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Preface

Communication has long been recognised as a critical site through which power, representation, access, and social relations are negotiated and contested. In contemporary societies marked by rapid technological transformation, global interconnectedness, and shifting political economies, inequalities within communication systems have become increasingly visible and consequential. Structural disparities in access to media and technology, asymmetries in knowledge production, algorithmic governance, and uneven participation in public discourse continue to shape social realities across diverse contexts. The study of communication inequalities, therefore, remains central to understanding broader questions of democracy, inclusion, cultural citizenship, and social justice.

Against this backdrop, the conference themed *Communication and Inequalities in Context* seeks to foster critical and inclusive dialogue around the multiple dimensions of inequality shaping contemporary communication landscapes. The conference provides an interdisciplinary platform for scholars, researchers, practitioners, and students to examine how communication processes both reproduce and challenge structures of exclusion, hierarchy, and marginalisation across local, national, and global settings.

This Book of Abstracts brings together a diverse body of research that reflects the breadth and complexity of these concerns. The contributions engage with issues ranging from communication and social transformation, infrastructural inequalities, and intersectional power relations to transnational communication asymmetries, digital cultures, algorithmic bias, data justice, and epistemic inequalities in research and academia. Collectively, the abstracts highlight the evolving nature of communication inequalities and the need for critical, context-sensitive, and interdisciplinary approaches to their study.

As the Kolkata, India Regional Hub of the 76th Annual International Communication Association Conference, at Sister Nivedita University, Kolkata represents an important effort to strengthen scholarly engagement between regional research contexts and global communication scholarship. The conference sub-themes, *Communication, Society & Structural Inequalities*; *Critical Theory, Power & Inclusion*; *Global & Cross-Border Communication Contexts*; *Digital Cultures, Algorithms & Data Justice*; and *Knowledge Systems & Research Inequalities*, have enabled meaningful scholarly engagement with some of the most pressing debates within contemporary communication research. The range of perspectives represented in this volume underscores the importance of dialogue across disciplinary, geographical, and methodological boundaries.

We extend our sincere gratitude to all contributors for their insightful research and participation. We also acknowledge the invaluable efforts of the reviewers, session chairs, organising committee members, volunteers, and institutional partners whose support and commitment made this conference possible.

It is our hope that this volume will contribute to ongoing academic conversations on communication and inequality and inspire future research, collaboration, and critical engagement in the field.

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Theme 1:

The evolving landscape of the relationship between communication and inequality

From Margins to Archive: Bhimayana and the Visual Politics of Subaltern Representation

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The marginalised often linger at the edges of dominant discourse, silenced within deeply rooted social hierarchies. Drawing on Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's essay, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', this paper through the graphic novel, *Bhimayana: Experiences of Untouchability*, aims to examine how the text negotiates the politics of representation through Spivak's distinction between *Vertreten* and *Darstellung*. The text further complicates the questions of representation raised by Spivak and hints towards a prospective pathway leading to the empowerment of the marginalized by their own voices. It further explores the possibility of marginalized art forms like Pradhan Gond art to be theorized as a medium of graphic storytelling, instead of relying on dominant Western narrative frameworks. It tries to portray the importance of developing an indigenous narrative form within Indian aesthetics and context by referring to Amiya Dev's concepts of 'situs' and 'rootedness' in a postcolonial discourse. The study adopts a qualitative textual and visual analysis of *Bhimayana*, drawing on Spivak's critique of representation, Dev's culturally rooted comparative framework, and Scott McCloud's visual narrative theory in *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*. The study highlights that *Bhimayana* through its distinctive mode of subaltern portrayal, challenges the dominant visual narrative techniques and emerges with a capacity to address social realities and engage meaningfully within global discourses on representation, communication, and inequality. The paper contributes to ongoing discussions on subaltern representation, visual culture, postcolonial studies within the evolving landscape of the relationship between communication and inequality.

Keywords: Dalit Literature, Graphic Narrative, Postcolonial Studies, Subaltern Representation, Visual Culture

Communication Infrastructures as Anchors in Community Building and the Production of Space: An Ethnographic Study of Working-class Odia Migrant Community in Katedan IDA, Hyderabad

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Drawing on Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* and Sandra Ball-Rokeach's *Communication Infrastructure Theory*, this paper examines how communication infrastructures built by a migrant community function as central anchors through which community is formed and urban space is produced. Based on an ethnographic study of the Odia migrant community in the Katedan industrial area—a dense MSMEs hub on the outskirts of Hyderabad, the paper focuses on two such infrastructures: religious spaces like temples and secular spaces like commercial establishments.

Working class migrants experience persistent precarity in relation to employment, housing and social security. In the absence of sustained state support and often unwelcoming local environments, community emerges around shared identities, migration histories and cultural symbols. This emergence is not merely a response to urban insecurities but an ongoing collective effort to resist spatial, socio-political and economic marginalisation. This paper examines how such community formation is mediated through communication infrastructures, particularly temples and commercial spaces, and how these sites actively shape lived space within precarious industrial environments.

Drawing on eight years of field work involving participant observation, 15 semi-structured interviews and extensive informal conversations, the paper analytically operationalizes temples and commercial establishments as communication infrastructures by categorizing them as communication nodes, hotspots, or comfort zones. Temples anchor symbolic communication by serving as centres for festival celebrations and community meals (nodes), while commercial establishments facilitate everyday interactions, information exchange and network formation (hotspots). The findings suggest that these infrastructures are not merely supportive but constitutive of both community and space.

By examining the triad of communication, migrant community and spatial production, this paper brings spatial theory and migration studies into conversation within communication scholarship. Ultimately, this study argues that urban policy and migration governance must move beyond formal frameworks to recognise socio-spatial anchors as vital communication infrastructures that enable migrant communities to mitigate precarity, resist marginalisation, and actively produce lived space.

Keywords: Communication Infrastructures, Production of Space, Urban Precarity, Migrant Community

Journalism Under Constraint: Platform-Based Regional Media During Internet Shutdown in Jammu and Kashmir

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In today's digital world, media rely heavily on uninterrupted internet connectivity to produce and disseminate information. However, when this communication system gets disrupted, especially during crises, journalistic practice gets severely affected. The prolonged digital disruption in Jammu and Kashmir following the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019 presented this unique challenge for the media. They had to function with limited internet under severe communication conditions. This paper examines how regional media used mobile journalism to reshape communication when digital infrastructure is compromised. The study analyses two regional media outlets, Jammu Link News and Kashmir Life, which adapted journalistic practices through mobile-first publishing on Facebook to navigate this situation. The paper integrates Framing Theory, News Value Theory and Platform Affordance Theory to analyse how regional media narrates conflict and authority, judges and prioritises information based on news values such as relevance, continuity, negativity, etc., and illuminates social media features such as visibility, brevity and persistence in constrained situations. Empirically, the study adopts a netnographic approach combined with reflexive thematic analysis to examine Facebook post captions of two regional media outlets between August 2019 and February 2021. These captions were manually analysed thematically and coded using framing and news values to identify narrative patterns. The findings reveal two contrasting yet interconnected forms of journalism. Jammu Link News focused on official statements and institutional decisions, framing events as administrative and political. In contrast, Kashmir Life focused on the human impact of conflict, detentions and everyday consequences of restrictions, presenting personal experiences and social disruption perspectives of the event. These reflect the deeper socio-political context influencing the two media outlets within Jammu and Kashmir. Geographically and culturally closer to mainland India, the Jammu-based outlet presents the dominant and administrative narrative of normalcy and development, whereas anti-hegemonic discourse is visible in the reporting of Kashmir Life due to the prevailing sense of alienation in the Kashmir valley from the Indian state over a period. The analysis also shows how low-bandwidth social media platform Facebook reinvented journalistic operations through platform dynamics such as brevity, algorithmic visibility, speed and tone in short-form news text and perspectives that gained prominence during these restricted environments.

Keywords: Regional Media, Mobile Journalism, Internet Shutdown, Conflict Reporting, Facebook, J&K

Gendered Visuals: A Goffmanian Analysis of Bollywood Film Posters in the Post-COVID Era

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Gender prevalence and portrayal across different media forms have been a significant area of research. This paper attempts to study the gender dynamics portrayed in the depiction of characters and designs in main cinematic posters of Bollywood movies released in theatres and Over-The-Top (OTT) platforms between 2022 and 2025 using Goffman's theory of gender analysis. Bollywood is one of the most influential film industries in India. The time period was deliberately chosen because the post-COVID era witnessed a substantial rise in OTT releases, allowing a decent sample size for the study. This study examines whether audience segmentation influences poster design and other creative elements of a film in any meaningful way. The movies for each year were selected based on their financial success and popularity, ensuring the inclusion of films with higher visibility among audiences. Goffman deduced six categories of gender assessment; relative size, function ranking, feminine/masculine touch, ritualisation of subordination, licensed withdrawal, and family. Drawing parallels with Goffman's categories, the findings indicate that male characters tend to hold more visual weight in film posters in terms of relative size and function ranking. This is particularly evident in films that are primarily male-lead driven, where female characters do not contribute significantly to the film's narrative. Licensed withdrawal was found to not be exclusive to the depiction of female characters alone. Although the posters examined did not necessarily portray women as submissive, in most cases, women's body language appeared delicate and docile. Also, more female-centric or gender-equal portrayals were observed in OTT content, which invites discussion around digital inclusivity and online audience segmentation.

Keywords: Bollywood Posters, Gender, Goffman's theory, Digital Inclusion, Audience Segmentation

The Role of Communication in Reducing Gender Inequality in India: Advancing SDG 5

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Gender inequality is a persistent global issue that acts as a barrier to social progress and economic prosperity. In this context, effective communication could be an impactful move. This paper focuses on how communication helps reduce gender inequality and ties into Sustainable Development Goal 5: Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. This paper also aims to find how strategies in communication can push back on those traditional patriarchal norms. They promote empowerment for women and help build societies that eliminate gender inequality. The focus area of this study includes how the media portrays women and digital online activism. Analysis from previous research has found that communication has the potential to speed up reaching SDG 5. It can amplify women's voices in ways that challenge stereotypes and promote the required social change. Limitations like cultural barriers and the digital divide can resist the process of approaching equality. In conclusion, suggestions and recommendations for policymakers and researchers include gender-sensitive approaches to media policies. Promoting digital literacy might help, and engaging men in advocacy for equality could be key. By leveraging communication strategically, we can accelerate progress towards SDG-5 and create a more equitable society.

Keywords: Gender Inequality, SDG-5, Empowerment, Effective Communication

Dalit-led Media Initiatives and Their Sustainability Under Conditions of Inequality

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Although limited, a growing body of scholarship has begun to focus on the representation (or lack thereof) of Dalits within mainstream newsrooms. While much of this work focuses on representation, there remains a lack of attention to the media spaces created and sustained by Dalit communities, including print magazines, YouTube channels, and publishing houses. Taken together, these platforms constitute what this paper conceptualizes as Dalit-led media initiatives, understood as media platforms led by Dalit actors that operate outside mainstream institutions and are shaped by shared conditions of caste-based marginalization and resource constraints. These initiatives are distinguished not only by Dalit ownership but also by their editorial commitments, resource constraints shaped by caste hierarchies, and their role in producing counter-public narratives.

The paper examines the conditions under which these initiatives operate, with a focus on political pressures and economic challenges, particularly regarding long-term sustainability and labour conditions. These dimensions are examined together to understand how caste-based structural inequalities shape both the production and survival of Dalit-led media initiatives. It addresses the following research questions: (1) How do caste-based inequalities structure access to media markets, resources, and long-term sustainability for Dalit-led media initiatives? and (2) How do political and economic constraints shape editorial practices and labour conditions within Dalit-led media initiatives?

To answer these questions, the study uses a qualitative, multi-sited case study approach focusing on three Dalit-led media initiatives across different media formats. Cases were selected based on variation in organizational structure, funding model, and political positioning, enabling comparison across different resource and power contexts. The study draws on 15 semi-structured interviews with founders, editors, journalists, and contributors, along with three months of multi-sited fieldwork involving participant observation of media production processes and editorial practices. Data will be analyzed through thematic coding and comparative analysis across cases.

Drawing on critical caste studies and the political economy of media, the paper argues that communication inequality extends beyond representation to include unequal access to media markets, resources, and institutional support, shaping who can produce and sustain media platforms over time.

Keywords: Dalit-Led Media, Critical Caste Studies, Media Sustainability, Communication Inequality, Caste and Media.

Political Communication from Print Media to Podcasting: Understanding how Media Shapes Political Consciousness and Social Transformation

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Marshall McLuhan argued in the book 'Understanding Media' that the form of a medium shapes human perception and behaviour more strongly than the content it carries, thereby bringing about social transformation. The present study applies McLuhan's media theory to understand how media shapes our political consciousness through his concept of 'the medium is the message', which emphasises how our perception, social organisation, and democratic engagement are shaped by the medium, not by the content it carries. The available literature, both chronologically and thematically, is reviewed to understand the shift in political communication from print to podcasting. Applying McLuhan's theoretical framework of 'hot' and 'cool' media to the study, this measure assesses the technological transition in political communication. He termed print media as "the Gutenberg Galaxy", a visual, linear medium that rewarded literacy, hierarchy, and individualism. Radio extended the

human voice across space in real time. The medium favoured emotional connection, and tone became decisive. Further, politics shifted from debate to feeling. In 1960, the Kennedy-Nixon debate on Television shifted politics to visual aesthetics and performance, showing that appearance matters more than argument. In the 21st century, with the advent of the internet, the idea of 'global village' was further emphasised, helping politicians to connect directly to the audience, where engagement outweighs truth. Finally, podcasting offers a hybrid media form that fosters long-form intimacy, helping develop parasocial relationships with podcasters. The study found that each medium's 'message' is embedded in its structure, not in the content. Different media foster different messages as print fostered individualism, television fostered celebrity politics, and social media produces perpetual presentism. The contemporary political communication strategy depicts how successful campaigns align with McLuhan's theory. Podcasting represents the latest extension of our senses in political life. It can be conceptualised as a return to the oral tradition, amplified by digital distribution, in which the leader's voice enters the listener's private space for hours, reshaping trust and engagement in ways print, radio, television, or social media alone cannot; thereby, the medium continues to be the message.

Keywords: Political Communication, Marshal McLuhan, Media Theory, Podcasting, Social Transformation

Experiences of Wifi infrastructure: Everyday encounters of (dis)connectivity among people in Tumkuru, Karnataka

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Public Wi-Fi initiatives have emerged as pivotal infrastructural interventions to mitigate digital inequities and democratize access to information in resource-constrained settings. This study, situated in Tumakuru district, Karnataka, a semi-urban region characterized by heterogeneous socio-economic fabrics and escalating digital demands—critically examines the spatial transformations engendered by community Wi-Fi hotspots. Specifically, it investigates whether these hotspots have exacerbated pre-existing hierarchical dimensions (e.g., caste, class, and gender-based disparities) or flattening of such inequities through enhanced connectivity. The research triangulates quantitative data from user logs, access metrics, and bandwidth utilization patterns with qualitative insights derived from semi-structured interviews, among Wi-Fi users, local authorities, digital literacy facilitators, and marginalized communities. Lefebvre's spatial triad (1991), the analysis interrogates patterns of usage, structural limitations (e.g., bandwidth throttling, coverage gaps), spatiality (e.g., hotspot placement vis-à-vis residential and public nodes), gendered access dynamics, and hierarchical stratifications.

Preliminary findings suggest hotspots yield uneven spatial impacts, reinforcing elite capture in peri-urban zones while marginally empowering peripheral users. This study contributes to communication and media studies by illuminating how public Wi-Fi reshapes socio-spatial hierarchies in the Global South, offering policy recommendations for equitable digital infrastructure deployment.

Keywords: Public Wi-Fi; Spatial Transformations; Community Hotspots; Gendered Access; Hierarchical Inequities; Infrastructural Interventions

Un-Gendering the Market: Advertising, Inequality and the Changing Face of Communication

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Advertising in today's digital culture is not about selling a product but has move far beyond the traditional market and has become a powerful tool in the cultural arena where identities are formed, executed and challenged. Within the Indian context, this shift is especially important as advertising increasingly addresses intricate social issues like gender diversity, emotional expression and social inclusion. (Un)Gendering means not referring to any gender and moving beyond the binary traditional norms and stereotypes to fluid and inclusive representations. This research aims to analyse how gender identities and sexual representations are portrayed in the brand campaigns, recognizing gender neutral elements through visual representations like colour , language and designs in the advertisements also how gender neutral advertisements contributes to the development of inclusive brand identities and influences consumer perceptions. The methodology used is mixed research approach .By using qualitative content analysis of specific advertisements from famous Indian brands focussing on their visual stories, character representation and fundamental ideas. The sentiment analysis was applied to understand the audience perceptions on the advertisements in You tube additionally a survey was done among the young generations (Gen-z) to understand the attitudes and reactions towards gender neutral advertisements.

The research is theoretically based in gender performativity theory which focuses on gender as a socially produced and displayed identity and the theory of recognition and redistribution, which focuses on the importance of cultural representation as well as economic and social equity. The findings show that while contemporary advertising is increasingly using gender-neutral and inclusive perspectives its effect shifts depending on authenticity and audience reception. While such efforts have the power to challenge stereotypes and promote inclusion they usually exist within commercial structures, thereby reflecting both progressive growth and underlying structural inequality.

