

A Journalistic Study on “Use of Social Media in News Gathering”

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ABSTRACT

Newsgathering is one of the challenging tasks that journalists have to perform. The emergence of social media is believed to combat the difficulties of newsgathering by giving them an opportunity to monitor the content online. A recent trend of sourcing practices with social media in writing articles has been witnessed at large. The existing literature also suggests that social media is being embraced as a news sourcing tool by mainstream media. Newspaper Journalists use social media in every aspect of their work to remain competitive during the digital times. This paper is an attempt to explore the journalistic use of social media tools for news gathering techniques.

KEYWORDS: Social Media, Newspaper, Journalism, Newsgathering

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INTRODUCTION

Newsgathering process is one of the complex and challenging task for journalists in the process of reporting. Many factors like censorship and surveillance, misinformation, language, distortions introduced by witnessing events at a distance has made is difficult for journalists. Reports suggest that technological advancements have somehow eased and changed the way journalists these days gather news. Earlier journalists used to rely on their notepad and pens. Today, professional journalists rely more on computer and mobile phones and not just for the writing but everything starting from the news sourcing, story compiling to story publishing. In the journey of conventional practices of journalism to technological era of journalism social media applications have become central to any kind of news reporting that lends itself to more open and social ways of communicating. This paper is an attempt to explore the use of social media in news gathering.

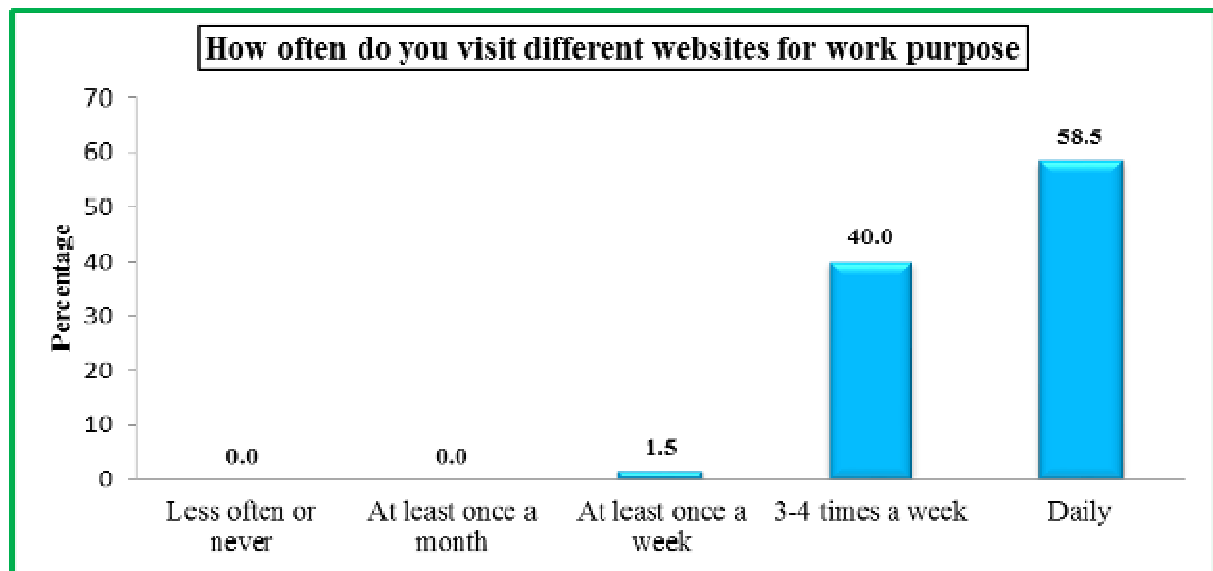
Analysis and Interpretation

Wilkinson and Bhandarkar (2010) in their book titled “Methodology and Techniques of Social Science” have opined that analysis and interpretation of data involves a number of closely related operations that

are performed with the purpose of summarizing and organizing these in such a way that they yield answers to research questions or hypothesis that had initiated the study. Data when collected from various primary and secondary sources is in its raw form and are incredibly useful but also overwhelming. It is almost impossible for researchers to deal with all this data in its raw form. Through data analysis, the data is presented in a suitable and summarized form without any loss of relevant information so that it can be efficiently used to answer different quires of the study. Data can be presented in the tabular or graphic form. The tabular form (tables) implies numerical presentation of data.

