

## Relevance of New Media vis-a-vis the Covid Pandemic: An Overview

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**Abstract** – On the basis of its relevance and trend, media can be classed as traditional media, mainstream media and new media. While the former two are relatively older, the new media has its history just a decade ago. The adoption of new media has been possible only with the advent of advance communication gadgets which functions on the Web 2.0 platforms. While the new media is becoming the most preferred media among all others in recent times, its adoption by the population saw an exponential growth during the last 24 months beginning with the restrictions imposed by governments to curb the spread of covid infections around the globe. Being the most convenient platform where an individual has access to all kinds of products and service, it became the favorite choice of the masses. The paper will throw a glimpse over the role new media platform promise and delivers amidst the pandemic.

**Keywords:** Traditional media, mainstream media, new media, pandemic, future of new media.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The term new media is vague, and its definite description of its forms has been (Sizellenge to academicians and practitioners. It is known differently at different situations and place owing to its wide and diverse applications. In today's context, it is mean to denote the type of media which adopts the latest of technologies to communicate and entertain the masses. New media is also known as online media, digital media or journalism. The term new media in reference to the present work denote the tools and platforms used today- the

internet, computers, smart phones and its allied Information and Communication Technology.

The concept of new media could mean any form of media that is of recent in origin and are different in use and application from the previous one. In that context, no specific media constitute a new media, but all media were once new media for a particular time period. To someone born in the middle of the 20th century, Television definitely would be the new media. To someone with the experience in the beginning decade of the 21st century, the internet or its tools such as the computer would constitute a new media. Thus, the definition of new media is not static but dependent of the time period in which the society lives and the media prevalent during the time.

Today, the term definitely denotes the adoption of Web 2.0 platforms and its allied Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools necessary for the process. While the technologies developed for the purpose are different, it all intends to serve the public. Similar to the job done by other media, the new media of the present communicates, entertains, educate and mobilize the masses in the development process. Comparing with the previous forms of communication channels, the new media of today is hugely sophisticated, independent and user friendly.

Earlier media platforms such as newspapers, radio and television promises a limited perspectives in their content and relies on the mercy of gatekeeping. However, the new media of today are devoid of such limitations. The new media of today are normally user created contents where the user



of the media is not just the recipient of information but an active participation in the creation and dissemination of news, views and other information of value. The new media is not limited to communication dissemination of information alone. It has its use in wide arrays of discipline. In governance, business, education and sports, the new media converge and become the most trusted partner in delivering such projects.

## 2. NEW MEDIA AND THE PANDEMIC WORLD

Amidst these developments, the corona virus pandemic which broke out in the later part of 2019 has literally halted the world. It halted the functioning of business, the educational institutions, the entertainment industry and perhaps the flow of information to a great extent. In order to contain the spread of the virus, the governments around the world have taken up several measures since its outbreak. However, after 24 months, the transmission is yet to be stopped. Virus mutates and new variant is said to have emerged to a more infectious one. Globally, as on 23 December 2021, there have been 276,436,619 confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 5,374,744 deaths, reported to World Health Organization (WHO). Till today, it remains a challenge to humanity.

In the light of the emerging scenario, the role played by new media in mitigating the crisis is something which redefines its relevance. When the world was in total lockdown the functioning of every institution and establishments are literally halted. Business and schools were closed. Movement of people was heavily restricted. Any form of socialization was discouraged. In that scenario, new media does the role as a platform to come together, join hands, learn and became a platform of transacting business. Such was the latest of wonders promised and delivered by the new media.

## 3. NEW MEDIA IN OUR DAILY LIVES

In fact, the role of new media in the pre-pandemic era was largely social and entertaining in nature. However, since the covid pandemic, new media has

its wider and deeper application in every aspect. The adoption of new media in every sphere of life has become a new normal to many as it has been in practice during the last two years. While the relevance of new media in the post pandemic scenario is expected to be a new normal in the coming time, it is pertinent to look into the emerging areas where new media has been increasingly adopted and will be of huge demand in the future.

### 3.1 New Media in Communication

When the covid pandemic hit the world, the way human communicates even changes. Social and personal interactions were discouraged. The only option left for the public to get updated of the happenings around the world was through the mainstream news. However, the mainstream media which includes the press and broadcasts media has its predicament too. There are reports of locals or communities forbidding journalists and pressmen from getting firsthand account of information. Besides, families would disallow the delivery of newspapers at home such was the result over the fear of the spread of coronavirus.

A survey conducted through telephonic interview determined the lockdown impact on newspaper reading pattern and time spent by the public. It found that readers who spent over an hour reading before lockdown declined by 22% after lockdown due to the doubt of the spread of infection through newspapers, and many people shifted from print media to digital media (LOCKDOWN IMPACT).