Keywords: Ungendered, Gender -Neutral Advertising, Consumer Preferences, Generation Z, Gender Identity, Brand Campaigns

Echo Chambers, Information Diversity and Youth Perception of Social Issues on Social Media

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The rapid expansion of social media has transformed the ways in which young people access information, engage in public discourse, and develop perceptions of contemporary social issues. While digital platforms provide opportunities for participation and Information sharing, algorithmically curated feeds and personalised Recommendation system increasingly shape users' exposure to content. This study examines how Echo Chambers and information diversity within social media environment influence youth perception of social issues. Drawing upon Leon Festinger's Selective exposure theory, Cass Sunstein's Echo Chamber concept, and Eli Pariser's Filter Bubble Concept, the study explores how user preference and algorithmic systems interact to reinforce similar view points and potentially limit exposure to diverse perspective. The research adopts a quantitative online survey method involving 120 undergraduate college students aged between 18 to 22 years from Howrah who actively use social media platforms. The study seeks to examine pattern of social media use for information related to social issues, analyse whether users are exposed to diverse or homogenous viewpoints, and explore How such exposure shapes there understanding and perception of social realities. The

study argues that unequal exposure to information in digital environment may contribute to new forms of communication inequality, where algorithmic personalization and networked interactions influence knowledge formation and opinion development among youth. The findings are expected to contribute to contemporary communication research by providing insights into how social media ecosystem affects democratic discourse, information diversity, and youth engagement with social issues in an increasingly mediated society.

Keywords: Social Media, Echo Chamber, Information Diversity, Youth Perception, Social Issues.

From Echo Chamber to Public Sphere: An epistemological analysis of Free Will through Advaita Vedanta

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This study aims to find out if Man really possess the potential to enjoy something called 'Free Will'. In the era of Social Media, the virtual culture is playing a crucial role in constructing Behavioral Notions. This study enquires about the difference in impact made within digital echo chambers and real-life echo chambers, in the contemporary public sphere. The family draws cultural influence from the society. These notions are, then, forwarded to the younger generation. Thus, this research examines this constructed behaviour and Man's innate urge towards Free Will. The research adopts a qualitative approach using thematic analysis of the Advaita Vedanta using the Bhagavad Gita, the Ramcharitmanas and the Mundaka Upanishad. Findings indicate that 'Constructive Communication' is directly proportional to 'Argumentative Communication', leading to the creation of augmented reality. However, the concept of 'Opinion Leader' can never be eradicated from participatory mode of communication. The study contributes to ongoing discussions on digital participation, youth culture, and media engagement within evolving communication ecosystems.

Keywords: Digital Media, Youth Culture, Advaita Vedanta, Constructive Communication, Augmented Reality

Egocentrism and Disillusionment in Communication Context

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Communication, the act of transmitting, receiving, exchanging ideas; a basic necessity governing crucial acts, pronouncements, responses and has the power to transform the world, in its truest sense is not just words; is often more nonverbal than verbal hinging upon socio-psychological dynamics of human lives. In the recent world of modernized digital communication and information overload, the manner and requisites of communication processes is emerging and evolving as more complex phenomenon than ever, expediting a communicator to be further voiced in individual perceptions & sentences than always through platforms of evaluation and creation: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc. However, Communication is not just a sender's essential but a receiver's conviction; an effective sender-receiver connection figured on the substance of trust, credibility and empathy. Close to sturdily voicing one's perceptions and judgements lies a fine disunion of an assertive communicator expressing individual opinion and beliefs and exhibiting egocentrism unveiling unconscious disregard of receiver's view, need and expectation, thereby impeding effective communication and may even lead to miscommunication. Egocentrism in communication is difficulty differentiating between self and other; difficulty in accurately perceiving and understanding perspectives other than one's own. This study aimed to examine, understand and analyse the nature of impact caused upon communication context and processes as a result of communicators' enormous exposure and access to digital communication platforms and the complex dynamics of expression and expectation in the socio-psychological domains of human communication. This study is an Interpretative analysis done by using the Discourse analysis technique

Keywords: sender, receiver, egocentrism, miscommunication, communication context

Theme 2:
Conceptualisations and theorisations of communication inequality and inclusion/exclusion

The Verbatim Script: A Study of Textual Fidelity in the Digital Audio Adaptations of Satyajit Ray's Feluda Stories

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This paper investigates the practice of maintaining verbatim fidelity in the remediation of digital audio adaptations of Satyajit Ray's Feluda stories on Mirchi Bangla's YouTube channel. Through a comparative analysis of print vs. audio of selected passages from three Feluda stories, Hatyapuri (হত্যাপুরী), Chhinnomastar Obhishaap (ছিন্নমস্তার অভিশাপ), and Gangtok-e Gondogol (গ্যাংটকে গণ্ডগোল), this paper shows the near-total fidelity between Ray's printed prose and their audio play versions. Deviations from the original text are rare and can be classified into two categories: medium-necessitated additions and medium-necessitated omissions. Some words are added in the audio adaptations to compensate for communicative effects that are easily conveyed in print but more difficult to express through sound, while certain textual elements become redundant because the audio medium already fulfills their communicative function. The findings demonstrate that the production operates as a custodial media practice, utilizing sound design and vocal performance to make the original layout of the print page clear to the ear.

Drawing on Walter Ong's (1982) theory of secondary orality and Bolter and Grusin's (1999) concept of remediation, I set aside traditional transformative adaptation models and argue that maintaining strict verbatim fidelity when adapting regional, vernacular literature for global, digital media platforms serves as a structural mechanism for achieving communication inclusivity. By preserving regional, vernacular literature against algorithmic pressures to standardise language, verbatim remediation allows for more equal communication within a stratified digital environment. Thus, maintaining textual fidelity can be a critical aid towards communication inclusivity, allowing regional registers to achieve equitable representation without sacrificing their linguistic integrity

Keywords: Verbatim Remediation, Satyajit Ray, Feluda, Secondary Orality, Communication Inequality.

Meaning in the Margins: Generative AI, Advertising Infrastructure and Cognitive-Environmental Inequality in the Global South

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The expansion of generative AI-driven advertising systems has transformed communication from the distribution of information to the algorithmic structuring of environments in which information is encountered and interpreted. While traditional frameworks of communication inequality focus on access and skills, they fail to account for how AI-mediated systems produce differential conditions for meaning formation across populations.

This paper examines whether these systems institutionalize a new form of inequality by differentially shaping

coherence (narrative stability) and navigability (capacity for control and orientation). In the Global South, low-income users are disproportionately embedded in high-volume, low-transparency, advertising-saturated ecosystems, while higher-income users retain the means to curate their informational surroundings. The result is not merely unequal access to data, but an unequal distribution of the conditions required to maintain a coherent reality.

The study aims to: (i) conceptualize this condition as cognitive-environmental inequality; (ii) operationalize it through Exposure Entropy, Coherence, and Navigability; and (iii) examine its structural production through a TWAIL lens as a continuation of epistemic inequality between the Global North and South.

Adopting a conceptual-analytical framework, the paper draws on MTML and principles of CCS. It treats AI-driven advertising infrastructures as dynamic cognitive environments and conducts a structured comparative analysis across socioeconomic and geopolitical strata. The analysis is further grounded in a rights-based juridical perspective, drawing on cognitive autonomy, informational self-determination, and dignity to evaluate the implications of differentially structured environments.

The analysis suggests that AI-driven systems tend to produce higher-entropy, less coherent, and less navigable environments for marginalized populations, increasing cognitive load and constraining autonomy. These conditions reproduce colonial patterns of epistemic asymmetry, shifting the core axis of inequality from access to information toward control over the architecture of meaning.

Keywords: Cognitive-Environmental Inequality, Generative AI, TWAIL, Computational Communication Science, Epistemic Inequality, Global South

Algorithmic Colonialism and the Digital Afterlife of the Literary Canon: Search Engines, Recommendation Systems, and the Persistence of Western Literary Authorities

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Literary knowledge in its contemporary circulation occurs increasingly within the circle of algorithmically mediated environments, for instance, digital archives, search engines, and recommendation systems. Although these platforms present themselves as supposedly neutral infrastructures for retrieving information, they recursively reproduce historical asymmetries because of an algorithmic bias embedded within the literary canon. This paper aims to explore how algorithmic systems participate and engage in such reproductions of epistemic inequality by a thorough examination of the privileges that canonical Western texts in digital knowledge networks receive. The discourses of algorithmic colonialism and theories of epistemic power in regards to knowledge productions are imperative here, and the study interrogates and probes into the various methods in which digital platforms extend and perpetuate colonial hierarchies of legitimacy authority into the contemporary discursive and communicative spaces.

By keeping the aggression of digital discoverability on the forefront, we are going to analyze the circulation of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Rabindranath Tagore's *Gitanjali*. This paper's objective is to analyze the disparities between recommendation patterns, search visibility, and frequency and densities of citation across several and mostly the major digital platforms. Through a comparative reading of search engine results, metadata infrastructures, as well as algorithmically generated recommendations, this study will demonstrate how texts belonging to the Western canon continue to receive a disproportionate amount of attention due to algorithmic amplifications, while non-Western literary works are marginalized in comparison within ecosystems of global information provision.

The readings and the analysis seeks to situate these inferences within the broader discourses and debates surrounding digital humanities, postcolonial knowledge systems and hierarchies, and the formation of a canon

by drawing on conceptual and theoretical frameworks as prescribed and proposed by critiques and scholars such as Edward Said, Safiya Noble, and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong' o, and the intersection of literary studies and communication technologies will be examined in this paper in order to argue that algorithmic infrastructures don't actually function as passive conduits of cultural knowledge, but as active agents in shaping literary authority and visibility, as well as representation and ultimately, this paper wants to contemplate about algorithmically curated literary spaces and contend that there is a risk of perpetuating a digital afterlife of the colonial and the postcolonial canon, wherein historical hierarchies through narratives of cultural prestige are reinscribed through contemporary systems of retrieval of information. Therefore, to address these dynamics, it's crucial to understand how communicative technologies continue to curate and structure inequalities in the process of literary knowledge production across the globe.

Keywords: Algorithmic Colonialism, Digital Canon Formation, Epistemic Inequality, Literary Knowledge Production, Postcolonial Digital Humanities, Algorithmic Bias in Cultural Platforms

Inclusion of Climate Change Education across the Rural and Urban Education Settings: Towards Spreading Environmental Awareness among Children and Youth

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Climate change is a pressing issue of the new millennium. Though the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes on climate change education and awareness among the students (from primary schools to higher education) towards sensitization and development of a sense of responsibility toward the environment and sustainability among the children and youth, the same is yet to be successfully implemented. The present study focuses on the inclusivity of climate education among rural and urban children and youth. A preliminary review the existing literature hints at marked challenges in both rural and urban educational settings concerning insufficient teacher training, a lack of hands-on training, and inadequate action-based knowledge of environmental sustainability. While rural settings appear to lack adequate infrastructure and resources to provide effective climate change education despite being closer to nature, urban settings, despite having access to better digital resources, sufficient infrastructure, and institutional support, seem far removed from practical learning and real-life experience. Therefore, this study aims to do a comprehensive analysis of the climate change education scenario in India, including both rural and urban educational settings, based on meta-analysis of earlier works, towards exploring the possibility of a holistic education system for climate change education, in which curriculum-based knowledge or formal schooling can be combined with informal learning opportunities (eco-clubs), experiential learning, and community-based initiatives (teamwork) towards fostering a better understanding of climate change among Indian children and youth.

Keywords: Climate Change Education, Educational Curriculum, Environmental Awareness, Rural-Urban Disparities, Youth Engagement.

Media Representation of Indigenous Identity and Politics in India: A Case of State of Jharkhand

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The population of indigenous community in India is around 104 million (Census of India, 2011), still their representation in the mainstream media is little. Globalization, increasing literacy among the indigenous communities, and proliferation of social media led to the democratization of the media space which has

brought many indigenous stories from within the community. Though the voices of the marginalized were somehow under spoken and unheard in the mainstream media and discourse yet there were consistent efforts to bring forth their stories and identity. Since 1990's after the coming of cable and satellite TV, the scenario changed a lot. But tribal people constitutes less than one percent of the media industry workforce that too they work at the lower ranks which speaks for their underrepresentation in media.

Media is a significant tool representing the indigenous identity and putting forth their stories to bring into mainstream politics and media discourse. Thus, this paper would seek to discuss the development of media discourse around the tribal identity and what efforts were put by the mainstream, traditional and alternative media. Also it would seek to find out what are the issues which are given more prominence in media related to tribal population. How and to what extent the representation of indigenous identity and culture resonates with their real life. Further to what extent the tribal history, icons and their culture are recognized in the mainstream media and discourse.

This paper would seek to discuss this issue mostly from the secondary accounts and having an overview of media content. Further it would discuss different case studies where special efforts were put by individuals, organization and agencies for taking forward the tribal stories and discourse. It would also include the account of significant tribal leaders, intellectuals, speakers, journalists, filmmakers and activists by referring to their interviews. Thus, this paper seeks to discuss the development of tribal discourse in Indian media and how it got shaped in the past 30 years particularly in the state of Jharkhand. In doing so, it would take into account the theoretical perspective of cultural studies, representation and political communication.

Keywords: Media Representation, Indigenous People, Adivasi, Stereotype, Jharkhand Media, Tribal Discourse

Beauty, Identity and Influence: Exploring Power and Representation in Digital Spaces through a Qualitative Lens

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With the power of digital media, the development of concepts of beauty and identity is taking place online, and this is possible through the production of content by social media influencers. This study aims to look into the construction of beauty online, especially through the concepts of power and representation. This investigation will be carried out through a qualitative study employing thematic analysis of influencer content to explore how particular concepts of beauty are communicated.

This particular study will seek to investigate the ways through which social media influencers can be used to promote particular concepts of beauty and lifestyle, which can, in turn, affect the manner through which people perceive themselves and others. It will also look into whether it is really possible for diverse representations of identity to be constructed through social media sites, or whether they still promote certain ideals of skin tone, physical type, and status.

In addition, through the patterns and ideas obtained from the content and the message, the paper will be able to show the ways in which digital beauty culture is not only about expression, but also about influence and power. With the creation of social media sites for influencers, it is not only promoting certain ideals of creativity and inclusion, but also promoting ideals of traditional beauty standards.

The findings show that social media influencer not only shapes beauty and identity but also reinforces traditional norms, while sometimes allowing alternative representations.

Power in content creation affects audience self-perception, lifestyle, and ideas of inclusion and exclusion. Therefore, this research seeks to further highlight the idea of power and representation, especially in relation to the world of social media influencers and the importance of promoting certain ideas of beauty.

Keywords: Beauty, Identity, Influence, Power, Digital Spaces

Pedagogy of Allyship: Sensitizing Male Graduate Students in the Indian Mass Media Classroom

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The journalism and mass communication education increasingly seeks to engage male students in understanding gendered power relations. Integrating topics on gender issues into mass - media curricula aims to train “reflexive practitioners” capable of reshaping media narratives. This study explores the transformative potential of gender-sensitive pedagogy among male graduate students of journalism and mass communication classrooms.

This paper focuses on the critical interrogation of neutrality, privilege, and among future media practitioners. The study employs narrative inquiry and self-reflexive journals as data sources, which have been analyzed using thematic analysis. Focusing on studying how male students negotiate notions of neutrality, privilege, and self – reflection within mass - media classrooms. Addressing questions, firstly the construction of gendered neutrality among male students, secondly hegemonic masculinity in facilitating the unlearning patriarchal biases and pedagogical perspectives that foster active allyship in a media scholar in classroom.

The findings assert that male students’ patriarchal socialization enable neutrality with objectivity equally. It unconsciously reinforces systematic privilege of being an ‘authoritative voice’ in their social patriarchal power hierarchies among male students.

This paper identifies that critical inquiry on gender issues during classroom interactions does offer safe-space dialogues in shifting male students’ perspectives from defensiveness and reluctance toward professional accountability. This possibility of dialogue is essential quality of the heterogenous classroom teaching to invoke action based critical thinking among students. Foregrounding the pedagogy of allyship for gender and communication curricula in mass media classroom is significant in cultivating reflexive practitioners to create more inclusive media narratives. It contributes to the male – sensitization from the mass media classrooms. This paper finds that the same classroom’s dialogic practice along with self-reflexive journaling is capable of navigating the complexities of contemporary gendered media environments.

Keywords: Gender-Sensitive Pedagogy, Male Sensitization, Hegemonic Masculinity.

Nation, Sport and the Margins: Indigenous Representation and Cultural Inequality through the Lens of Bollywood Sports Biopics

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This paper critically examines the politics of indigenous representation and cultural inequality in selected Bollywood sports films, namely Mary Kom (2014), Chak De! India (2007), and Penalty (2019). Drawing upon Stuart Hall’s theory of representation and Antonio Gramsci’s concept of cultural hegemony, the paper analyses how indigenous and Northeastern identities are represented within dominant nationalist discourse. The study argues that Bollywood sports cinema simultaneously promotes symbolic inclusion while reproducing

hegemonic cultural structures that marginalise indigenous voices. Through qualitative textual analysis, the paper demonstrates how cinematic narratives transform athletes from peripheral communities into symbols of national pride while often suppressing the socio-political realities of exclusion, racism, and cultural inequality. Keywords: Gender-Sensitive Pedagogy, Male Sensitization, Hegemonic Masculinity.

Keywords: Indigenous representation, Bollywood sports cinema, nationalism, Northeast India, cultural hegemony, representation theory

Framing the Minority: Melodramatic Mode and Muslim Representation in Popular Bengali Films

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There are a number of empirical studies that examine the inequalities of portrayal in mainstream Hindi films that reinforce the bias against the Muslim community, but popular Bengali films have received limited academic interest in this regard. This paper, focusing on the Bengali films *Raktabeej* (2023), directed by Nandita Roy and Shiboprosad Mukherjee, and *Zulfiqar* (2016), directed by Srijit Mukherji, seeks to present a case in point to understand how the sense of 'otherness' among the Muslim community in the Indian public discourse is shaped. The paper argues that, in the context of mainstream Bengali films, 'melodrama' as a mode of affective engagement with individual and social subjection plays a critical role in these representational inequalities. The study conducts a close textual analysis of the films to provide a critical framework to underscore how melodrama, as a narrative form, constitutes minority characters in the public domain. It also focuses on the implications of such publicness for the way film audiences are addressed. Shifting the focus away from the content, this paper seeks to discuss the formal conditions that allow for the articulation of melodrama as a dynamic, expressive vehicle of meaning in the public field in specific historical and political circumstances.

