Platformisation and the Indian news media

A qualitative exploration of Indian journalists' perception on platformisation with respect to news production and distribution practices

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Abstract

The news media industry in the Indian subcontinent has sustained a relatively steady growth in newspaper sales and readership and shares almost every challenge with its global counterparts when it comes to the change in production and distribution models. This is largely due to the growth of platforms that have displaced the traditional news-making practices. This research aimed to explore the perceptions of Indian journalists on platformisation with regards to news production and distribution, the changing newsroom practices and the use and effects of algorithms and automation. There was a thematic analysis conducted on ten in-depth interviews with Indian journalists who are presently working with Indian news organisations.

The analysis revealed that these journalists are concerned about the reaction-driven and outrage-inducing content on the platforms, the increase in the spread of misinformation and the prevalence of hyper information. They were distinctly aware of the interference of platforms in their day-to-day practices and the dependency on views or clicks for revenue, and the control that has on the content created by them. There has been a rise in alternative journalistic practices, which include citizen journalists, freelancers and any individual with a large following on social platforms. These also include journalists who now have an influencer-like status that can impact people's opinions. Furthermore, despite these changing practices, Indian journalism seems to have reverted to the use of conventional journalistic practices that were prevalent in legacy news media organisations. They seemed to agree that the profession would continue to evolve no matter the medium and must serve the public. The inescapability of platforms and their impact or editorial autonomy was also noted, as was the impact from Covid-19 on news publications and organisations. To add to this, there still exists a preference for print journalism in India causing a divide between digital and print teams and thereby a succinct knowledge gap between the roles and tasks of the journalists who are part of these teams. This has also been cited as the reason behind Indian news organisations' slow adaptation to platformisation. Lastly, Indian journalists associated platforms with the business and economic side of the news organisation and at times simply an extension of their daily work. They maintained that the use and purpose of platforms were dependent on the person using them and at the same time, took cognisance of the positive attributes of platformisation. Thus, the findings of the research had some similar themes to studies done on platformisation and news media, and also provided some additional insight. The study has relevant theoretical and practical implications on platform studies, journalism studies and news production and distribution practices in India.

KEYWORDS: *platforms, platformisation, news media, journalism, India*

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

The pervasiveness of the internet coupled with the omnipresence of Google and other digital and social media platforms owned by tech giants have thoroughly impacted the working practices and the business models of several industries, and news media is no exception (Nieborg et al., 2019; van Dijck et al., 2018). The news media industry has been forced to sustain themselves by constantly evolving their business strategy, especially the production of news content and its publication and distribution models (Nieborg et al., 2019; Posetti, 2018). Journalists, whether part of news organisations or working as freelancers, face several risks today, from threats to media freedom and journalism practices to dwindling readership and viewership; and the newspaper industry, in particular, has been at the receiving end, with the global print industry declining at a rapid rate (Chada, 2017; Posetti, 2018).

Despite this, the newspaper industry in India has been growing both in sales and readership in comparison to its counterparts in the rest of the world (Innovation Media Consulting, 2020; Onikoyi, 2020). This has been attributed to the country's vast population, increasing literacy rates and the rise of regional newspapers (Chada, 2017). According to Statista, India's leading newspaper is the Hindi daily Dainik Jagran, which boasts a readership of over 68 million people (Statista, 2021a). The only English daily to make it to the top ten most-read newspapers is The Times of India, with 17 million readers. These numbers are nowhere close to the readership of the print versions of the internationally renowned names like The New York Times or The Guardian (Statista, 2021b; Statista, 2021c), who in turn have a much wider online readership base and subscribers. Indian news organisations have not yet been able to catch up to their global counterparts when it comes to online subscriptions and readers (Ninan, 2021). This has likely to do with the slow expansion of internet and mobile services in the country and the dominance of the newspaper market (Onikoyi, 2020). However, as India is estimated to have over 936 million smartphone users by 2022 (Shenoy, 2019), it shall soon see a rising, dedicated readership and viewership base on online news websites and e-papers.

However, one of the main impediments to news media that the Indian news industry also shares with its global counterparts in the news business is the pervasiveness of tech giants like Google and Facebook, among others, who have thoroughly transformed the production, distribution and business models of the industry (Pavlik, 2013; Posetti, 2018). This platformisation, as it is so called, has impacted the very core of journalistic practices (Deuze & Witschge, 2016; Nieborg et al., 2019), and has changed the way news organisations produce and distribute content, and the way audiences consume this content (Nieborg et al., 2019; Nielsen & Ganter, 2018). While the concept of platformisation shall be expanded upon further in this

paper, it is important to note that the emphasis of this paper is on platformisation with respect to the production and distribution of news media content in India.

Thus, keeping in mind the ubiquity of platforms, especially in news media practices, and the threat to media freedom in India, this paper aims to understand how journalists within the country's news media industry understand and perceive platformisation through the research question – *How do Indian journalists perceive platformisation with regards to news production and distribution?* The following sub-questions shall be used to guide and supplement this research:

i) How have Indian newsroom practices changed in the wake of platformisation?
ii) What are the viewpoints of Indian journalists on the (potential) effects of algorithms and automation on the production of news content?

Platformisation refers to the use of platforms as the dominant medium for economical and infrastructural extensions of websites, and other digital applications – both on the web and smartphones (Rodrigues, 2020). Thus, any form of transaction or interaction, be it economic or an exchange of information, which happen on any websites or applications are dependent on large platforms to carry out their service. Furthermore, platforms do not simply exist as frameworks that provide services but also gather data from users and other stakeholders for further usage, including third-party companies for advertising and marketing purposes (Helmond, 2015) – which shall be elaborated upon in the next chapter. When this researcher refers to news production, it covers the process of gathering, corroborating and collating information, and then writing a report or a long-form article either in a newspaper, magazine, a website or all the mediums. In the case of news distribution, this paper specifically refers to the immediate step followed by the journalist after writing the news story, wherein they send it to another department for edits, presentation, and finally to publish in the paper, making it available for consumption – but not the act of distributing the tabloid, or broadsheet itself to each reader. However, as the next chapter shall discuss, the line between publishing and distributing news content is increasingly blurring due to platformisation (Haneef & Khan, 2020). Algorithms, on the other hand, refers to a set of rules to attain a conclusion and/or an outcome, whereas automation refers to making a device perform functions that were earlier accorded to humans (Diakopolous, 2019). A detailed description of the concepts in the research question and sub-questions have been explored in the theory section of this paper.

This research on the perceptions of the intermingling and dependency on platforms of news-making practices has great academic, scientific significance. There has been ample research on news media organisations and the journalistic profession's adoption and adaptation to developing technologies and platformisation (Nieborg et al., 2019; Nielsen & Ganter, 2018; van Dijck et al., 2018). However, there seems to be little research on platformisation in the

Indian news media industry (Arvikar, 2020; Haneef & Khan, 2020; Rodrigues, 2020). At the time of this research, several scholarly articles were found, which contained interviews with Indian journalists on their perception and the effects of digitalisation, but there seem to be none on platformisation. The research found on platformisation in India seemed to recognise its effects on journalistic practices, but contained no records of personal experiences from news industry professionals. The only exception was the insightful work by Haneef and Khan (2020), which explored regional digital publications in South India – helping in giving some direction on how to approach this research. Thus, this research aims to contribute to the limited research in this area as most of the current scholarly articles lack the emphasis on the inevitability of the effects of platformisation in the news media industry in India. Furthermore, this research can be considered more academically relevant as its findings can provide either the framework and/or pave avenues for future topics of research with regards to either just the profession of journalism, especially in India, or platformisation, and can contribute to the field of platform studies by researchers of news media in the country.

Furthermore, this research aims to make Indian journalists reflect on platformisation and how it is intertwined with newsroom practices, and make them reassess the relationship between journalism and platformisation; especially in terms of news production and distribution strategies, and the changes in business and economic models of the news organisation. The influence of platformisation on news-making practices is profound (Nieborg et al., 2019; Nielsen & Ganter, 2018) and Indian journalists will need to accelerate their acclimatisation to it without having to wait for a devastating event like a pandemic to force them into taking action. Thus, this research hopes to make journalists in India reflect on the seepage of platformisation into their everyday work practices and take stock of the transformation happening in the news industry and examine their place in it. Furthermore, the discussions and reflections on this concept may help initiate collaboration within organisations and among journalists in India, especially with adapting to the rampant changes in the production and distribution practices of news. Thus, this paper hopes to make the journalists contemplate their profession and its future.

Additionally, due to Covid-19 lockdowns, many news publications and organisations in India have been forced to re-evaluate their strategies especially during the initial stages of the pandemic, when there was no newspaper circulation in several regions of the country for several weeks (ET Bureau, 2020; Ninan, 2021). Not only were some news media companies forced to shut down and implement layoffs but also had to either shift to an online-only model or launch digital versions of their papers for the very first time (ET Bureau, 2020). In combination with the consistent threat to journalists and journalistic practices in the country (Posetti, 2018; Rodrigues, 2020), the pervasiveness of platforms shall perhaps bring the

flourishing Indian news industry to the same position as that of their North American and European counterparts. Thus, the subject of this research is of significance to the profession and practice of journalism in India and the concomitant scientific research on this topic.

