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Code and Credibility: Content Analysis of AI-Driven Journalism in India

Priyanka Kumari

Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Mass Communication, School of Media, Film & Entertainment (SMFE), Sharda University, Greater Noida. Uttar Pradesh, India.

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***Correspondence:**
Jhapriyanka2409@gmail.com
Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Mass Communication, School of Media, Film & Entertainment (SMFE), Sharda University, Greater Noida. Uttar Pradesh, India.

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Abstract

This research study looks at Artificial Intelligence (AI) and robotic journalism in the Indian media ecosystem by adopting a secondary data analysis method in various reports and publications from the Reuters Institute, WAN-IFRA, NITI Aayog, UNESCO, and scholarly journals. The research noted that AI technologies were being adopted across content types or categories, and in categories, we note as traditional journalism; it was likely more than a novelty. Using comparative content analysis of samples of news articles generated by AI and the social implications of automation in journalism, the degree of impact it may have on the credibility of journalism as a product and process will be examined. Some visual data are presented as bar graphs where we note the reach of AI across content categories for the products we sampled (i.e. sports, weather, finance, politics, entertainment, and health). The study concludes that Indian newsrooms apply AI in fairly structured, data-heavy content types (where the audience generally expects to see data), such as sports and weather. While opinion journalism and political reporting exhibited more caution, before their journalistic philosophy of truthfulness and trust, they expressed caution in newsroom policy out of ethics, trust and credibility issues. The study also suggested introducing ethical frameworks, training regimes for newsrooms, and policies for responsibly adopting AI technology in journalism.

Introduction

The Indian media environment is undergoing a technological transformation, mainly driven by the adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in journalism. The media environment has been pressured to produce real-time news, deliver personalised content, and reduce costs, corresponding with enabling AI-powered tools that are becoming more prevalent in Indian newsrooms. These include automated content generation tools, algorithm-driven curation engines, chatbots, and audience engagement tools. A recent report by FICCI-EY (2023) mentioned that many leading Indian media companies are beginning to use AI, mainly for repetitive or highly driven tasks in the domain of sports, weather, and finance, which mirrors a global movement toward AI-assisted journalism, which are posited to create greater efficiency, scalability, and responsiveness in media production.

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However, Indian media organisations face significant challenges that differ from those in the international context. International leaders such as the BBC, The Washington Post, and China's Xinhua News Agency have developed a more structured and integrated approach to AI supported by ethical protocols, technology training and litmus tests (Beckett, 2023; UNESCO, 2021). However, the regulatory clarity, institutional structure, and editorial maturity characterizing Indian newsrooms are not necessarily sufficient to embrace the technologies enclosing AI. According to Sundar and Bansal (2022), the lack of standardized AI governance in India has resulted in piecemeal experimentation and crises of confidence around the potential of automation to degrade editorial accountability, diversity of news, and public trust.

In studying these phenomena, this paper adheres to the idea of "code", referring to AI's algorithms and automated software, and "credibility" as the ethical, professional, and trust dimensions of journalism. The title of this paper, "Code and Credibility", reinforces how these two ideas rub against each other--the automated code of AI and the fundamental news values, integrity and ethics of journalism. We examine these issues through the lens of secondary data from international sources such as the Reuters Institute, WAN-IFRA, UNESCO and local policy documents by NITI Aayog in order to do a thematic content analytical analysis of how AI is being implemented in Indian media and what it means for the integrity of journalism in an era of AI. We not only conduct a comparative appraisal of the issues we read about, but we also map the contents of different categories of media and by how much AI is made use of across many categories of content, such as politics, entertainment, health and finance and use bar-graphs to show how AI is distributed across those content categories.

The findings show AI's small but growing role in Indian journalism and the need for responsible implementation. The paper ends by promoting practical suggestions for ethical regulation, industry-specific training for AI, and culturally contextualised AI solutions to protect the integrity of news in a digitally automated world.

Literature Review

Incorporating Artificial Intelligence (AI) in journalism has moved quickly and globally over the past decade, especially in technologically advanced media environments. The BBC, The Washington Post, and others represent early adopters and institutions that are quickly integrating AI into the business of journalism, live reporting, and structured data journalism. The BBC has adopted systems such as "Juicer" to personalize news feeds and automatically tag metadata, enhancing news and audience engagement with the institution (Beckett, 2019). The Washington Post launched its automated journalism "Heliograf" during the U.S. elections 2016, demonstrating the advantages of automating live journalism in providing and updating news in real time (Carlson, 2020). These implementations signal a shift toward scalable and news data-driven news ecosystems that support ethical models, algorithmic accountability, and transparency in editorializing. Although Graefe (2016) expresses that robotic journalism can deliver objective reports based on facts, such as sports and finance reports, it must be carefully governed to avoid problematic expressive capabilities such as bias, loss of context, and reduced human agency in editorial decision-making.

