Alfa Generation's Book for Comprehensive Digital Media

by
Prof. (Dr.) Minal Pareek

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" It has been a roller coaster ride as a media educator. This compilation is a journey of learnings and knowledge. Digital media and its growth is overpowering human minds, hence it was much needed to bring this knowledge to the table of students and faculty across all domains of academics."

- Prof. (Dr.) Minal Pareek

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Chapter 1

Journalism in India in the era of AI: Challenges and Possibilities

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Abstract

This chapter focuses on various technologies and trends of AI used in the Indian media space. Also after extensive literature review and interview, this chapter emphasizes on the challenges of using AI and shows a route map on how to overcome those challenges to efficiently use AI for the betterment of journalism in India.

Introduction

Marvin Lee Minsky, a mathematician believes, AI is the "science of making machines do things that would require intelligence if done by men." This definition given by Minsky has comprehensively captured the essence of what human beings want to achieve by using Artificial Intelligence in their daily life. In a report, Liran Antebi has mentioned that, initially the 'dominant paradigm' of AI believed that artificial intelligence could replicate human thought. Later on the 'connectionist' paradigm of AI tried to 'imitate' the human cognition by using artificial neurons. But according to Atenbi's report, these paradigms were failures in 'theoretical' and 'laboratory demonstrations. (Antebi, 2021).

Tate Nurkin and Stephen Rodriguez in their work have stated that AI does not have a clear definition. They believe AI is not a specific technology but a range of different techniques. According to them, AI is the term that is typically used for those machines that are capable of learning from the environment. (Nurkin and Rodriguez, 2019) Likewise, Viski et al have regarded AI as a 'host of different computer science and innovation branches'. They believe AI promises to "improve efficiency and functionality in nearly every industry." (Viski et al. 2020) The Digital Media Platforms are also no exception.

The introduction of the AI anchor by Xinhua, the state news agency of China had revolutionized the global media landscape. (1) Now Bloomberg uses the AI technology of a company named Cyborg to assist the reporters to write more articles. In 2019, Guardian Australia had published their first machine assisted article. (2)

AI Based Journalism

While talking about the usage of AI in the field of journalism, it is important to discuss some key terminologies related to this concept.

A relatively new phenomenon is algorithm based journalism. With 'personalisation' and 'Recommendation' becoming the buzzwords in the internet, algorithm based journalism is gaining more traction. One of the major aspects of algorithm based journalism is automated content production. Hence, according to Graefe's definition, this kind of journalism practice is a process of using 'software or algorithm' to generate news stories with the intervention of any human being.

But the problem of such definition is that, it does not reflect other technologies associated with algorithm based journalism. Therefore, Kotenidis and Veglis are of the opinion that, as a result of it, the terms like 'conceptual journalism', 'robotic journalism' or 'autmated journalism' is used interchangeably with algorithm journalism. But Kotenidis and Veglis believe that a more generalized and inclusive definition of this term was given by Hamilton and Turner in 2009, as they feel it is a combination of algorithm, data and knowledge from various branches of social science that helps with the accountability of journalism. (Kotenidis and Veglis, 2021).

Algorithm based journalism is different from the concept of Automated journalism. It is an algorithmic process of converting any data into a narrative news text that does not require any kind of human intervention after the point of initial programming. (Hamilton and Turner, 2009). Hence, the automatic production and distribution of news to the audience is the main goal of automated journalism. (Biswal and Gouda, 2020) The big media houses around the globe are using Automation in their newsroom. But the next step has been achieved by the Chinese news agency, Xinhua has achieved something significant with the introduction of robotic news anchors.

While discussing the issue of automation, Nic Newman in his report has categorically mentioned about the extensive use of AI in the Chinese news apps like Jinri Toutiao (Today's Headlines), Qutoutiao and Kuaibao in order to deliver personalized news to its users based on their preference.

But Newman has also expressed his concern about the potential problem of the trend of disseminating personalized information to the audience. According to him, clickbait videos are the result of this particular trend as those are designed to attract more views. In order to create clickbait, a number of Chinese news apps like Toutiao started making contents with distorted information and vulgar materials. Hence, in 2018, the Chinese government decided to suspend quite a few apps along with Toutiao. (Newman, 2019).

