

Rise of AI and Influencers in India's News Landscape: Insights from 2025 Digital News Report

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Artificial Intelligence Latest News

- Influencers and generative AI are “supercharging a fragmented alternative media environment” for news, says the 2025 Reuters Digital News Report.

Digital Media Landscape in Transition

- India's news consumption patterns are undergoing a radical transformation, driven by the convergence of generative AI tools and the growing influence of social media personalities.
- According to the **2025 Digital News Report** by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, video-led content, AI-powered summarisation tools, and non-traditional news voices are redefining how Indians, particularly the youth, access and engage with news.
- The report, based on an **annual survey across 48 countries, including India**, highlights a rising preference for personalised, bite-sized, and video-driven news formats, often delivered by influencers or

through AI interfaces. This evolution signals a significant shift away from traditional platforms like print, TV, and news websites.

Generative AI Becomes a Popular News Tool

- Generative AI platforms such as **ChatGPT** and **Perplexity AI** have emerged as prominent tools for news consumption in India.
- These tools are increasingly being used to simplify complex topics and generate personalised summaries for users.
- The report found that India leads in adopting generative AI for news access, with 44% of Indian respondents expressing comfort with AI tools.
- Nearly one-fifth of them use chatbots weekly for news, making it the most popular option among the surveyed countries.
- AI-driven news consumption offers several advantages: it condenses lengthy reports, avoids ideological bias (to an extent), and allows users to seek specific clarifications interactively.
- However, this also raises concerns about the authenticity and editorial integrity of AI-generated content, especially when used as a primary source.

Social Media Influencers as Emerging News Voices

- Parallel to AI adoption is the rise of news influencers, personalities who use platforms like YouTube and Instagram to deliver commentary, satire, and educational content.
- These influencers often command follower counts in the millions and wield considerable sway over public opinion.
- These creators blur the lines between journalism, commentary, and entertainment, often connecting with audiences more deeply than traditional media can.

Video Emerges as the Preferred Medium

- Across countries like India, Thailand, the Philippines, and Kenya, more people now prefer watching the news rather than reading it.
- This has further pushed both influencers and news organisations to adopt video-first strategies.
- In India, YouTube has become a dominant hub for political talk shows, explainer content, and ideological debates.
- This shift toward video content reflects broader generational changes, particularly among Indians aged 18-34, who overwhelmingly turn to social media and platforms like YouTube over news websites for daily information.

Traditional Media Faces Sharp Decline

- The report confirms that legacy formats such as television broadcasts, newspapers, and even standalone news websites are witnessing waning user engagement.

- Only 24% of respondents aged 18-34 consider news websites as their main news source, compared to 41% who prefer social media and video platforms.
- This trend has profound implications for journalistic sustainability, credibility, and the economics of news production in India.
- Legacy organisations are now being forced to diversify digitally and engage audiences through short-form video, social media interactions, and even AI-generated news formats.

Misinformation and the Challenge of Trust

- Trust in news globally remains stagnant at 40%, as per the 2025 survey. In India, while platforms like WhatsApp are not broadly seen as high-risk vectors of misinformation due to their closed-group nature, they remain an exception.
- India, being WhatsApp's largest market, has faced several incidents where fake news videos circulating in large groups have incited mob violence and even fatalities.
- Interestingly, 11% of Indian respondents believe that their own friends and family also contribute to spreading misinformation, pointing to a trust deficit even within personal networks.

The Future of News Consumption in India

- The blending of AI tools and influencer-led journalism reflects an ongoing democratisation of news access, personalised, on-demand, and vernacular in spirit.
- However, it also necessitates critical thinking, digital literacy, and regulatory oversight to ensure that the public discourse remains constructive and accurate.
- Traditional media outlets, while still relevant, are being challenged to adapt faster than ever.
- The onus now lies on institutions to harness these new technologies responsibly and find synergies with emerging voices without compromising journalistic ethics.

Source: TH

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