In India, the use of AI in journalism is still in the early stages. Reports from NITI Aayog (2021) and FICCI-EY (2022) emphasize the growing interest within Indian media organizations in AI-enabled services to manage tasks such as alerts, tagging content, and analyzing audience engagement data. However, these organizations are hindered by limited resources, a lack of support in terms of technology infrastructure, and a wide gap in AI literacy among journalists. Unlike global media organizations, Indian news organizations do not have established ethics guidelines and governance for AI (Singh & Bhattacharya, 2023). As a result, AI adoption in India tends to be exploratory and is limited beyond traditional data-heavy content, such as weather and cricket updates.

Furthermore, international discussions about AI tend to focus on algorithmic transparency and ethics governance. At the same time, there is little academic engagement around AI ethics in the Indian context,

which stresses the need for academic inquiry into AI ethics, the ethical implications for credibility in the news, and the ethics of AI for journalism (Thorsen & Jackson, 2018). The present study seeks to address this insufficiency in the literature by examining AI adoption in Indian journalism using a technological and ethical perspective.

Methodology

This research uses qualitative secondary data and content analysis to explain how Artificial Intelligence (AI) is operationalized in Indian journalism. The research draws from reputable information, such as government policy documents (especially reports from NITI Aayog) and white papers from media consultancies (including FICCI-EY), as well as industry reviews (which included organizations like WAN-IFRA and Reuters Institute) and scholarly articles, to build an account of how AI is being adopted into news production. The contents were analyzed along a comparative spectrum of six large content areas (sports, weather, finance, politics, entertainment, health) determined by the data source and prevalence of AI uses in journalism. The six content areas were selected based on the available data and the extent of the creation of content in the use of AI for journalism. The patterns and percentage uses of AI were drawn from existing media case studies and documented evidence of practices in newsrooms using primary evidence from The Times of India, India Today, and ABP News. By combining multiple sources, the study provided a richer and more nuanced thematic mapping of the shaping of contemporary journalistic output in India through AI.

Content Analysis & Findings

The bar graph below compares the distribution of AI-generated content across six news areas in Indian and global media as shown in Figure 1. The data shows that there are differences in how Artificial Intelligence is used for various forms of content. These differences reflect the priorities and capabilities of news organizations in different parts of the world.

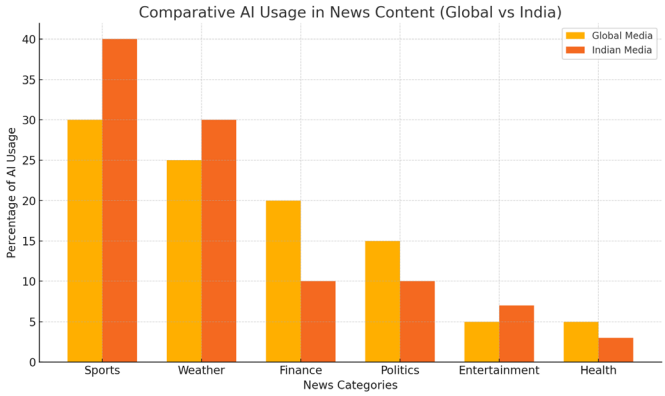
Based on the graph, Indian media leads in AI usage in the sports category with 40% AI-generated content. Global media follows with 30% AI-generated content, suggesting that Indian media depends heavily on AI to analyze real-time updates, match stats, and summarize scoring, especially in reporting on cricket-heavy coverage. A similar picture is found in weather; Indian media leads with 30% of AI-sourced content, and Global media follows with 25%. India's uniqueness in this instance may be driven by its sheer variety of climatic zones and the need for a hyper-local weather update that AI can now quickly and accurately supply to its users at speed.

However, when it comes to more editorially sensitive categories, we see a reversal of the 'percentage presence' of AI, reflecting a more advanced use of algorithmic reporting in how AI is assisting reporting on financial stock index trends and economic forecasts globally, with global media at 20% for AI usage and India lagging at 10%. There remain significant disparities in politics, which also runs the risk of evolving AI content generation, with global media, on average, utilizing AI for 15% of their political content (compared to 10% in India). The continued lower levels of use of AI may be due to the gravitas attributed to issues of credibility and misinformation, as well as the additional subtleties in interpretation that AI tools currently lack in reporting on politics.

In entertainment, Indian media (7%) and world media (5%) show similar, but low, engagement with AI for reporting, even if some of that use reflects curation of celebrity news or societal trends. Perhaps most notably, health journalism shows the least use of AI overall, with 3% of Indian media reporting using AI and 5% by world media. The complexity and ethical challenges posed by reporting on health and medical topics also likely contributed to limited usage.

Overall, the graph illustrates that Indian media's use of AI is stuck mainly in data-heavy, fact-based reporting areas. In contrast, the world media has a much more evenly and more mature integration of AI in areas requiring data analysis and editorial judgment periods.

The Indian media has a far greater reliance on Artificial Intelligence in sports and weather, where



Source: Compiled and visualized by the author from secondary data including Reuters Institute, FICCI-EY, WAN-IFRA, UNESCO, and media house reports.