To answer the research question and the sub-questions, this paper shall follow the following structure: the next chapter, 'Theoretical Framework', shall provide a theoretical overview of concepts related to the research question, the previous studies on platformisation and news media, and lays the groundwork for the analysis and conclusions. The 'Methodology' chapter explains the reasoning behind choosing the qualitative research method of in-depth interviews and thematic analysis to analyse the transcripts, and the process of sampling, data collection and data analysis. This is then followed by the 'Results' chapter, which outlines and explains the major findings deduced from the analysis. Finally, the last chapter, 'Conclusion', surmises the paper and attempts to provide a reasonable answer to the research question, and reflects on the implications of the study, and the limitations and recommendations for future research on this topic.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Theorising platformisation

Before delving into the concept of platformisation, it is important to acknowledge that the news media industry as a whole has been undergoing consistent transformation due to constantly developing technologies (Diakopoulos, 2019). The emergence of classified advertising websites and search engines, in particular, had impacted the distribution and revenue models of the traditional news media organisations also known as legacy news media, which mainly dealt with newspapers (Nielsen & Ganter, 2018; van Dijck et al., 2018). Once they became common, there was a rise of news aggregators like Google News and Yahoo News, which had a profound effect on editorial autonomy – especially editorial insight, in curating news stories. Social media platforms were launched much after news media's gradual loss of autonomy to news aggregation websites and search engines (Haneef & Khan, 2020; van Dijck et al., 2018). Their rise, as van Dijck, Poell and Waal (2018) put it, "… [was] hailed as the driver of economic progress and technological innovation" (p. 1), because of their ability to offer services without the pressures of legal restrictions, corporate obstacles, unnecessary expenses and offline intermediaries like publishers and news organisations. Although this is disputable, (Diakopoulos, 2019; Haneef & Khan, 2020), social media platforms, in particular, have changed business and newsroom practices. Moreover, platforms like Google and Facebook control more than 60% of online advertising, making legacy news media organisations lose both advertisements and readers and/or viewers to these tech giants (van Dijck et al., 2018). Additionally, they are also responsible for increasingly influencing the content of news production (Nieborg et al., 2019). In countries like India, both platforms and news organisations are additionally having to adhere to or bow down to the will of populist, authoritative regimes who also make use of platforms to disseminate information, further influencing news production (Chada, 2017; Posetti, 2018).

Nieborg et al. (2019) define platformisation as "…the penetration of economic, governmental and infrastructural extensions of digital platforms into the web and app ecosystems, fundamentally affecting the operations of media industries and production practices" (p. 85). According to this definition, the very existence of a platform impacts media-making practices. The use of the word platform for these services is significant as platforms not only host and steer interactions between social, political, cultural and technological actors but is also constantly shaping their actions (Giellespie, 2010, as cited in Nieborg et al., 2019). Nielsen and Ganter (2018) state that news media's loss of control over the production and distribution of communication and content means an increasing amount of dependence on intermediaries like platforms. Thus, they pose the concept of platform studies, which "…[focuses] on how news

media organisations adapt to the rise of platforms that restructure the media environment by developing widely shared systems and services" (Nielsen & Ganter, 2018, p. 1605).

Authors van Dijck et al. (2018), break down the elements that constitute a single platform: firstly, there's data, both content and user data, which is fed into the system – these include geolocations, personal interests and preferences etc. Secondly, through application programming interfaces (APIs), platforms are able to share this data with third-party entities. Thirdly, single platforms contain algorithms, which can be broadly described as sets of automated instructions to transform input data into the desired output. Fourthly, ownership status, which determines the organisation's legal status, economic transactions and their interactions with their users; fifthly, business models, the manner in which economic value – whether it is money, user attention and/or valuation – is created and captured. Thus, platforms are never free. Finally, there is user agreements or terms of service, which are long, complex contracts that determine the relationship between the platform owners and the users. However, most users simply check the box at the end of the agreements without bothering to read it, or spend very little time reading it; this is true especially for social networking platforms (Obar & Oeldorf-Hirsch, 2018). All these components influence the way information and content on the platform is made, distributed and even accessed by the audience, making the user a significant component of the platform (van Dijck et al., 2018).

There is a close relationship between media producers and platforms, which results in platform dependence – affecting the media-making process. Furthermore, the rise of platforms invokes a debate about the private benefit and corporate gain versus public interests and collective benefits (Cohen, 2019; van Dijck et al., 2018), which is a significant discussion when it comes to news media organisations whose goals ideally do not align with corporate interests as they are supposed to be serving the public. This creates an additional tension for journalists as platforms are not neutral, they are imbibed with norms and value-structures of the people and corporations that own them (Nieborg et al., 2019; van Dijck et al., 2018), and while this is true of news media as well, when combined with platformisation, however, these norms and structures can either clash (van Dijck et al., 2018) or end up favouring one over the other (Nieborg et al., 2019).

The tech giants and platforms – Google, Amazon, Facebook, Apple and Microsoft dominate the global markets today and are commonly referred to as the Big Five (Haneef & Khan, 2020; Nieborg et al., 2019; van Dijck et al., 2018). All most all other websites and/or platforms – sectoral platforms like news, travel etc. that have their own niche – are either completely or partially dependent on one or more of the Big Five, who are also known as infrastructural platforms, to offer their products and services (van Dijck et al., 2018). Andersson-Schwarz (2017) calls these platforms "superstructures" because they are global

entities that provide crucial basic information services upon which other sectoral platforms can be stacked or built upon (p. 383). Thus, even a news website has to depend on the Big Five for its services.

2.2. Changing newsroom practices

Before digitalisation, news media organisations operated as two-sided markets that brought the reader and/or viewer, and advertisers together. This allowed them to control the production and distribution of content albeit with a predilection towards the advertisers (Nieborg et al., 2019). However, platforms are multi-sided markets – which can constitute social institutions, content producers etc., along with advertisers and users. News or any other product from journalists are just one of the many services offered by a platform and are not at the top of their list of priorities, which largely revolves around attracting advertisers through user attention (Nieborg et al., 2019; Nielsen & Ganter, 2018). Due to this, news organisations must now "…align their content strategies with platform-defined markers of popularity…." (Nieborg et al., 2019, p. 93), and every platform has its own markers and affordances that the editorial departments must adhere to if they want their content to be visible (dos Santos et al., 2018).

The Big Five are prevalent in most countries in the world, including India (Arvikar, 2020; Haneef & Khan, 2020). These infrastructural platforms have made extensive efforts to become the central nodes in the production, circulation, and commodification of news by developing new data services and news-related features. Thus, online news content producers— from legacy media organisations to producers of disinformation— target online platforms to distribute and monetise their content (van Dijck et al., 2018). Consequently, the traditional form of gatekeeping by news organisations have been replaced by the filtering conducted by platforms (Nielsen & Ganter, 2018; van Dijck et al., 2018) – which is done through algorithms (Diakopolous, 2019), which in turn affects journalistic integrity and autonomy.

Dos Santos et al. (2018) emphasise that news stories were sourced, packaged and formatted through traditional editorial practices in newsrooms that also acted as a gatekeeper or a curator of news and information before it reached a mass audience. Now, however, digital intermediaries have become news aggregators and along with search engines or social media platforms, they act as gatekeepers that are external to journalism; either facilitating or impeding news delivery to the consumers (Bucher, 2012, as cited in dos Santos et al., 2018). Digital gatekeeping implies that online platforms have their own gates, and they send news pieces to the audience when news media outlets meet the entrance criteria set by those gates (dos Santos et al., 2018).

Journalistic independence and conventional newsroom practices have been integral to news media's ability to keep politicians, governments and corporations publicly accountable (dos Santos et al., 2018; van Dijck et al., 2018). Moreover, news stories were initially presented as bundles of content along with news advertisers. With social media platforms, news organisations have handed over their content to these platforms, where it can be consumed, bought and connected to advertisements, rather than drawing audiences to their own websites (van Dijck et al., 2018). This leads to what Arvikar (2020) calls the "sachetisation" of news (p. 244) – wherein news is made available in bite-sized pieces to make it more palatable to the reader and/or viewer. Thus, news organisations are releasing information as short updates to continue generating views. Moreover, the fundamental process of finding or being informed of a story, research and corroboration of facts and sources and then writing it, has changed to finding the headline first, which here refers to what attracts a viewer and not necessarily the actual headline of a news story. Journalists now feel that all their editorial training, judgment and intuition are not given enough of a priority over the analytical insights received from the platform metrics, despite their fallible nature, to determine what stories can be written, their length, the agenda set by news organisations, placement and the headline (Cohen, 2019); thus, influencing the editorial agenda set by the news organisations. This further intensifies the long-existent journalistic dilemma of telling stories that the audience wants versus what they need (Ferrucci, 2020). The use of metrics like Google Analytics to determine content production can result in a journalism that is more market driven rather than being in the service of the public and cannot be considered authentic journalism, and news organisations are struggling to find a balance between the two (Tandoc & Thomas, 2015, as cited in Ferrucci, 2020).

This is then causing tension between the operational and editorial considerations while producing and distributing content, which is often short-term, and the more strategic but long-term considerations on whether the news media organisation will end up becoming too dependent on platforms for reaching audiences and in the process, lose control over their editorial identity, the access to user information and other metrics, and other significant aspects of their revenue model (Nielsen & Ganter, 2018). Furthermore, news production would initially take place both inside and outside newsrooms and be limited to news gathering and writing (Deuze & Witschge, 2016). However, getting the content "out…into the world" is now an essential part of the work process of any conventional reporter (Cohen, 2019, p. 583). As a consequence,

>…freelance journalism, independent news entrepreneurship, and casualisation of
>labour have become even more paramount, particularly among younger reporters and

newcomers in the field (as well as for more senior journalists affected by lay-offs and downsizing so common across the news industry). (Deuze & Witschge, 2016, p. 1)

Haneef and Khan (2020) go to the extent of calling journalists "digital labourers" (p. 156) for providing free additional labour that goes beyond their traditional roles, while also facing cost-cutting and competition from other organisations and content generated by users. Journalists involve themselves in immaterial labour to produce content and have to also sift through news and information acquired from social media and at times, even verify the facts on social media posts. Thus, "…journalists face an increased pace and intensity of work as they are pressured to publish instantly and continuously." (Cohen, 2019, p. 572). There has been a significant rise in fact-checking websites with dedicated journalists, sometimes within the news organisations, to combat misinformation (Rodrigues, 2020).

The restructuring and reshaping of traditional news media algorithms are causing news organisations to react to platformisation in different ways (Nielsen & Ganter, 2018). They coexist with them – developing and restructuring their features to change how information can be created, distributed and accessed – thus affecting the editorial processes within the newsroom and the subsequent dissemination of new content; they confront them – believing that their presence is unjust and has no legitimacy; or they collaborate with them – accepting the opportunities the platforms have to offer (Nielsen & Ganter, 2018) – which include speed in distribution, the ability to reach a larger audience and personalisation of news content (Diakopoulous, 2019). The Indian news media industry seems to have adopted either to coexist or to collaborate with platforms.

Thus, the very nature of platforms allows them to affect and intertwine with media-making practices. Platforms now play a significant role in content distribution and production, overtaking the conventional practices of news industry publishers (Diakopoulous, 2019; Haneef & Khan, 2020).