Keywords: Melodrama, Film Form, Representation, Bengali Films.

The (M)other Tongue and the Margins of Belonging: Ol Chiki and Dalit Locational Hermeneutics

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This paper reads Mithu Sen's *I Am Ol Chiki* (Bengal Biennale 2024), created in Pearson Palli with Santali collaborators Sanyasi Lohar, Mungli, and Bodi Baske, through the frameworks of Dalit locational hermeneutics and Dalit posthumanism. While the mural emerges from a specifically Santal and Adivasi linguistic history, these frameworks help illuminate how marginalised languages and communities are made peripheral within dominant cultural spaces. The argument does not collapse Dalit and Adivasi histories into one category. Instead, it uses Dalit thought as a critical method for understanding the politics of exclusion, visibility, and embodied presence.

Painted as Ol Chiki glyphs on mud walls, *I Am Ol Chiki* is read here not simply as a work of public art but as a locational intervention. It compels Santiniketan to be interpreted from its margins, where language, place, and social hierarchy intersect. Inserting Ol Chiki into a Bengali-dominant landscape, the mural disrupts the authority of hegemonic fluency and reclaims space for a script often pushed to the edge of public visibility. The idea of the "(M)other Tongue" captures this tension: Ol Chiki is both the mother tongue and the other tongue, intimate yet estranged within the very geography it inhabits.

The paper also argues that the mural exceeds a human-centred politics of recognition. Through mud walls, pigment, weathering, QR codes, and communal participation, Ol Chiki becomes part of a more-than-human network of survival. The fading of the mural under the monsoon is read not simply as loss but as a sign of precarious endurance. As a counter-monument and living archive, I Am Ol Chiki shows how linguistic visibility can become a radical claim to place, memory, and belonging in Santiniketan.

Keywords: Melodrama, Film Form, Representation, Bengali Films.

Video Editing as a Tool for Portraying Inequality: Cut, Fade, Silence

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In contemporary visual media, video editing plays a crucial role in shaping how audiences perceive and emotionally engage with social realities. Beyond its technical function in narrative construction, editing operates as a communicative and ideological device that influences the representation of power, absence and marginalisation. While existing scholarship on inequality in media largely focuses on narrative content and character representation, comparatively less attention has been given to editing techniques as aesthetic strategies that construct meanings of social inequality. This study addresses that gap by examining how cuts, fades and silence function as expressive cinematic devices in representing unequal social conditions.

The research is theoretically grounded in film theory, semiotics and affect theory, particularly drawing on Sergei Eisenstein's concept of montage, Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis of visual signs and affective approaches to spectatorship. These frameworks are used to analyse how editing techniques produce emotional and ideological responses in viewers. Rather than treating editing as a neutral technical process, the study conceptualises it as a form of meaning-making that shapes audience interpretations of inequality.

Using a qualitative textual and visual analysis, the study examines four selected films and documentaries produced between 2010 and 2024 that explicitly engage with themes of class, gender and racial inequality. The case studies were selected based on their critical recognition, thematic relevance and distinctive use of editing patterns. The analysis focuses on recurring editing strategies, including abrupt cuts, extended silence, discontinuous transitions and gradual fades, and investigates how these techniques frame marginalised experiences and social exclusion.

The findings suggest that editing techniques contribute significantly to the affective and political framing of inequality, although their meanings remain context-dependent and open to multiple interpretations. Abrupt cuts often create a sense of fragmentation and precarity, while silence and fades can evoke absence, erasure or emotional distance. In contrast, seamless continuity editing may normalise unequal social structures by concealing tension and disruption. The study argues that editing should be understood not merely as a stylistic component of audiovisual media but as a critical site where social meanings and ideological positions are negotiated.

By foregrounding editing as a central analytical category, this research contributes to critical media studies by expanding discussions of inequality beyond narrative representation and towards the formal mechanisms through which visual media shape perception and emotional response.

Keywords: Social Inequality, Video Editing, Film Theory, Semiotics, Affect Theory, Critical Media Studies

Theme 3:
**The dynamics and implications of enduring inequalities and new divides for
communication scholarship in different settings**

**Entanglements of water, media, chemical industries and bodies:
Affective geographies of Kalapet residents**

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Kalapet is a village in Pondicherry which is inhabited by fisher community. This locality sitting by the side of Bay of Bengal was ravaged by Tsunami in 2004 and subsequently by a few cyclones. The loss is mourned by the people of Kalapet every year through banners and posters that depict the fury of tsunami in particular. While these images help in redrawing memories of the past destruction, people in this region live amidst the presence of two chemical factories that seemingly have polluted the ground water. Those who have moved into the village are aware of the precarity of having to live in this space. Yet, they negotiate with this vulnerability by connecting themselves with these spaces through what Butler and Yancy (2020, p. 487) call 'redrawing the world'. The threat of water being polluted is superseded by the contingencies of living and flourishing. In this sense, inhabitants of Kalapet are adept in modifying their affects of feeling unsafe with those of flourishing despite odds. On this basis, this paper seeks to capture how affects of fear, worry, threat etc. are experienced within physical spaces and how these negative affects are overcome with positive registers of affective intensities. Further, the study will focus on the 'affective geographies' (Anderson, 2014, p. 18) of the inhabitants in terms of how they relate to and sense the place - eventually negotiating between belonging and alienation with the two industries in the background. Interestingly, the affects of Kalapet as a place to live in are also affects of water that run underneath. To substantiate the flows of water and affects, the paper will examine the place-making of Kalapet in mainstream and local media, including posters, during specific discursive events of gas leakage, death of staff in the industries, and other disasters. Lastly, the paper will foreground the entanglement of water, media, chemical industries, bodies and the flows of affective imaginaries around/about them.

Keywords: Affective Geographies, Water, Hydromedia, Material and Discursive Entanglements

Communicative and Structural Inequalities in Organisations

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Structural inequalities create disparities in access to power, resources, and opportunities, affecting the representation and growth of the marginalised. Structural inequalities focus on outcomes that are independent of individuals' efforts and talent. Communicative inequalities refer to access to communication resources, such as voice, representation, and information. Structural and communicative inequalities are repeated, normalised, and used to establish hierarchy within institutions through micro politics. The research aims to explore how communicative and structural inequalities are formed, regulated, and perpetuated in organisational systems, and what their implications are. The researcher collected qualitative data through participatory observation, focus group discussions, and semi-structured interviews with employees at different levels of the hierarchy, and analysed them using Braun and Clark's (2006) thematic analysis model and aspect-based sentiment analysis. In the Indian context, the process of marginalisation is complex due to the diversity. Research concludes that marginalisation occurs through numerous factors, including employment status, institutional experience, and

micro politics. Research further concludes that communicative and structural inequalities limit marginalised communities' ability to influence policy and further aggravate disparities. It widens the knowledge gap between marginalised and privileged groups. It also affects the organisation's growth and output. The inequalities are created and perpetuated by the privileged who control and dominate institutional discourse.

Keywords: Communicative Inequalities, Structural Inequalities, Marginalised Voices, Micropolitics, Aspect based Sentiment Analysis.

Cinema Reinforcing Knowledge System on Sustainability: Understanding Audience Perceptions on SDGs in Contemporary Indian Films

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In recent years, sustainability has emerged as a central global concern, yet its communication within popular media remains uneven. Cinema, as a widely accessible and influential cultural form, has long functioned not only as entertainment but also as a significant site of meaning-making and public pedagogy. Despite its potential, relatively limited scholarly attention has been paid to how sustainability, particularly in relation to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), is represented in Indian cinema and interpreted by audiences. This study examines how viewers engage with and make sense of sustainability narratives in Indian films, approaching cinema as a knowledge system that shapes public understanding of social, economic and environmental issues. The analysis is informed by Cultivation Theory, which considers how sustained media exposure influences perceptions of reality and Social Learning Theory, which highlights how audiences internalise and negotiate values encountered through media texts. Together, these frameworks provide a lens to understand how cinematic storytelling contributes to the formation of sustainability awareness. Methodologically, the study adopts a qualitative approach, drawing on in-depth semi-structured interviews with a diverse group of participants, including students, research scholars and general viewers. Using purposive and snowball sampling, the research explores how audiences interpret sustainability-related themes and how these interpretations are shaped by socio-cultural contexts. The data are analysed through thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns in audience perception, engagement and meaning-making. The study argues that cinema operates as an important communicative space where sustainability is not only represented but interpreted and negotiated. In doing so, it highlights the role of audio-visual storytelling in shaping public understanding of sustainability and underscores the need for more nuanced and context-sensitive engagements with sustainable development in Indian cinematic narratives.

Keywords: Sustainable Storytelling, Indian Cinema, SDGs, Audience Interpretation, Media and Society

Gendered Climate Vulnerability and Structural Inequalities: A Thematic Review of Climate Change Literature

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Climate change impacts are unevenly experienced, with gender emerging as a critical axis shaping vulnerability. Across diverse contexts, women often face heightened risks due to entrenched social roles, unequal access to resources and limited participation in decision-making processes. This paper examines gendered vulnerability in the context of climate change through a thematic analysis of existing scholarly literature, with the aim of identifying key patterns, conceptual trends and gaps in current research.

The study seeks to address three central concerns: first, to identify dominant themes in the literature on gender and climate vulnerability, second, to examine how social norms and power relations shape differentiated experiences of risk and third, to highlight areas that require further scholarly and policy attention, particularly in the Global South. In doing so, the paper engages with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) framework, which conceptualises vulnerability as a function of exposure, sensitivity and adaptive capacity, while also drawing on intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) to understand how gender interacts with factors such as class, caste and geographic location.

Methodologically, the study adopts a qualitative thematic review of over fifty peer-reviewed articles, reports and books published between 2010 and 2025, sourced from academic databases including Scopus, JSTOR and Google Scholar. The analysis identifies recurring patterns across domains such as access to resources, health and safety, livelihood precarity and the disproportionate burden of adaptive responsibilities. Particular attention is given to how structural inequalities shape both vulnerability and resilience.

The findings suggest that while gender is increasingly recognised in climate discourse, significant gaps remain in addressing context-specific and intersectional vulnerabilities. The paper contributes to ongoing discussions on climate justice and communication inequalities by foregrounding the need for more inclusive, locally grounded and gender-responsive approaches to policy and research.

Keywords: Climate Change, Gendered Vulnerability, Intersectionality, Climate Justice, IPCC Framework

The Double-Edged Digital Haat: Socio-Technical Barriers and Digital Marginalisation among Women Entrepreneurs in Gangetic West Bengal

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The digital inclusion of India's rural women entrepreneurs is stifled not just by infrastructure but by systemic domestic inequalities and restricted technological access. This study interrogates the intersection of digital communication infrastructures and structural gender inequalities within Gangetic West Bengal. Despite India's rapid digitization, rural women navigate a "triple burden" comprised of limited digital literacy, physically restricted mobility, and entrenched patriarchal norms that govern the domestic and public spheres. This research addresses the critical gap between technological potential and "digital marginalization," questioning whether riverside connectivity fosters genuine empowerment or merely digitizes pre-existing social hierarchies.

Adopting a qualitative research design, this study gathered primary data through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions involving a cohort of 150 women entrepreneurs situated across seven riparian districts. Methodologically, the qualitative data was managed, cataloged, and organized systematically using Microsoft Excel to ensure analytical rigor. The dataset was then subjected to inductive and deductive thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns, concepts, and socio-technical anomalies across the transcripts.

The thematic analysis reveals a stark technological paradox in the Gangetic interior. While platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook successfully function as "digital haats" (virtual marketplaces) for local trade, business scaling is severely constrained by structural barriers. Emergent themes highlight that digital networks act as vital economic conduits while simultaneously entrenching traditional gender hierarchies by confining female labor to the domestic sphere. The data attributes this regression to two pivotal qualitative dynamics: "time poverty" arising from inescapable domestic duties, alongside "masculine gatekeeping" operating via systemic device deprivation and routine hardware tracking.

The study concludes that technological intervention alone is insufficient to disrupt the deeply rooted socio-technical barriers of rural Bengal. Meaningful digital connectivity remains unattainable without targeted policy measures that actively challenge entrenched gender norms and household power dynamics governing

internet and mobile usage. Ultimately, these findings contribute a localized perspective to the global discourse on gendered digital divides, illustrating the specific, geographically isolated obstacles women entrepreneurs navigate within a river-based economy.

Keywords: Digital marginalization, Triple burden, Masculine gatekeeping, Digital haats, Time poverty

Platformed Faith and Unequal Visibility: A Uses and Gratifications Study of Religious Content Engagement among Urban Youth in India

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Digital platforms have significantly transformed religious communication in India, enabling users to access and engage with faith-based content across multiple formats. While this expansion is often viewed as democratizing religious expression, concerns remain regarding unequal visibility and representation within digitally mediated environments.

Despite increased access to religious content, not all forms of faith-based expression receive equal visibility or engagement. This study addresses how platformed media environments shape patterns of religious content consumption and contribute to emerging communication inequalities, particularly within India's majority-minority religious landscape.

The study is expected to demonstrate that platformed religious communication is shaped not only by user motivations but also by differential patterns of visibility and circulation. It highlights how platform dynamics contribute to the uneven representation of religious content, reinforcing communication inequalities. The paper contributes to extending UGT within platform-oriented media environments and offers insights into the role of digital culture in shaping contemporary religious communication in India.

Keywords: Digital Religion, Communication Inequality, Uses and Gratifications, Religious Coping

Digital Inequalities and Communication Divides in a Hospital Setup

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Effective communication is a critical component of quality healthcare delivery and patient safety. However, inequalities in access to digital information and communication resources often create barriers between healthcare providers and patients. Factors like low digital health literacy, language differences, socio-economic status, limited digital access contribute to communication divides in healthcare settings, particularly now when digital platforms are emerging rapidly in hospital setups. These gaps can affect patients' understanding of treatment plans, medication safety, ability to exercise their rights during care.

Despite advances in healthcare systems and digital health technologies, many patients still face difficulties in receiving and understanding health-related information. Communication barriers may lead to misunderstanding of medical instructions, medication errors, delayed treatment, reduced patient participation in decision-making. Addressing these inequalities remains a challenge for healthcare institutions and administrators. The objective of this study is to examine how digital communication inequalities affect patient care in hospital settings, to identify strategies that healthcare organizations can adopt to minimize these divides and improve patient-centric communication.

The study uses a qualitative approach based on interview questionnaires on patients coming in outpatient department. Sixtyfive patients were randomly selected, interviewed to assess their digital accessibility based on demographics - namely senior citizens, rural habitat, non-english speaking and first time visit. Questionnaires include digital literacy, ease of online booking appointments, billing, downloading reports, prescription. Patient-provider interactions are examined to understand impact of digital communication divides.

72% patients preferred verbal explanation over digital instructions 48% elderly patients faced difficulty accessing online reports, billing or e-prescription downloads. The findings indicate that digital communication inequalities significantly influence patient safety, treatment adherence, and patient satisfaction. Language barriers, limited access to digital tools like online booking of appointment, registration, billing, test reports, archieving electronic prescriptions are major contributors to digital communication gaps. Hospitals can implement patient education programs and handhold patients to access digital platforms to improve patient engagement. Strengthening communication strategies within healthcare systems is therefore essential to reduce digital inequalities and ensure equitable, safe, effective patient care.

Keywords: Digital Inequalities; Communication Divides; Digital Health Literacy; Patient Safety; Patient-Centred Communication; Healthcare Equity

Theme 4: Broader Social and Communicational Outcomes of Communication Divides

Muslims and Islamophobia in Indian Hindi Press: Critical Discourse Analysis

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Media has emerged as a powerful tool of molding perceptions and dispensing propaganda. The Indian Hindi press, inadvertently too, has played a key role in establishing personal, national, regional, cultural, ethnic and gender identities while emphasizing certain characteristics of a particular group or community in positive or negative light. This study attempts to explore the hostile representation of Muslim/Islam in the Hindi press, which can be categorized as “Islamophobia”. For this purpose, five Indian Hindi Newspapers including Dainik Bhaskar, Amar Ujala, Hindustan, Rajasthan Patrika, Dainik Jagran were purposely selected because they bear the rank of being the highest circulated newspapers in India among Hindi Newspapers, according to the Audit Bureau of Circulation. This study has been conducted to analyze the image of Muslims and Islam. The study has been made in the context of Indian Hindi Press. The main research question of the study is “How are Islam and Muslims presented in Indian Hindi Newspapers. The objectives of the study are to examine the frames regarding Muslims and Islam in leading Indian Hindi Newspapers exclusively. This study explores the differences between the portrayal of Muslims and Islam by each Indian Newspapers. The period selected from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025. In this study, critical discourse analysis has been used to investigate the most prominent themes of stereotyping and prejudices, anxieties, In this study, I would like to highlight this aberration and distortion of the pursuit of truth - the ethical blueprint of any newsprint source through the study of spreading Islamophobia and the communal colouring of the Indian Hindi Press.

Keywords: Muslim, Islam, Islamophobia, Critical Discourse analysis, Indian Hindi Press, Propaganda

Communication through Lens: Exploring Implications of Folk Forms in Anurag Basu’s “Barfi!”, “Jagga Jasoos” and “Ludo”

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Communication, the process of exchanging thoughts, ideas, and emotions, is a very simple as well as interesting thing to understand. Communication has two basic elements- sender and receiver, related to specific culture, beliefs, and values. We can't eradicate the cultural aspect from them. Folk media has a closeness to the masses. India, a country rich in culture, heritage, and languages, has a multi-lingual, heterogeneous population. Folk knowledge, customs, beliefs, and traditions are nothing new here (Prasad, 2013). Folk media have the power to reach a wide number of people. Folk media work as an important tool in motivating people to know several factors (social, economic, political, health-related issues, etc.) through its use of creativity, simple languages, and attractive art forms (Chapke & Bhagat, 2003). Folklore has made it to the big screens as well. Several Bollywood and Tollywood movies have used or are using several folk art forms to propagate the ideas of the film to the masses, so they can easily relate to it (Kachhawa & Tiwari, 2021). When another culture is performing a culture, it is more enjoyable and firmly falls under “Cultural Rigging”. (Pal & Rahman, 2020). Movies directed by Anurag Basu- “Barfi!” (2012), “Jagga Jasoos” (2017), and “Ludo” (2020) have implications of folk in different aspects, different manners, and most effectively from the perspective of communication for social change.

