

Digitalisation has been a conducive environment for CML skills in this age. It considers the phenomenon of participatory audience in the public sphere in a country like India characterised by mediatised society. It is ineluctable because 'media mediate everything in society – work, education, information, civic participation, social relationships'. The more vital it is that people are informed about and critically able to judge what's useful or misleading. Media literacy is needed not only to engage with the media but to engage with society through the media. (S Livingstone). If this is so, then people are faced with no option but to be trained to be critically perceptive to understand what media messages are misleading. The idea is to be aware of our ecology by paying attention to Marshall McLuhan's observation that the world is constructed media environment where humans live in as unconsciously as fish in water. (Seth Ashley, Mark Poepsel, Erin Willis, 2010).

The above scenario poses challenges to media regulation, implications of technological convergence and the impact of propaganda insinuates 'media as a no option policy', (Kellner, D., & Share, J., 2007) as an 'imperative for participatory democracy in the 21st century' in meeting the challenges of media effects. The media are omnipresent in modern life.

(European Commission - European Association for Viewers' Interests (EAVI) EAVI's view on media as 'no longer an advantage rather it is a disadvantage not to be, not only to individuals but to countries and international organisations' echoes Kellner's view to reinforce the indispensability of media.

The model comprises of two distinct fields to understand media . The research examined the two strands; one from an individual's ability – individual competences (IC): (a) to utilise the media interacting with the other as environmental factors (EF), and second, (b) to inform these debates on media. They relate to critical, creative and communicative competences useful in building social relationships and participation in the public sphere which involves participatory media, active and well informed audience.

### **Content Regulation**

In an online environment where the possibility for direct content regulation diminishes, the need for a media-literate public increases. Consumers and citizens need to be aware of the risks and opportunities offered across an array of online and mobile service activities, while stakeholders need to understand and monitor to what extent people are aware of changes and developments. (Ofcom). It is my firm belief that content regulation remains essential in the converged media age. An emerging and progressively more competitive media industry does not warrant ignoring content rules. Such rules should aim increasingly at ensuring that public interest content reaches users in the multichannel era. Content regulation will be required to provide a framework – particularly valuable at a time of rapid change – that also allows intervention to take place when the above values are at stake.

Nevertheless, the traditional means of regulating through licensing broadcasters and imposing conditions on their licences are being challenged by the proliferation of channels of communication and the volume of material transmitted. In addition, the internationalisation of television, the development of cable and satellite TV and the introduction of digitisation have made it more difficult to maintain and manage content rules traditionally designed for free-to-view mass audience channels (Tambini and Verhulst, 2001). Technological convergence has made it increasingly difficult to distinguish between broadcasting and telecommunications.

The Internet, the catalyst of convergence, can transmit voice messages, data and video and raises questions as to whether it should (or could) be regulated at all.

### **The Case of The Internet**

In fact, the Internet provides a good illustration of the current challenges to content regulation. There can eventually be a limitless number of websites and multiple means of delivery to the end user, and equally varied ways and means for controls to be evaded. An Internet service provider, depending on the services it offers, may be variously categorized as publisher, journalist, broadcaster or phone company, each of which has historically had different liabilities for content it produces or distributes. From a general regulatory and societal perspective, it may no longer matter whether a piece of indecent material (for example, pornography) is obtained by mail, at a store or via a TV set, mobile phone or the Internet (Levy, 1999). Of course, a distinction can currently be made between indecent material transmitted via a universally available medium, like television, a medium with fast-growing home penetration rates, like the Internet, and a medium in its infancy, like IPTV (Internet Protocol Television) and Third Generation (3G) mobile phones.

However, technological developments are likely to change things in the near future. Today's niche technologies may become mainstream in a short time. Regulation should be dynamic and flexible enough to anticipate and accommodate such changes. A consistent approach is needed to determine the types of material that are objectionable so that their dissemination can be banned regardless of the type of conduit used to obtain them, with regulation tailored as needed to fit the specific medium of transmission.

As Oswell (2007) mentioned with regard to the Internet, the medium has opened the doors to a new age of regulatory complexity, but at the same time it has led to a series of simplifications and centralisations of regulatory authorities and powers. The Internet has offered a single, universal and free space in which various regulatory problems and issues of different media and communications sectors could be made visible. As a discursive concept, the Internet could provide a totalising space, a surface around which trans-media regulatory issues are discussed. Regulatory convergence constitutes a single train of thought, understanding and problematisation. (GMP- Iosifidis 2014)



Ofcom's regular research into adults' media gives detailed evidence on media use, attitudes and understanding among UK adults aged 16+. It covers TV, radio, mobile phones, games, and the internet, with a particular focus on the latter.

The more people use mobile phone the more dominant SM become as a medium for exchanging personal, social, business and professional content is increasingly becoming more influential as content distributor. Admittedly, the EU Consortium has conceded that 'considering the multiplicity of approaches, a conclusive universal definition proved unworkable – as it has done for more than twenty years.' (EU Consortium)

Digitalisation makes it even more important for citizens to learn how to navigate their way through the huge global database of the Internet while learning how to understand messages as critical consumers as well as citizens. To address the primary question this research also explores how SM can support media education in developing CT to make 'prosumers' media literate and empower them to participate responsibly in democracy globally.

Academic acknowledgment of the importance of curricular media education for all three tiers of the education system is foundational for this research because the absence of 'critical analysis and creative media production in schools jeopardises the very social and political democratic purposes for which public schools were designed'. (Domine, V. 2011)

In pursuit of a multi-perspectival approach to developing online critical pedagogy the research addresses issues of media which is inter-connected with participatory media, propaganda, cultural studies, democracy and citizenship. The study reiterates 'the call to action' issued by Kellner, D., & Share, J., (2007) to progress from 'articulation about media importance' to 'exploring the best ways for implementing it' as a departure point.

The research examines the incidence of propaganda as amplified by the 'echo chamber' of convergence and explores how SM channels, citizen journalists and other stakeholders propose to encounter rogue discourses and UGCs which are juxtaposed alongside editorial, educational and institutional content. "These changes seek the development of CML to empower students and citizens to adequately read media messages and produce media themselves in order to be active participants in a democratic society" (Kellner, 1995; Kellner

& Share, 2005) which India's Ministry of Human Resource Management (MHRC) has failed to recognise.

The ability to read, write and understand is centuries old; similarly, the mass media have existed since the nineteenth century (radio and the press) or the middle of the twentieth century (television). Educational policies aimed at teaching critical perspectives on the mass media, in some countries, have existed for decades.

Therefore the study convincingly argues that 'media' are needed as a result of media convergence, which has significant implications for education systems and society as a whole. Many argue that the media approach is increasingly needed as education is now more about handling information than its accumulation. That realisation is far from new, but it is becoming truer with time.

Another argument in favour of intensified media education is that self-regulation is increasingly used for the sector, as governments recognise that they can no longer control emerging media in the same way as in the past. Making self-regulation a success depends on having a well-informed audience. David Buckingham argues convincingly that media education should not be about condemning or endorsing the undoubted power of the media; their impact has to be accepted. It should be about helping citizens make better use of the media for their personal development and participation in society. (Buckingham.pdf.)

### **Citizenship**

Citizenship is an old term implying the relationship between the individual and the state. (Eylem Simsek & Ali Simsek, 2013). Citizenship education aims to develop active and informed citizens who are politically literate and media literate. Engagement in the practice, principles and process of citizenship is important to equip citizens with the inquisitorial skills to be able to negotiate media texts. (Vincent W. Youngbauer, 2013)

The term 'informed citizenship' refers to the ability 'to access all of the available information on a matter of public policy before reaching a decision.' It stems from Schudson's initial notion. From a holistic approach it is integrative of understanding how information

contributes to the civic process transcending the idea of information gathering, to monitoring information, critically reading information, and intelligently processing information. It is informed by a number of theoretical perspectives; media theory, democracy and governance, learning theory, participatory audience, SM, digital, information and media .

Media literacy has potential for informing citizenship if it is underlined by 'digital citizenship,' as people should be able to participate in a digitally mediated society where they need to rethink their familiar rights and civic responsibilities which are linked with citizenship. (Livingstone, S)

The importance of media literacy in promoting informed citizenship, culture and participatory democracy is evident in the popular social networking websites as reflected in the changes in the editorial practice in the newsroom of global broadcast television channels including the BBC, CNN and Al-jazeera. The BBC has recognised SM as having three 'key, highly valuable roles' in its: (a) newsgathering, (b) audience engagement and (c) a platform for our content functions.

The public service media's role has been demonstrated in concert with several organisations including World Bank, European Broadcasting Union (EBU) European Commission, UNESCO, UN and online advocacy and voluntary bodies. The Global Alliance for Partnerships on Media and Information (GAPMIL) enunciates nine key development areas of media : (1) governance, citizenship and freedom of expression; (2) access to information and knowledge for all citizens; (3) development of media, libraries, Internet and other information providers; (4) education, teaching, and learning – including professional development; (5) linguistic and cultural diversity as well as intercultural and interfaith dialogue; (6) women, children and youth, persons with disabilities and other marginalised social groups; (7) health and wellness; (8) business, industry, employment and sustainable economic development; and (9) agriculture, farming, wildlife protection, forestry and natural resources conservation.

During the 1970s, media education began to be recognised as a critical practice of citizenship, part of the exercise of democratic rights and civil responsibilities. Developed initially in the 20th century from work by education scholars like Lev Vygotsky and Paolo Freire, is conceptualised as a socio-cultural practice that embodies, reflects, and refracts power

relations. Postman and Weingartner (1969) conceptualise one form of inquiry learning through describing how it alters the nature of the authority relationship between teacher and student: (1) the teacher rarely tells students a personal opinion about a particular social or political issue; (2) does not accept a single statement as an answer to a question. (Renee Hobbs & Amy Jensen, 2009)

Kellner and Share (2005) argue that CML cannot be separated from radical democracy since this type of education will develop skills for enhancing democracy and participation: It takes a comprehensive approach that would teach critical skills and how to use media as instruments of social communication and change. The technologies of communication are becoming more and more accessible to young people and ordinary citizens, and can be used to promote education, democratic self-expression, and social progress. (Kellner and Share, 2005)

A vibrant democracy is contingent upon engaged citizens (Richard Wike & Alexandra Castillo, 2018) who cognitively construct knowledge to equip themselves with attitudinal attributes to reach out to political participation.