As news supplies became a concern, it paved the way for the rise of several news portals, news application and other social blogs. According to a joint study by Broadcast Audience Research Council of India (BARC) and Nielsen India, there has been a 41% increase in time spent on news apps. Users spent around 40 minutes per week tracking news on their smartphones in the week of March 28 to April 3, up from 27 minutes in the pre-Covid sample period (January 13-February 2, 2020).



Overall, the news franchise on smartphones has grown 34%, the report revealed.

Further, news aggregators also have been directing users to news websites and apps. Aggregator apps have recorded a 50% increase in time spent on their apps during the period between March 21 and 27 2020. For instance, the number of downloads of In shorts (online news site launched in 2015 from Noida) has doubled in March over February. In March the news aggregation platform had registered 40,000-50,000 downloads per day, up from 20,000-25,000 downloads per day in February. "Our regional video news app — Public — is growing faster than Inshorts currently. This is because users in smaller towns and cities do not have access to other sources for digital news and prefer video content over text," said Azhar Iqbal, CEO and co-founder, Inshorts (FINANCIAL EXPRESS).

### 3.2 New media in entertainment Sector

Different media got different taste when it comes to entertaining its masses. However, the entertainment offered by new media is incomparable to print and broadcast media. In fact, all forms of entertainment provide by other media are part and parcel in the new media. While the broadcast media performs better when compared to print, the programs offered by television channels are largely synchronous in nature. This means that in order to enjoy a certain entertainment programme, a person has to be present physically at the aforementioned time. Therefore, many of the programmes can be missed.

The limitation in the nature of entertainment provided by television channels are well addressed with the new media. By and large, the programs, news, videos or in short, its contents are asynchronous in nature. This means that an individual is not affected by its time and availability. He or she may access the content when he is

available. Netflix is one such online streaming platform, an example in this regard.

New media change the face of the entertainment industry. With a variety of games available in different platforms, these are downloaded and used as a means of entertainment by the young. Video/Mobile game like Clash of titans, clash of clans, PUBG and video sharing application such as Tiktok are some that is widely used as a means of entertainment. PUBG, the popular gaming app, was downloaded 83 lakh times between 11 March and 5 April 2020 (the print).

When lockdown was imposed in the first quarter of 2020, these games became the favorite pastime of the youths. While its merits and demerits has been debated, it is without doubt that such games at such a platform is helping millions of youths fight stress who were under lockdown for months. A study published in Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking in April 2021, found that for adolescents, using social media to actively face the situation, relieved their feelings of distress and anxiety to some degree, increasing feelings of happiness.

In another research done by 'The Brave Face of Gen Z', it is evident that young people have been deeply impacted by the crisis. More than 70 per cent say they are currently going through higher levels of stress because of Covid-19 and 57 per cent say their mental well-being has been affected. In this situation, their primary mode of media consumption and communication has been social media. (Indian express) According to a new study by Bain & Company (Bain & Company is an American management consulting company headquartered in Boston, 1973), the online video user base in the country has scaled to more than 350 million people, growing 24% between 2018 and 2020, nearly twice as fast as markets such as China and Indonesia. However, despite this growth, there exists massive headroom in penetration and usage.



About 59% of India's Internet users consume videos online, as against 67% in Japan, 69% in Indonesia, 74% in Brazil, 76% in Mexico, 78% in South Korea, 79% in the UK, 83% in the US and 92% in China (the Hindu).

### 3.3 New media in Business Sector

New media immensely eased business in a number of ways. This has been evident more so during the pandemic. When the pandemic hit the world, the only medium of transaction during lockdown was the online marketplace operated through online transaction. In the previous period online payment has been an option to the business and customers. However, with the pandemic people engage themselves in the virtual means of accessing goods and services. The imposition of lockdown was the reason behind the adoption of new media in business in a large scale.

In towns and cities, the new media give rise to a number of cloud/online based businesses. With the restriction imposed in the opening of stall and malls, entrepreneurs resorted to launching app-based marketplace where people place orders for the product and services they need. Though app-based marketplace is in practice since the past 5/6 years, its adoption during the pandemic is tremendous. The new approach is even convenient for consumers and customers as well. The comfort of placing orders online and the convenience of receiving products at home are unmatched.

Besides the nature of transactions, businesses saw an increasing presence online. Through new media platforms brands are positioned, new products got showcased, feedbacks are received, and rapport is being built between stakeholders. Thus, the role new media plays in businesses goes beyond buying and selling of products and services. There are several factors behind the adoption of media by business establishments. However, the most main reason behind such is the fact that there is an

increasing adoption of new media by the young and the educated. Therefore, it became a perfect promotion platform for businesses.