This paper tries to understand the nature of folk forms that have been used in those movies to communicate with their audiences. Portrayal of several folk-art forms in movies, specifically in Bombay cinemas, could have been very effective for social change in terms of communicating ideas and thoughts to the masses, in a different manner.

Keywords: Folklore, Communication, Cinema, Culture

Medicalization, Overprescription and Test Syndrome: Consumerist Impressions in the Popular Online Discourse on Maternity

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In contemporary times, the discourse surrounding perinatal maternity may be breeding a materialistic-consumerist culture, turning the experience of pregnancy and motherhood into a shopping spree. Medicalisation, overprescription of medical supplements and suggestions of diagnostic excesses are among the markers of maternal consumerism that superabound in digital discourse. This study aims to examine whether the discourse surrounding maternity contributes to a broader culture of materialism and consumerism. While existing research has critically examined intensive mothering, the medicalization of pregnancy and the role of consumer culture in shaping maternal identities, there is still a significant lack of research that methodically examines the discursive tactics applied to discourse surrounding maternity. To examine this popular discursive

culture of maternal consumerism, this study employs an artificial intelligence(AI)-augmented content analysis of 202 articles sourced from the popular pregnancy and parenting website, ‘What to Expect’. In this method, AI analysis is used to support manual coding and assess the reliability of the coding instrument. It uses a coding prompt to measure the prevalence of seven consumerist dimensions in the sampled text: Medicalization (discursive framing of maternity as a medical condition requiring frequent clinical intervention, expert supervision and technological control), Perfect Childbirth (commodification of childbirth), Mom-and-Me marketing (promotion of a specialized consumer segment that frames mothers and infants as a unified target for consumption), Diagnostic Emphasis (overprescription of medical tests), Supplement promotion (promotion of non-essential medical supplements), Planned Obsolescence (promotion of a use-and-throw culture) and Conspicuous consumption (promotion of luxury products and services). Using a structured prompt, each article was evaluated and then manually coded with a standardized coding instrument to distinguish between evidence-based maternal health guidance and consumer-driven or overmedicalized discursive framing, and to identify consumerist patterns that frame maternity as less natural and as requiring medical surveillance beyond prescribed levels, creating irrational fears among expectant mothers. Study findings are used to theories that such digital narratives could contribute to the commodification of maternity, reinforcing a culture of risk aversion and over-dependency on commercial-medical systems, increasing the financial burden of families, especially those in developing countries.

Keywords: Maternal consumerism, Medicalization, Online Discourse, Content Analysis, Childbirth

Rethinking Identity in Digital Culture: Instagram Reels and the Mediated Self as a Vehicle of Participation, Performance, and Power

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In the age of algorithmically curated short-form video, the self is no longer merely represented online — it is performed, negotiated, and constituted through the platform itself. This paper interrogates Instagram Reels as a critical site of identity formation in contemporary digital culture, arguing that the Reels format operates simultaneously as a mediated mirror of the self, a theatre of social performance, a participatory public sphere, and a mechanism of algorithmic power. Drawing on a multi-theoretical framework that brings together Erving Goffman’s dramaturgical model of self-presentation, Foucault’s analytics of power-knowledge and the panoptical logic of visibility, Henry Jenkins’s theory of participatory culture, and Stuart Hall’s encoding/decoding model, the paper advances the argument that identity in the Instagram Reels ecosystem is not a stable essence but a fluid, co-produced, and politically charged discursive event. Methodologically, the paper employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of a systematically selected corpus of Instagram Reels from diverse Indian users, examining textual, audio-visual, and contextual dimensions of self-presentation. The analysis is supplemented by platform architecture analysis to map how algorithmic logics structure the conditions of identity performance. Theorizing identity as a curated self — shaped through ongoing acts of personal, social, and spectacle-oriented curation — the paper demonstrates that the Reels format produces at least three distinctive modalities of the mediated self: the performative self (identity as dramaturgical display for audiences), the participatory self (identity as civic and cultural engagement through content creation), and the surveilled self (identity as data object subject to algorithmic governance). The paper concludes by arguing for a revised media literacy framework that accounts for the power asymmetries embedded in platform architectures. If Instagram Reels enables new forms of voice, belonging, and political self-assertion for previously marginalized communities, it simultaneously re-inscribes surveillance capitalism’s logic of subjectivation — making subjects legible, governable, and commercially valuable. Understanding how identity is rethought, restaged, and re-powered through Instagram Reels is not merely a platform studies question; it is a critical intervention into how power, culture, and selfhood are being reconfigured in the digital present.

Keywords: Instagram Reels, Mediated Self, Digital Identity, Participatory Culture, Digital Culture

Communicating e-Governance for Sustainability: An Analysis of Digital India Narratives on Instagram

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The digital transformation in India is accelerating, and Indian governance is increasingly dependent on social media platforms to communicate information about public services, government reforms, and citizen-driven initiatives. Instagram is one of these platforms that have become visually driven spaces for narrating e-governance and promoting citizen engagement. This study analyses e-governance communication on Instagram through official Government of India-affiliated accounts, focusing particularly on the content and frames used to promote digital governance programs. The study is based on the theory of the public sphere, framing theory, and strategic communication, which view Instagram as a mediated interface between state institutions and citizens. The study employs the analysis of the latest 100 posts each of Digital India, Mygov India, and MeitY Instagram pages. Posts about Digital India initiatives are assessed in terms of imagery type, representational inclusion, contextual framing, calls to action, feedback mechanisms engagement, participatory message, and prevailing thematic patterns. This approach enables an assessment of the visual and textual strategies mobilised to communicate e-governance and encourage citizen awareness. The study will analysis that Instagram based e-governance communication, builds a discourse of accessibility, inclusiveness, and responsiveness, positioning digital governance as citizen-friendly and aligned with participatory governance. These narratives have implications for e-participation and Sustainable Development outcomes, most importantly regarding transparency, accountability, and access to institutions. However, the interaction is mostly informational and symbolic with limited opportunities for dialogic engagement or deliberative involvement. It is limited to publicly visible content on selected government Instagram accounts and does not look into the backend policy processes. Also, the platform's features, its visibility through algorithms, and its focus on promotional aesthetics limit further civic engagement.

Through critically analysing government driven digital governance narratives on Instagram, this study will contribute to e-governance and digital communication with citizens in India, will examining both the platform's potential and its limitations for meaningful engagement.

Keywords: E-governance, Digital India Program, Digital Communication, Citizen engagement, Instagram

A study on Public Perception of Fact-Checking Websites – As a Social Transformation Tool

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The digital transformation in India is accelerating, and Indian governance is increasingly dependent on social media platforms to communicate information about public services, government reforms, and citizen-driven initiatives. Instagram is one of these platforms that have become visually driven spaces for narrating e-governance and promoting citizen engagement. This study analyses e-governance communication on Instagram through official Government of India-affiliated accounts, focusing particularly on the content and frames used to promote digital governance programs. The study is based on the theory of the public sphere, framing theory, and strategic communication, which view Instagram as a mediated interface between state institutions and citizens. The study employs the analysis of the latest 100 posts each of Digital India, Mygov India, and MeitY Instagram pages. Posts about Digital India initiatives are assessed in terms of imagery type, representational inclusion, contextual framing, calls to action, feedback mechanisms engagement, participatory message, and prevailing thematic patterns. This approach enables an assessment of the visual and textual

strategies mobilised to communicate e-governance and encourage citizen awareness. The study will analysis that Instagram based e-governance communication, builds a discourse of accessibility, inclusiveness, and responsiveness, positioning digital governance as citizen-friendly and aligned with participatory governance. These narratives have implications for e-participation and Sustainable Development outcomes, most importantly regarding transparency, accountability, and access to institutions. However, the interaction is mostly informational and symbolic with limited opportunities for dialogic engagement or deliberative involvement. It is limited to publicly visible content on selected government Instagram accounts and does not look into the backend policy processes. Also, the platform's features, its visibility through algorithms, and its focus on promotional aesthetics limit further civic engagement. Through critically analysing government driven digital governance narratives on Instagram, this study will contribute to e-governance and digital communication with citizens in India, will examining both the platform's potential and its limitations for meaningful engagement.

Keywords: E-governance, Digital India Program, Digital Communication, Citizen engagement, Instagram

Work, Inequality and Everyday Life: A Case Study

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This paper is based on my research on occupational inequality in society, particularly focusing on how different professions are perceived and valued unequally within our social structure. The study examines the hierarchical attitudes related to various forms of labour, where certain professions are regarded as more respectable than others. The paper explores how social perceptions, interactions, and communicative practices contribute to shaping and reinforcing these inequalities. The ways in which people behave and socially position individual from different professions reflects a broader communicational divide. This paper represent a case study from Thakurnagar, a locality under Gaighata in the North 24 Parganas district of West Bengal. In this region, flower cultivation and flower-related trade form a major source of livelihood. Many women are involved in collecting flowers, preparing garlands, and selling them in urban markets. Despite their hard work and essential contribution, they often face neglect, disrespect, and unequal treatment. This case study emerges from my direct engagement with the field, where I have had regular encounters with the participants and their everyday realities. Informed by both my personal observations and a broader social perspective, the paper attempts to examine how occupational inequality is experienced in everyday life and how communication shapes these perceptions.

Keywords: Gender, Labour, Community practice, women, Flower Cultivation.

Narratives of Erasure: How Policy Language Silences Trans Identities in India's Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026

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In a historic Supreme Court judgment, *NALSA vs. Union of India* (2014), the recognition of transgender identities, along with the fundamental rights to non-discrimination, freedom, and privacy, was affirmed for the whole community through the right to self-identification. This approach helped depathologize and humanize gender-diverse lived experiences, and it was further reflected in the *Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019*. However, the passing of the *Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026*, in both houses may shift the discourse toward pathologizing these experiences in medical or anatomical terms, thereby restricting identity within a medico-legal framework. Such a shift from self-identification to externally imposed classification may further marginalize the community.

There is a lack of research examining how legislative discourse produces communicative inequality and symbolic erasure, especially in the Indian context. As a result, it remains unclear how these narratives affect transgender individuals' sense of identity, recognition, and agency, and how affected communities negotiate or resist such representations.

This study aims to explore how transgender and other non-binary individuals interpret policy language and its impact on identity; understand experiences of erasure, exclusion, and invalidation in everyday life; and comprehend how policy influences voice, recognition, and agency. A qualitative narrative approach will be adopted, using unstructured interviews with approximately 10 transgender individuals with diverse identities and other non-binary community members selected through convenience and snowball sampling. The interviews will allow participants to share personal stories in their own terms, and the data will be analysed thematically to capture patterns of meaning and emotional experiences.

The study is likely to reveal how policy language contributes to feelings of identity invalidation and symbolic erasure among transgender individuals. The findings are expected to show significant psychological, social, and economic impacts, including distress, frustration, and marginalisation at social and institutional levels, along with narratives of resilience.

Keywords: Transgender identity, Policy discourse, Symbolic erasure, Communicative inequality, Pathologizing.

Digital Divide and Health Inequality: A Cross-Sectional Study on Sexual and Reproductive Health Awareness among Urban and Rural Adolescents in Bangladesh

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Digital media can reduce sexual and reproductive health (SRH) inequalities among adolescents, but in emerging digital economies access and benefits may not converge. This study explores the role of digital divide on SRH KAP among urban and rural adolescents in Bangladesh. A cross-sectional survey was administered to 463 adolescents (54.4% male; 67.4% urban; Mage = 17.59) of digital ownership, access to the internet and SRH information sources, platform following, search exposure and trust in online SRH content in relation to Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices scored as proportions ranging from 0–1; Welch t-tests, chi-square, and effect sizes tested group disparities; OLS adjusted associations were estimated with nested models using robust standard errors (HC3) with variance inflation factors and the Breusch–Pagan test confirming model assumptions. Though access to the internet was high and equivalent across residence (90.1 versus 87.4% urban vs. rural), but KAP followed significant structural inequalities. The internal reliability for the three KAP domains was low ($\alpha = .13$; Knowledge–Practices $r = -.30$) and were modelled separately. Urban adolescents scored significantly in overall KAP estimating .593 than the rural which is .555. Score in Knowledge of Urban adolescents is quite higher than rural ($d = 0.52$) and Attitudes ($d = 0.40$), but not Practices ($d = 0.00$). Controlled for, gender (female Knowledge advantages $b = .143$). In contrast, no digital-access or platform-engagement variable predicted SRH outcomes, while paternal education and marital status did (all t test to Student's t; nonsignificant). Only 'Trust in online SRH information' was associated with negative attitudes ($b = -.010$) and practices ($b = -.021$) showing how much health-misinformation is prevalent on

Facebook. In our setting socio-cultural factors like embarrassment, privacy, superstitions related to religion and content-related ambiguities acted as major hurdles in obtaining accurate specific information about SRH. In a near-saturation access environment, digital media amplify as much as mitigate SRH inequality. The study provides an integrated account of the digital divide, health inequality and communication inequality as drivers of adolescent SRH in a Global South setting and advocates for content & equity-focused rather than access-oriented intervention.

Keywords: Digital divide; Health Inequality; Sexual and Reproductive health; Adolescents; KAP, Bangladesh.

Inequalities in Science Communication and Public Understanding of Antibiotics: Implications for Antimicrobial Resistance in Urban India

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In current times, antimicrobial resistance (AMR) has emerged as one of the most significant global public health challenges, driven largely by the misuse and overuse of antibiotics. While biomedical and clinical dimensions of AMR have been widely investigated, comparatively less attention has been directed toward the socio-communicational factors that shape public understanding and everyday use of antibiotics. In India, due to rapidly growing and urbanizing contexts, unequal access to reliable, scientific and medical information has led to disparities in health literacy, which subsequently influence antibiotic-related attitudes, decision-making, and practices.

This study examines how communication divides influence public understanding and use of antibiotics in urban India. Specifically, it analyzes how inequalities in access to credible health information shape antibiotic-related knowledge, self-medication practices, and patterns of antibiotic consumption. Conceptually, the study draws upon communication inequality and health literacy frameworks to understand how differential access to scientific information produces uneven awareness and behavioural outcomes across social groups.

Methodologically, the study adopts a conceptual and interdisciplinary analytical approach through a critical review of literature drawn from microbiology, public health, and science communication research. The analysis focuses on how antibiotic-related information is produced, disseminated, and interpreted through multiple communication pathways, including healthcare professionals, pharmacies, digital media platforms, and informal peer networks.

The study argues that communication gaps contribute significantly to misconceptions surrounding antibiotic use, including self-medication with commonly available antibiotics such as amoxicillin, premature discontinuation of treatment, and reliance on informal advice systems. These findings highlight the socio-communicational dimensions of antimicrobial

resistance beyond purely biomedical explanations. The paper further suggests that inclusive, accessible, and audience-sensitive science communication strategies are essential for strengthening public engagement with microbiological knowledge and promoting responsible antibiotic practices. Addressing communication

inequalities may therefore play a crucial role in broader public health efforts aimed at mitigating antimicrobial resistance in rapidly urbanizing societies.

Keywords: Antimicrobial Resistance; Science Communication; Communication Inequality; Health Literacy; Antibiotic Misuse; Urban India

Theme 5: Tensions and Intersectionality of Power Hierarchies in Communication

Invisible Behind the Lens: Women Cinematographers, Gendered Labour, and the Indian Screen Media Industry

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Cinematography, as a behind-the-camera profession, has historically been male-dominated across cultures and geographies, with women's contributions consistently overlooked, under-documented, and denied widespread recognition despite their significant presence and creative excellence. Looking back at the history of cinema, the names of the craft's pioneers are overwhelmingly male, and the remarkable work of women who contributed to this field has rarely received the acknowledgement it deserves. Within the Indian screen media industries, this erasure is especially pronounced, as the professional trajectories of women cinematographers remain largely absent from archival records, scholarly literature, and industry narratives. This marginalisation is closely tied to the gendered organisation of labour in screen production, where technical roles, such as cinematography, continue to be shaped by unequal access, recognition, and professional authority.

Grounded in feminist media historiography and recovery work frameworks that challenge dominant media histories by reclaiming the contributions of women practitioners, this study maps and critically analyses the historical and contemporary professional presence of women cinematographers in Indian cinema and screen media over the last two decades. It also identifies systematic gaps in documentation, visibility, and scholarly engagement with their careers and gendered labour. The study adopts a qualitative desk-based research design, drawing on e-newspapers, e-magazines, media websites, national and international cinematography associations, audiovisual industry reports, and available academic literature on women working behind the camera. Existing scholarship on gender disparity in technical filmmaking roles has predominantly emerged from Global North perspectives, leaving women cinematographers from the Global South, including India, under-documented and marginalised. Informal networks, boys' clubs, and personal connections have been identified as key mechanisms for entry and career sustenance in this field. The findings are expected to highlight persistent structural invisibility despite occasional industry recognition, underscoring the continued need for systematic documentation and critical engagement.