Table 1: How often do you visit different websites for work purpose

Response	Number	Percentage
Less often or never	0	0.0
At least once a month	0	0.0
At least once a week	3	1.5
3-4 times a week	80	40.0
Daily	117	58.5
Total	200	100

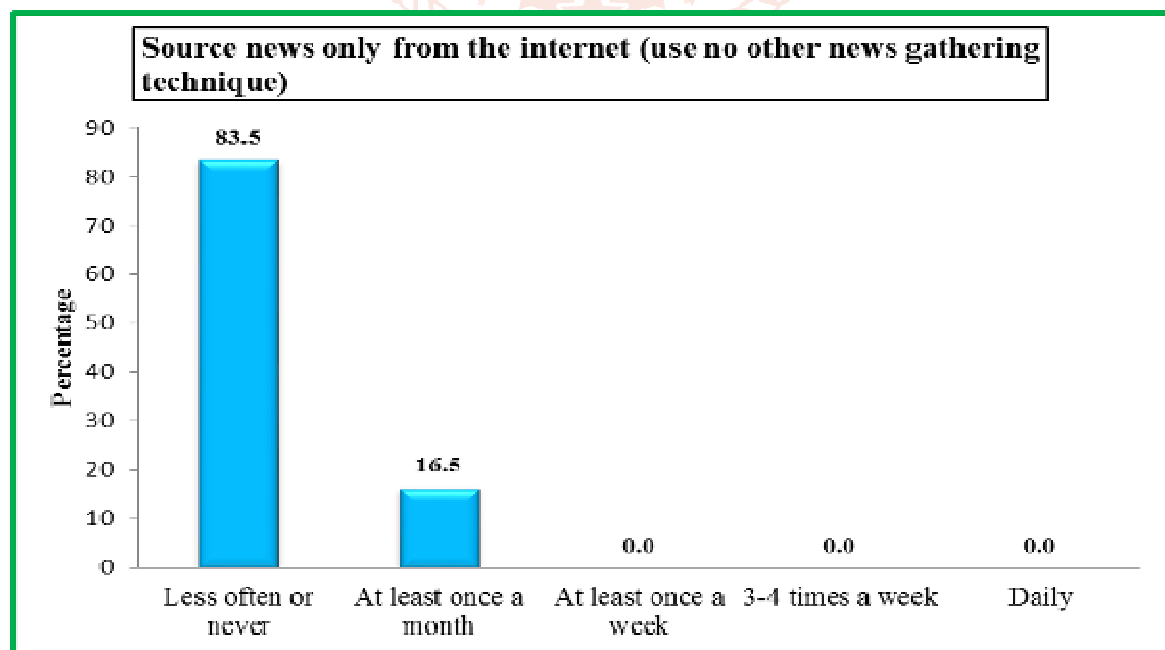


Graph chart 1(a) shows how often do journalists visit different websites for work purpose

The chart shows that 1.5% of the respondents visit different websites for work purpose at least once a week. 40% of the respondents visit websites for 3-4 times a week. 58.5% of the respondents surf websites daily for work purpose. The deduction that can be drawn is that, Journalists these days regularly keep an eye on different news websites, official Twitter accounts, Instagram, Facebook account handles of famous personalities to get lead into a story. Earlier it required moving out of office or home to find a news story but now a journalist can find news via internet by browsing different websites from his or her own chamber/desk.