The Internet, mobile phones and SM have encouraged constructivist learning for citizens which induct them into politics in increasingly innovative and participatory ways. Elena Afromeeva, Mirjam Liefbroer and Darren Lilleker. It is impossible to have a progressive democracy unless there are healthy, competent, engaged citizens (R. Hobbs ) who are involved in political engagement.

Besides digital transformation of the media ecology where citizens create, publish and syndicate content which facilitated political participation community citizens involvement in trade unions, church or community groups also contributed to it according to Olsen. (Olsen, M. E. 1982).

Online deliberative sphere calls for participatory audience to interact with each other and with journalists or creators of media content. From the cognitive perspective active and political participation depends on citizens' abilities to process complex arguments while the degree of engagement is determined by citizens non-cognitive sagacity to process complex issues.

A healthy governance is underscored by freedom of expression and press freedom. (Paul Mihailidis, 2008) as a fundamental right. The twin fundamental rights is key to ensuring an

individual's basic rights are protected in society but in many parts of the world this right is virtually non-existent. Vibrant democracies require informed, active and engaged citizens who are competent in expressing their interests, making representation, acting in concert with peers and question government officials by encouraging the media to make them accountable. The protection of the three components of the right to freedom of expression is enshrined in the Article 10 of European Convention on Human Rights as (a) freedom to hold opinions, (b) freedom to receive information, views and ideas, and (c) to communicate and share them without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers. (Dominika Bychawska-Siniarska, 2017)

How does media education influence students' understanding of media's roles and responsibilities in a democratic society? What is critical media literacy approach to citizenship? One of the main aims of media education is to provide not only media analysis skills, but also the ability to effectively use media to exercise democratic rights (Brownell & Brownell, 2003). UCLA's Rozana Carducci and Robert Rhoads (2005) call on media education to develop responses to media's socialising tendencies:

Today's students are largely socialised through the media, a reality that calls for the implementation of curricular and co-curricular pedagogical practices that develop media - the ability to critically analyse and decode messages embedded in various media productions.

The theoretical foundations for media specifically engaged citizenship - should be seen as channels through which media initiatives and frameworks can be structured for the university. Citizenship and awareness can serve as the foundations on which flexible platforms can be built to effectively implement media in a classroom, department, or university.

Citizenship: critical media literacy is an extremely important factor for active citizenship in today's information society. It is a fundamental skill not only for the young generations but also for adults and elderly people, parents, teachers and media professionals. Digitalisation and the power of the ubiquitous Internet have encouraged an inclusive society to participate in debates worldwide which can now create and disseminate images, information and contents. In this context, media education is viewed as one of the major tools in the development of citizens' responsibilities. (Matteo Zacchetti (2007) Media : A European approach. Sept. 2007)

### **The Role of Some Media**

When we talk about SM a few virtual platforms leap to the mind instantly; the common ones include WhatsApp, YouTube, X Instagram, Facebook, Telegramme and TikTok. Valenzuela reveals how political upheavals and protests have used SM. Sebastián Valenzuela, (2018). This is instigated through opinion expressions and activism, which is again a mere expression of one's sentiment on a particular subject. Lee, Chan, and Chen [5] finds that SM platforms, such as X, play an active role in democratic engagement. seeking information via social network sites is a positive and significant predictor of people's social capital and civic and political participatory behaviours, online and offline.(Homero Gil de Zúñiga, Nakwon Jung, Sebastián Valenzuela). That is, political engagement is both a major consequence of using SM for news as well as a key antecedent of sharing misinformation. brought about by SM – have produced a new dilemma: how to sustain a citizenry that is enthusiastically politically active, yet not spreading misinformation?

Sebastián Valenzuela, Daniel Halpern, James E. Katz & Juan Pablo Miranda (2019) The Paradox of Participation Versus Misinformation: SM, Political Engagement, and the Spread of Misinformation, *Digital Journalism*, 7:6, 802-823, DOI: 10.1080/21670811.2019.1623701

We argue that reliance on SM for news does not contribute to people's real level of political knowledge (objective knowledge), but instead only influences people's impression of being informed (subjective knowledge). Sangwon Lee et al., (2022)

### **YouTube House Rules**

The research infers from the findings that commenters either overlooked or defied the house rules of YouTube when commenting. YouTube's house rules and publishing policy regarding the posting of media content and comments purport to protect copyrights, children, user-generated-content (UGCs) and most importantly net users. Readers may refer to YouTube's house rules and posting policies in the appendix section of this study. (Source: <https://www.youtube.com/intl/en-GB/about/policies/#community-guidelines>)

Public digital discourse is crucial component of modern democracy—one that journalists must

stop treating with indifference or detachment—and for news organisations to use journalistic rigour and better design to add value to citizens' comments above the social layer. Through original interviews, anecdotes, field observations and summaries of research literature. (Marie K. Shanahan, 2018)

Why assess comments? We need to know how in the micro-public sphere: (1) readers deliberate with each other about the news. (2) engage directly with journalists, and hold them to account for their work, (3) prove to be a source for news stories and (4) enhance critical reflection on stories.

The evaluation of these online comments is essential in providing valuable insights for articulating the potential of SM for promoting informed citizenship. The study examines comments to check for deliberative and demonstrative participation. (Perrycek, Peter, Edelman, Noella, CeDem14: MV-Verlag, 2014) Cook et. al. (2007) and Neblo et al, (2009) produce evidence that those who engage in 'deliberation are well-educated and hold superior social capital'.

Sebastián Valenzuela 2018 reveals of how political upheavals and protests have used SM. (Sebastián Valenzuela “Unpacking the Use of SM for Protest Behaviour” 258122781 June 2018). This is instigated through opinion expressions and activism, which is again a mere expression of one's sentiment on a particular subject. Another research was done by Lee, Chan, and Chen [5] finds that SM platforms, such as X, play an active role in democratic engagement.

News organisations are keen on basically respectful conduct in conversations. Online-comments fit current participatory needs (Schozman et al, 20120). We are driven to choose between utopian and dystopian scenarios'. (Papacharissi, 2011). Through examining the correlation between comments and CML skills this study seeks to know under what type of participatory behaviour people are engaging in online discourse.

## Chapter 6

### Contents and Results

#### Research Findings

Qualitative analysis of comments from news stories to explore how India population engage news stories touching on national significance. Research studies in communication have for long concentrated on the viewership rate of mainstream media as the main measure of the performance of a given TV channel. However, this has changed with the digital age and as the mainstream media no longer enjoy their position as the central source of information (Brossard, 2013). People are increasingly relying on the online sources as their main source of information and the audience for the traditional TV and radio media are continuously reducing. The ability of online media to support continuous interaction and the ability of the audience to choose only what they want at any time has played a bigger role in making online media main information source, hence disadvantaging the traditional mainstream broadcasts.

Faced with the challenge of decreasing influence of traditional media in disseminating information, a lot of media houses are rushing online as a way of ensuring their influence does not dwindle. This has given rise to several increasing visibility of traditional media houses in online platforms as they look to increase their influence in news dissemination (Yang, et al., 2022).

New communication platforms have opened up opportunities for community members to directly engage with their audience. This has led to a transformation in how people interact with news sources and how these sources assess their competitiveness. Unlike traditional viewership, the current online interactions also require these channels to consider how people engage with their online platforms.

Video-sharing platforms like YouTube are particularly well-suited for effective online communication, as YouTube is the world's largest video-sharing site (Zhou R, et al., 2016). Through YouTube, channel owners can share videos, host live events, track video viewership, count channel subscribers, and engage with viewers through comments. This diversifies the ways in which channel performance is evaluated. By monitoring comments and interacting with viewers, channels can gauge their viewers' sentiments and ensure they provide the most



relevant information to their audience.

In light of these considerations, this research offers insights into the exploration of viewer interaction on YouTube by analysing a comprehensive set of comments gathered from various YouTube channels associated with different news outlets (Pinnamaneni S, 2013). While previous studies on YouTube as an online information source primarily focused on the relationship between content and viewership, understanding multifaceted user engagement traits is crucial, especially for comprehending how one's YouTube content is perceived. This study explores how video characteristics, such as content, channel attributes, and community aspects unrelated to the video content, can influence user engagement.

### **What Are Comments?**

Online comments, concomitants of digital convergence are as old as the print media and celluloid films. Comment is a genre of communication. Online comments are audience feedback on media content. This implies that comment is social communication, it is meant to be seen by others, and it is reactive: it follows or is in response to something and appears below a post on a blog, a book description on Amazon, or a video on YouTube. Although comment is reactive, it is not always responsive or substantively engaging. Blogs are writers' views about their special interest topics or experience. Taken together they are known as User-generated-content.

Comments are a “string of entries...in a linear chronology...tied to a specific focus” Trice (2011) quoted in Jason Thomas Mickel, (2014). In the context of television news YouTube channels such entries are directly linked to articles (Graham, 2013). Entries in a threaded form show the hierarchy of parent and child posts. In this study the terms fields, threads, entries, replies and posts are used interchangeably in the context of news websites.

Studies from the print era indicate that journalists' audience perceptions were based on their four known major groups: (1) archetypes, (2) professional peers, (3) sources and (4) close acquaintances, including family members beside which journalists do not tend to trust. (Cjr.org). Input from strangers was often disregarded or dismissed. This instinctive bias toward “known” readers threatened to exclude other, less familiar reader segments, affecting

the choices journalists made while selecting, reporting and crafting stories.