2.3. Algorithms and automation

As mentioned previously, the treatment of news content as data points results in the loss of editorial autonomy and transforms it into a business model that prioritises user attention (van Dijck et al., 2018). The lack of news aggregators or any form of editorial insight, barring some of the internal setups on platforms like Facebook, enables a mixture of content that is random and incongruous, containing news from mainstream news organisations but also from the widest variety of other sources, including regular users and producers of misinformation and disinformation (Nielsen & Ganter, 2018; van Dijck et al., 2019). Media content produced by

news organisations is thus commodified and treated as algorithmic data (Diakopoulous, 2019; Nieborg et al., 2019) because there is a fear of missing out on content and being visible on the platforms, who in turn provide the reach news organisations are now unable to obtain (Nielsen & Ganter, 2018). Journalists must therefore possess skills beyond basic reporting and news-making (Diakopoulous, 2019; Haneef & Khan, 2020) to make their content visible, as the way users now find information is highly dependent on platform algorithms that are different for every platform and type of content (Nielsen & Ganter, 2018).

Author Nicholas Diakopolous defines algorithms as "…a series of steps… undertaken in order to solve a particular problem or to accomplish a defined outcome." On the other hand, he defines automation as "…a device or system that accomplishes (partially or fully) a function that was previously, or conceivably could be, carried out (partially or fully) by a human operator." (2019, p. 16). A combination of the two then is not only beneficial to the production and distribution practices of organisations but can heavily influence them. In the case of news media organisations, algorithms and automation are defining what news content can be visible on platforms. Along with search engines, which are already news aggregators, platforms are becoming the first source of information for many people. They are being seen as arbiters of news and information. One of the many reasons this can be problematic is the extent to which users are exposed to misinformation and disinformation especially during elections as seen in large democracies like the US and India (Diakopolous, 2019; dos Santos et al., 2018; Rodrigues, 2020). Despite its many advantages to news publishing, the use of automation to write news stories is yet to be a practice in Indian newsrooms (Arvikar, 2020).

Algorithms are able to undertake decisions like prioritising, classifying, associating and filtering content – something that usually required an editorial insight in news media organisations (Diakopolous, 2019; van Dijck et al., 2018). With the right context, algorithms can sift through content quite easily; however, when it comes to sensitive material – as is often the case with news – the information may get filtered out by platforms deeming it inappropriate for consumption and/or only make similar content visible to the viewers (Cohen, 2019; Diakopolous, 2019). In the same vein, depending on the social and ideological norm of the person and/or the organisation setting the algorithms, certain information can be rendered invisible or it may value certain information over others, which may also result in algorithmic bias (Diakopolous, 2019).

Diakopolous (2019) further amplifies this sentiment when he states that "The power of media platforms…is broad, and ranges from shaping public opinion during political elections, to enabling or hindering community formation, moderating speech, and dictating the conditions under which news organisations disseminate content" (p. 183). This further emphasises the point that platforms are not neutral. The success of platforms is largely credited to algorithms

that are able to cultivate user attention, engagement and satisfaction. News organisations must thus be able to participate in the market logic of user engagement by optimising for the most readily available signals of individual attention—the likes, clicks, and shares that are central to determining the economic value generated from content on platforms (Diakopolous, 2019). This leads news media to post articles that are clickbait – having content or headlines with the sole purpose of attracting a user, and compelling them to click on an article even if it does not contain any substantial information (Arvikar, 2020).

Thus, the journalistic news feed on platforms in the future will need to find a balance between what editorial values can be embedded in the platforms' algorithms, and what are technically feasible to actually engineer, as well as decide how to weigh those values across a range of scenarios or consumption contexts so as to allow for seemingly inappropriate but valuable information to be visible to the public (Diakopolous, 2019). Several news organisations are likely to adopt a hybrid model wherein content production and distribution is both editorial and data driven (van Dijck et al., 2018). News media have traditionally used metrics to determine readership and viewership and are now also using to assess the number of users accessing the information on the websites through platforms, using this knowledge to increase users by altering content (dos Santos et al., 2018). However, the mechanism of algorithmic selection also affects the quality of content generated by digital publishers (van Dijck et al., 2018). To add to this, news organisations must not only contend with the tech giants behind these platforms but also take into account the context in which they operate, the governments, various entrepreneurs and big and small businesses, non-profit organisations and individuals, who can now also create content and shape the interactions on the platforms (van Dijck et al., 2018) – similar to what's happening in India. However, it must be noted that despite the presence of algorithms and automation, one cannot overlook the significance of editorial insight (Diakopoulous, 2019; Haneef & Khan, 2020). Moreover, platforms will still be dependent on content producers to produce information, news organisations must then try to use their journalistic insight to trump content derived from users and navigate algorithms.

2.4. The Indian news media industry

The Indian news media industry is more dynamic than its Western counterparts with a growing subscription base both in newspapers, which has slowed down over the years but is still steady, and the digital space, as mentioned in the first chapter. However, platformisation is not the only hurdle they have to face. The Indian press, like many others in the world, is facing threats to its freedom amid a turbulent political climate and existent corporatisation – all standing in the way of ethical journalistic practices (Posetti, 2018; Rodrigues, 2020). Open

11

access of platforms to governments and citizens alike, make it difficult for journalists to contain misinformation, disinformation and attacks on their credibility (Chada, 2017; Posetti, 2018). For the longest time, Indian news publications operated on the policy of being able to disseminate information at a low cost, a feature that has now been disrupted by social media platforms like Facebook and even WhatsApp (Haneef & Khan, 2020; Posetti, 2018).

While the Big Five mentioned above are quite prominent in India as well, the existence of telecom provider Reliance Jio, which apart from mobile and broadband internet also provides a number of services on its Jio platform, and the rise of WhatsApp as one of the primary sources of information has dealt a significant blow to Indian news outlets (Arvikar, 2020; Rodrigues, 2020). India's diverse and divisive landscape poses a challenge for media organisations and platforms alike (Arvikar, 2020; Haneef & Khan, 2020). WhatsApp, which has become the primary source of news and information in non-Western countries has created a slew of misinformation in India (Newman et al., 2019; Rodrigues, 2020). Moreover, India's longstanding issue of the nexus between media owners, corporations, politicians and political parties has further exacerbated both the issue of misinformation and the impact of platformisation on journalism and threatened the profession itself. The current regulations in India have been unable to deal with the changing ownership and distribution patterns of media organisations (Arvikar, 2020; Rodrigues, 2020). The current political regime has put a wrench into investigative journalism and several news organisations have faced lawsuits under political pressure (Arvikar, 2020).

Furthermore, due to both corporatisation and platformisation, Indian news organisations have been offering free news applications, where the aforementioned sachetisation of news tends to contain outrage and scandal-ridden information – a relatively accurate illustration of the kind of information that becomes viral on platforms (Arvikar, 2020; Chada, 2017; Haneef & Khan, 2020). Indian newspapers also tend to offer an electronic version of papers for free on their websites, with no change in the content (Chada, 2017). To round it up, the Indian newspaper industry has been rather slow in the adoption of AI and other similar technological developments but is still facing the effects of platformisation, forcing it to innovate and/or find a balance with several political and corporate actors (Haneef & Khan, 2020). At the same time, in tandem with the journalistic dilemma mentioned previously, the creativity of journalists, especially when it comes to storytelling, is highly dependent on the mechanised, efficiency and productivity-driven culture permeated through platformisation, causing relentless pressure on journalists (Deuze, 2019; Markham, 2012). Creativity is increasingly being used as the catchword in an effort to make the journalists seem enterprising and self-actualised individuals but is in fact, being used as a ruse to demand more work from journalists (Deuze, 2019). Thus, the Indian news media industry is confronted with more or less similar

trends and challenges as news organisations around the world despite the steady growth in sales and readership.

3. Methodology

This chapter explains how the research on the perception of Indian journalists' on platformisation with regards to news production and distribution was executed. To answer the aforementioned research question and sub-questions, the qualitative research method of in-depth interviewing was conducted on ten journalists with mandatory former or current experience in print journalism. A thematic analysis was performed on the interview transcriptions and the themes developed from the material were used to help answer the main research question. The rudimentary structure of the methodological process was borrowed from Kvale's stages of interview inquiry (2007): thematising, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analysing, verifying and reporting. The first stage: thematising, which involves the purpose of the study, research questions and acquiring theoretical knowledge have been explained in the previous chapters of the paper. The remaining stages shall be expanded upon in the subsequent sections of this chapter. Additionally, in the analysis stage, the method used for the thematic analysis was the one outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) and shall be explained in detail in the subsequent sections of this chapter.

3.1. Research Design

As this research aimed to examine and explore the perception of platformisation of journalists working in Indian news organisations, it lends itself to a qualitative method of study. A qualitative approach towards research comprises how people interpret and give meaning to the phenomena around them, which is constructed through social interactions (Guest et al., 2012; Schreier, 2013). This research was a combination of inductive and deductive approaches. The primary method of data collection was in-depth interviews with journalists. An in-depth interviewing method of data collection is more appropriate for this research as the information being sought – the perception of platformisation – requires a personal interpretation of the concept and a connection to their own experiences with it. Thus, as the data collected would include their experiences, insights and other deeper knowledge of their profession, organisation and career, other methods of data collection were not suitable (Johnson, 2011). The interviews were semi-structured in nature. There was an interview guide used to direct the flow of the questions and cover all relevant points of data (Appendix B). However, as qualitative research is iterative in nature, the interview guide evolved over the course of the interviews and the data gathered from the interviewees and additional research. A total of ten interviews were conducted via Zoom and its embedded recording and transcriptions software helped this researcher to transcribe the interviews. In cases where the interviewees spoke in Hindi, a translation in English was also done. A third-party medium was used for the data collection as

the interviewees, i.e., the units of analysis, are journalists and reporters who are working in news organisations in India and it wasn't feasible to travel to the country.

3.2. Sampling

3.2.1. Units of analysis

The units of analysis in this research were Indian journalists and reporters. While there are multiple roles performed by individuals within a news media organisation that are conducive to the concept of platformisation, this researcher wanted to gain an editorial insight into the perspectives towards the concept as according to the theory and previous research, it is the editorial aspect of journalism that has been utmost affected by platformisation (Diakolpolous, 2019; Nieborg et al., 2019; van Dijck et al., 2018).