Table 2: Source news only from the internet (use no other news gathering technique)

Response	Number	Percentage
Less often or never	167	83.5
At least once a month	33	16.5
At least once a week	0	0.0
3-4 times a week	0	0.0
Daily	0	0.0
Total	200	100

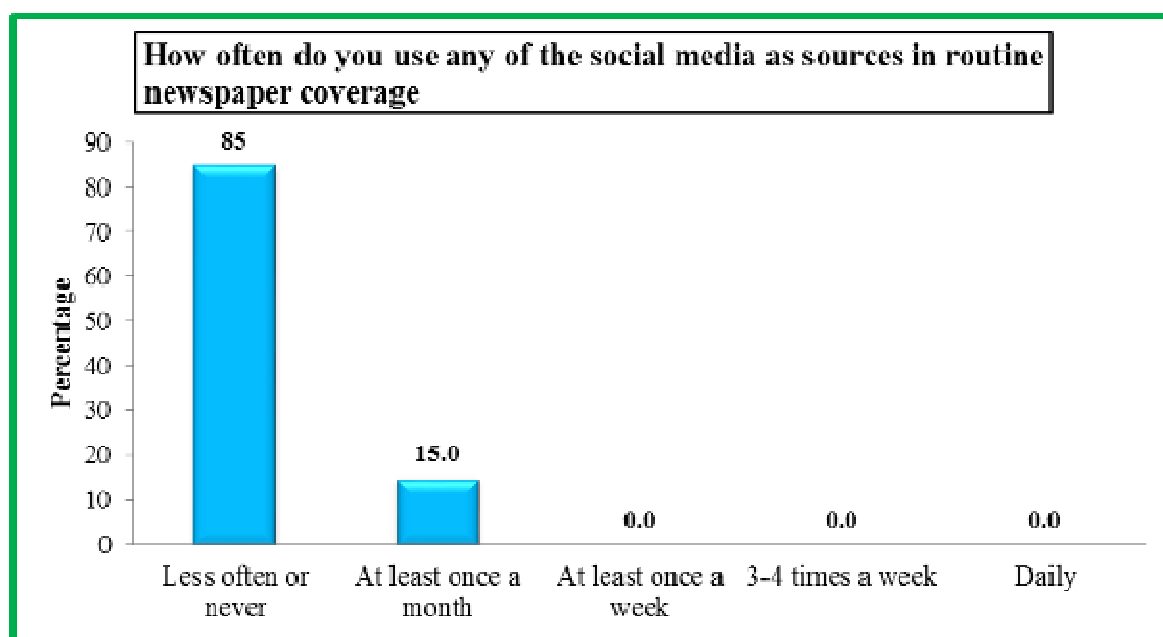


Graph chart 2(a) shows how often journalists source news only from the internet (use no other news gathering technique)

The chart shows 83.5% respondent's source internet or social media less often or never. 16.5% of the respondents use sources from internet at least once a month and doesn't use other news gathering techniques. Hence it can be drawn that there are a very small number of journalists who are dependent on internet sources and doesn't use any other news gathering techniques. But still majority of the respondents are dependent and believe that traditional ways of news gathering are best.

Table 3: How often do you use any of the social media as sources in routine newspaper coverage

Response	Number	Percentage
Less often or never	170	85
At least once a month	30	15
At least once a week	0	0.0
3-4 times a week	0	0.0
Daily	0	0.0
Total	200	100

