

Online News Media and the 'Myth' of Diversity: An Indian Chapter

Dr. Rachna Sharma, Assistant Professor, Department of Journalism, Kalindi College (University of Delhi) and **Priyanka Mittal**, Mphil Research Scholar, Centre For West Asian Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

Email: rachna_130@yahoo.co.in; priyankaamittal@gmail.com

Introduction

- News Media- Past and Present
- Online Media as 'alternative' platform
 1. Diversity of Content
 2. Convergence of technology as well as content
- Two decade later, Online News Media practice
 1. Convergence of technology-based-content
 2. Contradiction in principle of Media Diversity

Objectives of the Study

- **To explore whether the diversity in online news media in India is a myth or did it really ushered communication revolution as proposed and as was expected of.**
- To define Online news media in India
- To characterize diversity in sociological Indian context
- To find out patterns of online news media in terms of diversity in Indian context
- To compare and assess the degree of diversity as provided on the digital platforms of traditional media including the newspaper and TV news channels with that of online news portals
- To chalk out the failures in the process of achieving online news media diversity in India.

Research Design and Methods

- Qualitative Content Analysis of 3 websites

1. Newspaper website – timesofindia.com
2. Television News Website - ndtv.com
3. News Websites- Indiatimes.com

- To study diversity in-terms of :

1. Minorities coverage based on religion
2. Coverage in relation to the backward regions/states
3. Coverage of the backward tribes and castes

- Parameters to analyze:

1. News Exchange patterns – Horizontal and vertical pattern
2. Diversity and inclusion of regional media in online Media
3. News update and Follow Ups of Important Issues

Defining Diversity

- Inclusion of Multiculturalism (Gurpreet Mahajan)
- Socio-political Pluralism (Richard E. Redding)
- Diversity based on language, class, caste, region, religion etc.

Online News Media

- Online News media refers largely to the media present via online websites and news portals on digital platform.
- Content
- Networks
- Interactivity- belongingness, participation and contribution
- Dialogical Journalism (Mark Deuze)
- Indian online news media towards 'functional co-existence'

Online News Media and Diversity

- Diversity in context of media contents includes a choice between programme types or genres, sources, outlets, opinions as well as representations.
- Diversity in context of media policy caters to the interests and opinions of the public towards general diffusion of media power in society on the level of ownership, economic structures and political influence.
- What the study revealed:
 - A sadistic state of representation
 - a lack of dearth of news items update
 - No development issues are taken up by online news media
 - Coverage of religious minorities like Parsi, Jain, etc. and tribes have no representation
 - Online news media look like copies of traditional media

- To achieve 'perfect diversity' three choices have to be made (Cuilenburg):
 1. Selection
 2. Definition
 3. Measurement
- Emerging patterns of Diversity
 1. Reflective: Bottom-up, empirical and quantitative (Cuilenburg)
 2. Open: Top-down, normative and qualitative (Cuilenburg)
 3. Linkage: A cross-sectional calculation based diversity

Conclusion

- Ownership is the only one component of a shifting and expanding
- Online news media only serves as an extension tool to mainstream traditional media with regard to news production and transmission.
- There is a need for reflection of diversity in relation to overall socio-political goals.
- There is a need to discuss the underlying overall rationales of media policies in this direction.