To gain a more comprehensive insight on the concept, it was imperative that the interviewees possessed reasonable if not skilled knowledge of the inner workings of a news organisation, especially that of production and distribution. Thus, the interviewees were selected if they had a minimum experience of two years as a journalist, which included some knowledge of print journalism i.e., they worked or are currently working in a newspaper and/or magazine for at least four months. The final list of interviewees ended up having a minimum of six years of experience working as a journalist.

3.2.2. Sampling strategy

An advertisement was posted on social platforms like Twitter, Instagram and Linkedin to reach journalists that met the sampling criteria. Furthermore, personal messages were sent to journalists on the same platforms to reach a wider sample. While the sampling was purposive, the combination of convenience and snowball sampling was also done to ensure enough interviewees were available within the limited time frame of the study. Thus, interviewees were asked to suggest and/or reach out to their colleagues to participate in the interview. A significant portion of the interviewees was found via snowball sampling.

 The ten interviewees found possessed between six and 21 years of experience as a journalist and thus, had accumulated vast amounts of knowledge to respond to the questions and share their insights about the research topic. They comprised three men and seven women and six of them are currently digital journalists that extensively use platforms in their daily work. A description of the sample can be found in Appendix A. The sample was relatively heterogeneous as they consisted of print journalists, digital journalists who work in digitally native organisations as well those in the digital sections of legacy organisations, and even a broadcast journalist who switched from being a print reporter to news anchor. All of the

interviewees are full-time journalists working in Indian news organisations. Nine of them work in English news organisations, one works in a Hindi news channel. However, due to the small size of the sample, the findings discerned from them cannot be generalised to the larger populace of Indian journalists. Despite this, they provide valuable insight into their profession and platformisation.

3.2.3. Data collection

The ten interviews were conducted on the video conferencing application Zoom due to the Covid-19 measures that were existent at the time of this research in The Netherlands. Moreover, as the units of analysis were journalists living in India, it was beyond the scope of this research to have a face-to-face interview. The interview recordings were between 45 minutes and 90 minutes long. The transcriptions were between 7,500 and 11,000 words. The interviews themselves were a little longer and the parts that were unrecorded consisted of audio-visual and internet connection checks and a little conversation starter to ensure the interviewees were comfortable. As this was an online setting, both the interviewer and the interviewees were at home. However, there were limitations in discerning certain factors like the tone of the voice and facial expressions, as the clarity was largely dependent on the strength of the internet connections. Moreover, since the interviews were held between April and June, it was during the peak of Covid-19 infections in the country and amid a cyclone, which largely affected the quality of the video calls and the duration of the interviews.

As shall be explained in the later sections, the analysis of the data began during the interviews itself and thus, the researcher wrote down several observations and other notes during the interview. However, the researcher found themselves inhibited while taking notes during these interviews as they did not want to distract the interviewees.

3.3. Operationalisation

The components of the main research and sub-questions are journalists, platformisation, content production and content distribution, newsroom practices, algorithms and automation. The interview guide attached in Appendix B gives an overview of topics that were covered in the questions and encompassed the abovementioned components. A guide from Guest and colleagues (2012) helped in formulating the framework of the interview questions, which included pointers like having soft, simple opening questions to ease the participant into the interview, among others. The first section of the interview covered their experience in the news industry and the organisation they work in. Thereafter, they were asked to define and explain the concept of platformisation in their own words to determine how much they know about it

and if there have been any changes in their working practices because of it. The subsequent sections delved deeper into content production and distribution practices including questions like 'How has your organisation adapted to the changes brought about by platformisation?'. This allowed for the interviewees to delve deep into their careers and examine all the news organisations they have worked in. This was followed by questions on adaptation to technology, algorithms and change in newsroom and labour practices. These questions aided in understanding not only their perception of platformisation but also how they believe it influences and determines their journalistic practices and work ethics. Finally, the interviewees were asked about additional changes and/or threats to the profession of journalism. In most cases, the participants covered several of the topics in the questions without having to ask each question separately, indicating that the flow of the semi-structured interviews was gradual and logical and at the same time contained room for additional points and information that could be used in future research avenues.

Thus, the semi-structured interview guide was a reliable measuring instrument that served in gathering a comprehensive understanding of platformisation from Indian journalists and were able to explore all the elements that are part of the main research question as well as the sub-questions.

3.4. Data Analysis

Once the interviews and transcriptions were complete, a thematic analysis was conducted on the textual material – the transcriptions. An understanding of how the interviewees perceive platformisation in relation to how they produce and distribute news media is best done by recognizing the patterns in their answers and thematic analysis was reasoned to be the most conducive method for this purpose (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The common themes generated by their insights and experiences provided rich, in-depth data. Thematic analysis is useful because its code-based approach allows for sorting and describing the data (Guest et al., 2012). Moreover, the multiple stages of coding help with the strategic examination of the relationships between the discerned patterns and the rich descriptions – resulting in comprehensive interpretations of the interview data (Booije, 2009; Guest et al., 2012; Schreier, 2013). Furthermore, understanding someone's perception of a concept means understanding the meaning they have created around it and how they use it to inform their experiences – making the coding process associated with thematic analysis appropriate for this research (Guest et al., 2012).

The process of the thematic analysis followed for this research was used from Braun and Clarke (2006), which outlines six phases of analysing data. This was done because it provided

an exhaustive way of filtering, reducing and collating the data, and finding the patterns within it. Thus, this included, familiarising oneself with the data, trial coding or generating initial codes, searching for themes within the codes, examining how the codes apply to the overall data, reviewing the themes, and finally, defining the themes. The suggestion by Kvale (2007) to begin the analysis during the interview process itself was also followed.

When it came to the interviews, certain sections stood out during the conversation and were made a note of so that this researcher could know what to look for during the examination of the data and not miss out on any valuable pointers. This was considered another level of coding to help make sense of the data as a few of these observations translated into codes and one of them even became a major theme. This gave the researcher an idea of what to keep in mind while interviewing the next set of participants, and the patterns to look for during the main analysis phase. From the initial coding stage onwards, the software ATLAS.ti was used to make the process of creating codes and identifying relevant patterns easier. The interviews were closely read multiple times to identify the codes. Thereafter, the codes were grouped according to the themes that were discerned from examining them. This was followed by another examination of the data for additional codes and/or to check if the codes that were identified in specific sets of interviews were applicable to most of the interviews. Every code was defined and later, the codes were grouped into sub-themes. Post this, the sub-themes were finally grouped into four main themes. A thematic map with the main themes, the sub themes and the codes can be found in Appendix C.

3.5. Reliability and Validity

As the section on operationalisation indicates, the questions measure the concepts in the research question and explore the aim of this research. Every step of the research process, from the sampling and interviews to the analysis, have been recorded to ensure transparency and prove that the research is valid. As the results of the research depend on the researcher's interpretations of the analysis – with inputs from the theory – it can be said that it has face validity (Guest et al., 2012).

Lastly, with thematic analysis, reliability is of great concern as it largely depends on the interpretation of the researcher, which can be biased (Guest et al., 2012). However, one advantage of this paper is that since there was a single researcher, there was less room for potential misunderstandings of the interpretation of the codes from the text. Moreover, as stated earlier, the sample size is too small to generalise the findings. Furthermore, reliability is difficult to achieve in qualitative research as its goal isn't to replicate and/or to generalise (Guest et al., 2012). Additionally, semi-structured interviews do not allow themselves to achieve

replicable results. That being said, the interview guide was relatively consistent throughout the interview process and all questions in it were asked to the participants. Thus, the guide can be reused for any further research. In the case of this paper, efforts were made to ensure that the research was valid and dependable and can hopefully provide a basis for future research.

3.6. Ethical considerations

To ensure that this research was conducted ethically, every interviewee was asked to sign a form of informed consent: which contained brief information about the research and gave them the option to refuse to participate in it (Flick, 2011, Kvale, 2007). This was reiterated to the interviewees at the beginning of each interview. It was also ensured that the participants' verbal consent was recorded in the interviews. The participants' private information will remain confidential and the information they provided has been reported without change and/or omission. The description of the sample does not give away any aspects of their identity. Their beneficence and privacy were of high priority (Kvale, 2007). Lastly, this research maintained a friendly rapport with the interviewees but ensured that it did not affect the outcome of the data and the results. Finally, the personal experiences and perspectives of the researcher with regards to the topic did not influence the results and were only used as an additional tool of conversation during the interview. This researcher made it certain to remove any personal biases during the process of data collection.

4. Results

The following section contains the results of the thematic analysis conducted on the ten semi-structured interviews of Indian journalists. The final list of codes obtained from the analysis reflects the comprehensive and holistic themes that were generated from the interviews and were a recurring pattern throughout the responses. This helped in understanding the perceptions Indian journalists have towards platformisation. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the analysis of the data began during the interviews itself and helped in determining what to look for during the analysis on ATLAS.ti. The themes discerned from the interviews are a *concern for content*, with the sub-themes: reaction and response, and information. They have five and seven codes respectively. The second theme is *platforms and their influence over journalism*; with the sub-themes, platform interference with two codes, types of journalism with three codes and impact on journalism with five codes. The third and fourth themes, *print versus digital* and *connotations of platformisation*, do not have sub-themes, but they contain eight and four codes respectively.

4.1. Concern for Content

Perhaps the most discernible and common theme throughout the interviews was the journalists' concern for content, news and other information alike, which are available and prevalent on these platforms and their effects on the audience's attitudes towards journalism. The use of the word content is significant as it exemplifies that the information on platforms is seen as something that it contains and not something useful and as being provided by someone. The code concern for content consists of two sub-themes that highlight the journalists' concern for the quality, source, type and extent of the information on platforms that either exist because of platformisation or result from it. The first sub-theme is reaction and response, which encompasses how the content is used to generate reactions, is largely trivial and a response to likes and dislikes of those consuming the content. The second sub-theme is information, which refers to the various degrees of information available because of and due to platforms. These are explained further below.

4.1.1. Reaction and response

Large sections of the news and information on platforms, especially those circulated from news organisations are meant to generate reactions, both positive or negative, either from the audience and/or other stakeholders. This occasionally includes scandalous, sensationalised content that exists solely to create outrage and thereby generate more clicks and views. Additionally, the reportage also tends to revolve around reactions by personalities on events,

opinions and each other. This is covered under the code 'reactionary content'. Several interviewees like the one quoted below have raised objections to this.