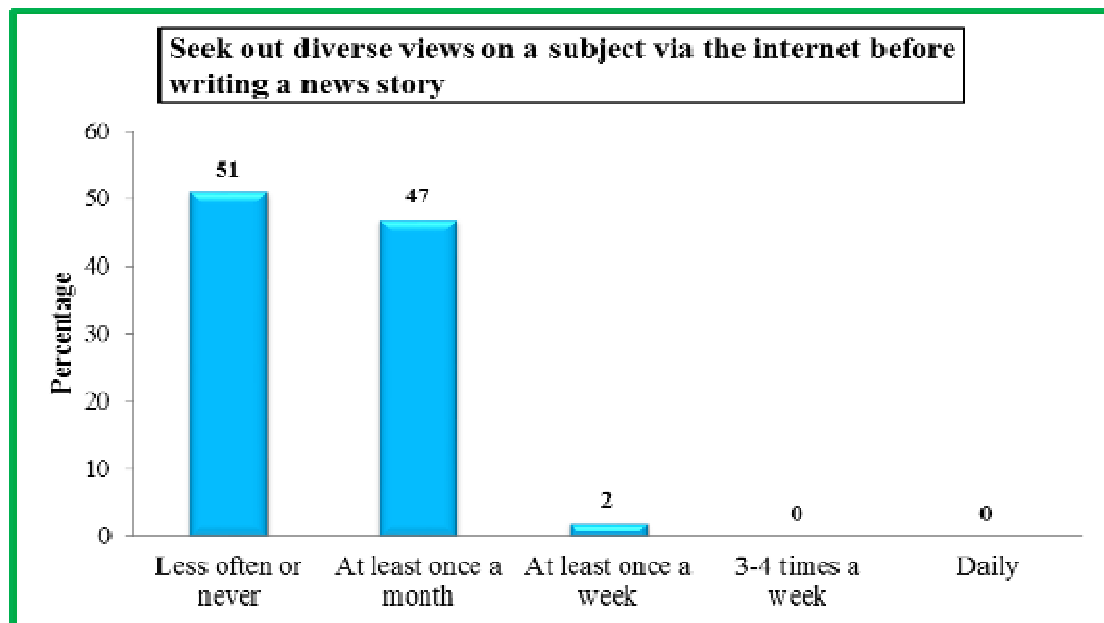


Graph chart 3 how often journalists use any of the social media as sources in routine newspaper coverage

The chart shows that 85% of the journalists use social media sources in routine newspaper coverage as less often or never. 15% of the journalists use social media as sources at least once a month. This indicates that no doubt social media is of high use to journalists in news gathering but journalists still do not wholly and solely depend on social media for their news. It is in rare cases that social media is used as a source in routine newspaper coverage but majority of the times journalist have to find proper sources and leads for news.

Table 4: Seek out diverse views on a subject via the internet before writing a news story

Response	Number	Percentage
Less often or never	102	51
At least once a month	94	47
At least once a week	4	2
3-4 times a week	0	0
Daily	0	0
Total	200	100