As such, there are a myriad of ways a business can manipulate the online system. For example, a business can hire reviewers and create false users to fabricate positive (albeit false) reviews about the business. But what does this achieve? What are the consequences (if any) if individuals are caught falsifying information? What safeguards do we have in place to differentiate between a real and a false review? While others (e.g. Jenkins, Ford, & Green, 2013) have suggested that readers ask themselves a series of questions to discern a false review from a real one,

Online comments can reflect a multitude of attitude, sentiments and rationality. They can be informative, misleading, entertaining, abusive, deliberative, provocative, inductive, deductive, engaging and educative. Reagle argues that although both the readers and commenters either overlook false comments and instead place a high value on them. Some comments are off-topic, or even topic-less. (Joseph Reagle, 2016) This study focused on understanding and categorizing the types of debates occurring in online comment sections. Often regarded as abusive, the study aimed to challenge the common advice of "never read the comments" by exploring the potential significance of comment threads.

The online activity of masses of ordinary people might display the wisdom of the crowd or collective intelligence. It can be deduced from this topics that this “changes everything” and is transforming the Internet, markets, freedom, and the world. However, it continues to be intriguing by what is happening in the margins—the seemingly modest comment.

### **Task Related and Non-Task-Related Comments**

The data for this thesis is determined by the distinction made by Veerman and Veldhuis-Diermanse (2001). They differentiate between task-related and non task-related comments, which are based on the post’s demonstration of potential knowledge construction.

In this context, task-related comments show knowledge construction by stating a new concept or advance the conversation by developing existing ideas, relating new ideas, explaining, or evaluating. Not task-related comments relate at most tangentially to the topic being discussed and fail to demonstrate knowledge construction by discussing unrelated ideas, setting rules of

the conversation, or offering related statements that do not add any critical perspective (Veerman & Veldhuis-Diermanse, 2001).

Research reveal a binary representation of comments from journalists. Some of whom are favourable to comments claiming that online comments on SM play an increasingly important role in public discourse. Comments provide a fertile ground to encourage citizens to communicate through online networks. The opposite camp of journalists and academics are justifiably hostile and allude the fostering of flaming research opinions and misinformation to comments.

Comment fields have been examined in a scholarly context only within the last five years. Research has examined style (H. Chen & Moeller, 2011), decision analysis (Henrich & Holmes, 2013), discourse (Diakopoulos & Naaman, 2011; Graham, 2013; Loke, 2012; Trice, 2011), bias (Lee, 2012), and the effects on journalism (Manosevitch & Walker, 2009; Santana, 2011; Weber, 2013).

Comments motivate the audience to discuss news content with each other and with journalists who also get 'opportunities to reflect on their writing, test arguments in the case of commentary pieces, receive feedback on stories, and can be a source for new leads.' (Madeline Welsh. 2015)

Online comments can contain many irrelevant comments such as those that are not subject related or some random characters. To ensure that the data used is clean and can reliable, I ensured that pre-processing is done to remove any unnecessary comments or texts that cannot be understood.

### **Sentiment Analysis**

I carried out sentiment analysis to define the comments into 3 main emotion groups: positive neutral and negative emotions. Sentiment analysis is applied to examine emotion expressed in a text. (Getthematic, 2020) In the analysis of customer feedback, social media monitoring, reputation management, and customer experience are just a few areas that can benefit from sentiment analysis. The analysis helped in classifying the comments based on the user emotions when reacting to the videos.

### **Thematic Analysis**

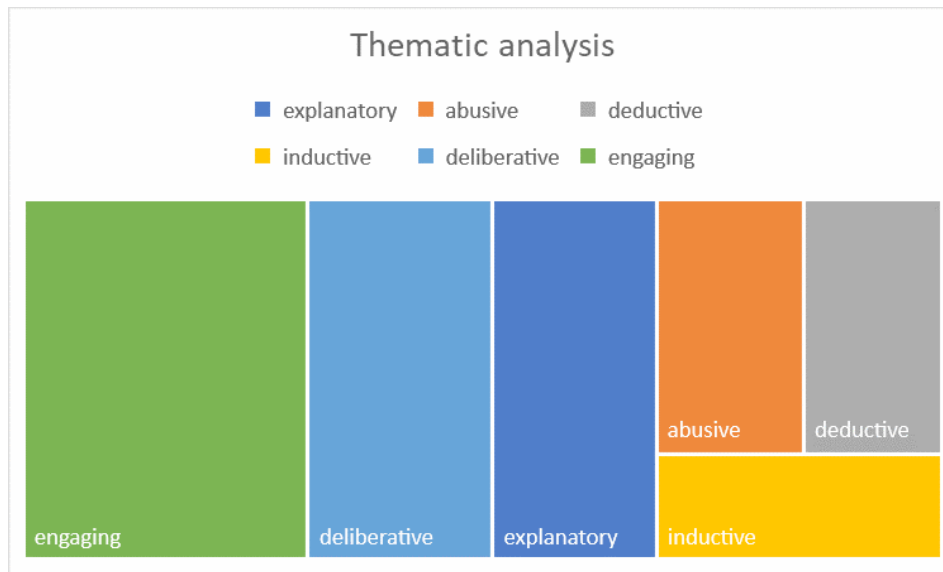
Thematic analysis was then applied to classify the comment based on 6 main themes: explanatory, abusive, deductive, inductive, deliberative, and engaging. Thematic analysis (TA) is a tool, which is applicable across different methods. (Boyatzis (1980). TA is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within data.” Braun and Clarke (2006). It is used for checking if phrases or themes are repeated in articles, texts, reports, comments and video files to inform decisions. TA is suitable in detecting subjective perceptions, experience, views and thoughts as expressed in articles, narratives, media content, comments, speech, video and audio content in the area of social communication. TA being an exploratory method in nature there is a danger of over exploration during the process it is easy to do over-coding from the purpose of the research question. TA seeks out themes and patterns in a dataset, power relationship, relationship and inter-communication, personal tendencies or biases can distort message. TA enables the researcher to identify repetitively stated themes, topics, concepts, inference and patterns. Thematic analysis involves a five-step process: (1) Familiarisation with the content, (2) Coding themes, (3) Reviewing themes, (4) Defining and naming themes, and (5) Reporting

To avoid the pitfalls of missing certain subtle aspects or nuances in communication a dual approach two different techniques have been adopted: Thematic analysis and Sentiments analysis are effective in teasing out inductive as well as deductive in determining themes. The inductive approach enables the research to use the data to determine or recognise a theory or themes whereas the deductive approach to test a theory by seeking befitting themes to fit the pre-conceived theory.

In analysing 1000 comments the following steps were taken to review the data. The diagram indicates the flow of processes starting with the number of channels where the comments were extracted to the final sentences included in the analysis.

### Thematic and Sentiment Analysis

This thesis has dual findings; one from the systematic review of extant literature which dwelt on the importance of ontology and epistemology of social media and media education and the other from the thematic and sentiment analysis of online comments.



The functional aims of this thesis relating to democracy have compelled to rely on observational, dialogic textual or documentary-based data online. Hence a systematic review became a source of online comments to offer correlational evidence. To bypass this limitation, I adopted a two-pronged strategy.

Firstly, I gathered and integrated a wide range of articles that explore the role of social media in reinforcing epistemic security. Secondly, I carried out a thorough analysis of a small subset of articles that report the findings. By taking this two-step approach, I assessed the probability of how both secondary questions could be addressed.

## Chapter 6

### Discussion

Our primary outcome variable is the user-engagement, has been measured by exploring different sentiments and themes that come out in the comments extracted from different YouTube channels. The current focus of online media literacy programs on evaluating the facts and verifiability of online content has been criticised for ignoring the role of emotions in online behaviour. Brodie RJ, et al. (2013) argue that user engagement can be broadly described as user-initiated actions that leads to realisation of value and knowledge among the online community. As regards this study, user engagement is measured based only on the comments linked to the videos of News about India affairs on YouTube.

Unlike previous research that primarily considered journalists' negative perceptions of comments, this study sought empirical evidence of audience behaviour in comment sections. It questioned whether comment fields contribute to a deliberative public sphere and examined their impact on journalists' professional practices. The passage emphasises that comment sections offer a platform for audiences to discuss news content with each other and journalists. Additionally, it suggests that comment fields can be valuable for journalists by providing opportunities for reflection, testing arguments, receiving feedback, generating leads, and even serving as a source of revenue through community building and enhanced metadata for advertising.

#### **YouTube – A Powerful Platform News, Information, Discussion and Learning**

No one is a stranger to YouTube. YouTube has emerged as a versatile educational platform (Sherer and Shea, 2011; Snelson, 2011) to its 2.6 billion users per month. YouTube has evolved as an integral part to our daily life. It is the most influential online platforms for casual (or informal online) learning (Duffy, 2008).

The one social network that stood out from the rest as having an overall positive effect on mental health was YouTube. The video streaming platform scored very high in categories like awareness, self-expression, and community building. YouTube is also the only social network where anxiety, depression, and loneliness lessened with use. Many YouTubers actively try to create an online community where users can support one another. However, a major downside

to YouTube was that it has the most negative effect on sleep.

YouTube accounted for 80 per cent of the third quarter of 2022. With about 550 million active SM users every minute, 400 hours of new video upload per minute and 4,333,560 videos being watched every minute the impact of YouTube on knowledge construction is evident. As at January 2020 India had a subset of 400.0 million SM users of the global 3.81 billion netizens, which represents 49 percent of the world's total population.

YouTube holds the distinction of currently being the second most popular search engine in the world, right behind its parent company, Google. If your business could benefit from producing brand tutorials, instructional content, product reviews, or guest interviews, then this social media platform is a must — especially if the payoff is reaching their more than 2 billion monthly users.