> You know…a lot of times the news is about this person has said so and so, so what is your reaction? At times, this person is no expert on any subject and…at times, that person is just an actor, you know who holds no expertise in politics or any sort of matter, right? Why is a person's opinion given so much importance and then news pieces are being carried out on that person's opinion? (Interviewee 3)

Thus, the quality of the content is trivial or rather has no real news value according to the interviewees. With several senior journalists and print sections of news organisations already holding similar opinions about information online and those who produce it, this further exacerbates their attitudes towards news on platforms and the journalists working on them – another significant finding which shall be expanded upon in a later section.

Furthermore, to ensure that no organisation gets left behind in covering the reactions, it leads to a production of content that is nearly replicated across platforms, which then compete for space on the Google carousel, or rather with the platform's algorithms to be viewed by as many people as possible. This also ties into the code 'content replication', which in turn results in clickbait journalism, wherein organisations compete for the highest number of clicks (Arvikar, 2020; Diakopolous, 2019). This is something that nearly every journalist mentioned they were wary of, and admit that they have been made to participate in what they call "clickbait culture".

This occurs because most organisations have no idea what will work on platforms. The codes 'different criteria' and 'response to metrics' cover this phenomenon. As Interviewee 9 states, "What works on Google will not work on Facebook and what works on Facebook will not work on Google… so there is a tendency generally to start creating or modifying content to those platforms…". Thus, according to the interviewees, this lack of understanding of what content can do well online or on different platforms, causes both journalists and other content providers to modify their content based on the viewership metrics with the hope that it will work, further affecting the type of content. This also ties in with Diakopolous' (2019) observation that different platforms have different markers of popularity.

4.1.2. Information

The second sub-theme under the concern for content theme looks closely at the participants' concerns of misinformation, hyper information and other codes that go beyond reactions and have been largely expedited because of platforms, according to every journalist

interviewed. When it comes to the Indian news media industry, as mentioned in the previous chapter, the existence of 'free' and/or low-costing news due to both corporatisation and platformisation (Arvikar, 2020; Chada, 2017; Haneef & Khan, 2020), has degraded the quality of the content, according to the interviewees. This again is born out of dependency on clicks or views as the main feature that attracts advertisers, and hence, at times is the only source of revenue for several news organisations (Nielsen & Ganter, 2018; Rodrigues, 2020). This is covered under the code 'free information'. Interviewee 1 refers to this when they say, "[news] was never supposed to be free, but I think now it is…I think it's in fact getting freer. I mean today you have…even if you don't buy [name of newspaper] you can get most of what is in it through any social network right now."

To combat this, all the participants here stressed the need for organisations to find ways to monetise the content posted on platforms that aren't solely dependent on advertisers. They stressed the 'need for novelty', also the code that defines this idea, and were of the view that unless there was different, novel content, on the digital extensions of their organisations, and if there was no alternate mode of revenue, most news organisations would eventually die out. There was also an emphasis that platforms must pay news organisations for using their content – defined by the code 'payment for content'. If this isn't done and legacy organisations, specifically, do not find a way around replicating the content in their digital and print editions, the existent dearth of jobs for journalists and increasing layoffs shall be further exacerbated. Interviewee 4 laments on this when they say, "…it's sad because you know, for us, this is about the only skill, we know you know, telling stories."

Subsequently, this drives home Arvikar's observation on the sachetisation of content (2020), because to stay relevant and on par with other organisations especially when it comes to speed, journalists are forced to update details of news stories in short intervals of time to make it palatable to the audience – like bite-sized consumable pieces. Define under the code 'sachetised content', it not only grabs attention and results in more clicks but also is a deviation from conventional journalistic practices and adds to the remarks by Haneef and Khan (2020) on the increase in the daily tasks of reporters. Despite some interviews vehemently denying that their workload had increased, further questions into their work practices and the several examples cited from their career during the course of the interviews stated the opposite.

Content that exists for interaction, is free, not novel but stale, and sachetised, inadvertently leads to the shared concern of 'hyper information'. Thus, the overabundance of information, which lacks news value, and the fact that journalists must constantly provide content makes platforms an inescapable, unavoidable, part of a journalist's everyday life. An interviewee sums this up when they say "…there would be some sort of credibility attached to your information, [earlier it] was just not bombarded, right now there's a clutter of information

and there is no way that you can explain to people what is authentic and what is not."
(Interviewee 3). Journalists, due to the very nature of their work, are inundated with
information from every possible source, making it difficult for them to switch off.

Lastly, these factors come together to result in one of the major concerns cited by both
the interviewees and the researchers in the second chapter of the paper: 'misinformation'. The
interviewees stress that the rise in misinformation is largely because of the open access to news
or rather content production that has been enabled by the platforms – as stated by dos Santos et
al. (2018) and Diakopolous (2019) – and a combination of content that generates reactions; due
to being for or against people's opinions and the dependency of organisations on a platform's
algorithms to be read and viewed, which shall be explored in the next section. A lot of
misinformation, which most interviewees referred to as "fake news", which is circulated by
news organisations, the interviewees claim, is bad journalism and not deliberately misleading.
However, the journalists now have to conduct 'additional verification' checks of their content,
and those circulated by others to attempt to curb the spread of misinformation.

> A lot of fake news is just a low-quality journalism. I don't even want to use the word
> journalism…you know the old-fashioned things in journalism like context, research, fact
> checking, double checking, editing, all of this is not there in any of these organisations.
> Right? So, I would not always attribute mal-intent to lot of fake news. A lot of fake
> news is just…you know just things that should not have existed. (Interviewee 9)

This is another instance wherein their workload has increased. Moreover, as
researchers Chada (2017), Posetti (2018) and Rodrigues (2020) have stated, the prevalent
contempt against journalists in the country makes it difficult for them to sustain credibility in
face of both platforms and meddling authorities. This shall be reflected upon in the next section.

In congruence with the sachetised content, hyper information and misinformation, the
code 'speed' refers to the emphasis on speed in news organisations when it comes to the
delivery of content, especially in legacy organisations. As Interviewee 4 states, "…on the online
team [structuring and working on the content] doesn't really happen because [what] everybody
wants is putting a premium on speed. And you do it first, you put it across and then you edit it
later." This adds to author Diakopoulous' (2019) remark that a platform's ability to speed up
distribution also causes the organisations to prioritise it over information, further degrading its
quality. Thus, the themes 'reaction and response' and 'information' capture the interviewees'
views on the kind of information they are made to produce and distribute on platforms.

4.2. Platforms and their influence over journalism

The second most persistent theme that emerged from the data was 'platforms and their influence over journalism'. This covers the effects of platforms on the profession of journalism and news practices as perceived by the interviewees. This theme consists of three sub-themes: platform interference, which pertains to the deep entrenchment of platforms into the production and distribution aspects of journalism, types of journalism, which refers to conventional and unconventional methods used by journalists on platforms, and finally, impact on journalism, which is self-explanatory but refers to the impact on the profession with regards to platforms – again as understood by the interviewees.

4.2.1.   Platform interference

The theme 'platform interference' is a relatively broad description for the hold that platforms have both in terms of the content, as explained above, and in the newsgathering, production and distribution practices of journalism. This sub-category has two codes, 'ads and viewer dependency' and 'control'.

The first code covers the dependency of news organisations and journalists on the clicks and views from the audience to both stay on the top of platform algorithms and ensure revenue from ads. As Diakopolous (2019) states, news organisations are always trying to find ways to increase user engagements through any means – whether it is clickbait or any other signs that can generate more clicks and bring viewers to their content. It is the only way they can be visible on a platform among the mass of content available, and thereby grab attention from advertisers, which several organisations, especially in India, are entirely dependent on for revenue. As this interviewee states:

> The search engines determine a lot of what is going to work for you and what is not. Search engines and hashtags, these are two things that really determine...it's going be sad if we don't, you know, if we work so hard on it and then it's not getting read. (Interviewee 6)

Another interviewee echoes a similar concern and stresses the dependency on the income generated through advertisements:

> The most superficial stories actually interest the audience, these days, so we do give them a boost, you know? So that at the end of the day, we have to make money and we make money through ads, clicks...it's not your job, it's not a journalism thing, but you know feeding yourself is also your job. Just to ensure that you know you get enough

revenue, you do your proper journalism later, but you do this also on the side. (Interviewee 4)

This then ties into the code 'control', which refers to the control that platforms have on the revenue and editorial autonomy of news organisations. The control then is over the content, either from platforms or from the government and corporations via platforms. Interviewee 6 states, "...how are you read? It is essentially being dictated by these digital platforms...unique content, which I don't think happens anymore, [is] because of the kind of dictatorial hold that these platforms have [on content]." While this interviewee refers to the editorial autonomy and creativity that has been impacted because of platforms, another code that falls under the impact on journalism theme, Interviewee 9 expands on the control by platforms without mincing any words when they say:

> ...the kind of grip that Google has...I don't think even monopoly is the right word, monopoly is when you have no other seller of a product. This is a monopoly and a monopsony together. Because Google sort of controls every part of the business in one way or the other. So, this is a very interesting kind of a space to be in and, interestingly it covers, it controls all part of a business but it's not directly involved, other than for advertising. (Interviewee 9).

The same interviewee also laments the effect this has in the newsrooms. "...the Facebook algorithm might take you down [if you do not adhere to it], but what happens is that the culture that it permeates in your newsroom is very difficult to take it away." (Interviewee 9). Thus, the combination of control over the content and the dependency on viewership and advertisement greatly affects journalism practices and makes news organisations give up their editorial autonomy, integrity and the traditional form of gatekeeping conducted by them to survive amid platformisation (Nielsen & Ganter, 2018; van Dijck et al., 2018).

4.2.2. Types of journalism

This second sub-theme focuses on the different types of journalistic practices employed by Indian journalists to reach a wider audience as well as try to maintain journalistic integrity amid the onslaught and control from platforms as captured by the three codes 'alternatives to traditional journalism', 'journalist influencers' and 'conventional journalism practices'.