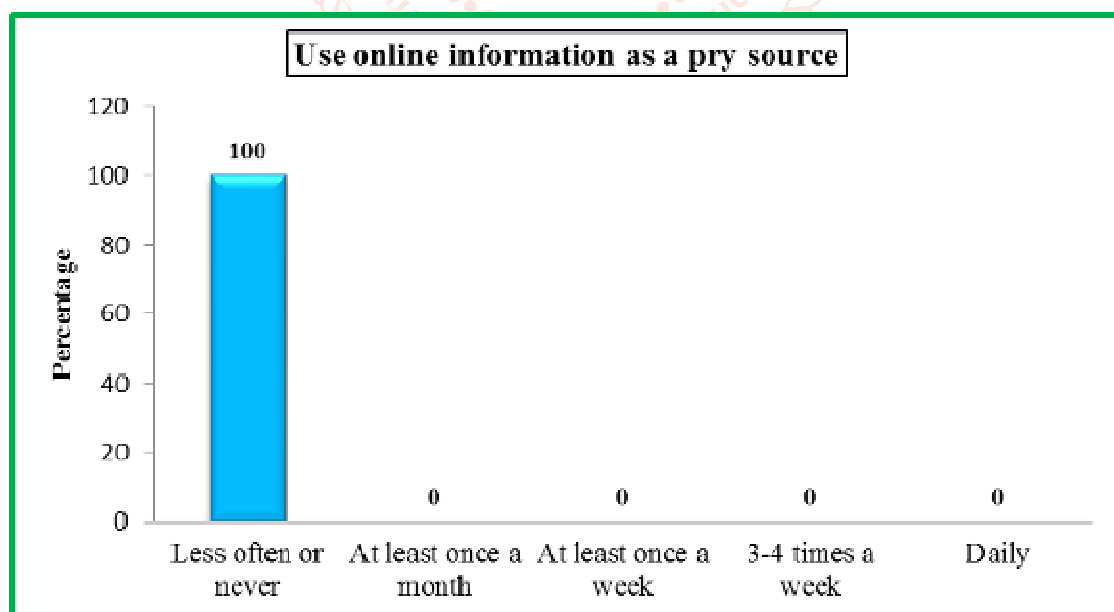


Graph chart 4(a) how often does journalists seek out diverse views on a subject via the internet before writing a news story

The graph chart shows that 51% of the respondents says that they use less often or never internet before writing a story. 47% of the respondents said that they at least use internet once a month. 2% of the respondents said that they at least use internet once a week. That means journalists do not wholly and solely depend on internet for their reporting. They still follow conventional methods of news reporting.

Table 5: Use online information as a primary source

Response	Number	Percentage
Less often or never	200	100
At least once a month	0	0
At least once a week	0	0
3-4 times a week	0	0
Daily	0	0
Total	200	100

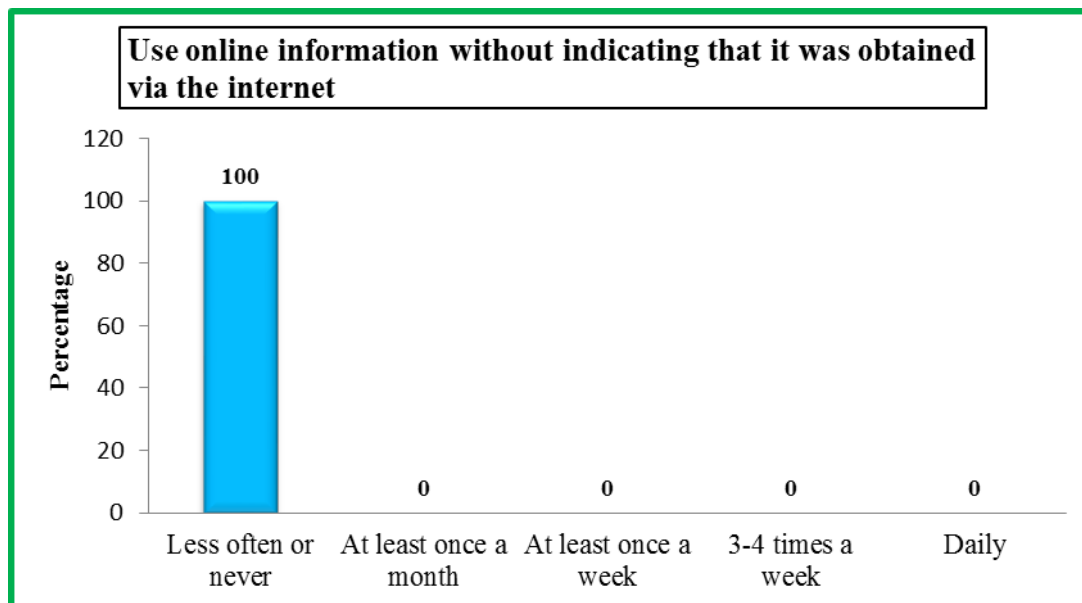


Graph chart 5(a) how often journalists use online information as a primary source

The chart shows that 100% of the respondents allege that they “never use or use very less” online information as primary source of news. That means journalists do not use online information as the only or primary news source rather than they have to cross check online information with the concerned person or cross check with at ground level.

