

# **“Ethical dimensions of media industry: An Indian perspective”**

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## **ABSTRACT:**

The Indian newspaper & TV channels industry witnessed tremendous growth over the last two decades in terms of scale, reach and revenues. Today, there is an overpowering influence of the mass media in shaping public opinion, policies, buying behaviour and generating market share. This growth has not been matched by corresponding sensitivity towards non-commercial and non-market dimensions. Against this backdrop – the issue of ethical dimension of media industry becomes an interesting topic especially as commodification of news and its marketing is touching new highs.

In this context, the art of storytelling in news is witnessing a dramatic shift from the actual story to the mechanics, process and its marketing. The onslaught of over 800 TV channels in English & regional languages are making this ART a dying form with mechanics taking charge and dictating terms. Regional language press has started to assume ominous proportions and with changing ownership patterns; the role of ethics & morality in Indian media is witnessing a change. Media entrepreneurship today is a necessary condition for any growing business enterprise, a political party, and even to individuals seeking to leverage public influence for private gain. Ratings & Morality of TV channels is now a raging debate and Justice Markandey, Chairman - Press Council of India chaired a session on this subject in Hyderabad recently.

When the government, the polity, the market and the industry are unable to provide for full-spectrum systemic regulation that protects consumer welfare and public interest, who will step in to address the gap becomes a MOOT question. Issue of ethical reporting and its influence on society especially on the Generation X and Y becomes more relevant given two factors:

1. Multiplicity of media & cut-throat competition for survival is leading to a situation where virtue tends to be discarded or gets a back seat

2. Growing influence, at times alarmingly dangerous of social media is where access and content generation is extremely easy. Due to this, responsible and validation of content prior to dissemination of communication tends to become a casualty

**Keywords:** Storytelling, Ethics, Commodification, Regional Media, Morality, Rating, Regulation, Marketing, Entrepreneurship, Ownership

**OBJECTIVE OF STUDY:** There will be two-fold objectives of this paper to understand the impact on ethical dimension of the Indian media industry. These objectives are based on the questions given below:

- a) Given the proliferation, both in terms of numbers and spread, is the Indian media playing its rightful role in a responsible manner?
- b) Is there a need to therefore regulate and monitor the media to ensure that we walk the fine line between freedom of voice and responsible reporting?

**METHODOLOGY:** A cross-sectional survey of subject matter experts, across various sectors - education, corporate firms (manufacturing, infrastructure, service, retail and IT) could help us gather public sentiments on the above issues. Based on secondary sources of data, a comparative study with trends in UK /US media can also be explored. References can be made to contributions of the Press Council Chairman, Justice Markandey Katju, who has been propounding meaningful regulation, need for professional qualification for journalists in this context even though it is much against the mood of the Fourth Estate.

A detailed survey of literature on the ethical dimension of communication to understand the academic community views on the subject is necessary to view the context and the questions proposed for this paper.

The overall aim of the paper will therefore be to understand the importance of a more robust and constructive public debate on such issues. And to acknowledge the need for the Media as the Fourth Estate, to go beyond commerce and focus on certain non-negotiable attributes both in letter & spirit so as to integrate responsibility with freedom and make a meaningful contribution to society at large.

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