As the first theme, concern for content stated, both the audience and the journalists have direct access to each other, allowing for a free-flowing mode of communication. This has caused a rise in freelance journalists, citizen journalists and individuals with a large number of

followers who garner attention and views and are able to influence the opinions of others. The freelance and citizen journalists do not need to be linked to any organisation to publish information. An active presence on some platforms is sufficient. In most cases, they are experts in certain fields, however, there are also those who have absolutely no expertise, but manage to attract attention and generate reactions. This, some participants stress undermines journalism and the work journalists put in to publish a news story.

> …it [platforms] has shifted one's understanding of experts…the experts have changed…a lot of people are not experts on all subject matters, [they have] not even studied the subject matter, [they] have an opinion and that opinion is given undue importance and then influences people's opinions. (Interviewee 3)

On the other hand, there has been a surge of the job title content producers, who are arguably synonymous to journalists in several large media outlets, further giving an indication to the type of content produced by these individuals or rather how tech giants and large-scale corporations view journalists. Interviewee 5 states that in several news organisations, the designation of a trainee reporter has been replaced by that of a content producer. They elaborate on this change when they explain that:

> That [content producer] is a ridiculous moniker to be given to a reporter. A reporter is not just about attracting attention…it's about information, it's about facts and it's about adequate due diligence. It's about the relevance, it's about accuracy and speed…when you call someone a content producer, all of those qualities go away because none of those things matter for [a] content producer. A content producer is only interested in getting that click on the website. (Interviewee 5)

By making this distinction between a journalist and a content producer, Interviewee 5's remark ties in with van Dijck and authors' (2018) observation about content producers who are both producers of information, similar to journalists, and can also be the purveyors of misinformation and disinformation, using platforms to largely distribute and monetise their content.

Furthermore, several journalists also tend to achieve an almost influencer-like status or become celebrities in their own right – influencing the opinions of their followers on social media platforms. While interviewees claim that platforms open themselves up to criticism, feedback and even sources of valuable information, they have to exercise caution because there is a severe threat to freedom of speech, not to mention a highly polarised political climate, in

India and journalists often attract vitriol and/or can use their newfound platform to disseminate their ideology (Posetti, 2018; Rodrigues, 2020). As one interviewee states:

> "… it kind of bloats your ego at some point because it is the same as stardom in some ways, because you know, you're fed this idea that you are doing public service over here. Which is great, we are, we are here to do social service and public service and all of that is great, but you have to also understand that you cannot suffer from this messiah complex, you have to be able to listen to people." (Interviewee 7).

Thus, according to the interviewees, journalists with large following may help with reaching more audiences and hence, generating more views, but influencing opinions go against the core of journalistic practices.

The third code that emerged was 'conventional journalism practices'. This was interesting to the researcher as many interviewees, despite stressing the need to evolve and adapt to digital platforms, were very adamant that conventional practices of journalism must be followed, and several news organisations, especially legacy ones in India, have been ensuring that the journalists adhere to these practices. Thus, the newsrooms are following the traditional, legacy, print-oriented journalism practices despite and in spite of the existence of a digital branch within the organisation. Here, the fear is that in trying to keep up with platform algorithms, the stories that journalists should be telling are getting lost in the fray and adhering to traditional forms of news gathering, being on the ground and reporting is one of the few ways to ensure journalism is not undermined. Thus, the adhering to conventional practices may ensure – the journalists state – that journalism can be used for the public good. Here, the notion of creativity being propagated by platforms is abnegated and maintaining old-school journalistic practices can be considered a response to the market-oriented journalism that has exacerbated since the arrival of platforms (Deuze, 2019; Ferrucci, 2018; Markham, 2012). As Interviewee 6 states, "…if the principles of old-school journalism are applied to the kind of journalism that these platforms are expecting from us, I think the quality would be better, it would be smarter as well."

4.2.3. Impact on journalism

The last sub-theme delves further into the aspects explored in the previous sections. Impact on journalism comprises five codes: changing mediums, impact on creativity, public service, inescapability and Covid-19 impact. The code 'changing mediums' encapsulates the idea that mediums and/or platforms through which news and information are provided may change and journalism will continue to evolve but shall manage to stay true to its core. This derives

from the views expressed by the journalists in the earlier section. This is perfectly explained by Interviewee 1, where they state:

> While I mean the medium might change and, like, I told you today, I might almost instantly in real time use my Twitter handle to kind of give you a piece of information, but only as a journalist do I have access to the right network to give you authentic information […] maybe print might get threatened, but obviously the journalists are not threatened. Journalists just move to a different medium, so they might make a transition to you know the online medium but apart from that I don't think journalism as such has a threat to it. (Interviewee 1)

This drives home the assertion that journalists are the ones who question and try to keep those in power accountable, and no matter the changes a medium may go through, it would be most efficient for journalists and platforms to collaborate to produce and distribute information, and the latter should acknowledge that journalists must operate as arbiters of news content as they have the most training and experience to do so (dos Santos et al., 2018; Nielsen & Ganter, 2019; van Dijck et al., 2018).

Another impact on journalism that the interviewees spoke of was creativity. This covers both the fact that to cater to optimisations (SEOs) and platform algorithms, journalists are forced to modify content simply to be read and reach a wider audience and that the news content in newspapers now seem to lack creativity both in terms of presentation and in content because the journalists and the organisations don't see the point in investing their time on it. This also refers to the resources allotted to journalists to pursue investigative or human-interest stories as there is no assurance that the stories would perform well online. This is a contradiction to the other finding listed in the latter part of the paper, wherein despite this, more resources are being allotted to print than to digital. Moreover, several journalists cited censorship of content, especially on platforms as a major hindrance to creativity and the ability to pursue stories and thereby journalistic practices, further driving home the observations of Deuze (2019) and Markham (2012). This also ties in with the code 'Covid-19 impact', which covers more sections of the data from the interviews, but has also escalated the transition to the digital to the point wherein newspaper subscriptions have taken a hit, further impacting the kind of stories journalists can write. The other aspect of impact on journalism this code captures is the job losses in news organisations, which along with platformisation, has compounded in several media companies in India.

The above two codes ebb into the next code that is 'public service'. Here, the code both stresses the need for journalism to be in the service of the public and the lack of it as one of the

major threats to the profession. When it comes to India, specifically, the ability of news media organisations to stand to authorities, especially the government has been greatly questioned (Arvikar, 2020; Posetti, 2018). However, since platforms give space to news organisations of every kind, smaller organisations have been using platforms to produce news content that is of public interest despite the backlash from the government and the viewers, aptly stated by an interviewee:

> … there are a few handfuls of smaller news organisations…they don't have money, they don't have resources and they are every day, they are put through hell for saying what they're saying. But they're still going out doing it because you know, for them, saying it is more important…. (Interviewee 5)

All these codes on the impact of journalism due to platforms inadvertently result in the code 'inescapability', which refers to the inability to avoid and/or escape platforms. They are everywhere and a constant part of one's life especially as a journalist. As one journalist puts it, "If you are a journalist in today's day and age, you can't afford to not be on these platforms. Even if you really want to switch off from these platforms once in a while, you can't do it." (Interviewee 3). Deuze and Witschge (2016) stated that news production would take place both inside and outside newsrooms, but now for many journalists, platforms have become indispensable because news production largely takes place through and on platforms.

> …you know part of my job is also to track all the social media platforms and to understand what people are talking about, and you know what they want to know, what are the questions that they're so searching for so that I can provide the answers of those questions in my articles...we have to just be there to you know understand what is happening in the digital…so, it has become a necessity. (Interviewee 8)

Thus, both the theorists that served as a framework for this research and the interviewee participants understand the necessity and inevitability of platforms, but deprecate the impact it's having on the journalistic profession. They are aware of its ubiquity but not blind to its ramifications.

4.3. Print versus digital

Amid the clutter of information that journalists are made to provide due to platformisation, digital journalists in India, especially those that work in legacy organisations

have to contend with the fact that they are either considered nonserious and/or expendable compared to their print counterparts. This theme does not contain sub-themes but has several codes including print and digital divide, print preference, separate teams, knowledge gap, distribution role, slow adaptation, integration and speed. All of these codes reflect the experiences and perceptions of the participants in the way the Indian news organisations have adapted to platforms, what should be done to work with the platforms and the dynamics in the Indian newsrooms with regards to the print and digital journalists.

The code 'print and divide' refers to the fact that journalists aren't aware of what's happening in their organisation, especially when it comes to the publishing and distribution side of things in print and digital spheres. This is present in the legacy organisations in India. There seems to be an unawareness and what some interviewees describe as a rift between the print and digital sections. The newsrooms tend to follow and favour the traditional, print-oriented journalism practices despite and in spite of the existence of a digital branch. This is largely prevalent because the digital branches of the legacy organisations mostly depend on print teams for content and verification, causing an unhealthy relationship between the teams. Nearly every code in this theme has been generated because of the existence of this dynamic. The first code, in particular, is best exemplified by Interviewee 6, when they say:

> ...I know for a fact that a lot of the print journalists who are also you know, being snotty about the fact that they are in print are also essentially using Twitter, a lot more than digital journalists do...I know that a lot of them would depend on Twitter, to make a name for themselves, to make sure that the stories are being read better, but still don't have that kind of faith in digital media. (Interviewee 6)

The same interviewee then further goes on to say "...the print media...there is this complete ignorance about what happens in the digital teams." Thus, this divide is further aggravated by the fact that the print and digital teams are separate and there is a gap in knowledge in terms of what the other does, especially with print journalists, who are unaware of what's happing with the online and platform-related teams. A print journalist expresses their frustration with this when they state:

> ... [the separation] is not a good thing, because ...I don't know if they're changing the story or headline for Facebook's algorithm...I think as journalists [we] have to adapt to this change and kind of gather all the information they can... [print] journalists are still very disconnected from that.... (Interviewee 1)

Several interviewees claim that they feel like they work in "silos". Most of the time, the distribution of tasks in legacy organisations consist of the print journalist gathering the news, making a copy for the print version and the digital team stepping in to upload it online. The latter modify it so that it can be picked by algorithms and make it SEO-friendly by reworking the headline and the first paragraph. At times, their only role is to upload it to the website and post it to the platforms. This is signified by the fourth code 'distribution role' referring to digital journalists who are only publishing or distributing information, but not producing it. As Cohen (2019) states, the role of distribution is now an essential task of a reporter.