Data Journalism is another term that is coined in recent times. With journalism in modern times getting extremely data- driven and technology oriented, the journalists need to justify their claims with empirical evidence. Epistemological validity of knowledge has become a

buzzword for journalists in the 21st century. (Morini, 2023). According to Berret and Phillips, data journalism is a field which incorporates collecting, analyzing, visualizing and publishing data for journalistic purposes. (Charles and Phillips, 2016)

On a similar line, Howard had defined data journalism as an application of data science. In this context, Howard has elaborated the idea of data science where he defined the concept as 'extraction of knowledgefromdata'.(Howard,2014)InIndia,withtheemergenceofdigital journalism platforms like The Quint and Newslaundry data journalism started to flourish.

AI and Changing Indian Media Landscape

In the past couple of years, with the advent of AI newsbots, particularly in Television, there is a massive shift in the Indian media landscape.

AI powered news presenter of India Today's Aaj Tak news channel. (3) According to an article written by Debanjan Banerjee, Indian Media and The entertainment Industry has witnessed a strong growth in recent times. He cited a FCCI- EY report and according to that report, the advertising to GDP ratio is expected to increase 0.02% in 2025 from that of 2019. (From 0.38% in 2019 to 0.40% in 2025) According to Banerjee, by taking advantage of problem solving capabilities of AI and its abilities to simulate human intelligence, the media industry is trying to cut their expenses. (4) After the introduction of 'Sana', the AI presenter with the ability to read using text to speech technology, other regional news channels like Power TV, a Kannada news channel, launched its first AI news presenter named 'Soundarya' in 2023. Another Kannada TV Channel News First Kannada had followed the path of Power TV and launched their AI anchor later in the same year. (5) In 2024, INMA's South Asia News Media Festival, Rohit Saran, the managing editor of Times of India has mentioned that the use of Generative AI has managed to reduce the workload of the editor in the newsroom. He has said, there are almost 500 reporters working for TOI from different parts of the country, but due to their lack of fluency in English, the newspaper needed to have around 400 editors to edit and rewrite their copies. But with the use of Generative AI, those reporters can now submit their copies in bullet points in their own language and the Times' GenAI tool transforms those copies into a 300 word article and suggests a few options for suitable headlines for that article. But Saran

has mentioned that, without manual inspections, those AI generated articles are not being approved for publication. (6) In 2019, a report by Reuters Institute and University of Oxford named, 'Journalism, Media, andTechnology Trends and Predictions 2019' has suggested through a survey conducted among reporters and editors, that, 78% respondents believe that, there should be more investments in Artificial Intelligence in the newsroom. Interestingly, 85% respondents also think that they need to have more editors and journalists to meet future challenges. The respondents of that survey do not rule out the importance of having more editors and reporters despite incorporating and experimenting with AI. Ritu Kapoor, the CEO of The Quint, while talking to the writer had emphasized on the mix of human and artificial intelligence for media operations. (Newman, 2019).

As more news media in India are expanding their wings online, they have started using AI tools to increase their online traffic. As for example, Hindustan Times, in February 2023, had launched their AI initiative in order to increase the efficiency of their users and to increase their onlinetraffic.Theirinitiative is focusingonAIbased newsroom, subscription acquisition, personalisation, Generative AI based newsroom and managing the revenue. (7)

Trusting AI Journalism

Opdahl et al. have stated that, in modern times, there is immense pressure on the newsroom and according to them, AI's role is to reduce the expenses of the news organizations and to improve the efficiency. They have identified, usage of AI in newsrooms may help to collect the background information automatically, helping journalists to save up time on the tiring process of fact verification and helping and assisting them to create and present tasks. However, Opdahlet al. believes that, there should be a business model and editorial independence in a news media to ensure efficiency and a high quality journalistic practice, but the media organization should also be mindful of not using AI just to reduce the workforce.

Hence, Opdahl et al. have stated that, the central aim of AI is not only to increase trustworthiness, but also to reduce the tedious work pressure from the journalists, so that, they can invest more time in the process of creativity and self reflection which would ultimately resultin improved journalism. (Opdahl et al. 2023).