Keywords: Women Cinematographers, Gendered Labour, Structural Invisibility, Indian Screen Media, Feminist Media Historiography

Mainstreaming the Marginalised Consciousness in Tamil Cinema: A Retrospective of Mari Selvaraj Films

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The perennial problem of caste consciousness and caste supremacy in India continues to dominate the mainstream media discourse for several decades, particularly in Indian Cinema. Indian Cinema has occasionally produced films that focus on themes associated with vulnerable, oppressed, and marginalised communities. However, many such films were often critiqued as subliminal and were below the threshold of the collective consciousness of the dominant communities across Indian Cinema. The Tamil film industry, for several decades, was predominately influenced by dominant caste narratives that reestablished the notion of caste hierarchy and celebrated caste supremacy through its commercial narrative, which made conscious attempts to normalise the inequalities and immoralities that existed in society actively. However, the contemporary Tamil film industry can be identified with prominent Dalit filmmakers, using distinct narrative structures and techniques that demonstrate the marginalised communities' struggle, oppression, annihilation, and uprising. Hence, examining and understanding such distinct narrative structures through which they have voiced their concerns is essential. In this context, this study aims to reflect on how the marginalised consciousness was mainstreamed through the films of Tamil filmmaker Mari Selvaraj. Using a qualitative approach, this study analyses four films of Mari Selvaraj, namely *Pariyerum Perumal* (2018), *Karnan* (2021), *Maamannan* (2023) and *Vaazhai* (2024) with the following objectives: to identify the various motifs and symbolic elements embedded to express oppression in the narratives; to trace the distinctive narrative structures and patterns utilised to demonstrate the uprising of the marginalised communities; to establish how Mari Selvaraj himself emerged as an auteur in developing a unique style of film narrative to mainstream the marginalised consciousness. The study further integrates the concept of mainstream marginality with Auteur Theory which provides a powerful lens for understanding how the director's voices can challenge dominant narratives.

Keywords: Voices, Marginalized Consciousness, Dalits, Tamil Cinema, Mainstreaming

Reinscribing Gender Hierarchies through Mythological Retellings in Kannada Cinema: A Study on Kantara Duology

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Myths and folklore have long served as a foundational basis for cultural expression in South India. They encompass not only narratives of divine powers and human interaction but also the underlying themes of social norms, gender relations, and hierarchies. In recent years, there has been an emergence of "mythological retelling" in Kannada Cinema set in a hyper-real narrative that uses the framework of folklore and divine intervention to explore social themes. Examining mythological retellings in cinema is significant for

several reasons. Firstly, cinema functions as a major cultural apparatus through which myths are mediated, popularized, and reimagined for contemporary audiences. Secondly, gender hierarchies are rarely neutral in such narratives, particularly aspects such as heroism, sacrifice, bodily prowess, and divine sanction are often mapped into masculine ideals, while the feminine is configured either as support, object of devotion, or threat. Thirdly, South Indian cinema draws on rituals, folk forms, and local beliefs whose appropriation into mainstream film raises questions of authenticity, representation, commodification, and gender politics. Ultimately, it is evident that the potency of mythological structures remains a significant presence in the 21st-century cinematic imagination. For example, films such as *Kantara* (2022), *Adipurush* (2023), *Kalki 2898 AD* (2024), *Bramayugam* (2024), *Lokah Chapter 1: Chandra* (2025), and *Kantara: A Legend – Chapter 1* (2025), show how ancient archetypes are repackaged to address modern anxieties about identity, land rights, religious faith, and social order, but often at the cost of reinforcing traditional gender norms and roles. Hence, this study examines how mythological retellings construct and legitimize specific models of masculinity, while subordinating the feminine principle, through the analysis of the Kannada duology: *Kantara* (2022) and *Kantara: A Legend Chapter 1* (2025), directed by Rishab Shetty. The study uses textual analysis as its primary method to identify key scenes, character portrayals, and recurring motifs that shape the gender discourse. Further, the analysis examines the *mise-en-scène* to decode the symbolic construction of masculinity and the feminine.

Keywords: Myth, Masculinity, Gender Hierarchy, *Kantara*, Kannada Cinema

Framing Crisis and Catastrophe: Power, Voice and Audio-Visual Narratives of the 26/11 Mumbai Attacks on OTT Platforms

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The expansion of OTT platforms has transformed how real-world crises are revisited and understood, shifting from immediate news reporting to layered, narrative-driven reconstructions. The 26/11 Mumbai attacks, a defining moment in India's recent history, continue to be reinterpreted through such audio-visual texts, where meaning is shaped not only by events but by narrative framing, perspective and affect.

While existing scholarship has largely examined questions of authenticity and ethics, less attention has been paid to how these narratives organise power, voice and visibility. This paper addresses this gap by analysing how contemporary OTT representations frame crisis, control and catastrophe and how such framings privilege certain experiences while marginalising others. Drawing on framing theory and narrative analysis, the study approaches these texts as sites of meaning-making where representation is closely tied to power.

Methodologically, the paper employs qualitative content analysis of selected productions - *Mumbai Diaries 26/11*, *State of Siege: 26/11*, and *Hotel Mumbai*. The analysis is guided by four categories: distribution of voice, narrative centrality, construction of authority and representation of suffering. These are examined through indicators such as dialogue dominance, narrative focus, decision-making agency and the depth and visibility of suffering.

The findings suggest that these narratives do not merely depict disaster but actively reorganise it. Civilian-centred narratives foreground vulnerability, institutional narratives emphasise coordination and control, while globally oriented texts frame catastrophe through individualised survival. In doing so, they produce distinct yet overlapping regimes of meaning, revealing how audio-visual storytelling shapes public memory and mediates communication inequalities in the representation of crisis.

Keywords: OTT Platforms, Crisis Communication, Framing, Power, Disaster Narratives

The Oraon Ritual Body: Performing the Everyday v/s Performing the Special

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A ritual actor performs an act to ascribe a special meaning to it. The ritual actor or the performer helps with the fruition of a thought, belief, or philosophy. They may perform it in different ways, by organizing, communicating, or witnessing the rites and rituals. In the process, these different categories of performers perform their identities, such as gender, caste, and class, among others, through speeches, sounds, and bodily gestures (acting). These bodily performances attain specialized meanings, which makes them different from everyday life actions.

The Oraon community in the West Burdwan district of West Bengal performs Karam Puja, Dal Puja, Sarhul, among others, where men and women participate 'equally.' Ritual roles are divided by genders and status within the community. For example, the economically affluent male members are part of the organizing committees; the females are responsible for singing, dancing, and arranging the feast (which is again supervised by male members of the community). The responsibility of embodying tradition and carrying it forward inadvertently falls on the youth. Interestingly enough, the gendered (also classist and ageist) division of labor in a traditional ritual debunks the notion of equal participation by all irrespective of gender, economic prowess, and age.

The proposed paper will investigate how ritual actors negotiate between performing everyday life (Goffman, 1959) and specialized acts (Turner, 1982) and through bodily performances perform their gender, caste, and class identities (Butler, 1990) and engage with questions of power and agency. I will take an ethnographic approach to understand the gender and power dynamics in the ritual festivals of the Oraon community in West Bengal. I have visited villages in West Burdwan district and plan to visit more villages, especially during the time of the festivals, where I will take up the role of a participant observer (Schechner, 2004), build rapport with the community members, and engage in conversations with them to learn more about how they perform their different identities.

Keywords: Ritual Actor, Community Performance, Gender Roles, Oraon, Karam Puja.

Platformed Caste: Social Media Networks and the Reproduction of Caste Hierarchies in Digital Publics

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Social media platforms are seen as democratic media where people can freely voice their opinions and join the public conversation. Digital communication can, however, reinforce social inequalities in societies with deep-rooted inequality like the caste system in India. In recent years, caste identities, caste discrimination and caste resistance are more visible in social media in the country. Digital spaces are means being used by Dalit activists to share their experiences, raise awareness, mobilise support and expose caste-based discrimination, which is largely overlooked by mainstream media. While the recent scholarly development of the concept of digital activism has received some attention, few studies have explored how caste hierarchies operate within the social media communication networks, or how the social media platforms serve to both exclude and to resist.

This research paper explores the production, circulation and contestation of caste discourse on social media platform X (formerly Twitter). It focuses specifically on the dynamics of dominant caste narratives in digital communication network and the creation of counter-public by Dalit activists to contest against caste discrimination. The study uses a mixed digital methods approach that involves a combination of Social Network Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis. Data will be gathered over six months from the publicly available posts behind the hashtags related to caste, including #DalitLivesMatter, #CasteIsNotPast and #Ambedkarite. To identify communication clusters, influential accounts, interaction patterns, and Critical Discourse Analysis will be used to analyze the representation of caste identities, resistance narratives and discriminatory discourse in the online conversations.

This study aims at proving that social media not only recreate caste hierarchy but also create new forms of digital resistance. The results will help in communication scholarship by pointing to the interaction of digital communication infrastructures with the consolidated social hierarchies in the Global South.

Keywords: Caste, Dalit Activism, Social Media, Digital Inequality, Digital Public Sphere.

The Art of ‘Othering’: A Display of Inequality in Communication in the 21st Century

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The digital revolution of the twenty-first century has transformed communication into an immediate, global, and participatory process through platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Twitch, and X. While these platforms are often celebrated as democratic spaces that encourage self-expression and visibility, they continue to reproduce deep-rooted gender inequalities in technologically advanced forms. This paper examines how women creators in the digital age experience systematic “othering” through online harassment, algorithmic bias, objectification, and unequal standards of visibility. Drawing upon feminist theory and digital communication studies, the paper argues that social media has not dismantled patriarchal structures but has instead reshaped them within digital cultures of virality and surveillance.

Using examples of influential creators such as Emma Chamberlain, Lilly Singh, Pokimane, Kusha Kapila, and Prajakta Koli, the study explores how female creators are subjected to disproportionate scrutiny regarding their appearance, personal lives, morality, and emotional expression in ways male creators are not. The paper further analyzes how women of colour and women in male-dominated spaces such as gaming face intersectional discrimination shaped by sexism, racism, and cultural stereotyping. It also examines the role of influencer culture and platform algorithms in reinforcing idealized beauty standards and “performative femininity” as prerequisites for digital visibility.

The study engages with Simone de Beauvoir’s concept of woman as the “Other” and Judith Butler’s theory of gender performativity to understand how communication itself becomes gendered in online spaces. Ultimately, the paper argues that the digital public sphere mirrors broader social inequalities where women’s voices remain vulnerable to silencing, regulation, and commodification. In doing so, it highlights how communication in the twenty-first century continues to operate within unequal structures of gendered power despite the illusion of digital democracy.

Keywords: Gender Inequality, Othering, Digital Communication, Algorithmic Bias, Online Harassment, Influencer Culture, Intersectionality.

Theme 6:
Algorithmic biases and marginalization

**Algorithmic Attention and Adolescent Minds: AI-Driven Media Exposure,
Digital Cognitive Fatigue Leading To Brain Rot and
Emerging Communication Inequalities**

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The growing use of artificial intelligence-driven algorithms in digital media platforms has significantly changed the way information is accessed and consumed. Adolescents and young learners are among the most active users of these platforms and are constantly exposed to algorithmically curated streams of media content. While such technologies make information easily accessible and engaging, they also raise concerns about attention fragmentation, cognitive fatigue, and the phenomenon often described as “brain rot.” These developments may also lead to new forms of communication inequality, where differences in digital access, literacy, and exposure to algorithmic content influence how young people engage with the outer world. Although research on artificial intelligence and digital communication has increased in recent years, relatively little attention has been given to how AI-driven media exposure affects students’ cognitive engagement and attention patterns. In particular, the issue of digital cognitive fatigue or “brain rot,” characterized by reduced concentration and mental overload. The study follows a descriptive survey method. The target population consists of higher education students in West Bengal. According to the AISHE report, the total number of higher education students in the state is approximately 2.7 million. For the present study, 200 college-level students from 40 institutions across West Bengal were selected using a convenience sampling technique. The collected data are analyzed using basic descriptive statistical techniques. The study is expected to show that prolonged exposure to AI-curated media environments may contribute to cognitive fatigue and reduced attention among students. The study contributes to ongoing discussions on the differences in how students engage with digital media, highlighting emerging inequalities in digital communication and cognitive engagement.

Keywords: Brain Rot, Artificial Intelligence, Cognitive Overload, Adolescent ,
Communication Inequalities

**Invisible Games, Unequal Attention: A Uses and Gratifications Study of Audience
Perceptions of Media Coverage of Lesser-Known Sports in India**

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The dominance of cricket within India’s sports media ecosystem reflects deeper structural inequalities in communication, where lesser-known sports remain persistently marginalized despite the expansion of digital media platforms. While digital environments are often positioned as democratizing spaces, it remains unclear whether they meaningfully enhance visibility for underrepresented sports or reproduce existing hierarchies through algorithmic prioritization. This study examines how audiences perceive and engage with media coverage of lesser-known sports in India, focusing on the disjuncture between perceived accessibility

and actual visibility across traditional and digital media. Grounded in Uses and Gratifications Theory, the study conceptualizes audiences as active participants who consume sports content to fulfill informational, entertainment, identity, and social interaction needs, while simultaneously operating within structurally constrained media environments. A quantitative research design is employed using an online survey of urban youth (N = 300–500) across metropolitan India. The study measures three key dimensions: perceptions of media coverage, the role of digital platforms in enhancing visibility, and the relationship between media exposure, consumption patterns, and intention to support lesser-known sports. Statistical analyses, including correlation and regression, are used to examine how media exposure predicts audience engagement and support intentions. The study expects to identify a significant gap between the perceived openness of digital platforms and the continued marginalization of lesser-known sports, driven by algorithmic filtering, commercial priorities, and entrenched audience preferences. While digital media may facilitate discovery, it does not necessarily translate into sustained engagement or equitable representation. By integrating audience gratifications with platform-level inequalities, this study extends Uses and Gratifications Theory into algorithmically structured media environments. The findings contribute to broader debates on communication inequality, digital visibility, and platform governance, particularly within Global South contexts, and suggest strategic interventions for enhancing the representation and sustainability of underrepresented sports.

Keywords: Uses and Gratifications, Media Inequality Digital Platforms, Algorithmic Bias, Lesser-Known Sports

Reading the Construction of Transgender Identity in Digital Cultural Landscape

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Virtual spaces predetermined by the conditions of digital technology are dominant sites of “Expressions”. The people identified as transgressive to their gender identity are taken as a case of this study, who are seen to exert emotional labour over a digital social space to align with their possible choices of gender. The textual analysis of the study finds a typicality in these “expressions” by a few purposively chosen transgender influencers at Instagram that hovers around the demonstration of their sexualities. We have thoroughly interviewed three social media influencers based in Kolkata, who have chosen on the basis of their developed social media presence pinned to their transgender identity; the study registers their experiences of emancipation from the socially deterministic perspectives or reading they undergo in the public sphere(s). The relatable existing literature around the formation of identities across the digital landscape is crucial in this context.

This paper attempts to develop an argument under ‘construct of gender performativity’ theorised and contextualised by Judith Butler. Under the constructionist perspective of gender performativity, how our subjectivities alter along with the changing culture(s) mediated by the digital world are problematized and a lack of coherence is identified between the historically derived social construction of gender and the meaning(s) of selfhood in the digital world.

In this contemporary digital-cultural juncture, this paper poses that the incoherence between the perspective of the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ is further curated in the digital space. We argue that the question of liberated expressions of the self in a digital space by the transgender people are limited and appropriated by the dominant binary of gender norms and performativity which further reproduces an incomplete un-layering of their non-heterosexual identities/subjectivities.

Keyword: Transgender, Digital, Self, Other, Performativity

Artificial Intelligence Literacy in Journalism: Exploring Algorithmic Bias, Data Inequality, and Media Practices in Kolkata

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Artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as a transformative force across the global media ecosystem, reshaping the production of news and the workflows of newsrooms. According to Dahiya & Trehan (2024), with the rapid adoption of technological tools, media organisations primarily rely on AI to enhance accuracy, efficiency, and competitiveness in data-driven storytelling. In this environment, the professional competence of media and journalism practitioners is no longer limited to traditional reporting skills; it now includes the capability to understand, analyse, and engage with AI technologies. This competence is mainly referred to as the literacy of AI, encompassing knowledge of the functions, ethical considerations, limitations, and implications of AI for public trust and editorial integrity.

While artificial intelligence enhances efficiency and automation in newsrooms, it also raises critical concerns related to algorithmic bias and data inequality. AI systems often rely on large datasets that may reflect existing social, cultural, and economic disparities. As a result, algorithmic decision-making can unintentionally reinforce marginalisation by privileging dominant narratives while underrepresenting minority voices. In the context of journalism, this has significant implications for news selection, framing, and visibility, potentially affecting public discourse and democratic inclusivity. Therefore, AI literacy among media professionals must also encompass an understanding of algorithmic fairness, bias detection, and the societal consequences of automated decision-making.

In this context, in India, specifically in metropolitan media hubs such as Kolkata, the tools of AI have begun to influence media houses through trend analysis of social media, automated transcription, predictive analytics, and content generation, which is largely machine-assisted. However, the level of readiness, awareness, and knowledge among media professionals to work alongside AI tools varies significantly. The absence of structured training, misconceptions about the capabilities of AI, and concerns related to job displacement further emphasise the need to analyse the tools of AI literacy within this community. On the other hand, as Olayinka & Odunayo (2024) note, understanding the state of perception is crucial to ensure that media organisations can leverage AI tools while maintaining the quality of press and upholding ethical standards. Therefore, this research primarily focuses on media professionals based in Kolkata to decode their level of AI attitude, literacy, practical exposure, and the media environment that is AI-enabled.