> ...[the story] goes to the publishing editor who is then usually the SEO person... I think that is what is causing problems now. Because usually that publishing editor has no linkage to the story. They have not been a part of the reporting, they have not been a part of the editing, they are you usually only there so that the story gets picked up by Google. That's their only job. (Interviewee 5)

This not only affects the quality of the content but also echoes Nielsen and Ganter's (2018) indication that platformisation has caused news organisations to restructure their teams. All the interviewees are rather disgruntled by this and they believe that this further divides the print and digital teams and the journalists within those teams.

In India, as mentioned in the second chapter of the paper, print is still a relatively growing news industry and this has largely to do with the country's assertion that it is a superior, serious and more credible medium. The code 'print preference' perfectly encapsulates this. It refers to the disdain towards digitalisation and platforms – the tendency of senior journalists or those in print to consider print journalism, superior and authentic to their digital counterparts, who are considered callous and trivial. This then hampers the news organisations' ability to adapt and respond to the changes happening in the digital sphere, which is an inference made by most interviewees. The code 'slow adaptation', which refers to the perception that organisations have been slow to adapt to both digitalisation and platformisation, also embodies the inference.

This is problematic in many ways. Interviewee 9 attempts to explain this when they say, "[print is] making so much money here, why would I go there [digital space] for a fraction of that money...I would say the transition is happening, it is happening very slowly in the Indian market." Thus, the preference for print is also from the revenue sources, mostly advertisers. The lack of allocation of resources for digital-only news organisations and the digital teams within legacy organisations also impacts the kind of content produced by the teams. This is also evident from Interviewee 7 who is adamant that they are solely a print journalist despite

writing for the online version of their newspaper and having the task of distributing the e-paper of their publication on WhatsApp.

This inability or stagnancy in adapting and transitioning in the news organisations to meet with technological advances, and navigate the changing nature of platforms have a large-scale impact on the news industry and journalism itself. While this was expected in India where as previously mentioned, the expansion of internet services was slower compared to the rest of the world (Onikoyi, 2020), however, Covid-19 expedited the consumption of online news content (Ninan, 2021), leaving news organisations ultimately unable to cope with the changes. To counteract this, the interviewees stressed the need for 'integration'. This involves not only merging and sharing the skills and tasks between the digital and print teams but also with the platforms. In the case of the latter, the news organisations need to take ownership of their content seriously and not simply pander to platforms and their algorithms. This has far-reaching repercussions both to journalism and the public. At their current state, print and digital are largely replicas of each other in terms of content. The online spaces of legacy news organisations merely act as records of the print product.

> …[in] print media news houses…for me to be as a journalist as a print journalist, all I have, I've been expected to do is send an update for online, okay? I am not being integrated, I mean they're not integrating newsrooms, they are having a print newsroom, they have a digital newsroom, and they just work together. They are not integrated yet…you can't continue to work in silos anymore.... (Interviewee 1)

Other interviewees further specify that the senior journalists in the print medium must bring their expertise to the online space instead of shunning digital journalists. Interviewee 6 states, "My biggest suggestion would be that veteran journalists, senior journalists need to acknowledge the potential in digital media and contribute, or at least guide younger journalists in this field." Thus, the divide between the print and digital teams and journalists is being intensified through the contempt for digital journalists and the disconnect in the tasks allotted to the teams. This can only be counteracted with an integration of skills and the workforce and can be useful in meeting the challenges posed by platformisation.

4.4. Connotations of platformisation

The final theme groups together the remaining codes that were generated from the data gathered from the interviewees. The connotations refer to the meaning and associations of the concept of platformisation as understood by the participants. It was found that despite the

ubiquity of platforms and platformisation, most journalists associated it solely with social media platforms, and few could explain the concept. Despite this, their answers to the questions revealed that they may not be able to point out or accurately describe platformisation, but they do have an understanding of what it entails and how it has been affecting their profession. This theme comprised four codes, monetary association, positive association, person dependent and extension.

Monetary association refers to the association of platformisation with monetary, economic and business sections of the organisation. Both the definitions of platformisation used in this paper emphasise the monetary and economic aspects of platformisation (Nieborg et al., 2019; Rodrigues, 2020). The economic aspect of platforms is significant to the constitution of a platform as its monetary value is determined through user attention (van Dijck et al., 2018) and several journalists, while aware of the use of audience metrics for revenue, were unable to understand how it worked. To them, platforms are a change in the business and revenue models of news and media organisations. Print journalists like Interviewee 1 stress, "…as print journalists, [a platform] does not interfere with us, like the economics of news does not yet interfere with us in our everyday things." This researcher must point out that this quote is a contradiction because, despite this assertion, they go on to explain the need to monetise content and be more involved in the digital arm of the organisation. Thus, despite associating platformisation with the economics of news organisations, they are distinctly aware of its ramifications to the editorial section.

However, despite all the discussions in this chapter, several journalists understand and look at the presence of platforms in a positive manner. They stress that with algorithms and metrics, there is far more knowledge of what a user reads and how much time they spend on an article, among other insights, which informs them to make relevant changes to their distribution patterns or simply to the structure of the content. The reader takes a centre stage, which if done right, according to interviewees, is useful in understanding what kind of stories they want to read. Additionally, Interviewee 5 gives examples of how due to the ease of access provided by platforms to its audiences, several issues of public interest now have a space to reach their target audience, which was not possible in spaces that belonged to mainstream news organisations. This is aptly explained when they state:

> For a generally marginalised community, women, lower-caste people, sexual minorities and all of those people they definitely get room to become entrepreneurs, but they also get a dedicated reader base, a group of people who regularly follow what they're writing and that news or their writing has an impact on society in general. I think that's an

aspect of what good platformisation done in terms of bringing up these new entrepreneurs in news or in media in general... (Interviewee 5)

This also ties in with the third code 'person dependent', which states that the meaning of platformisation is different and changes according to each person's wants and needs. For journalists, platforms can be the source of information, the means to distribute it and gain access to viewers. This can also change according to the beats the journalists specialise in. In the case of Interviewees 7 and 8, who are film and entertainment journalists, they specify that being present and active on social media platforms is, at times, the only way to keep up with events and gain information. On the other hand, journalists reporting on politics, current affairs and other civic issues sometimes have no means of reaching the stakeholders involved, especially in India, wherein the politicians and other government officials use platforms to make announcements and share information (Posetti, 2018; Rodrigues, 2020).

Lastly, the journalists interviewed see platforms as an extension to everyday journalistic processes and/or as publishers of content. This code can be seen as a derivative of the above code; however, this solely refers to an extension of newsroom practices and the fact that platforms are, at times, considered to be providers of content. Interviewee 4 expands on this by saying:

...We should ideally not call them social media platforms anymore. Because, these are publishing houses, so they can say that they are just platforms, but they are not platforms, they are publishing houses, they publish other people's content, which is exactly why, you know, it's a blurry line....

As indicated by Interviewee 4 and observed by Diakopolous (2019) and Haneef and Khan (2020), platforms allow for open access to publishing, and with the amount of content they can host, which according to the user is free, it can be detrimental to the survival of news organisations. They are seen as news providers, and the efforts put in by actual content providers is rendered invisible. Thus, the various associations Indian journalists have made with platformisation exemplify and contribute to the extent of their understanding of the concept and their perceptions regarding its integration into their work practices.

5. Conclusion

The inevitability and pervasiveness of platformisation in the news media industry have lasting consequences and India is no exception. The major platforms like Google, Apple, Facebook and Amazon are infrastructural platforms that provide the foundation and services for nearly all the websites and applications on the internet today (van Dijck et al., 2018), and news websites are increasingly dependent on them for the production and distribution of content (Nieborg et al., 2019; Nielsen & Ganter, 2018). In India, coupled with the threat to media freedom and the relatively steady growth of the news industry, there has been a delay in the transition and response to the onslaught of platformisation. Journalists in the country have been forced to cope with changing working practices and for this purpose, this researcher sought to examine their perspectives. The insight acquired from the researchers who have studied this concept and its implications served as a groundwork to analyse the responses provided by the interviewees who participated in this research and was used to answer the research question: *How do Indian journalists perceive platformisation with regards to news production and distribution?*

To answer the research question and the sub-questions, interviews were conducted with ten Indian journalists working in news organisations based in the country. A thematic analysis was conducted on the data gathered from these interviews, which resulted in four broad themes. First is the *concern for content*, in which the journalists interviewed expressed concern for the different types of content, from misinformation, hyper information and sachetised content, which is present on platforms, and how it affects the general public's perceptions towards the journalistic profession and the news media industry. The second theme was *platforms and their influence over journalism*, this includes both the profession and the daily work practices. This theme consisted of journalism's dependency on views for ad revenue, the rise in different types of journalists that platforms have contributed to, the inescapability of platforms, the need for journalism to be of service to the public, among others. The third is *print versus digital*, which captured the divide between the print and digital journalists when it came to editorial tasks, and the open contempt of senior, print journalists towards digital journalists that is commonplace in many newsrooms. Finally, the theme *connotations of platformisation* gave an overview of the meanings the journalists associate with the concept of platformisation. They largely saw it as an economic portion of the news organisation and were aware of the advantages provided by platforms, believing it to be an extension of their daily tasks and that its use and purpose changed according to the person using it.

5.1. Theoretical Implications

The findings in this research aligned, to an extent, with the previous research as presented in the theoretical framework. However, there were several instances within the codes and themes that were specific to India**.**

To begin with, Indian news organisations do not yet have a reliable revenue model and have to depend almost completely on advertisers. As Google and Facebook control a majority of the advertising (van Dijck et al., 2018), both legacy and digital-only organisations are very much dependent on them for revenue. Despite the organisations hosting their content on their respective websites, they rely on the services provided by Google and Facebook to reach a wider audience (Andersson-Schwarz, 2017). This is largely done by using the platform-specific algorithms and other readership and viewership metrics to know what content is being read, what generates the most clicks and so on – further confirming Diakopolous' (2019) inferences on the use of algorithms in news media. The existence of information that is free or disseminated at a low cost, as stated by Chada (2017) and Arvikar (2020), is a concern shared by the interviewees as well. This bleeds into the quality of the content and has ramifications on the revenue made by the news organisations and therefore, the income earned by journalists. This was considered one of the significant impacts of platformisation and the aforementioned dependency on advertisements.