Table 6: Use online information without indicating that it was obtained via the internet

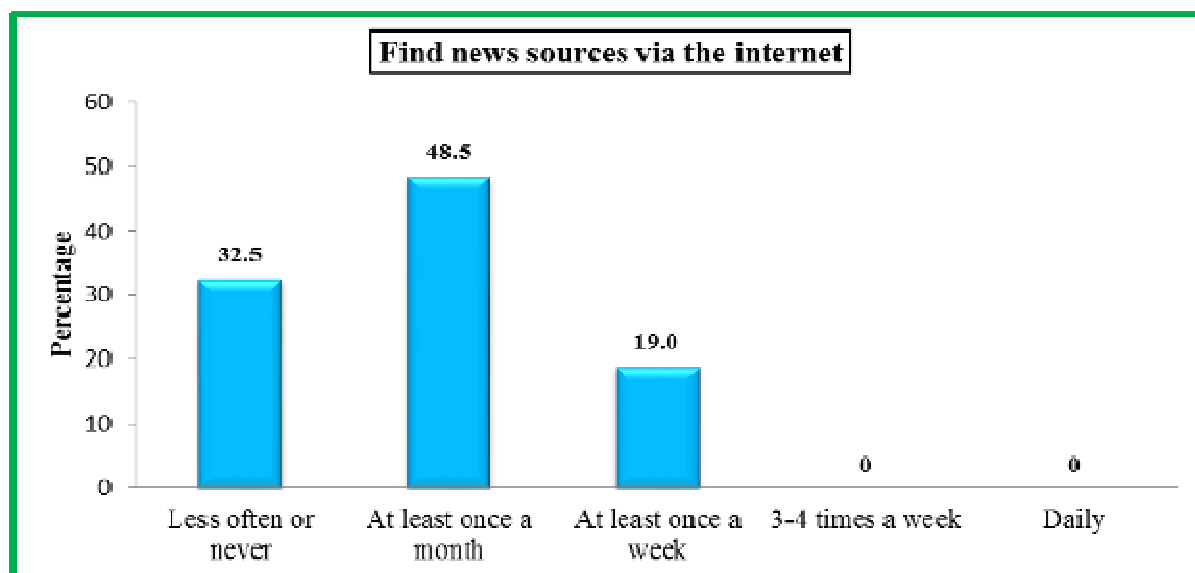
Response	Number	Percentage
Less often or never	200	100
At least once a month	0	0
At least once a week	0	0
3-4 times a week	0	0
Daily	0	0
Total	200	100

**Graph chart 6 (a) use online information without indicating that it was obtained via the internet**

The chart shows that 100% of the respondents confirmed that they never or rarely use online information without indicating that it was obtained from the internet. The respondents said that if respondents receive any sort of information online, then the online source is given full credit in the news story.

Table 7: Find news sources via the internet

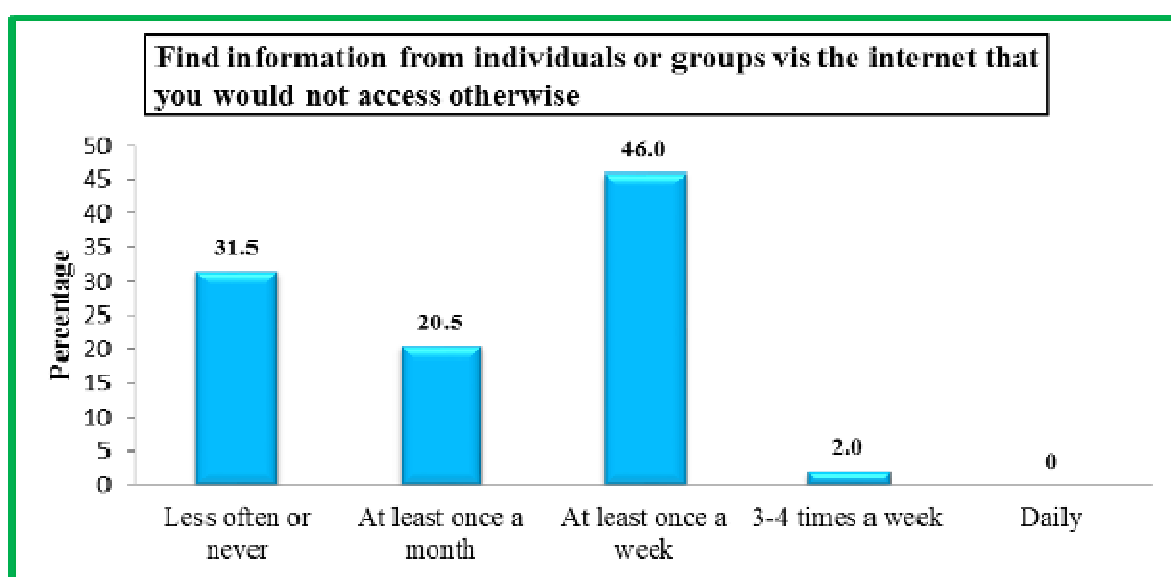
Response	Number	Percentage
Less often or never	65	32.5
At least once a month	97	48.5
At least once a week	38	19.0
3-4 times a week	0	0
Daily	0	0
Total	200	100