The study will provide empirical insights into existing knowledge gaps and misconceptions regarding AI tools among media professionals. This study primarily identifies areas where AI tools can be integrated into news workflows. Similarly, this study highlights opportunities for enhancing the curriculum, developing skills, and innovating in the newsroom. The study will examine both awareness and literacy by assessing the understanding of concepts, ethical concerns, practical applications, and tools related to AI. On the other hand, according to Noain (2022), evaluating the attitudes of professionals, perceived challenges, and readiness to use and adapt practices driven by AI also helps to analyse the literacy of AI.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence Literacy, Journalism Education, Newsroom Automation, AI Awareness, Ethical Challenges in AI Journalism, Digital Competence, Algorithmic Bias, AI Literacy in Journalism

In Touch, Out of Sync? Exploring the Relationship between Mobile Phone Use and Academic Performance among Santhal Indigenous Girls in Rural India

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While smartphones have penetrated even the most remote corners of the globe, the academic implications of this digital shift remain critically understudied among marginalised tribal girls — arguably the most digitally vulnerable demographic. Existing scholarship has largely centred on urban, mainstream student populations, leaving indigenous communities, particularly Santhal girls in rural India, conspicuously absent from the discourse. This study addresses that gap by investigating the relationship between mobile phone usage and academic performance within this underexplored context. A cross-sectional survey was administered to 115 marginalised tribal girls from the Santhal indigenous community in West Bengal, India, aged 17–21 years, pursuing undergraduate studies at colleges affiliated with the University of Burdwan that has dedicated department of Santali. Participants were recruited through convenience sampling. An adapted Academic Performance Scale (APS; Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.89$) developed by Birchmeier, Grattan and Hornbacher and Gregory of Saginaw Valley State University was employed alongside demographic variables and self-reported daily mobile phone usage. Data were analysed using Spearman rank-order correlation and simple linear regression.

Academic Performance Scores of the respondents were categorised according to the scale, resulting in moderate academic performance (55.65%), good performance (38.26%), poor performance (4.35%) and excellent performance (1.74%). Spearman's rank-order correlation, given the non-normal distribution of the mobile phone usage time (3.53 ± 1.01) variable, indicated a negligible and non-significant correlation between the two variables ($\rho = 0.001$, $p = 0.992$, $n = 115$), suggesting that the duration of mobile phone usage does not have a statistically significant relationship with students' academic scores (23.52 ± 4.12). The result of the linear regression indicates that the model was not statistically significant, $F(1, 113) = 0.023$, $p = .879$, and explains virtually none of the variance in academic performance ($R^2 = 0.000$, Adjusted $R^2 = -0.009$). The regression coefficient for time spent on mobile phone is negative ($B = -0.059$), suggesting a slight decrease in academic score with increased mobile phone use. However, this relationship was not statistically significant ($t = -0.153$, $p = .879$), indicating that time spent on mobile phone does not meaningfully predict academic performance in this sample.

Keywords: Mobile phone, Internet, Academic performance, Tribal, Girls, Marginalised.

Algorithmic Bias and Credibility of Short-Video as a News Source: A Study among Generation Z in Santiniketan

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The evaluation of media consumption is closely associated with technological innovation. In ancient India, information sharing was limited to storytelling and community gatherings. In that time, information was disseminated through declarations engraved on stone or metal. After that, the print media has been used by various civilizations to disseminate news and information to the general public for many centuries. The rapid development of technology and digital media has significantly transformed the way news is produced, distributed, and consumed. In recent years, India has seen a significant shift in how people consume news, driven by rapid smartphone penetration, affordable internet access, and the growing popularity of social media platforms. Among these changes, the emergence of short-video formats—popularized by platforms such as YouTube Shorts, Facebook and Instagram Reels, etc, has significantly transformed the news ecosystem, particularly for Generation Z. These platforms rely heavily on algorithm-driven recommendation systems that personalize content based on user behavior, potentially leading to algorithmic bias and selective exposure.

This study examines how Algorithmic bias influences Gen Z's perception of credibility in short video news content. This study also identifies the factors influencing news consumption and the credibility of short-form news videos. The researcher employs a quantitative research method to address the objectives set. The survey is considered a primary data collection tool, which would comprise 100 respondents selected purposively. The findings of the study reflect that although short-video news is perceived to be engaging and easily accessible, its credibility is often questioned due to concerns about misinformation, lack of depth, and personalized content.

Keywords: Algorithmic Bias, Short-video News, News Credibility, Generation Z, Santiniketan

Platformed Visibility and Cultural Inequality: Patachitra as a Folk Communication Practice on YouTube

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Patachitra is a traditional scroll painting and storytelling practice of rural West Bengal that combines visual narratives with performative songs as a medium of communication, cultural expression, and knowledge transmission. Historically rooted in community performances and oral traditions, Patachitra has increasingly entered digital spaces through platforms such as YouTube, where folk artists, cultural organisations, and independent creators upload performances and visual content for wider audiences. While digital media is often celebrated for democratising cultural visibility and preserving traditional art forms, the visibility of Patachitra online remains uneven and shaped by platform structures, algorithms, and digital accessibility.

This paper examines how visibility and representation of Patachitra are constructed on YouTube and how digital platforms influence the circulation of indigenous cultural knowledge. The study argues that digital visibility is not neutral; rather, it is determined by factors such as production quality, language, technological access, platform algorithms and institutional mediation. Through a qualitative analysis of selected YouTube channels featuring Patachitra-related content, the study investigates the modes of storytelling, presentation styles, audience engagement, and the identities of content creators, focusing on whether the content is produced directly by Patua artists or by external organisations and cultural intermediaries.

The findings suggest significant inequalities in digital communication and representation. Videos produced by organisations or creators with better technical resources, editing quality, and multilingual accessibility tend to receive higher visibility and audience engagement, whereas content created by rural Patua artists often remains marginalised due to limited digital literacy, inadequate resources, and linguistic barriers. This unequal visibility demonstrates how digital platforms reproduce existing social and cultural hierarchies even while offering opportunities for preservation and global circulation.

Overall, the paper shows how digital platforms reshape traditional communication and create new forms of cultural inequality, especially for indigenous knowledge systems in the Global South.

Keywords: Communication, Visibility, Algorithms, Inequality, Data Justice, Digital Media

Digital Misogyny towards Political Leadership: Algorithmic Bias and Gendered Harassment of Women in Kerala's Political Sphere

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Social media platforms are widely used to interact and analyse the actions of political actors. Former Kerala Health Minister Veena George, a CPI(M) legislator and former journalist, has emerged as one of Kerala's most politically targeted public figures since assuming office in 2021. This illustrates how women leaders are subjected to intensified online attacks that are not merely political but deeply gendered. These attacks frequently target her personal identity, reflecting structural biases against women as a marginalised group. This study tries to analyse how algorithmic systems may be complicit in amplifying such gendered harassment, normalising misogynistic discourse, and reinforcing the marginalisation of women in political spaces. Within hours of any controversy involving the health department, the internet erupts with hashtags questioning the minister's credibility. This study examines how platform algorithms structurally enable opposition parties to weaponise digital misinformation against women leaders in left-governed administrations. This study also aims to identify algorithmic amplification of negative narratives targeting Minister Veena George and to identify asymmetries in the promotion of misinformation against Left leaders. This study opts for a critical discourse analysis. Social media data will be collected from Facebook and Instagram, focusing on posts, replies, and trending content related to the ex-minister. Particular attention will be given to algorithmically amplified interactions, including high-engagement posts. Discourse analysis is used to identify the narratives used in these attacks. The study expects to find out that the algorithmic systems disproportionately amplify misogynistic and gendered content, contributing to the symbolic and political marginalisation of women leaders. By highlighting how digital infrastructures sustain gender-based disparities in modern political communication, the findings aim to contribute to broader discussions of algorithmic fairness.

Keywords: Political Communication, Algorithmic Bias, Gendered Harassment, Digital Media

Impact of Gen AI Visual Advertising on Audience Perception and Digital Newsroom Sustainability

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The incorporation of Gen AI (generative artificial intelligence) in digital media has a profound footprint on the way visual advertising is carried out, especially through the integration of hyper-realistic images and videos that are being generated through artificial intelligence technology. Anyway, the study has sparked concerns related to the authenticity of the content, the dissemination of misinformation along with the audience's trust level in the digital journalism culture. Despite the growing integration of artificial intelligence technology behind the creation of visual advertising, there has been very precise research on the way in which it is actually deceiving audiences' perception and also its implications on the sustainability of digital newsrooms.

The study is likely to find out that the use of AI-generated visual advertisements in the context of advertising in reference to journalism increases audience engagement in the short term due to the perceived realism but also it leads to a deceptive perception and decreases the trust level over the long term. The study is likely to establish the critical tension between sustainability and audience engagement in the context of the digital newsroom.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Gen AI, Digital Newsroom, Gen AI Advertising

From Visibility to Trust: Influencer Credibility and Knowledge Inequality in India

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This paper examines the relationship between influencer credibility and digital inequality within the contemporary Indian media ecosystem. While digital influencers are widely perceived as authentic and relatable sources of information, the study argues that credibility in platform-driven environments is not merely an individual attribute but a structurally produced outcome shaped by visibility, social positioning and algorithmic amplification.

The study draws on a quantitative survey conducted among Indian youth to analyse patterns of trust, content consumption and perceptions of influencer authenticity. Data was collected from more than 200 respondents from Delhi and Jaipur, using a structured questionnaire focusing on platform usage, credibility assessment and awareness of media ethics. The responses were analysed using descriptive statistical techniques and interpretive analysis to examine how perceptions of credibility are embedded within broader structures of digital communication inequality.

The paper is theoretically anchored in Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital and the framework of platform power and algorithmic authority. These perspectives enable an understanding of how certain influencers acquire legitimacy through markers such as language and presentation, while platform algorithms reinforce their visibility and perceived trustworthiness.

The findings indicate a significant overlap between visibility and credibility, where frequently encountered influencers are more likely to be perceived as trustworthy regardless of content depth or ethical considerations. Despite demonstrating awareness of potential biases, respondents continue to rely on influencer-driven content, suggesting a shift from media literacy towards platform-dependent information practices.

By reframing credibility as a function of visibility and structural power, this paper contributes to debates on communication inequalities, digital cultures and epistemic hierarchies. It highlights how influencer ecosystems, rather than fully democratising communication, reproduce new forms of inequality within digital knowledge systems.

Keywords: Digital Media, Digital Inequality, Influencer Culture, Platform Power, Youth Media Practices

The Flattened Stitch: Algorithmic Epistemicide and the Mediation of Kantha Heritage in the Global Digital Economy

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This paper examines the epistemic friction emerging at the intersection of traditional Global South material culture and global platform logic. The study conceptualizes these textile motifs as a tactical medium utilised by underprivileged women to record secret narratives of home resilience and climate trauma, with a focus on the historical Kantha iconography of South 24 Parganas, West Bengal, and Bangladesh. This study criticises the “semantic flattening” process that occurs when context-dependent knowledge systems are converted into uniform digital information.

The article argues that e-commerce interfaces consistently give standardized trade value precedence over local epistemic value, drawing on platform capitalism (Smicek, 2017; Gillespie, 2010) and critical data studies (Couldry & Mejias, 2019). The study's methodology shifts from a descriptive narrative to an analytically sound digital epistemic audit. Five fundamental Nakshi Kantha symbolic categories—the Lotus (Padma),

Caged Bird (Khacha), Swirling Waves (Bhenta), Mango Seed (Kalka), and Fish (Maach)—are chosen from institutional museum archives using a purposive sampling technique as an analytical baseline. This data is compared with 15 live digital listings systematically scraped from Amazon India, Etsy, and Instagram.

Using multimodal discourse analysis, the study measures the semiotic gap between the archive's localised lexicon and automated, SEO-driven algorithmic tagging systems. The findings demonstrate a systematic, algorithmic epistemicide, in which multi-layered socio-political and environmental narratives are reduced to flat consumer tags. The paper concludes by proposing a framework for data sovereignty in craft preservation.

Keywords: Algorithmic Epistemicide, Critical Data Studies, Multimodal Discourse Analysis, Nakshi Kantha, Transnational Bengal.

Hypermasculinity and Hyperfemininity in Algorithmic Cultures: Gendered Communication Inequalities in India's Short-Form Video Platforms

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The rapid expansion of short-form video platforms such as Instagram Reels, Facebook Reels and YouTube Shorts has significantly reshaped the contours of digital communication and visibility in India. Within these platform environments, visibility and popularity are no longer determined solely by user creativity; rather, they are increasingly structured by algorithmic systems that organise the circulation, amplification and discoverability of content. This raises critical questions regarding how platform algorithms structure unequal regimes of visibility through gendered forms of communication.

While existing scholarship has explored issues of participation, performance, and digital labour, relatively less attention has been paid to how algorithmic infrastructures organise visibility along gendered lines, particularly within the Indian socio-cultural context and in relation to non-binary identities. Drawing on the frameworks of gender performativity and platform studies, this paper examines how algorithmically mediated visibility systems may privilege certain forms of gender expression within India's short-form video culture. It argues that hypermasculine and hyperfeminine performances often become more algorithmically legible because they align with culturally recognisable and engagement-oriented forms of self-presentation. As a result, such performances are more likely to receive amplification, circulation and audience engagement within platform ecosystems. In contrast, non-binary and gender-nonconforming expressions may encounter lower visibility within these algorithmically structured environments. The paper conceptualises this disparity as a form of communication inequality, wherein access to visibility, recognition and digital participation becomes unevenly distributed across different gender identities and performances.

Methodologically, the study adopts a critical conceptual approach, engaging with interdisciplinary scholarship in gender studies, digital media and platform governance. By situating algorithmic visibility within India's socio-cultural context, the paper highlights how digital infrastructures interact with existing gender norms and platform logics to shape contemporary practices of online self-presentation. The paper ultimately argues that short-form video platforms do not merely host gender performances but actively participate in normalizing and amplifying particular gendered expressions through algorithmic systems of visibility. It calls for more inclusive approaches to platform design and governance that are attentive to diversity and equity in digital communication.

Keywords: Short-Form Video Platforms, Algorithmic Visibility, Gender Performativity, Hypermasculinity and Hyperfemininity, Communication Inequality, Non-Binary Identities

Algorithmic Gate keeping and Digital Diplomacy: Platform Governance, Bias and the Construction of India's National Identity on X

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The rise of digital communication technologies has fundamentally transformed the practice of diplomacy, governance and communication. The increasing centrality of digital platforms in governance has fully reshaped diplomacy as a key site for constructing national identity. States are increasingly relying on digital platforms to engage with domestic citizens, foreign publics and diasporic communities fluently. Social media is not only a space for interpersonal communication now but also a geopolitical space where nations shape their identities, assert strategic priorities and cultivate cultural narratives for its citizens. This transformation has given rise to 'digital diplomacy'. In Indian context, the transition is very visible. Government is now constructively using its X (erstwhile Twitter) for promoting India's national image, identity and diplomatic communication. The adoption of digital platforms by Government has now been systematic and institutionalized. Official X handles form a coordinated communication ecosystem that communicates policy information, counter misinformation, engage citizens and represent the country globally.

This paper aims to examine how algorithmic bias and platform governance shape the visibility and reception of state narratives on X.

Drawing from Gate keeping Theory, Agenda Setting Theory this paper argues that algorithm act as mediators which influence which governmental messages are amplified and prioritized in digital space.

Focusing on three selected Government X handles, this paper investigates how this engagement driven system and policy structure the communication. Methodologically, the study adopts a qualitative content analysis of social media posts over a period of one year combined with engagement mapping to trace the pattern. A comparative thematic coding is employed to identify the recurring themes.

By situating digital diplomacy within algorithmic governance, the paper reconceptualizes platforms as active gatekeepers and calls for greater accountability and transparency in diplomatic communication.

Keywords: Digital diplomacy, Algorithm, Gate keeping, National Identity

Conditional Parasociality in Digital Communication: A Netnographic Study of AI Companions

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AI companions are opening a new frontier in digital communication. Users of such applications are practicing communication not human-to-human but human-to-machine. In this context, this study examined how users construct and interpret their communicative experiences with AI companion Apps. Examining the relationship between emotional engagement and structural constraint is the primary focus of this study, which also includes the monetization of communication and system performance. Deploying a qualitative dominant mixed method design. A netnographic evaluation of 200 user-generated reviews of two AI companion applications, namely Replika and Luna, was undertaken for this study. Through inductive thematic analysis, key communicative

patterns were unfolded. Followed by descriptive quantification of frequency and co-occurrence of such themes. To ensure intercoder reliability, Cohen's Kappa was performed, which also indicated a substantial agreement. Preliminary findings suggested that users perceive AI companions as relational entities, featuring emotional attachment. Yet that engagement remains unstable due to monetization strategies and technical limitations. These two emerged as significant constraints to human-to-machine communication continuity. Through co-occurrence analysis, it has been found that the emotional attachment often coincides with dissatisfaction toward the monetization strategy. Indicating that AI-mediated communication operates at both affective and transactional levels. Thus, this study tries to extend the parasocial interaction theory by adding the concept of conditional parasociality. The core argument behind such addition is that AI-mediated relationships are structurally contingent rather than continuously sustained. Thus, this study hopes to contribute towards the growing field of human-AI communication by underscoring the phenomenon of digital interactions within platform-based constraints.

Keywords: Human-AI Communication, Parasocial Interaction, Netnography, Conditioned Parasociality

Exploring the Dynamics of Algorithmic Literacy: A Systematic Literature Review of Gender Bias in Algorithmic Media Platforms

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In the advent of a constantly changing media landscape, algorithmic use through the digital media platforms in the last few decades has fostered a new shift in moulding personalised user experiences. This has, in turn, revamped the user engagement and platform interaction process. However, the extensive use of this data-driven model of shaping engagement patterns has created a negative bubble about increasing bias around social groups, specifically women, and thus highlighting the immediacy of understanding algorithm literacy. This has led to the creation of a new era of digital divide, which highlights the need for the acquisition of the correct skill set necessary to avoid risks in the world of digital kiosks and maximise benefits from their usage (Schreurs and Vandenbosch, 2021). Research regarding the rising concerns of algorithmic discrimination has been recognised, but the key factors that put forth such situations remain less explored. This paper thus tries to navigate the factors that lead to such gendered bias and its interplay with algorithmic literacy, which might act as a tool to mitigate discrimination. Through a systematic analysis of available literature, the researcher expects to understand the evolving dynamics of algorithm literacy and the inequalities that exist, since gender is only a part of it. Algorithmic content curation on digital media platforms thrives on personalised experiences, thus, it will be interesting to note that even though algorithm works as a new form of agenda-setter, it is not a watertight compartment; the users, once aware of such encounters, can break away from the cycle and create new learning and behavioral experiences.