Due to this, there is a significant influence on both the quality and the content of what is being published, confirming the observations by Nieborg and other authors (2019). Thus, the news organisations adjust their agenda according to what the platform algorithms determine is widely consumed. The existence of separate teams with dedicated persons to upload a news story and enhance it so that is caught by the algorithm builds upon the abovementioned conclusions drawn by previous researchers.

However, despite previous researchers' postulation that it affects journalistic integrity, the interviewees assert that the conventional, core practices of journalism are here to stay. They believe that platforms are simply mediums, which will cause the profession to evolve, but the profession shall continue to exist – deviating from the conclusions drawn by previous researchers. To add to this, the preference for the print medium by several senior journalists, news organisations, advertisers and even the readers, reveals that broadsheets in India are still considered the credible source of information; indicating that there is still a relatively strong market for journalism in the country.

At the same time, Arvikar's (2020) remarks on the sachetisation of content hold true as journalists revealed they provide short updates to an event every few minutes to make it easy for consumption. This in turn ties in with Haneef and Khan's (2020) observation that journalists are engaging in additional labour and tasks beyond the purview of their profession.

5.2.   Societal Implications

In the first chapter, this researcher dwells on the possibility that the Indian journalists who are interviewed reflect on their profession and news organisations with regards to the growing significance of platformisation. The interviews and findings revealed that the presence, albeit faint, of the preponderance of the effects of platforms in news organisations, is being felt among the participants.

One of the major implications of this research then is to find a way around the slow, stagnant response of the major news companies to platformisation. This is visible in the interviewees' emphasis on the need for integration between the teams, and the urgency to stop looking at digital journalism as a subordinate medium, but take the advantages it has to offer seriously. The editorial expertise of senior journalists can be conducive to combating the frivolousness, reaction-prone content that becomes viral on platforms. Interviewees call misinformation bad journalism. Thus, if 'good', experienced journalists that are well-versed in conventional journalistic practices of research, cross-verification etc. are employed in digital teams, there is a high possibility that the spread of misinformation can be curbed to some extent – that is, at least from the editorial perspective. This can also ensure that there is a balance in the published content between what the audience wants and what they need, reducing the dependency on algorithms, clicks and views, to determine content. This can somewhere also constrain the sachetised, bite-sized distribution of editorial content, especially in cases where it undermines journalistic integrity, creativity and autonomy.

For this purpose, the insistence on finding alternate models of revenue has been reiterated by several interviewees and this researcher. This is imperative to not only meet the persistent changes being made by platformisation but also the growing threats to the freedom of expression, especially in journalism. The dependency on advertisements as the only method of earnings in an organisation does not bode well for the future of news in the country. Therefore, a combination of a subscriber-based model and advertisements in digital-only organisations and finding the means to monetising content from print that is made available for free online could prove beneficial in the long run. This could also result in some more editorial freedom and give journalists the opportunity to hold people in power accountable, something that is not only their job but also has been restricted both due to platforms and the governmental interference in India (Rodrigues, 2020).

Lastly, despite the passive adaptation to platformisation, it is evident that it is an unavoidable extension of one's daily life. Therefore, the inevitable foray of automation into journalism shall further upend the profession and organisations. To be prepared for it, and predetermine its possible functions in news organisations without having to sacrifice editorial

integrity and journalistic creativity is a task that the news industry must consider a priority. Perhaps, using it to alleviate the workload caused by sachetisation and/or to take away the publishing-only roles given to trained journalists and replace it with automation could be a practical starting point.

5.3. Limitations and Recommendations

Despite all the measures that were taken to ensure that this research considered every aspect associated with the subject of study, the limited scope of the paper presented certain limitations. The findings presented in this paper were a result of coding processes associated with thematic analysis but is subject to the personal interpretation of the researcher. Efforts were made to be iterative and self-critical throughout the research process to ensure there was no personal bias reflected in the findings.

One of the major limitations of this research was, however, the small sample size. Despite the fact that semi-structured interviews are not meant to be generalised (Guest et al., 2012), a larger sample size, preferably with a journalist from the print and digital verticals of legacy news organisations and that of digitally native news organisations would have brought further insight into the perceptions of platformisation. This researcher believes that a couple of more interviews should have been conducted as the research had barely begun reaching saturation in terms of information. However, due to the ongoing pandemic that peaked in India during the time of this research, it was difficult to reach more journalists in a short time frame. Due to this, the results are not exhaustive, and further information could have been gained if there was an increase in the sample size.

Furthermore, the use of a third-party medium, the Zoom video-conferencing application, to interview the participants was convenient, but an in-person interview would have helped to build a better rapport and trust with the interviewee and the existence of non-verbal cues could have contributed a richer insight to this research. To add to this, weak internet connection issues also ended up slightly disrupting the flow of the interview.

However, this research opened up several topics and avenues of interest that can be pursued for future research. To build upon the above-mentioned limitations, a larger, more heterogeneous sample size can provide in-depth and perhaps different findings. One of the findings of the research, which revealed the divide between print and digital is a topic that could be explored further. There could also be a comparative study on legacy news organisations and digitally native news organisations as well as the inclusion of other regional language news organisations. A study with in-depth interviews that examines the relationship dynamics between the print and digital sections of legacy news organisations could provide a much-

detailed insight into the reasons behind the former's disdain for online journalism. More importantly, however, it could provide knowledge on why the legacy organisations were slow to adapt and respond to both digitalisation and platformisation and could perhaps reveal a more pragmatic solution to the future of news organisations and journalism in India.

Furthermore, there could be further research on the impact of Covid-19 on Indian news organisations. This could both cover the impact on the profession in terms of job losses, and how the pandemic acted as a catalyst for several legacy news organisations to transition into the digital sphere. This could also include an investigation into how despite the pandemic, the top publications continue to maintain a steady readership base. Lastly, future research should investigate why and how automation has not made it big in the country and how it could perhaps be useful in taking the load off the excess tasks performed by journalists.

Platformisation is here to stay and this research emphasises that it will continue to be an intrinsic part of the daily lives of journalists in India and around the world. This research has indicated that Indian journalists are aware of the effects and inescapability of platforms and largely believe that a balanced, integrated approach that stresses editorial insight and autonomy could be the ideal future for journalism, at least with respect to platformisation. However, the journalists and this researcher are aware that there are several other factors along with platformisation that also influence journalism practices and must be taken into consideration while discussing the future of journalism, especially in future research.

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Appendix A – Sample Description

Referred as	Interview Date	Sex	Experience	Current medium	Specialisation
Interviewee 1	18.04.2021	Female	10 years	Print	Education and Climate
Interviewee 2	06.05.2021	Female	8 years	TV	Current Affairs
Interviewee 3	08.05.2021	Female	7 years	Digital	Features
Interviewee 4	09.05.2021	Male	6 years	Print	Content and Editorial Desk
Interviewee 5	13.05.2021	Male	11 years	Digital	Finance
Interviewee 6	16.05.2021	Female	9 years	Digital	History, Culture and Features
Interviewee 7	16.05.2021	Female	10 years	Print and Digital	Entertainment and Lifestyle
Interviewee 8	19.05.2021	Female	8 years	Digital	Entertainment and Lifestyle
Interviewee 9	19.05.2021	Male	21 years	Digital	Technology and Editorial Desk
Interviewee 10	24.05.2021	Female	9 years	Digital	Features

Appendix B – Interview Guide

I.   Introduction

1. Explanation of consent form.

2. Explanation of research.

3. Icebreaker questions/conversation to build rapport.

4. How long have you been working as a journalist?

5. What is your beat/specialisation?

II.   Platformisation

1. What do you know about platformisation? / How would you explain it?

2. How has it impacted your working process?

      2.1.   What is your current working process?

      2.2.   How active are you on social media?

      2.3.   What platform(s) do you think has an influence on the news making/practice of journalism? In India?

III.   Changing newsroom practices

1. Has the existence of platforms increased your role/tasks in the newsrooms? Do you do more than you usually did?

2. What more is expected of you?

3. How has/does it affect(ed) the content making/news gathering process? How has it changed over the past few years?

4. How has/does it affect(ed) the content distribution process?

5. What is something that is specific to India when it comes to the threats and impacts to journalistic practices?

      5.1.   How does platformisation fit into this?

6. How has your organisation adapted to platformisation/big tech?

7. When you joined the organisation (alt. when you were in your previous organisations) did you think your colleagues, leadership were wary/worried about platforms? Were you?

8. How has your organisation adapted to the changed brought about by platformisation?

9. Do you think it was enough? What more/less could have been done?

10. How do you use platforms in your current work process?

11. How different is your production and distribution strategy as compared to that of print?

IV.   Algorithms and automation

1. Do you think news has been reduced to data points/ has there been a commodification of journalism? Could you elaborate?

2. How does your organisation use algorithms for the production/distribution of news content? [analytics]

3. [how]Are you involved in it?

4. Do you have an internal/external team/org that looks at the analytics and/or audience metrics of what has been posted? What about readership?

5. Is audience attention and engagement [explain/ask if they know what it is] and important factor in creating and distributing news stories? How? Why?

6. Is it different that reader attention/engagement? How? Why?

7. Is there an audience engagement team? If yes, what does it entail?

8. How important is 'data'? How do you measure it?

9. How much does that play into the new stories published on the site?

10. What are the factors used to determine what content is relevant?

    11.1.   How much do platform algorithms factor into this?

V.   Conclusion

1. Future? Where does it go from here?

2. Can principles of legacy journalistic practices be applied to platforms?

3. What other threats to journalism?

Appendix C – Coding Schema

Main themes	Sub Categories	Codes
Concern for Content	*Reaction and response*	reactionary content
		direct access
		response to metrics
		different criteria
		content replication
	Information	misinformation
		Hyper information
		need for novelty
		payment for content
		sachetisation
		free information
		additional verification
Platforms and their influence over Journalism	*Platform interference*	ad/views dependency
		control
	Types of journalism	alternatives to traditional journalism
		journalist influencers
		conventional journo practices
	Impact on journalism	changing mediums
		impact on creativity
		public service
		inescapability
		Covid Impact
Print versus digital		separate teams
		knowledge gap
		slow adaptation
		integration
		print preference
		distribution role
Connotations of Platformisation		monetary association
		positive association

	person dependent
	extension