The Indian e-retail market saw a 25 per cent growth in FY21 despite the two-month national lockdown and multiple prolonged disruptions in regional pockets over the year, as per a report titled 'How India Shops Online 2021' by consulting firm Bain & Company and online retailer Flipkart. During the same period, India's \$810-billion retail market shrunk by 5 per cent, along with a 7.3 per cent contraction in GDP. The e-retail market is expected to grow to \$120-140 billion by FY26, increasing at approximately 25-30 per cent per annum over the next 5 years, according to the report by Business Today).

### 3.4 New Media in Administration

There was a time when the government was at the complete mercy of the press. During those days, the image of the government depends on how the press sees in their lenses. Even the stability of the government was in the hands of the press. However, the situation has completely changed. The relevance of the press as seen in the past is no longer in the scene. The governments were in the position to adopt its own effective tool to communicate the masses.

To communicate the masses about the plans and policies of the government, every politician nowadays uses social sites such as Facebook and Twitter. Through these accounts, they get themselves updated of any activities carried out by them to the public. Besides, every department, ministry and parties maintained their presence in the social sphere. With the advent of the new media, the government no longer is at the mercy of the established media.

The use of new media by politicians has increased since the last ten years or so. Even the present



political dispensation has used social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook to communicate the mass. Its promotional activities are in terms of hundreds of crores. Between February and May 2019, Google and Facebook declared cumulative political online advertising of Rs 58.67 crore. The money spent on both platforms was similar, though Facebook's ad library received a far higher volume of individual advertisements. Google declared 12,276 political advertisements worth Rs. 29.3 crore. Facebook, in its India Ad Library, declared a total of 132,419 advertisements worth Rs 29.28 crore. This simply suggests the importance given by politicians in order to build rapport with the masses.

### 3.5 New Media and Education

With the advent of Web 2.0 technology coupled with the adoption of new media, learning which was once limited to the rich began to be changed. Now, with the tip of a finger, anyone willing to learn can access millions of online sources. Indeed, the new media has provided everyone the ability and the possibility to learn anything literally.

Nowadays, there are online courses accessible through new media. Learning materials are now available in both print and visual formats on the web. So, complex ideas, problems and other scientific knowledge can be learned using different means as desired by the learner. There are free online sources such as Wikipedia where you can contribute and learn as well. There are online videos available at Youtube where there are visual and audio explanations of a particular idea, situation of conditions. Without these platforms, acquiring knowledge or information will still be a distant dream to the disadvantage section of the society.

The manner in which learning takes place have considerably changed. Class and courses which was intended and suited for physical began to be switched to online mode. This are made possible with the new media and its tools. In this regard, the services provided by Zoom and Googlemeet are worth mentioning. With the help of these two

applications hosted through new media, virtual learning is becoming the norm of learning today. With these, a learner and a teacher interact, demonstrate and guide students as it is done in physical class. When one mentions learning in the pandemic world, the platform such as Zoom and Googlemeet cannot be independent from such activities.

The adoption of online based learning has been witnessed during the pandemic tremendously. As per report prepared by Sensor Tower, in the 10 days between 1 March and 11 March 2020, when work-from-home arrangements to check Covid-19 were just beginning to kick in, there were 1.25 lakh Zoom downloads in India. On 11 March, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared Covid-19 a pandemic and calls for social distancing strengthened. From this day until 15 March, a period of four days, there were 1.8 lakh Zoom downloads in India. The number of downloads skyrocketed after 15 March, as more people and organizations opted for work from home to curb the spread of the virus. Social-distancing norms have since assumed the force of the law, with the present government, on 24 March, announcing a 21-day complete nationwide lockdown. Between 15 March and 5 April, Zoom was downloaded 1.26 crore times in India (the print). Such was the intensity over the adoption of online learning platform during the pandemic.

### 4. CONCLUSION

The advent of the internet since the beginning of the 21st century completely changed the way we live, think and survive. The Web promises immense opportunities to each and every one without having to spend much effort. Amidst these the Covid pandemic has brought our reliance to these platforms-the new media- to a whole new level. The technology which was once regarded as an option cannot be denied any longer. It became the mainstream platform of learning and socializing. The widely adoption of new media during the pandemic have taught enough lesson for the public. In a number of ways, the new media is cheap and cost-effective. Anyone with a handheld device is blessed with the opportunity to access wide range of





information. The job it does in easing the teaching-learning process is immensely acknowledged. People have now mastered the use of the technology. Thus, in the near future-even in the post-pandemic period- the new media and its platforms are believed to continue its job of delivering services to the user.

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