Previous studies have found that user-generated science videos were more popular than professionally produced videos on YouTube. (Hofer, M. K., & Auberry, K. J. (2013). While considering video content factors is important in exploring user engagement. The use of authoritative spokespersons, such as scientists, instead of anonymous narrators, in presenting controversial scientific topics in documentary films also increases viewer engagement. (Nisbet, M. C., & Scheufele, D. A. (2009). The most and least viewed, shared, commented, liked, and disliked videos in the sample revealed that shorter and sometimes “clickbaity” titles helped boost viewership and engagement. Short, concise video titles seemed to attract greater user engagement, since almost all of the least popular videos in the sample had longer titles.

Although there appears to be a correlation between subscription status and engagement, it is impossible to pinpoint the exact causal mechanisms with the data. Once subscribed to a channel, users will receive notifications when it publishes new videos and will be continuously exposed to those videos in their subscriptions feed. Therefore, subscribers have greater chances to engage with videos from the channel than non-subscribers fostering a communal feeling and providing a vehicle for social connection and interaction with others with the online community which may stimulate deeper levels of engagement.

From the higher number of dislikes received leading to less user engagement it can be inferred that negative correlation between dislikes and engagement as evidenced by the number of

subscribers gained, average view duration, and average percentage viewed, but more comments received. However, videos with higher view counts were also shared which attracted more subscribers, but received lower attention-based user engagement in terms of both average view duration and average percentage viewed.

Although this study focused on science it can be postulated that the determinants of engagement do not vary with domains. It is interesting to note that the study highlighted the importance of attending not only to video content factors but also to factors that are not primarily content-related when understanding various user engagement activities with online science videos. While increasing user engagement is necessary, communicators should not lose sight of the more important, overarching goals of science communication, such as growing appreciation for science, increasing knowledge and understanding of science, influencing people's opinions, behaviour, and policy preferences, and engaging with diverse perspectives about science held by different publics in solving societal problems.

The study suggests that future research should look into the complex interplay among video factors that are both content-related and content-independent to guide sound practice of communicating science through YouTube.

### **Who Use YouTube?**

The majority of American adults — 74 per cent to be exact — report regularly using YouTube, with a heavy concentration in the age range of 15 to 35. YouTube is broadly popular amongst all genders, though the men-to-women ratio of users is 11:9.

### **What Kind of Content People Post On Youtube?**

YouTube is a video-only content platform. Our research shows that the type of content depends on the type of business and what user demographics are. Both long-form and short-form video content are effective for this platform. Most viewers tune in for a combination of education and entertainment. Users post all sorts of content to bring in as many people as possible to your channel. In order to tap into YouTube's popularity. Some people who find starting YouTube too daunting have partnered with YouTube influencers who may be keen in your mission, brand, or products can help you test the waters before you dive all the way in.



### **The Role of YouTube as Media Literacy Educator**

Among Indians who are politically interested, most respondents (69 per cent) said that they trusted YouTube for news. Average daily time spent on YouTube is 44 minutes. This makes YouTube the SM platform where users are spending the most daily time online in 2021. YouTube is primarily a long video platform which is highly engaging and commonly used as a replacement of the television.

Google's YouTube maintains a solid second place in the “most used SM” category where the video and streaming platform has the most active users—86 per cent of all people on the Web 79 per cent of all internet users own a YouTube account (Facebook’s sitting at 85 percent). However, what is disturbing is that survey by Future source Consulting that revealed some gripping points regarding UK users aged 3–16. They claim that over 10 per cent watch more than three hours of YouTube videos daily

YouTube is rapidly catching up. As a result, YouTube has a strong possibility of replacing Facebook as the most popular SM network, with roughly 2.3 billion active users – compared to Facebook’s 2.9 billion.

YouTube’s user base steadily grew from 73 per cent of adults in 2019 to 81 per cent in 2021. Meanwhile, Facebook’s statistics stayed unchanged from the previous year, at 69 per cent. With an estimated 225 million users, India has the highest number of YouTube users than any other country where video-streaming and sharing platform is more a vibrant multimodal platform which 'is crossing new milestones year-on-year' (Economic Times, Dec 10, 2019, [shorturl.at/lnG08](https://shorturl.at/lnG08)). The U.S. comes in second place with 197 million users. However, the UK actually averages the most views per person, so it’s safe to say people all around the world have love for YouTube.

Globally, YouTube is watched by 95 per cent of internet population.(Omnicoagency.com. [shorturl.at/wBNU7](https://shorturl.at/wBNU7)). YouTube Community Guidelines' common targets are incitement to violence, harassment, or hate speech of YouTube channel at <https://tinyurl.com/52j3p5vx> However types or variety of benefits of comments YouTube convey – there are many drawbacks that could impinge on the integrity of the data and comments. Tube filter designed to keep out abusive comments. YouTube added spam detection bot to improve the standard

and quality of its uploaded video but it has removed more than 1.1 billion spammy comments in the last six months. Total number of removed comments from 30 countries of 943,567,283 highlights the mindsets of YouTube users. Government agencies, professional associations, research institutions, journal or book publishers and universities are trustworthy sites.

YouTube is a multimedia and multi-modal online resource platform for education, information and entertainment. YT in-house rules makes a reliable channel. By briefly examining the history of traditional collection development at academic libraries, the author demonstrates how YouTube fits into the long continuum of library media collections in an open-access platform. YouTube doesn't allow anything that artificially increases the number of views, likes, comments, or other metrics either by using automatic systems or serving up videos to unsuspecting viewers. Also, content that solely exists to incentivize viewers for engagement (views, likes, comments, etc) is prohibited.

Although YouTube is the third largest SM platform with 467 million users in India which is part of the total number of 2.56 billion monthly users it is second most popular SM network worldwide

While you may not consider YouTube to be a typical SM platform, it's still a place for people to connect with one another through videos and in the comments section. When looking at it in terms of active users, YouTube ranks as the second most popular platform in the world. With It ranks just behind Facebook, which currently has control of the number one spot. Children in the UK spend one hour watching YouTube, which has grown into a monolith with monopolistic power. The previously entertainment website rapidly shot into popularity as a serious disruptive and empowering video sharing online platform. YouTube, is labelled as 'racy and raucous' and 'a storehouse of whimsical, time-wasting and occasionally distasteful videos by the press.

On the other hand it has taken to the centre stage in many peoples' lives. YouTube by inference from the revised EU's Audiovisual Media Services Directive falls within the scope of the Directive to be described as a video-sharing platform for a commercial service addressed to the public based on the following concepts: (a) where the principal purpose of the service (or an essential functionality of such service), (b) where it is devoted to providing

programmes and user-generated videos to the general public, in order to inform, entertain or educate; (c) which is made available by electronic communication networks; and (d) where the content is organised in a way determined by the provider of the service, in particular by displaying, tagging and sequencing.

YouTube has truly revolutionised the Internet over the last decades - (Jared J. Covili. 8 Sept. 2016). The platform has ushered in a new learning dynamic which has rapidly transformed almost everyone's online experience with its immediacy, immersion, and interaction attributes. In the education sector it has added a 'value proposition promising efficiency, greater attention to individual students' needs, and better support of learning when students are not in school' (Berrett, 2012 cited in Josef Hanson, 2018).

WhatsApp's 534.30 million, Facebook's 491.53 million, Instagram's 503.37 million LinkedIn's 84 900 000 it is the 2nd most visited site in the world. Google is looking to YouTube to be its next driver of growth. 60 per cent of people prefer video platforms to live television. (DigitalScholar). The growing number of over 520 million smartphone users in India may compound the problems associated with a deficit of CT. (Statista)

### **YouTube Throttles Epistemic Knowledge**

The YouTube misinformation policy is implicitly arbitrary and plays the second fiddle to many governments during the pandemic. It limits the right to freedom of expression in relation to COVID-19 information, by prohibiting users from posting any information that contradicts expert consensus from local health authorities or the World Health Organization (WHO). (YouTube, 2022). The policy restricts content that promotes prevention, diagnostic, transmission, and treatment misinformation, as well as the denial of the existence of COVID-19.

While this policy aims to prevent the spread of false information and prevent harmful activities, it may also lead to bias against individuals or groups that hold opinions that are not in line with the views of the local health authorities or WHO.

The policy amounts to a form of censorship, as it imposes a restriction on the type of

information that can be shared on the platform. (Mortensen, 2021). Moreover, one can sense how the policy favours information from authorities over other sources, such as alternative medical treatments, religious practices, or natural remedies. (ibid). For instance, the policy prohibits content that promotes home remedies, prayer, or rituals in place of medical treatment, which could be interpreted as discouraging cultural or religious practices that do not align with the views of the authorities.

Furthermore, the policy prohibits any claims that Hydroxychloroquine is an effective treatment for COVID-19, which has been a topic of controversy among health professionals. By doing so, the policy seems to favour the opinion of the authorities, who have expressed concerns about the use of Hydroxychloroquine, over the opinion of medical professionals who support the use of this drug for COVID-19 treatment. (Boulware et al., 2020). This could lead to bias against alternative views and limit the diversity of opinions on the platform.

While the YouTube misinformation policy aims to prevent the spread of false information and harmful activities related to COVID-19, it may also lead to implicit bias against alternative views and opinions that are not in line with the views of the local health authorities or WHO. This policy could be seen as a form of censorship that limits the right to freedom of expression and diversity of opinions on the platform.

So essentially the policy can be judged as non-epistemic as it restricts people seeking credible information because without compelling justification it is considered as a violation of the right to freedom of expression that underlies many democratic societies. The policy outlined in the YouTube seems to be designed to prevent the spread of misinformation about COVID-19, which is an important goal. However, the policy's language and implementation could be seen as implicitly biased against certain forms of expression or viewpoints, without necessarily providing clear and compelling reasons for why those forms of expression or viewpoints are harmful or inaccurate.