**Graph chart 7(a) how often journalists find news sources via the internet**

The graph chart shows that 32.5% of the respondents said that they find news sources via the internet less often or never. 48.5% of the respondents said that they find news sources via the internet at least once a month. 19% of the respondents said that they find news sources via the internet at least once a week. Hence the inference that can be drawn is that nowadays internet has become one of the important tools for journalists for news sourcing. Apart from conventional ways of going to the field and collecting news, internet has somehow eased the news gathering process for journalists.

Table 8: Find information from individuals or groups via the internet that you would not access otherwise

Response	Number	Percentage
Less often or never	63	31.5
At least once a month	41	20.5
At least once a week	92	46.0
3-4 times a week	4	2.0
Daily	0	0
Total	200	100

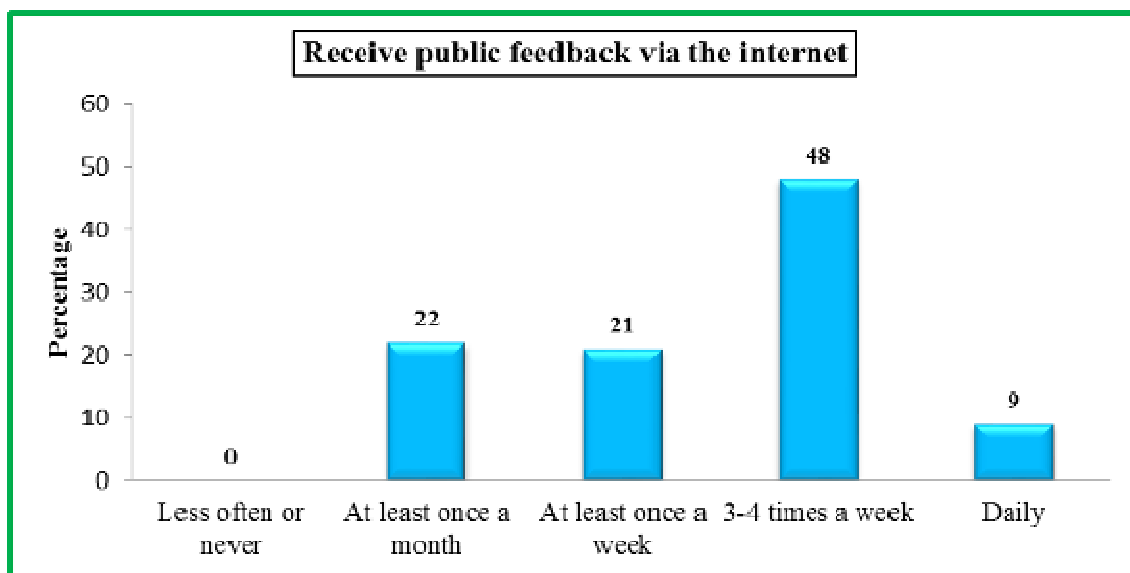


Graph chart 8(a) Find information from individuals or groups via the internet that you would not access otherwise

