

Social Media, Journalists, Public Relations: Trust or Distrust?

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Journalists today across media have access to enormous information and it's put to use depending on the nature of the story being filed. Information sources vary from primary and secondary modes and digital has added another dimension to the same. This paper aims to understand the relationship between journalists and use of social media in India and Malaysia.

The paper will try to explore the use of social media by journalists directly while filing their stories and reports and also if the public relations agency/corporate communication professionals on behalf of clients use them to interact with journalists. In this digital age, when information has become power and time is critical for journalists, is the use of social media helping them to churn out better stories in terms of sourcing information. Is social media becoming another avenue for information sourcing – be it Google, Facebook, Blogs, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube beyond just published information in public domain and direct sourcing hitherto used by journalists.

The other dimension being touched briefly is on whether journalists and publication houses are trying to leverage social media to extend their reach to readers and viewers. According to a recent presentation at brand conference in Bangalore by BBC Global Marketing Head – social media is allowing a news broadcasting house to leverage content in different platforms to reach audience based on specific requirements – a great way to leverage reach. Newspapers and TV channels are using social media to reach consumers on the go – who need constant updates.

Research Questions:

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- a. Do journalists use social media as an information source to file stories
- b. Is social media a credible source to get information – issues of trust
- c. Interplay between journalists, PR professionals & the client – use of social media
- d. Role of social media as a tool to reach journalists by PR professionals & industry
- e. Role of social media being leveraged by news media to extend their reach to consumers

This paper will try to establish both these trends by talking/interviewing media in India and Malaysia to get a better understanding on this subject. A two-country perspective will help communication practitioners understand the role of social media as a tool to reach journalists and help develop it as an effective medium to share messages, updates, trends & developments besides being a useful information source.

Methodology:

1. Interviews with journalists in India – Hyderabad, New Delhi & Mumbai
 - a. Financial / Mainline / Telugu / TV media
 - b. Focus group discussions with media besides individual interviews
2. Interviews with journalists in Malaysia – to be done by Dr. Kiranjit kaur, UiTM

Literature Review:

All relevant literature will be reviewed to justify the methodology and support from the findings of this research paper. The use of Medium is the Message from Marshal McLuhan among others will be used.