Khan, (2017) also investigated the drivers to YouTube participation and consumption. This study, unearthed the intention behind YouTube user engagement that has been categorised as active participation and passive consumption, involving conducting a qualitative survey with online users who filled a survey that measured user behaviour and obtained for YouTube

participation, relaxing entertainment motive was strongly linked to liking or disliking, social interaction motive strongly predicted commenting and uploading while the motive to give information was associated with sharing of videos. While this study tried to investigate the motives behind different engagement types, they offer very limited information on the emotional aspect of the users.

### **Sample Population**

This study has adopted Purposive sampling, also known as judgmental, selective or subjective sampling. It is a type of non-probability sampling technique focused on sampling techniques where the units that are investigated are based on the judgement of the researcher. The main goal of purposive sampling for this study is to focus on critical disposition of a population that are of interest, which is best able to answer the questions. The sample being studied is not representative of the population, but for researchers pursuing qualitative or mixed methods research designs, this is not considered to be a weakness. Rather, it is a choice, the purpose of which varies depending on the type of purposive sampling technique that is used. Critical case sampling is frequently used in exploratory, qualitative research in order to assess whether the phenomenon of interest even exists (amongst other reasons).

### **The Research Method**

The study aimed at identifying engagement reactions characterised as explanatory, abusive, deductive, inductive, deliberative, and engaging. A data set of 1000 comments including threads were extracted from six impacting news stories from YouTube channels of 6 television news channels; Al Jazeera, Sky News, CNN, Channel 4, NDTV and Zee News. One hundred and fifty comments of up to one year old were collected as sample data. The comments are based on videos of news of nation's interest in India. To execute the analysis, I took 4 key steps which is data collection, data pre-processing, data annotation, sentiment analysis, and thematic analysis. It is to be noted that despite India's national, Doordarshan Television being the first established and highly patronised public service broadcaster its deliberate exclusion was a deplorable omission based purely on the ground that the comments were in non-English language.

In general, a sample size of 150 items may be sufficient for a thematic analysis if the research

question is relatively straightforward and the sample is relatively homogeneous. However, if the research question is more complex or the sample is more diverse, a larger sample size may be necessary to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the themes that emerge.

It is also important to consider the quality of the data in addition to the quantity. A sample of 150 high-quality items may be more informative than a larger sample of lower quality data. Ultimately, the adequacy of the sample size will depend on the specific goals and research question of the study.

### **Data Collection**

The ethics of data collection are concerned with the accurate acquisition of data; although methods may differ depending on the field, the emphasis on ensuring accuracy remains the same. The primary goal of any data collection endeavour is to capture quality data or evidence that easily translates to rich data analysis that may lead to credible and conclusive answers to questions that have been posed.

Accurate and ethical data collection is essential to ensure the integrity and validity of findings, regardless of the field of study or data preference (quantitative or qualitative). The selection of appropriate data collection tools and instruments, which may be existing, modified or totally new, and with clearly defined instructions for their proper use, reduces the chances of errors occurring during collection.

Distorted findings can arise from improper data collection such as misleading questions on questionnaires, unknowingly omitting the collection of some supporting data, and other unintentional errors. This would lead to a skewed conclusion that may be useless. Researchers who select qualitative methods often ask: "How large does my sample size have to be?". It is common for the sample size in qualitative research methods to be smaller than in quantitative research technique involving in-depth interviews (unstructured or semi-structured techniques)

### **Raw Data Coding and General Coding Rules**

The data was subjected to a two-phase coding scheme. The first coding determined their significance by distinguishing between two types of comments; either task-related and not task-related. (Veerman and Veldhuis-Diermanse's, 2001). The researcher's not task-related

coding system was extended to include Abusive and Offensive in the light of the findings of The Guardian Study 2015 that about 12 per cent of comments were abusive. Their task-related codes was extended by one additional skill, interrogation. This was important because failure to do so would result in leaving out interrogative comments and distort the findings.

1. An entire comment is considered one unit to be coded.
2. Replies to comments will be considered as comments.
3. Comments must have been posted no more than one week after the original article posting date to be coded.
4. Coding sheets will guide the process and should be filled out for each article with each comment identified and coded. (*Veerman and Veldhuis-Diermanse, 001*)

### **Coding Rules**

1. Comments will be considered task-related if they meet the above definition of task-related and and if they address the defined article highlighted in the parent article. A reply to a comment critically builds upon a parent comment that addressed at least one key idea presented in the parent article
2. Comments will be considered not task-related if they do not address any of the defined article highlights and if they meet the above definition of not task-related.

### **Definitions:**

(1) Task-Related: A comment that demonstrates knowledge construction by stating a new concept or advances the conversation by developing existing ideas.

Examples:

New Idea: Offering an idea that has not been previously stated

Explanation: Clarifying or building upon a previously stated idea

Evaluation: Reasoning used to critically discuss a previous statement

Interrogation: Making enquiries about the topics to boost learning and understanding.

(2) Not Task-Related: A comment that fails to demonstrate knowledge construction through unrelated ideas, setting rules of the conversation, or offering related statements that do not add critical perspective.

Examples:

Planning: Setting up rules or guidelines for future posts

Technical: Discussing the functionality or rules of posting on the system

Social: Offering interpersonal agreement or disagreement without critical support or analysis

Nonsense: Making statements wholly unrelated to the original topic

Abusive: An umbrella word to sum up offensive, belittling, insulting, vulgar or rude.

Potter 's (2004) - Seven critical media literacies skills have been adapted in the interest of scooping the relevant essence of comments as warranted by the India's audience reflecting both skills; (a) sentiment and (b) rationality who are politically more activated. Hence, synthesis has been removed while abstracting and grouping have been substituted by abusive and explanatory literacy skills.

1. **Analysis:** Exhibiting recognition of the complex elements that comprise an issue. Greater context used demonstrates deeper analysis (W. J. Potter, 2004)
2. **Evaluation:** Exhibiting logic and reason to compare elements of an issue with elements of a similar issue in order to make a judgement of validity. Emotion can play a role in evaluation, but a judgement should not be based purely based in emotion (W. J. Potter, 2004). A lower level of media is evident when quick, superficial judgments are made (W. J. Potter, 2004).
3. **Grouping:** Communicating clearly the similarities and differences between elements within an issue or among other issues. Three models will help to identify grouping behaviour: exemplar, prototype, and classical (W. J. Potter, 2004). Exemplar uses familiar models as representations. Prototypes rely on abstractions to draw conclusions. The classical model uses clearly defined groups to define an object.
4. **Induction:** Drawing conclusions by finding and carefully considering specific patterns that occur. Citing reliable, external sources for patterns strengthens an argument.
5. **Deduction:** Drawing conclusions by applying general principles through logical connections.
6. **Synthesis:** Connecting disparate elements together to develop a new idea or perspective.



7. **Abstracting:** Clearly, accurately, and comprehensively summarizing a larger issue into a brief message.

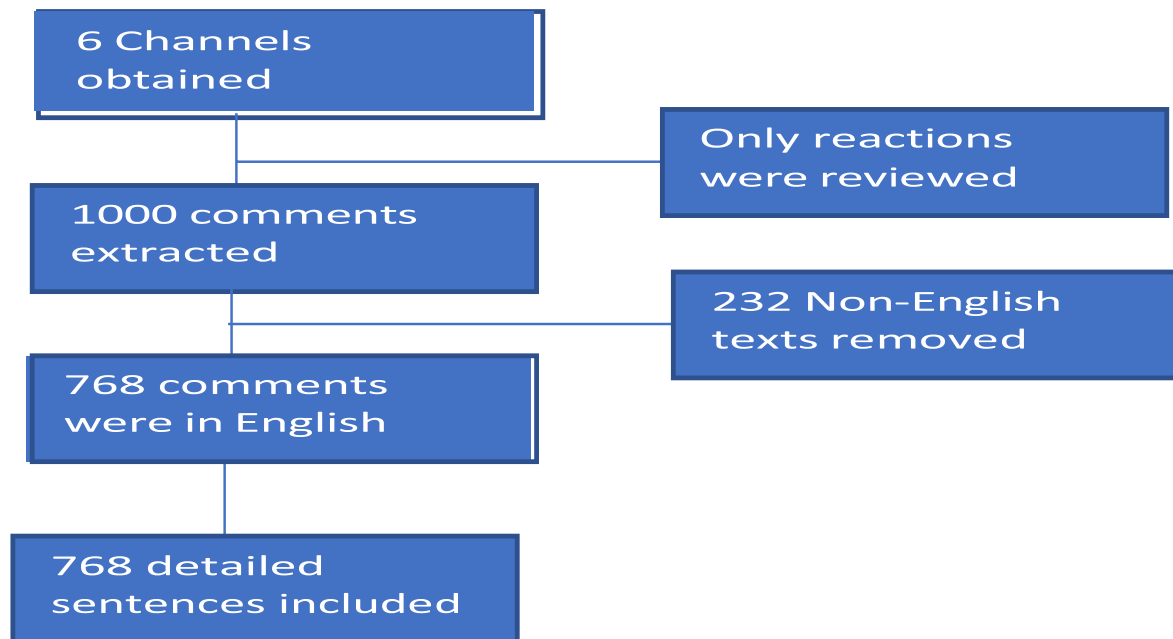
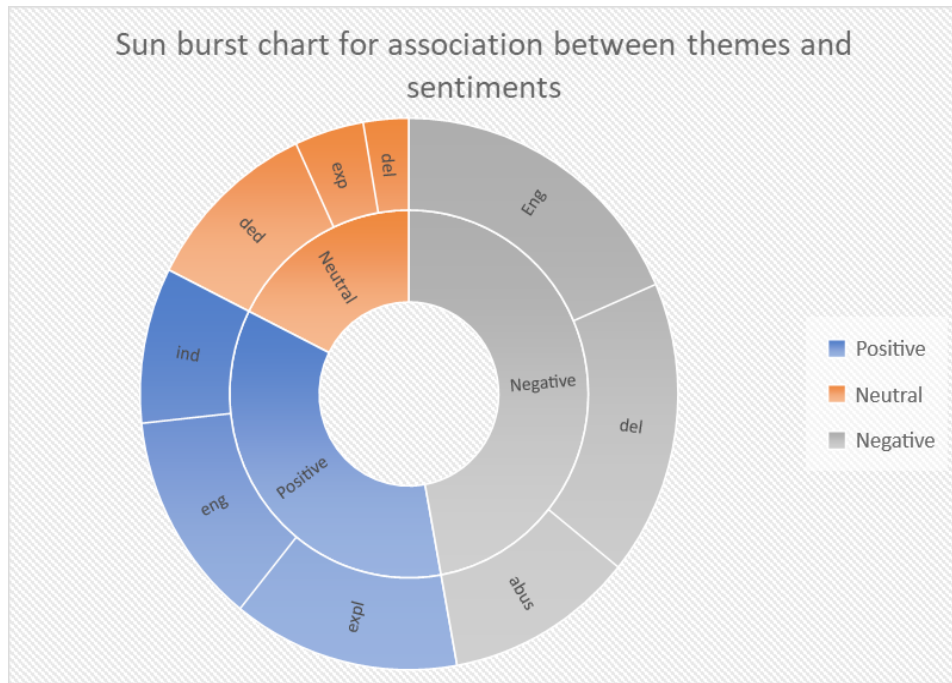
There was a notable difference in reactions reflected in international televisions compared to the post's stories in Indian-based TV channels. In international channels, majority of the comments were negative and neutral while Indian-based channels received more negative comments closely followed by neutral comments.