Figure 1: AI-driven news content distribution in India vs. global media (2018–2024).

output is structured chiefly, subject to repetition, and primarily data-driven. For example, AI automates real-time updates of sporting events, weather alerts and match summaries. These categories leave little room for interpretation, and a greater premium is put on speed to capture reader attention through output volume. This distributional trend would imply that certain Indian newsrooms view AI primarily as a productivity device for categorically factual, non-derivative information that does not necessarily require the editor to make multiple conceptual or structural decisions. In other words, AI use by Indian media organizations is technology-led to be efficient and convenient for low-risk, automated, automated information delivery for audience interaction and engagement.

On the other hand, global media organizations experience different approaches to the integration of AI into news organizations. There is a greater balance. Moreover, there is greater strategic integrity in integrating this technology across a broader scope of news categories, with greater implications such as finance and political stories where the implications of public opinion make it worth a higher risk in terms of interpretation and ethical considerations. Global media organizations that use AI in wider circumstances in their news production - for example, The Washington Post or The BBC - show clear levels of editorial confidence, ethics, and a sense of infrastructural capacity. Global media organizations balance the use of AI with policies that provide resources for proper oversight, applied as required. Global media organizations are also likely to have precise editorial guidelines surrounding the credibility and accountability of automated agents in their outputs.

This contrast demonstrates a distance in maturity in AI use between Indian and global media. Indian newsrooms tend to see AI as just another tool towards enhancing productivity, with some familiarity with AI in lower-risk parts of the news process, unlike their global counterparts who have begun the process of using AI for decision-making and analytical journalism, thanks to relatively greater regulatory clarity of AI as a technology and available frameworks for technical training. The gap is a warning sign for media channels in India that intend to use AI as much more than a form of structured data analysis in economic, political, or social narratives; it is in dire need of institutional approaches to written policy guidelines concerning AI, AI literacy, and editorial frameworks.

Discussion

The results of this study reveal that in the operational landscape of media organisations in India, AI use will be, at best, tangential to ideas of editorial depth and will be primarily focused on operational efficiency where AI can be used for operational efficiency by automating mundane actions with heavy data, like posting cricket scores and routine weather forecasts. While these use cases are helpful and reduce human effort and time to deliver news coverage, they still do very little to broaden their engagement with AI as a technology beyond existing use cases. There is a higher degree of reluctance seen with AI applications beyond sporting coverage and structure, especially for politically sensitive or editorially complex news narratives, primarily driven by fears of incorrect judgements and incomplete data while also dealing with the inherent biases and epistemological concerns of their reporting about public events of the day. The caveat about a potential loss of credibility and absence of regulatory scrutiny provides a reasonable disincentive for newsrooms to use AI for these editorial purposes where nuanced interpretation, editorial judgement, audience knowledge and accountability are all at play.

Global media organisations like the BBC and The Washington Post apply AI in various ways. In these cases, an organisation applies AI not only for automating content but also for instant and real-time news reporting and customisation of content for readers. They have broadly established an ethical framework for practitioners, transparency around AI practices, and significant AI fluency among journalists. In India, however, barriers remain to successful and meaningful adoption of AI and associated technologies, including inadequate technical training, low levels of policy infrastructure maturity, and a felt digital divide. Further, digitised work results in a significant lack of transparency in algorithm-driven content consumption, which erodes audience trust and increases risks around misinformation. For AI to be able to contribute to journalism in India responsibly, the industry needs proactive regulatory, ethical frameworks, and capacity building to position the evolution of technology against integrity in journalism and for and on behalf of public value.

Conclusion And Recommendations

The findings of this study illustrate that while various Indian media houses are gradually beginning to adopt Artificial Intelligence (AI) and robotic journalism practices, their current usage is primarily if not exclusively, confined to operational processes and not innovative editorial practices. AI is mainly used for producing structured data-heavy content, such as sports and weather reportage, as matters of credibility in these contexts can be reduced at least. Outside of these sections, they are more circumspect about employing AI concerning how information biases might arise from intentional and/or unintentional manipulation of AI-sourced information, particularly in areas such as politics, financial journalism or investigative journalism wherein ethicality and accountability are paramount, undermining credibility in the very foundational principles of journalism; trust with the public. Internationally, some media houses and organizations have developed many more mature ecosystems for AI integrations, including ethical policy guides and frameworks and a commitment to ensuring editorial transparency.

In summary, AI issues in India do not solely remain confined to the technological gap between India and international markets but broaden to the structural and ethical reasons and adoption of AI interventions as ideologies and values in how journalists perceive AI as training for doing journalism without real problems to solve. Setting the proper education, regulatory, and institutional frameworks for usage and training; otherwise, AI will reinforce existing problems and inequalities in journalism and compromise editorial standards. In closing, a framework of balance, inclusivity, and an ethical focus for the sustainability of AI usage in Indian newsrooms is required.

India's foray into AI-driven journalism is promising but fraught with challenges. To bridge the gap between code and credibility, media organizations must:

1. Develop newsroom-specific ethical AI guidelines.
2. Invest in training journalists in AI tools and data literacy.
3. Collaborate with academic and tech institutions to design culturally relevant AI models.
4. Encourage transparency and algorithmic accountability through open-source practices.

By taking these strategic steps, Indian media can harness the potential of AI not just for efficiency but for enhancing journalistic credibility and societal impact.

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