Keywords: Algorithm, algorithm literacy, social media platforms, gender, identity, bias.

Influencer Culture and the Standardization of Content on Instagram and Its Effects on Indian Youth: A Critical Analysis

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India currently stands as the world's largest Instagram market, with over 413.85 million active users — a figure that surpasses even the combined user bases of the United States and Brazil. Among this massive digital population, users aged 18–24 constitute the single largest segment, accounting for approximately 41.7% of all Indian Instagram users, or nearly 172 million individuals. This demographic reality places Indian youth at the very epicentre of a platform architecture that increasingly governs what is seen, celebrated, and reproduced in digital public life. This paper critically examines the rise of influencer culture on Instagram and interrogates its structural role in the standardization of digital content — and the profound consequences this standardization holds for Indian youth identities, aspirations, and psychological well-being. Drawing upon critical media theory, platform studies, and cultural studies frameworks — including Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field, and capital, as well as the political economy of platform capitalism in the Indian context — this study argues that content homogenization on Instagram is not an incidental aesthetic trend but a structural outcome of algorithmic governance and monetization logic. Influencers are compelled by the platform's recommendation architecture to reproduce legible, high-performing formats — curated body imagery, aspirational lifestyle spectacles, and performative authenticity — in order to remain visible and commercially viable. The result is a self-reinforcing cycle in which both producers and consumers of content operate within an increasingly narrow register of visual and cultural possibility. Through critical discourse analysis of popular Indian Instagram influencers across lifestyle, fashion, fitness, and beauty domains — and through synthesis of recent empirical findings on youth behaviour, identity formation, and mental health — the paper maps the consequences of this standardization across three interlocking dimensions — algorithmic beauty templates, fitspiration, platform capitalism in India, arguing that the commodification of youth attention and identity on Instagram reproduces rather than disrupts existing socio-economic inequalities — particularly along axes of gender, class, and geography.

Keywords: Influencer culture, Instagram, Content Standardization, Platform Capitalism, Algorithmic Governance, Performative Authenticity, Critical Media Theory.

Digital Cultural Algorithms: How AI Creates, Controls, and Commodifies Local Traditions

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Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming cultural production and changing the relationship between humans and local traditions. This paper examines how AI creates, controls, and commercializes cultural heritage, especially indigenous and folk traditions. Although AI is often presented as a tool for cultural preservation and democratization, its growing role in digital platforms raises important ethical and social concerns.

The study focuses on the interaction between human communities and AI systems in three areas: creation, control, and commodification. First, generative AI tools can produce folk-style music, stories, paintings, and designs by using large online cultural datasets. However, these creations often imitate traditional forms without acknowledging the original human creators or communities. Second, recommendation algorithms on platforms such as YouTube, Spotify, and Instagram influence which traditions gain visibility and which remain marginalized, reflecting cultural and economic biases. Third, AI-powered platforms commercially exploit local cultural expressions by turning them into profitable digital content without proper consent, attribution, or benefit-sharing.

Using examples from AI-generated indigenous art and digitally curated folk media, this paper argues that AI is not a neutral technology. Instead, it actively reshapes human cultural practices according to platform economies and market interests. The research highlights the need for ethical AI policies, cultural data sovereignty, and stronger protection of community ownership in the digital age.

Keywords: AI Ethics, Cultural Heritage, Human–AI Interaction, Algorithmic Bias, Digital Folklore Commodification

The Coded Public Sphere: Generative AI and the Reproduction of Communication Inequalities in the Global South

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This paper interrogates the emergence of a coded public sphere, where generative AI and algorithmic media systems increasingly mediate public discourse, visibility, and participation.

The coded public sphere is defined as the digitally mediated space of public debate in which participation, visibility and agenda formation are shaped by platform code, datafication recommender systems and automated moderation. Situated within the theme of Communication and Inequalities in Context, the study examines how AI-driven platforms such as large language models, recommendation engines, and automated content systems reshape communicative power in the Global South, particularly in South Asia. While these technologies promise democratisation of content creation and access, they simultaneously reproduce and intensify existing structural inequalities related to language, culture, class, and digital access. Drawing on critical communication theory and platform studies, the paper argues that generative AI systems are embedded with epistemic biases that privilege dominant languages, Western knowledge systems, and data-rich populations, thereby marginalising vernacular voices and localised knowledge. This results in an algorithmic hierarchy of visibility, where certain identities and narratives are amplified while others remain systematically underrepresented or distorted. Algorithmic hierarchy is defined as the ranking logic through which platforms make some climate narratives, actors and emotions and formats more visible than others.

The study further explores how these dynamics intersect with socio-economic inequalities, creating a shift from the traditional digital divide to a more complex algorithmic divide. The paper proposes a conceptual framework that integrates algorithmic accountability, data justice, and inclusive communication design as essential components of equitable media ecosystems. It emphasises the need for culturally contextualised AI systems, multilingual datasets, and participatory governance models to mitigate communicative exclusion. By reframing AI as an active agent in structuring the public sphere, this research contributes to ongoing debates on digital inequality, media power, and the future of inclusive communication in algorithmically mediated societies.

Keywords: Algorithmic inequality, generative AI, digital public sphere, data justice, Global South

Addressing inequalities and platform induced precarity: Everyday encounters of journalists in digital native news websites

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Digital native news websites rely heavily on social media platforms. In particular, platforms become avenues for journalists who encounter precarity, caused by layoff from legacy media organizations or voluntarily leaving their job due to intolerable working conditions (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2022). What drives them to do so is their desire to continue flourishing without compromising their values and this has for the most part created an unsettling conflict between them and the organizations they previously worked for. While establishing and working within digital native news sites, journalists continue to uphold these values that guide them as internalized principles (Leonhardt, 2025).

However, social media platforms are not neutral intermediaries, and instead are active content moderators in response to platform policies and state guidelines reinforcing compliance through their systemic mechanisms. This asymmetric dependency subjects entrepreneurial journalists to a new kind of precarity, where they now experience a conflict of values in their effort to find a midpoint between compliance with and defiance of the imperatives of social media platforms that sometimes throttle content diversity. In such instances, the dynamic nature of values in which journalists engage with and respond to precarity by reflecting on the ideals of journalistic conduct and at the same time on practices that emerge from ground conditions and lived experiences (Raemy & Vos 2021). This reflects the ongoing negotiations between the values journalists uphold in persisting with independent journalism and the quantified user data and activities induced by algorithms and platforms.

Against this background, the present study aims to find out how digital native news website journalists in Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Pondicherry negotiate precarity induced by social media platforms, and accommodate values as well. Further, the study explores the concept of values from a material practices perspective in which values are liable to be reconstituted through the relations between journalists, their practices and professional ideals. (Doherty et al., 2022). With platforms and algorithms forming new components in the assemblage of this practice, the materiality of values undergoes further reconstitution depending on how journalists manage to negotiate between their personal and institutional values.

Keywords: Values, precarity, negotiation, everyday resistance

Ajit at AI's Edge: Navigating Linguistic Blindspot and Epistemic Labor in Vernacular Journalism

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The rapid integration of Artificial Intelligence into journalism marks a significant transformation and renegotiation of newsroom practices globally. While much of the scholarship discourse centers on Western-centric ecosystems, the implications for Indian vernacular newsrooms remain underexplored

The study explores how AI adoption in vernacular newsrooms produces tension between technological standardization and linguistically and culturally specific epistemic traditions. It interrogates whether AI-driven journalism contributes to 'linguistic flattening' and epistemic marginalization within non-English news ecosystems, particularly in Punjabi print media.

This study adopts the qualitative exploratory approach. A case study of AJIT, a leading legacy Punjabi newspaper, has been undertaken. 18 In-depth interviews were done across various workflows in the print and digital wings, with a few dropouts due to busy newsroom schedules. The purposive sampling technique was used.

The key findings suggest AI adoption is non-linear and uneven. While AI can enhance efficiency and speed. It struggles to capture linguistic nuance and cultural context in non-English news spaces. It rather increases the journalistic labor when working on workflows fortified with AI or algorithms. This repositions the journalistic mediators of machine-generated content through a certain 'jugaad'. This study highlights the emergence of a kind of dominant paradigm with a Western bias of news, creating fewer spaces for region-specific news due to increased use of optimization algorithms in selecting trending topics. These homogenized vernacular spaces are highlighted as a concern in many industry reports by the Reuters Institute, WAN-IFRA, and others. This also leads to increased algorithmic gatekeeping, even if it is not very well understood by the news professionals working on them, showing a lack of understanding of algorithmic work and the notion of machine superiority.

Keywords: Epistemic Labor, Linguistic Flattening, Algorithmic Hierarchies, Algorithmic Gatekeeping, Vernacular Journalism, AI-Augmented Journalism

Climate Resilience between Policy and Practice: A Multimodal Analysis of Government Communication on Instagram

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Climate resilience in India is not merely a policy concern, but it is also a cultural practice rooted in ecological traditions, indigenous knowledge, and everyday environmental care. With the rapid spread of mobile internet and platforms like Instagram, climate communication has shifted into digital spaces. Yet current narratives, remain largely technocratic often sidelining culturally embedded ecological knowledge.

Despite growing digital outreach, a critical gap persists 'government led climate communication tends to prioritize policy visibly over grounded, inclusive community-centered and practice-based understandings of climate resilience. This raises a key question – Does digital communication meaningfully constructs environmental responsibilities, or does it reduce resilience to simplified visual messaging?

-The study uses qualitative visual content analysis of posts from Ministry of environment, forest, and climate change official Instagram account (@moefccgoi). A dataset of posts from January to December 2025 is analyzed as multimodal units combining images, captions, and hashtags. The analysis draws on frameworks of visual communication and climate resilience to interpret themes, pattern and representations. The analysis draws on the framework of Multimodal Discourse Analysis and nature 2.0 which enable the transformation of complex environmental problems into accessible and visually engaging narratives which contributes to the co-construction of environmental meanings within digital spaces conceptualized as "nature 2.0" (Büscher, 2013, 2017).

Our findings state that climate resilience is communicated through solution-oriented and behaviour- focused narratives, emphasizing awareness, and individual responsibility. Visual strategies simplify complex issues into actionable messages. However, dimensions such as risk preparedness, inclusiveness, and indigenous knowledge remain underrepresented. The study also finds a shift toward individualizing climate responsibility, with the state positioned more as a facilitator than a regulator. This highlights the need for culturally grounded, participatory, and justice - oriented climate communication.

Keywords: Climate resilience, Climate change, Digital Communication, Instagram, Environmental Communication.

Algorithmic Visibility and Cultural Erasure: AI-Generated Representations of Santhal and Oraon Women in India's Digital Visual Ecology

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Algorithmic systems are increasingly shaping contemporary digital visual culture by determining what becomes visible, shareable and socially recognisable. In this context, visibility is not neutral; rather, it reflects the underlying structures of communicative power embedded in platform-driven, data-dependent systems. This study examines the visual construction of Santhal and Oraon women from West Bengal, examining how biases in training datasets shape algorithmic outputs. AI image-generation tools such as ChatGPT and Gemini, while often perceived as objective, participate in the processes of knowledge production that may reproduce existing socio-cultural hierarchies, particularly in relation to marginalised communities in the Global South. Preliminary observations suggested recurring patterns of homogenisation, exoticisation and cultural misrecognition, raising concerns about how indigenous identities are rendered within digital environments. The research adopts a qualitative approach, using prompt-based visual analysis of a corpus of 100 AI-generated images produced through platforms such as ChatGPT and Gemini. The findings suggested AI-generated representations do not completely align with lived cultural realities and are rather biased. The study contributes to ongoing discussions on algorithmic bias, indigenous representation and the ethics of AI-driven visual communication, while also calling for more inclusive and context-sensitive approaches to dataset design and algorithmic development.

Keywords: Algorithmic Visibility, AI-generated Imagery, Indigenous Representation, Data Colonialism, AI Bias

Beauty Gig Workers in the Platform Economy: The Role of Algorithmic Management and Social Stigma

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This paper examines the relationship between engagement in digital platforms, algorithmic management, and social stigma in the context of beautician gig work in India. The recent growth of beauty gig work facilitated by digital platforms has changed the nature of work, with workers operating in digital environments guided by customer ratings, time pressures, algorithmic scheduling, and performance-based incentives. This research follows a qualitative methodology, in which focus groups are conducted with beauty salon workers who use digital service platforms. It is found that engagement in digital platforms contributes to better organisation, visibility, and customer interaction, thus fostering professionalism and respect among workers. Good customer ratings and performance transparency often lead to increased worker self-respect and self-confidence. On the other hand, algorithmic management policies also impose psychological strains arising from fixed scheduling, high workloads, pay uncertainty, and work-life conflict. Another important insight from the study is the persistence of stigma linked to beauty work, such as gendered notions, class stereotypes, and low-skill expectations, on the lives of workers. In any case, the emergence of platform branding and the legitimacy of beauty apps has led to a decrease in stigma within society and an increase in occupational respect. Therefore, platforms serve a dual function, facilitating economic mobility while also imposing new modes of managerial control.

Keywords: Gig Economy, Algorithmic Management, Beauty Gig Workers, Digital Platforms, Social Stigma, Occupational Identity

Precarity in the Age of Artificial Intelligence (AI): Job Insecurity and Inequality in Bengali Newsrooms

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The growing incorporation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in newsrooms is often framed in terms of efficiency, speed, and technological advancement. However, such narratives tend to overlook the uneven consequences of automation, particularly in relation to labor precarity and emerging inequalities within journalistic work. This paper examines how the introduction of AI in Bengali newsrooms is reshaping workflows while simultaneously generating new forms of job insecurity among media professionals, including entry-level reporters, copy editors, and visual content producers. Existing studies indicate a growing anxiety within the profession, with many journalists expressing concern over potential job displacement due to automation. While these concerns are frequently discussed at a general level, there remains limited engagement with how such anxieties are experienced within regional-language news ecosystems, particularly in the Global South. In the Bengali context, where resource constraints, linguistic specificity, and uneven technological access intersect, the implications of AI adoption appear particularly complex. The paper also considers how AI systems, often trained on large and potentially biased datasets, may reproduce existing social inequalities and raise concerns regarding representation, journalistic ethics, and editorial values.

Methodologically, the study adopts a qualitative approach based on purposive sampling. Semi-structured interviews are being conducted with journalists, copy editors, and newsroom professionals working across Bengali print and digital media platforms who are directly engaged with AI-assisted newsroom practices. Preliminary observations suggest that while AI may enhance productivity for some, it simultaneously produces differentiated vulnerabilities, particularly among professionals with limited technological access or institutional support. By situating Bengali newsrooms within wider debates on communication and inequality, the paper argues that AI-driven transformations are less about replacement alone and more about the reorganization of labor, ethics, and representational practices within regional journalism.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence in Journalism, Labor Precarity, Media Inequality, Algorithmic Bias, Bengali Newsrooms

Filtered Inequality: Gendered Algorithmic Bias and Marginalization on Instagram

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Social media platforms have evolved into powerful spaces that shape communication, visibility, and economic participation. Instagram, in particular, operates through algorithmic systems that curate content based on engagement patterns, thereby influencing what users see and how they interact online. While these systems are often perceived as neutral and efficient, they are deeply embedded within existing social structures. As a result, they tend to reproduce and amplify pre-existing inequalities, especially those related to gender. The visual and engagement-driven nature of Instagram further intensifies these dynamics by privileging certain forms of representation over others.

Despite the widespread use of Instagram as a platform for self-expression and economic opportunity, its algorithmic mechanisms may reinforce gender-based disparities rather than mitigate them. The central problem this research addresses is how algorithmic bias, rooted in unequal and socially conditioned data, systematically marginalizes women and gender minorities. Specifically, the study interrogates how Instagram's

content curation and moderation practices prioritize stereotypical and commercially viable representations while limiting the visibility of diverse, non-conforming, or critical gender narratives.

The study finds (and anticipates) that Instagram's algorithmic structure disproportionately rewards content that aligns with dominant, often stereotypical representations of femininity, thereby marginalizing diverse identities and voices. Women, particularly those from intersectional backgrounds, face pressure to conform to algorithmically favored norms in order to maintain visibility and engagement. This contributes to the normalization of narrow beauty standards and the commodification of identity.

Furthermore, the research highlights that algorithmic opacity limits user awareness and accountability, making it difficult to challenge biased outcomes. Content related to feminist discourse or social critique often experiences reduced reach due to inconsistent moderation practices. These dynamics collectively reinforce gender inequality within digital ecosystems.

The paper ultimately emphasizes that achieving algorithmic fairness requires more than technical adjustments; it demands structural changes in platform design, greater transparency, and the inclusion of marginalized perspectives in decision-making processes. Such interventions are essential to fostering a more equitable and inclusive digital environment.

Keywords: Algorithmic Bias, Gender Inequality, Instagram, Social Media Algorithms, Data Inequality, Algorithmic Fairness, Digital Labor, Influencer Culture, Platform Governance, Feminist Media Studies

Data Colonialism and Informational Inequality: A Critical Legal Inquiry

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The rapid expansion of digital technologies and artificial intelligence has led to unprecedented data extraction practices, often dominated by large technology corporations. This phenomenon, conceptualized as data colonialism, reflects a new form of power asymmetry where data from individuals and communities—especially in the Global South—is appropriated, commodified, and controlled by a few entities. This results in informational inequality, where access, ownership, and benefits of data are unevenly distributed, raising serious concerns about autonomy, privacy, and digital justice.

Despite growing reliance on data-driven systems, existing legal frameworks inadequately address the exploitative dimensions of data extraction and the resulting inequalities. There is a lack of robust legal mechanisms to ensure equitable data governance, protect marginalized populations, and prevent the concentration of informational power.

The study is expected to reveal that current legal regimes are insufficient to address structural data inequalities and often reinforce existing power imbalances. It will highlight the need for a rights-based, inclusive data governance model emphasizing transparency, accountability, and community data ownership. The research aims to contribute to the evolving discourse on digital justice by proposing legal reforms that mitigate technological exclusion and promote equitable participation in the data economy.