### **Categorising Themes Based On The Sentiments**

The analysis shows how the key themes were mentioned under each sentiment reaction. This was important in assessing what themes came out in negative comments, positive comments, and neutral comments. Although there were different expressions in the themes, identifying how they are distributed allowed us to know which ones came out in the different reactions from the viewers.

More than 47 per cent of the comments were classified as negative comments based on sentiment analysis, while about 35 per cent were classified as positive comments. Neutral comments took about 18 per cent of the comments.

From the network diagram given above, we can observe that engaging comments are more dominating as well as the negative. The engaging comments are either negative or positive, with negative engaging comments seemed to be more dominating. This is evident in the sunburst chart given in the figure below. The visual classification is given in the figure below:



### Six Thematic and Three Sentiment Analyses

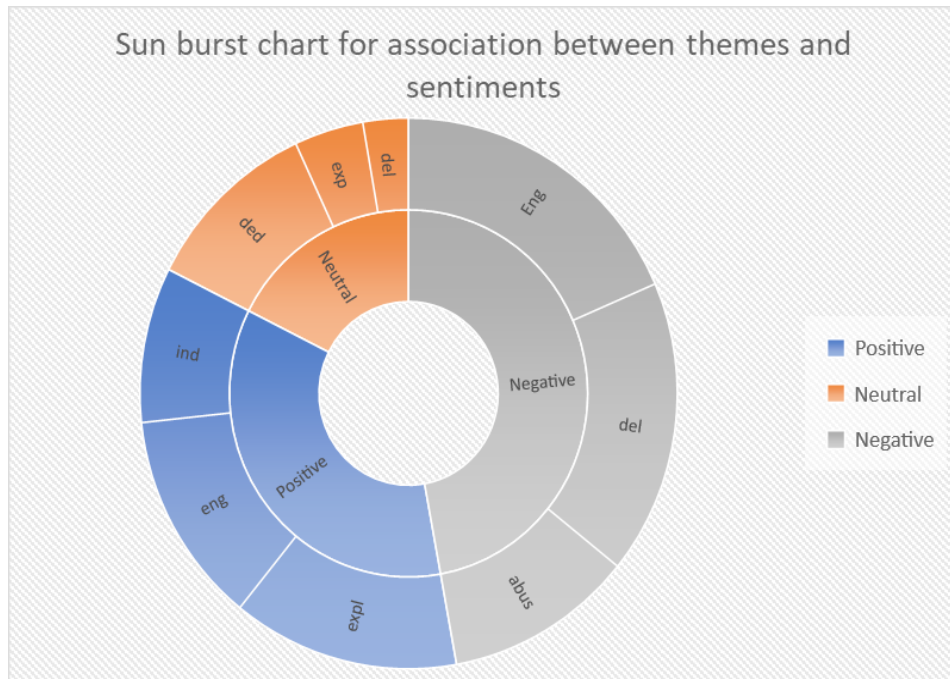
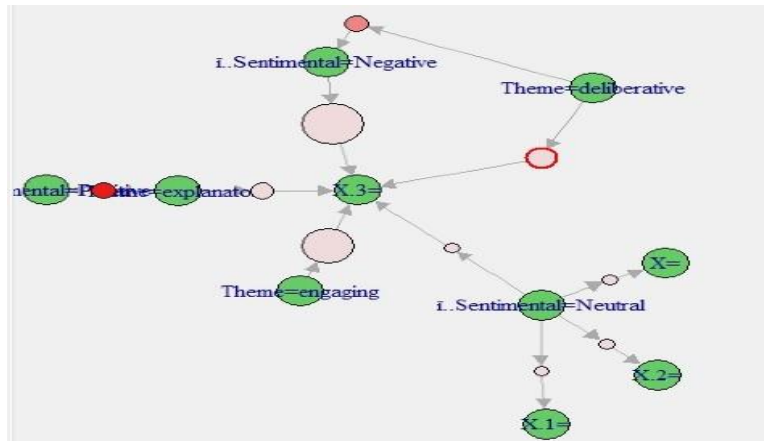
After processing the cleaned data, it was divided into 3 main sentiment reactions; Positive, Negative and Neutral.

Sentiments	Comments
Neutral	135
Negative	362
Positive	271

Thematic analysis was also conducted alongside the Sentiment analysis based on the 6 identified topics: explanatory, abusive, deductive, inductive, deliberative, and engaging to assess how the viewers react to different contents in the selected channels. The table below represents the distribution of the themes in different comments as obtained from our study:

	Themes	Number of Comments
3	Explanatory	137
	Abusive	87
	Deductive	82
	Inductive	70
2	Deliberative	154
1	Engaging	238

From the figure above, it is evident that engaging is the most dominating theme. To further understand how dominating was engaging against other themes, we also presented the outcomes in a tree map as shown below. The visual outlook of the thematic analysis was represented in the word cloud as shown in the figure below.



**(A) Positive Sentiments**

The following section reflects the viewer’s comments on news stories of national importance as posted on YouTube by national and overseas television channels. This section then gives detailed findings based on positive sentiments expressed by viewers on these channels. The comments are categorized based on the key themes that are investigated.

### **Theme 2: Engaging**

The second theme that came out in the positive comments was engaging. As illustrated in the figure above, at least 96 comments were engaging. These comments were majorly replies seeking to probe further about a subject matter, a complement, or a comment in form of a question. Such comments were more on YouTube Channels for the India-based TVs compared to the international TV channels. One example of an engaging comment is quoted below.

“This guy is fearless in telling the truth on the very face of those whose ancestors are one of the greatest predators”

### **Theme 1: Explanatory**

Majority of the positive sentiments were explanatory comments. There were majorly replies to other comments. Explanatory comments were one of the major themes that came out were the other viewers engaged in the comments trying to give different perspective of the news highlight. Majority of the positive comments explained concepts relating to the news being aired, with an aim of justifying such news. An example of a positive explanatory comment is quoted below

“Britain and Britons in the Indian continent also had some positive impact on India apart from the negatives. Just one example being India improving in terms of modern technology as a result of colonization.”

### **Theme 3: Inductive**

The last theme for the positive sentiments was the inductive theme. From our sentiment and thematic analyses, 95 comments were inductive. In these comments, the viewers argued based on the past experiences to make decision. Here, the viewers supported the topic matter basing on historical data. An example of the comment is given below.

“The secular and socialist included without any debate in the parliament during emergency. Which is unconstitutional and therefore a break of the law in the first place”

Positive inductive comments were given mostly found in national channels where key issues

affecting India were discussed but were very few when it came to international media

### **(B) Neutral Sentiments**

Another category of the Sentiment analysis was neutral sentiments. In this section, I assess the different themes that came out in the neutral comments. From the analysis in the figure above, 135 comments expressed neutral, which consisted of the different themes that were given in the figure above. This section then gives detailed findings based on neutral sentiments expressed by viewers on these channels.

#### **Theme 6: Deliberative**

Also, while some of the deliberative comments were neutral, most of these comments were negative. Deliberative comments were uniform across the local and international channels, and they showed different opinions on a subject matter by the viewers. Example of a negative deliberative comment from one viewer is given below. “I northeast, an all Indian against this bill. BJP govt has destroyed economy of the country, NRC and CAA is just a clever tactic to mislead the nation. BJP is known for its lies and lies and lies.”

#### **Theme 4: Deductive**

Deductive comments were considered to be comments where the viewer states a comment supported by some facts. A total of 82 comments were obtained to be neutral and presents a very strong conclusion about a subject matter. These comments were majorly new comments and for viewers trying to make judgement without diving into the subject matter so much. An example of a deductive comment is as stated below. “This guy is fearless in telling the truth on the very face of those whose ancestors are one of the greatest predators”

#### **Theme 3 Explanatory**

Also, another of them that came out in neutral sentiments was the explanatory theme. These were majorly replies to other comments. These themes emerged in 32 comments of neutral sentiments, and they appeared equally in both the YouTube channels for local tv and the international TV's. They explained concepts relating to the news being aired. An example of a

neutral explanatory comment is quoted below

“First they went after Dalits/social activists and said that they're Communist/Maoists And I did not speak out Because I was not a Dalit/Communist/Maoist Then they targeted NGO's and said that they're Urban Naxals/Fake Socialists and I did not speak out Because I was not a Socialist/Urban Naxal Then they demonetization and said that they have come for the corrupt and rich And I did not speak out Because I was not rich or corrupt Then they attacked MPL and isolated Kashmir and said that they have come to get the radicals among Muslims And I did not speak out Because I was not a Muslim Then they came for me And there was no one left To speak out for me Albert.”

### **(C) Negative Sentiments**

In this section, I explore the different themes that came out in the negative comments. Negative sentiments formed the biggest proportion of the comments in YouTube of the news channels with 362 comments being negative sentiments.

#### **Theme 6: Abusive**

The third theme that came out in Negative comments was abusive. 82 comments were abusive, and they reflected the dissatisfaction or frustration of the viewer either towards the TV channel, the host or the topic of discussion. These comments were also uniformly distributed across both the local and the international channels. An example of an abusive comment from a viewer is given below

“Modi is a demon”

#### **Theme 3: Deliberative**

Here, the study looked at comments where the viewer raises a topic matter, with an intention of spearheading a discussion around the issue. Mainly, these comments are structured in a question format, and with an intention of proposing different aspects about the subject. From the thematic analysis, 21 neutral comments were deliberative. Based on the type of tv, these comments were largely given in local TV channels more compared to international channels. Below is a sample comment is given to offer more elaboration on the neutral comments.

“If Modi declares emergency for an hour and do not tell anyone about it and erases the word

'secular' and 'socialist' so that it is not the constitution anymore. Would you be fine with that?" In the analysis, I also obtained that neutral Sentiment comments are more in local TV compared to the international students

### **Theme 5: Engaging**

While some of engaging comments were positive, majority of them were negative. Out of the 362 negative comments, 142 were engaging. They covered were majorly in topics of colonization and religion topics. An example of a negative engaging comment is given below:

“These types of people call others anti National seems like you haven't got any valid points now, so you have started what losers do 'anti-nationalist'. Mark my words once BJP gets a good majority in the Upper House, you would fail to see the word secular in the constitution.”

Thematic and Sentiment analyses are promising analysis tools to analyse the engagement CT skills and affective moods of users' response in online platforms. Through Sentiment analysis, 3 Sentiment emotions were identified: positive, neutral, and negative. Thematic analysis identified 3 negative, 3 positive and 3 neutral themes with some of the themes being distributed across different Sentiment motion.

In the result section the top 3 most prevalent comments are respectively engaging, deliberative and explanatory. This is an indication of high engagement level among users in the new channels. Engaging and deliberative are key aspects in initiating and spearheading online conversations in platforms such as YouTube. It shows the level of interest that the viewers have in news stories, which touch on matters affecting India as a country. The low number of abusive comments demonstrates largely healthy conversations taking place in the comments of such news stories.

Linking these findings to those of the survey by (Möller AM, et al., 2019) who obtained that despite high number of comment reactions and views in entertainment videos, political videos attracts high engagement levels in comments. Our study supports this though the findings on the fact that viewers initiate and reply to comment as a way of continuous engagement with the news stories touching on national interest.



### Potter's Adapted Media Skills Framework

Potter's critical media skills encompass six key skills designed to assess media literacy. Here's a brief description of his adapted version:

**Abusive Skills:** Abusive skills involve critically evaluating media content by identifying instances of abusive language, bias or manipulative techniques. This skills focus on recognizing and understanding the potential harm or negative impact of media messages.

**Explanatory Skills:** Explanatory skills hinge on the ability to analyse and interpret media content by providing clear explanations. Individuals with strong explanatory skills can articulate the intended message, identify underlying motives, and clarify complex concepts presented in media.

**Deductive Skills:** Citizens with deductive skills can analyse information, identify patterns, and draw conclusions based on evidence presented in media content. Deductive skills involve the application of logical reasoning to assess media messages.

**Inductive Skills:** Individuals with strong inductive skills can identify trends, patterns, and overarching themes within diverse media materials. They have the ability to generalise and make broader observations from specific instances in media content.

**Deliberative Skills:** These skills involve critically evaluating media messages by considering various perspectives and weighing different arguments. This skill underlines the importance of reflective thinking, discernment, and thoughtful consideration of diverse viewpoints.

**Engaging Skills:** People possessing these skills focus on active participation with media content and are capable of interacting with media messages, whether through discussions, social media engagement, or other forms of active involvement. This skill assesses the individual's ability to contribute constructively to media-related conversations.

Potter's adapted media skills framework provides a comprehensive approach to evaluating media literacy by addressing various aspects of critical analysis, interpretation, and engagement with media content. These skills aim to empower individuals to navigate the complex media landscape with a discerning and informed perspective.

### News Stories Selected By Popularity, Interest And Controversy

The following provides a comparison of sentiments and media literacy of comments expressed on news stories published and broadcast by India and Non-India based channels:

**1. Demonetisation:**

Non-India Based channels: Al Jazeera, CNN, Channel 4, Sky News: Often critical, focusing on the economic impact, inconvenience to the public, and implementation challenges.

India-Based NDTV, Zee News: Mixed reactions. Some supportive of the government's move to curb black money, while others critical of the execution and hardships faced by citizens.

**2. Ram Janam Bhumi/Babri Masjid:**

Non-India Based Channels: Coverage may be more neutral, providing historical context and reporting on legal proceedings.

India-Based Channels: Varied sentiments based on their respective political leanings, with some supporting the construction of the Ram Temple and others emphasising the need for communal harmony.

**3. Revocation of Article 370 on Kashmir:**

Non-India Based Channels: Mixed reactions with concerns about human rights and potential regional instability.

India-Based Channels: Varied opinions, with some celebrating the integration of Jammu and Kashmir into India and others expressing concerns about the impact on the region.

**4. Triple Talaq: Divorce by Three Pronouncement of 'Divorce':**

Non-India Based Channels: Coverage may focus on the legal and human rights aspects.

India-Based Channels: Opinions divided along religious and gender lines. Some supporting the ban for women's rights, while others argue against government interference in religious matters.

**5. Chandrayaan II - The Moon-2 mission:**

Non-India Based Channels: Generally positive, highlighting the scientific achievements and advancements in space exploration.

India Based Channels: Celebratory, emphasising national pride and technological capabilities.

#### **6. Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) 2019:**

Non-India Based Channels: Often critical, raising concerns about religious discrimination and its impact on minorities.

India Based Channels: Diverse opinions with some supporting the act for humanitarian reasons, while others criticize it for alleged discrimination against certain religious groups.

It must be noted that because sentiments can vary with time it cannot be held true for too long. They are influenced both by subjective decisions, perception and experience as well as by various external or environmental factors including political events, public discourse, and media coverage which are beyond our control.

#### **Limitations of Research Work**

Regarding the thematic analysis of the 6 thematic areas outlined in this study, it exhibited a number of strengths and limitations. One key strength is that the study made it easier to explore a large number of comments within a short time. Through the studies I was able to analyse emotions, which could be done using machine learning system. The analysis technique also brought forth high-level view of key important themes when exploring online engagement, hence giving a new angle of measuring user interaction on YouTube channels.

The limitations of the study on the other hand were that the study only analysed English comments, which might have left out some important insight from the non-English texts. The analysis being qualitative did not lend itself for testing of statistical significance, as a way of providing an evidence-based approach.

#### **Research Approach**

This chapter has described the methodology employed for this study, providing a rationale and other relevant information concerning the research context.

#### **Inductive: An Approach To Research**

Goddard and Melville (2007) suggest that an inductive approach starts with observations of a

specific subject and formulates theories towards the end of the research. In other words, researchers in this approach need to organise an empirical generalisation, highlighting preliminary relationships as a framework through the study. This means that instead of reproducing a previous study and seeking to see if the same results are produced or not, an inductive approach necessitates researchers to conduct research with a completely open mind without any preconceived ideas of what will be found in the study, and to generate new conclusions or theories through the analysis. Through observations, researchers detect new patterns, formulate some tentative assumptions, and finally develop some general conclusions or theories (Tromchim, 2006).

This thesis adopted an inductive approach because it provides more flexibility than a deductive approach, allowing researchers to examine existing theories and position their findings within the discipline. In addition, this approach urges researchers to move from specific observations to broader generalizations, supplying strong evidence and exploring a new phenomenon from a different perspective (Tromchim, 2006). In this case, it seems that the phenomenon of CJ from the eight member countries of SAARC may be better explained and understood using an inductive approach. (RAI, N., 2016) It would not be true to say that the inductive process takes absolutely no note of pre-existing theories or ideas when approaching a problem. The very fact that an issue has been selected for research implies judgements about what is an important subject for research, and these choices are dependent on values and concepts. This may help to formulate the overall purpose of the research. But the inductive approach does not set out to corroborate or falsify a theory. Instead, through a process of gathering data, it attempts to establish patterns, consistencies and meanings

### **Conclusion**

The study therefore concludes that YouTube is a very powerful platform that enhances user interaction and allows for the monitoring of critical engagement. As opposed to other arguments that political stories do not attract engagements in social media platforms such as YouTube, this study reveals that matters touching on national interest also attract varied engagement which can be traced and measured.

This study attempted to explore the existence of a connection between the content of

comments on political stories posted to a popular news site to determine whether those comments reflected evidence of media literate skills as prescribed and defined by Potter (2004) in his cognitive theory of media. Using these skills and a preliminary test that determined whether each comment was directly related to the article posted, the research questions aimed at understanding if knowledge construction occurs within this context and, if so, in what capacity.

The data collected and the subsequent analysis shows minimal evidence of knowledge construction happening in a large quantity over the entirety of the articles posted. Further, no pattern emerged indicating that contributors show more or less media in their comments based on the frequency of posting. On the contrary, media literate skills in small amounts were found spread throughout the articles' comment threads, uniformly by day of the week but with no apparent pattern based on topic.

Highly popular stories had notable quantities of media literate comments, but less popular stories and those with shorter conversations had notable ratios of media literate comments to overall comments. India's population is also likely to show a difference in how it engages with Indian-based television compared to international television, when the channels are airing news stories touching on Indian interest.(India-International TV).

### **Future Research**

This study presents the only known research in existence that attempts to test a portion of Potter's theory of media against comments on a news website. The limitations of the scope of this research indicate the first major area in which additional investigation can occur.