Keywords: Data colonialism, marginalized population, data inequalities, data governance

Infrastructures of Invisibility: Algorithmic Bias, Platform Governance, and the Politics of Digital Exclusion

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Digital platforms are the main way we communicate with each other about anything, and as such, they control the way people are able to speak and communicate with one another. This paper proposes that we see digital platforms as having designed the systems which use algorithms to structure relevance. Moreover, the algorithms these digital platforms use to determine relevance embed the biases of the design context and reproduce, further, existing inequalities of gender, race, caste, class, and geography. This paper uses the lens of critical data studies, digital sociology, and postcolonial media theory to provide an analysis of the various platform governance models in which social sorting mechanisms disproportionately exclude the already-marginalized because of how they function in cases of content moderation, recommendation, and monetization logics.

This paper proceeds in three steps. First, I argue that algorithmic bias is not simply one of many technical errors. More importantly, it is the result of a collection of systems and data training which are conceived within a set of pre-existing data collection and optimization systems. Next, I consider platform governance and the Global North and Global South users of content producers that govern the visibility of the Global South users and content producers as a result of an asymmetrical power relation, and finally, I draw on data justice framed by one such Taylor and Dencik and argue that in an effort to provide digital governance, we have to, first of all, provide digital justice by way of structural does les, not, by way of simply providing justice.

This study adds to the expanding body of interdisciplinary research at the crossroads of communication studies and critical technology studies, arguing that algorithmic inequity, historically, is not a design flaw to be fixed, but a political condition to be challenged.

Keywords: algorithmic bias, platform governance, data justice, digital exclusion, critical data studies, postcolonial media theory, Global South, digital inequality, content moderation, knowledge production

Theme 7:
Cross-Border Communication Inequalities.

**Social Media, the Nepali Music Industry in India and Nepal,
and Cross-Border Affective Spaces: Migration and Identity Discourses**

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The proliferation of social media platforms — YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram — has fundamentally restructured how Nepali music circulates across the India-Nepal transborder zone, transforming it from a bounded national cultural product into a dynamic, deterritorialised affective infrastructure. This paper examines how the Nepali music industry, straddling the distinct yet deeply entangled cultural polities of Nepal and the Indian Nepali-speaking communities of Darjeeling, Sikkim, Assam, and the broader northeastern borderlands, deploys digital platforms to constitute what this study theorises as cross-border affective spaces — networked, emotionally charged communicative environments where migration and identity discourses are simultaneously produced, circulated, negotiated, and contested. Drawing on Papacharissi’s concept of affective publics — wherein social media enables communities to articulate collective structures of feeling rather than simply exchanging information — alongside analysis of the *viraha* (longing/separation) and *dukha* (suffering) tropes embedded in Nepali folk song traditions, the paper argues that social media amplifies centuries-old emotional grammars of migration to produce new cross-border communities of sentiment. Digital platforms do not merely carry Nepali music; they engineer affective togetherness across geographically dispersed Nepali-speaking populations — migrants, diasporics, and subnational communities alike — whose identities are historically shaped by the peculiar experience of belonging to a linguistic and cultural nation that does not map neatly onto the territorial boundaries of either Nepal or India. The paper argues that the Nepali music industry’s digital cross-border presence is neither simply a cultural phenomenon nor merely an entertainment market — it is a para-political affective commons through which dispersed Nepali-speaking communities across India and Nepal rehearse, dispute, and reaffirm the terms of their collective identity in a postcolonial world that persistently renders them legible only as migrants.

Keywords: Nepali Music Industry, Cross-Border Affective Spaces, Migration Discourse, Affective Publics, Digital Mediascapes, Transnational Belonging

Theme 8:
**Inequalities Across and Within Communication Research, Including
Power Imbalances in Knowledge Production within the Field,
and Differences in Opportunities, Resources, and Capacities
Among Researchers, Institutions**

Regulatory knowledge as Epistemic power: TRAI’s Consultation Paper, 2004-24

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The formulation of regulatory policy in India’s broadcasting and telecommunication sectors takes place within a complex field where legal reasoning, market logic, technical expertise, and global models interact. This reflects the increasing reliance on specialised knowledge in governance (Weingart, 1999; Vibert, 2007). Institutions such as the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India play a central role in this process. It does so by

not only responding to sectoral challenges but also shaping how these challenges are understood. Consultation papers, often presented as neutral and evidence-based, are in fact key sites where knowledge is selected, organised, and legitimised.

Existing research gives limited attention to the knowledge practices within regulatory processes. In particular, there is little empirical work on how citation practices privilege certain actors while marginalising others, reproducing inequalities in knowledge production and participation. To address this gap, this paper examines how the TRAI frames regulatory debates through its consultation papers on telecom and broadcasting infrastructure between 2004 and 2024. It asks: whose knowledge is made visible, whose is marginalised, and how does this shape policy debates in telecom and broadcasting infrastructure?

Drawing on framing theory by Robert Entman and Deborah Nelkin's understanding of knowledge as a political resource, the paper conceptualises regulation as a site of epistemic power. Methodologically, the paper uses a mixed-method approach combining quantitative mapping and qualitative analysis of 230 citations drawn from selected consultation papers. This parameter categorizes sources across industry, government bodies, academia, civil society, private entities, media and international organisations.

The findings indicate higher citations from state authority, global expertise, and market rationality, while systematically excluding alternative knowledge systems, particularly emerging from civil society and academia. By situating these practices within debates on regulatory knowledge, this paper redefines the contours of public policy. It understands knowledge as more of a political resource than a technical input that structures regulatory outcomes.

Keywords: Regulatory Knowledge, epistemic power, framing, policy document.

From Sacred Vats to Global Streams: A Critical Analysis of the “Judima Model” in Securing Geographical Indications (GI) for Indigenous Knowledge in Assam

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The tribal landscape of Assam is rich in Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) but has long suffered from media invisibility and narrative appropriation. Mainstream media frequently exoticizes indigenous practices instead of recognizing them as intellectual property. This study examines the intersection of grassroots digital media and Intellectual Property (IP) rights among indigenous communities in Assam.

In 2021, Judima (Dimasa rice wine) became the first traditional beverage from Northeast India to receive a Geographical Indication (GI) tag. While the GI application was a formal legal process, the social proof of origin was significantly catalyzed by Community Radio (CR) and Mobile Journalism (MoJo).

This research argues that hyper-local media tools can function as a “Digital Notary”, transforming oral traditions into legally recognizable digital archives. Using a Qualitative Case Study and Participatory Action Research (PAR) framework, the paper evaluates the “Judima Model” as a replicable blueprint for “media-dark” tribes such as the Mising and Singpho to reclaim cultural agency.

The GI tagging of Judima marked a significant shift. Unlike conventional IP claims driven by commercial entities, the Judima movement emerged from the Judima Festival (est. 2016) and was community-led by the Dibarai Mahila Samiti.

Local youth used MoJo to document the brewing process, while CR broadcast folklore surrounding the Humao starter plant. This synergy converted oral heritage into documented continuity, satisfying the GI Registry's requirement for historical linkage between product and place.

The study contributes to Alternative Media Theory by demonstrating how digital storytelling operates as a mechanism of legal validation and cultural survival in the Global South.

Keywords: Mobile Journalism, Community Radio, Geographical Indication, Judima, Subaltern Studies, Digital Sovereignty, Traditional Ecological Knowledge.

Reelification of the Soap Opera: Theorising Indian Micro-drama as a Hybrid Narrative Form

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Indian micro-drama is rising rapidly and reaching millions of mobile phone users. This development raises questions like 'Is micro-drama a short serial, or is it a new form of independent storytelling?' This research study focuses on tracing the genealogy of Indian micro-drama through its three consecutive traditions – soap operas, web series and reels. Additionally, it explores how the algorithmic and structural logics of social media reels are reconfiguring Indian narrative traditions. This study proposes and defines a new theoretical concept, called 'reelification', to explain how the logic of short-form platforms compresses and restructures long-standing narrative traditions. This paper tries to establish Indian micro-drama as a hybrid narrative form and creates a research agenda for this nascent field. This is a conceptual and theoretical paper. It critically synthesises theoretical literature from remediation theory (Bolter and Grusin), genre studies (Mittell and Altman), platform capitalism (Srniczek), and Indian television studies (Mankekar and Vasudevan). Instead of primary data collection, existing literature, platform observation, and conceptual analysis are used. The findings argue that Indian micro-drama is neither a short serial nor an extended reel, but rather an independent hybrid narrative form that has emerged from a process of reelification. This process is algorithmically restructuring Indian narrative fiction – marginalising local, rural, and regional narrative traditions. Furthermore, this research identifies the academic invisibility of micro-drama in Indian communication studies as an epistemological inequality.

Keywords: Indian Micro-Drama, Hybrid Narrative Form, Reelification, Indian Soap Opera, Platform Capitalism, Algorithmic Storytelling

Epistemic imbalances in Toto tribe's knowledge production: An analysis of authorship and citation patterns in external scholarship

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Epistemic power imbalances persist as defining feature of academic knowledge production on small indigenous communities, where control over authorship and citation remains concentrated in external scholarly networks. This dynamic is particularly evident in research concerning the Toto tribe, one of India's PVTGs, with population of 1,635 individuals (Madarihat Block report, 2024), primarily residing in Totopara village, Alipurduar district, West Bengal. Despite their demographic marginality, toto tribe sustains rich indigenous knowledge which encompasses ethnomedicine, intergenerational agricultural practices, cultural practices and language revitalization efforts. The existing scholarship on these domain remains limited in scale and scope and is produced exclusively by non-Toto researchers. Within this body of literature, Toto tribe is positioned primarily as informants or anonymous knowledge sources, with no documented instances of community members serving as co-authors in academic publications. The citation patterns further reveal closed scholarly networks in which external researchers predominantly reference one another, while community generated materials receive minimal scholarly recognition.

The main objective of this study is to explore how authorship and citation patterns reflect broader epistemic imbalances in the production of Toto tribe's indigenous knowledge. Drawing on concept of hermeneutical injustice, this study adopts systematic review of literature to critically analyze existing academic publications from scholarly database. Through authorship mapping and exploration of citation relationships, the study identifies the patterns of external dominance in knowledge production and the marginalization of indigenous epistemic authority. This study advocates reforms like co-authorship frameworks, participatory validation and equitable citation practices to promote epistemic justice in research on small PVTGs.

Keywords: Toto tribe, indigenous knowledge, epistemic imbalances, authorship, citation patterns

Between Scopus and the Classroom: Academic Hierarchies and the Politics of Knowledge in Regional Universities of Eastern India

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The rapid expansion of higher education in India has intensified inequalities between metropolitan institutions and regional universities, raising critical concerns about how knowledge is produced, circulated, and legitimized. Focusing on Gauhati University, Dibrugarh University, and the University of Burdwan, this study examines how institutional location shapes academic practices within contexts marked by limited research infrastructure, restricted journal access, and uneven scholarly visibility.

Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of field, habitus, and symbolic capital, Michel Foucault's notion of power/knowledge, and decolonial perspectives advanced by Aníbal Quijano, Walter Dignolo, and Raewyn Connell, the study investigates how academic hierarchies structure epistemic authority. Employing a qualitative multi-sited case study design, the research combines three analytically connected methods. First, bibliometric

mapping of peer-reviewed publications (2015–2023) identifies patterns of publication, collaboration, citation, and journal indexing across the selected universities. Second, critical discourse analysis of a purposive sample of highly cited and institutionally representative journal articles examines how legitimacy, relevance, and scholarly value are discursively constructed. Third, 30 semi-structured interviews with faculty members, doctoral researchers, and early-career academics, selected through purposive and maximum-variation sampling, explore how scholars experience and negotiate these structures in everyday research practice. The three datasets are triangulated to connect institutional publication patterns, textual representations of knowledge, and researchers' lived experiences.

Findings suggest that academic hierarchies privilege English-language outputs, internationally aligned methodologies, and metropolitan collaborations, often marginalizing locally grounded forms of knowledge. At the same time, scholars strategically adapt through topic reframing, network-building, and alternative dissemination practices. Beyond higher education debates, the study advances communication scholarship by demonstrating how academic communication systems—including publishing, citation practices, indexing regimes, and scholarly networks—function as mechanisms of epistemic inclusion and exclusion. The findings have broader implications for global knowledge governance, research evaluation policies, and efforts to democratize knowledge production by recognizing diverse epistemic traditions and regionally situated scholarship.

Keywords: Epistemic Justice, Knowledge Politics, Scholarly Communication, Academic Peripheries, Decolonial Knowledge Production

Educational Disparities and Layered Inequalities: Caste, Class, and the Political Economy of Knowledge in India

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Educational inequality in India constitutes a critical and insufficiently theorised site for examining how communication systems and knowledge production reproduce social stratification. Existing scholarship, while extensively documenting income-based disparities, has yet to adequately theorise caste as a communicative category or interrogate how communication infrastructure mediates epistemic exclusion along caste and class lines. This paper argues that disparities in education are inseparable from the political economy of knowledge: hierarchically structured systems that determine whose knowledge is legitimised, who is granted access to it, and who is enabled to meaningfully participate in its production and circulation. Situating educational exclusion within communication scholarship, the paper foregrounds how caste and class jointly govern the terms of epistemic access and discursive participation in India's asymmetric knowledge landscape.

Drawing on Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital and field, and Sen's capability approach, the paper reconceptualises educational participation as a communicative practice: one shaped by inherited symbolic resources, institutional gatekeeping, and structural constraints on voice and discursive agency. This dual theoretical framework is deployed not merely as a sociological lens but to interrogate how communication infrastructure encompassing language policies, literacy ecologies, and differential media access mediates knowledge inequality across caste and class lines. The study thereby addresses a critical gap at the intersection

of epistemic justice and communication theory, an area that remains underexplored within mainstream communication research, particularly in Global South contexts. This paper's conceptual contributions lies in repositioning education in equality not only as unequal access to schooling, but as a communicative inequality in which caste and class shape the legitimacy, circulation and recognition of knowledge itself.

Employing a quantitative research design, the study conducts secondary data analysis of the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS, 2023–24) and National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) datasets both nationally representative, multi-stage stratified random samples. Quintile-based disaggregation and comparative state-level methods are applied to map persistent caste- and class-based educational disparities across India. Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes record rural non-literacy rates of 22.5%, against a national average of 19.1%, while tertiary participation among the poorest income quintile has risen only marginally from 8% to 15% between 2007 and 2017. Regional variation from Bihar's 74% to Kerala's 96% literacy rate reveals how spatial, caste, and class inequalities are compounded by differential access to communicative and epistemic resources.

The paper contributes a Global South communication perspective to debates on knowledge power and epistemic justice, arguing that caste-based educational exclusion is simultaneously a crisis of communicative inequality. By centring epistemic justice within communication theory rather than confining it to sociology or development economics, it advances conceptual discussions on how historically entrenched hierarchies shape the production and circulation of knowledge in asymmetric media environments. The study calls for a more reflexive and structurally attentive communication scholarship that treats marginalised epistemic voices not as peripheral concerns but as constitutive of the discipline itself.

Keywords: Communication Inequality, Knowledge Production, Caste, Cultural Capital, Epistemic Justice, Global South

Technology, Translation, Trust: How Translation Tools Reshape Academic Access in a Resource-Scarce Rural Indian College?

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This paper focuses on the impact of web-based translation services, such as Google Translate and AI-driven translation tools, among students at a rural college in West Bengal. The study uses the framework of Actor-Network Theory (ANT), which foregrounds the interaction between human and non-human actors in determining socio-technical practices. The paper argues that the process of translation is a networked activity. Through the lens of ANT, three distinct trajectories are highlighted: firstly, how digital technology translates Bengali text to the English language; second, how the students engage with these translated texts; and third, how the inaccuracies and errors emerging through the translation process reshape the teaching-learning practices. Using semi-structured interviews with rural college students (N=23), the paper attempts to understand how the syntactic errors and inaccuracies of web-based translation services and emerging AI-driven translation tools reconfigure their learning practices and their trust in academic resources. The objective is to foreground the role of technology and translation as pivotal mediators in knowledge production and how they might endure inequalities. The paper interrogates in what way the use of these digital and web-based translation tools and services affects the nature of academic engagement and the comprehension of study materials and resources among rural college students, many of whom are first-generation learners.

Keywords: Translation, AI, ANT, Trust, Teaching-Learning.

A Systematic Study of the Role of Social Media on Women empowerment

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As Article 14 (Right to Equality) and Article 15 ((Prohibition of Discrimination) of Indian constitution guarantees empowerment of women in India, several policies are aimed for their advancement since the inception of the five year plans. Henceforth the National commission for women established by the act of Parliament in 1990, the issue of women attaining advancement towards equality is well acclaimed. Empowering women is the most pressing issue in current scenario in India due to their role in nation building and social stability, which thrives on growth, development and betterment.

Women empowerment through social media is the new tool, which allows women to break the conventional stereotypes and demographic categories (Ibrahim Fatema, Social media and Women Empowerment: A brand new facet). Social media transform connectivity effectively in both global and local level. It is a useful weapon in the hand of women specifically who have started to explore the unprecedented opportunity offered by social media platform. This research takes a closer look on all the research publications (Scopus index journal from 1991 to 2025) which are based on women empowerment and social media at large. For this enquiry Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method has been employed to understand the interest of the researchers over the decades and how does gradual entry of social media change the discourse of women empowerment.

The systematic literature review (SLR) was undertaken to develop a detailed/structured history of how women empowerment/research on participation/leadership and communication has changed over time. A rigorous analysis of the literature will be achieved through the use of two frameworks (TCCM Theory Context Characteristics Methodology) and the ADO Framework (Antecedents Decisions Outcomes). This discussion observed only the analysis of data (related to publication) of Scopus indexed journal while the other publication like Elsevier and Web of Science are not included for systematic study.

Keywords: Social media, Women Empowerment, Systematic literature review, Theory Context Characteristics Methodology, ADO Framework