It is indicative that future research may examine each of these aspects that an individual uses to develop media through discussion-based electronic communication. The combination of these additional elements completes a system of media development in which not only are the building blocks for skills accounted for, but also the higher level tasks in which information is processed more fully based on the quality of a person's skills (W. J. Potter, 2004).

Competencies can be assessed through content analysis, similar to how skills were evaluated in the current study. On the other hand, delving into personal locus and information

processing tasks demands a more intimate interaction with individuals, something that textual artefacts cannot offer. In this regard, employing an experimental design method would yield more precise measurements of knowledge construction.

For a more profound exploration, a phenomenological approach could capture the experiences of those endeavouring to navigate the intricacies of media development. This approach also provides the means to scrutinize the various stages each person goes through in their quest to establish knowledge or identify the points at which they may struggle to build upon pre-existing structures.

The SM for pedagogy has been under-exploited for class-based and online delivery of media . In the absence of public intervention researchers have advocated a concerted and collective action by multi-agencies.

## Appendix 1

### Sample transcript coding from Delve output

RESPECT I was shocked to see how brits are surprised by knowing their ancestors' deeds. It's obvious that schools in deliberative Negative

Britain don't teach the history lessons properly but schools in India are showing us the what the real situation were. engaging Negative

This Man is a living National Treasure. engaging Positive

I'm currently reading Tharoor's book and it's been a real eye-opener. I was already aware that the actions of Britain and Britons in the Indian continent weren't something to be proud of, but when confronted with the engaging Negative

stories and statistics it's staggering that there is a collective amnesia about what happened. Just one example being India having a quarter of the world's economy before Britain took over, compared to just 3 per cent when they left. India was a relatively advanced civilisation, Britain destroyed local manufacturing and forced it to become agricultural. explanatory Positive

Huge respect for putting things in historical perspective. Especially concerned by the discontinuation of the teaching of colonial history in Britain. engaging Positive

Gory histories suppressed bear the risk of returning with much heavier impact (cf. Freud's Return of the Repressed). However, one cannot be too sure if colonisation was only a saga of loss and oppression. explanatory Positive

Shashi tharoor is probably the only Indian politician who I pay attention to when he speaks. Love him. He makes great points.

engaging Positive

India was one of the top five economies in the world before the British came over. Then they reduced it to ashes. The only thing I am thankful to the British for is that they helped create the idea of a politically unified India, which was rare in pre-British times. Only visionaries like shivaji thought on those lines.

engaging Neutral

Indians have really forgotten everything that happened few past years back . As b'coz our aim is to create good relationships with others and make India a developed, full fledged ,a powerful, a beautiful moreover a peaceful- happy nation . Who can help humanity and serve the whole world with its knowledge and potentiality to get away from poverty, discrimination against men to men and like other global problems.

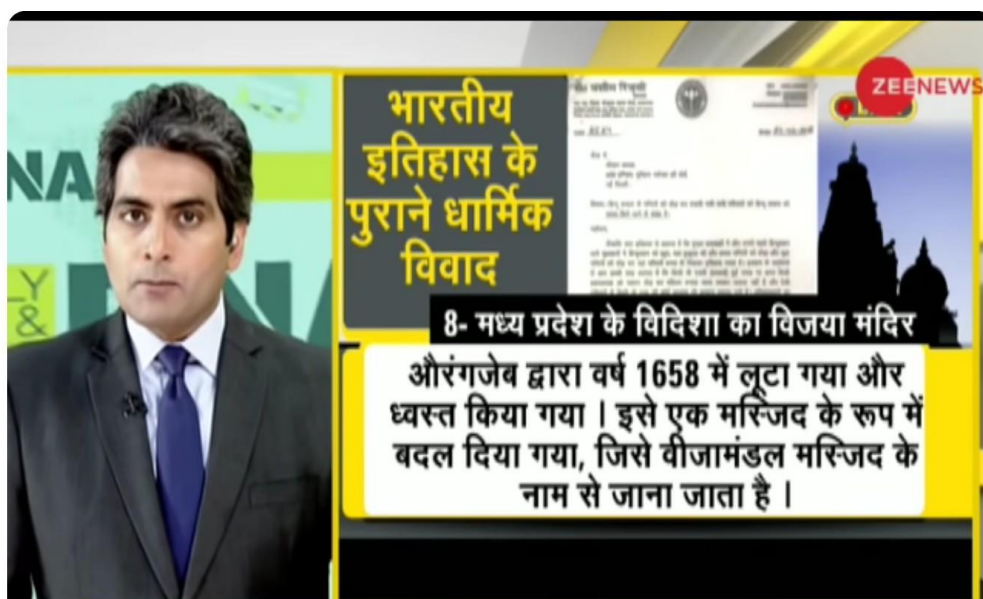
engaging Positive





## Appendix III

Zee News - Ram Mandir-Babri Masjid Case

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2oBjCS7ZU0Q>

Search

[www.zeenews.com](http://www.zeenews.com)
**DNA: All you need to know about the Ram Mandir-Babri Masjid case**

**Zee News** ✓  
33.2M subscribers

Subscribe

20K



Share



1.5M views 4 years ago

In this segment of DNA we brings to you detailed analysis of Ram Mandir-Babri Masjid case. Watch full video to know more.

...more

**3,501 Comments**

Sort by



Add a comment...



@honestphysics5894 4 years ago

 I am indian muslim  
Proud of my country and my Hindu brothers  
Jai hind

174



Reply

- Appendix IV  
 Al Jazeera – Triple Talaaq  
 2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IN8gyAh6KI8&t=43s>



### Can new divorce law protect Indian Muslim women? | Inside Story



**Al Jazeera English** ✓  
12.4M subscribers

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638



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Al Jazeera is funded in whole or in part by the Qatari government. [Wikipedia](#)

**YouTube**<sup>IN</sup>

Search

A Muslim man in India can no longer divorce his wife by simply uttering "talaq" - the Arabic word for divorce - three times. ...more

**433 Comments** Sort by



Add a comment...



@nn-ge8gb 4 years ago

As a daughter of a mother who was triple thalaked by a letter when my father was living in another country, I completely welcome this reformation in law.. We were abandoned by my father and no help was given to us moreover he remarried. I understand that instant triple is not a part of Islam then why shouldn't this practice be a made into a criminal law

Appendix V  
BBC News - Demonetisation  
3. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XSNHII3G\\_U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XSNHII3G_U)



India में Economic Slowdown के लिए सबसे बड़ी वजह क्या Demonetisation है? (BBC Hindi)



BBC News Hindi ✓  
17.4M subscribers

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Like



Share

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YouTube IN

Search

50K views 4 years ago

लुधियाना में कपड़ा बुनाई उद्योग की ऐसी बदहाली पिछले 40 सालों में कभी नहीं देखी थी. बदहाली के कारण कई हैं - कछुए की रफ्तार से खिसकती अर्थव्यवस्था, विदेशी सस्ते सामानों से प्रतिस्पर्धा, ऊपर से नगदी कारोबार पर सरकार का प्रतिबंध.

वीडियो: अरुणोदय मुखर्जी/प्रीतम राँय ...more

254 Comments

Sort by



Add a comment...



@ejjahmed5796 4 years ago

RSS thinks economic ups and downs r normal process of India but this is golden time for spreading tentacles of hindutva and Muslim disenchantment.

Appendix VI

Doordarshan News – Chandrayaan 2 Landing on The Moon  
4. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2srV-bEi\\_DU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2srV-bEi_DU)



YouTube <sup>IN</sup> Search

Chandrayaan 2 - Landing on Moon - LIVE from MOX-ISTRAC, Peenya, Bengaluru



Doordarshan National ✓  
5.49M subscribers

Subscribe

77K



Share

Download



Doordarshan (DD) is an Indian public broadcast service. [Wikipedia](#)

10M views Streamed 4 years ago #ISRO #Chandrayan #ISROMissions  
#Chandrayaan2 #ISRO #Chandrayan2 #Chandrayan #ISROMissions

India to make history with the landing of the Chandrayaan 2 spacecraft by reaching Moon's South Pole in its first attempt.  
...more

2,465 Comments Sort by



Add a comment...



@AsifKhan-hp5th 4 years ago

90 % people says mission failed but reality is that 90 of the components working successfully .... thanks ISRO.

## Appendix VII

NDTV - Jammu And Kashmir's Special Status Under Article 370 Scrapped  
5. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1u9R4\\_GLss](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1u9R4_GLss)



YouTube

Search



### Jammu And Kashmir's Special Status Under Article 370 Scrapped



NDTV  
12.9M subscribers

Subscribe

623



Share

Download



128K views 4 years ago #Article370 #JammuAndKashmir #370Scrapped

Today, a new chapter has been written in India's history regarding Jammu and Kashmir. The special status for the state has been scrapped by a presidential order that came into effect at once. Also, in a proposed law, which has cleared the Rajya Sabha and will need the Lok Sabha's approval, Jammu and Kashmir will cease to be a state and become two union territories with two Lieute ...more

210 Comments

Sort by



Add a comment...



@rahulkapur687 4 years ago

The only special status any Indian should have is one which ensures her/his welfare, rights and responsibilities. First we are Indians, then anything else... Bravo!

## Appendix VIII

### Channel 4 - Shashi Tharoor interview: How British Colonialism 'destroyed' India

6. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1giYXrofZYo>



Channel 4 is a British public broadcast service. [Wikipedia](#)

2.2M views 6 years ago

Indian MP Shashi Tharoor talks to Jon Snow on Channel 4 News about British colonial misdeeds and their echoes today. Subscribe for more identity politics: [bit.ly/LtASif](https://bit.ly/LtASif).  
...more

11,648 Comments Sort by



Add a comment...



@dharmaandbhakti2825 4 years ago

"Indians are very good in forgiving but not forgetting"--- What a beginning!!

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