The chart shows that 31.5% of the respondents said that they “rarely or never” find information from individuals or groups via the internet that they would have not accessed otherwise. 20.5% of the respondents said that they at least once a month find information from individuals or groups via the internet that they wouldn’t have accessed otherwise. 46% of the respondents said that they at least once a week find information from individuals or groups via the internet that they wouldn’t have accessed otherwise. 2% of the respondents said that they find information 3-4 times a week from individuals or groups via the internet that they wouldn’t have accessed otherwise. The inference that can be drawn here is that almost majority of the respondents 69% agreed that sometimes internet plays a key role in finding information or story that would not have been accessed otherwise.

Table 9: Receive public feedback via the internet

Response	Number	Percentage
Less often or never	0	0
At least once a month	44	22
At least once a week	42	21
3-4 times a week	96	48
Daily	18	9
Total	200	100

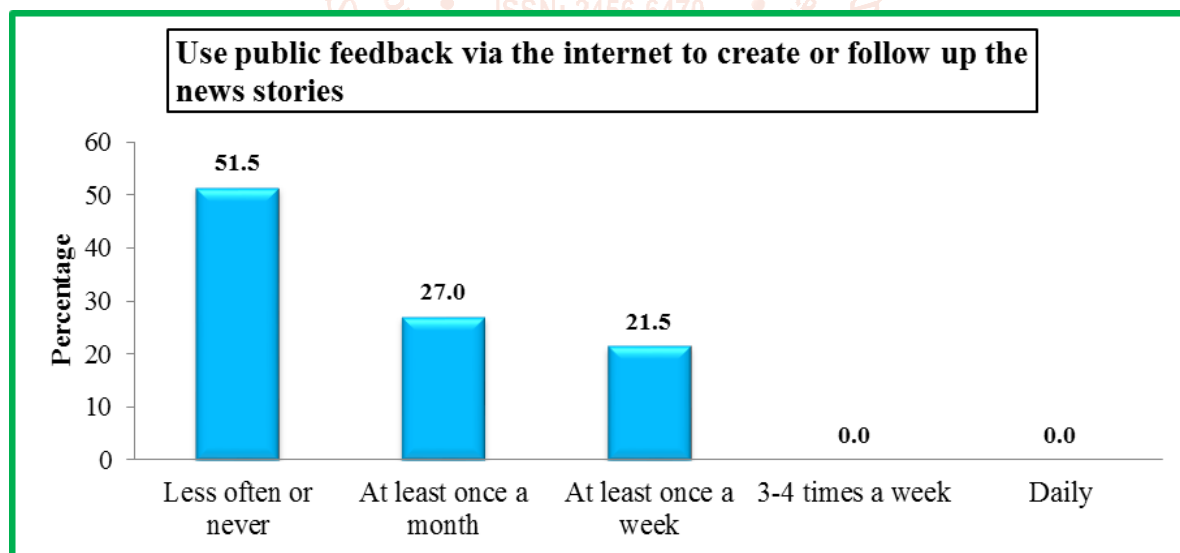


Graph chart 9(a) shows how often newspaper organizations receive public feedback via the internet

The chart shows that 22% of the journalists receive public feedback at least once a month. 21% of the respondents say that they receive public feedback via the internet at least once a week. 48% of the respondents say that they receive public feed 3-4 times a week. 9% of the respondents say they receive public feedback via the internet daily. The conclusion that can be made from the above statements is that feedback to news stories and news organizations and their digital editions has become a new norm of journalism today

Table 10: Use public feedback via the internet to create or follow up the news stories

Response	Number	Percentage
Less often or never	103	51.5
At least once a month	54	27.0
At least once a week	43	21.5
3-4 times a week	0	0.0
Daily	0	0.0
Total	200	100



Graph chart 10(a) shows how often journalists use public feedback via the internet to create or follow up the news stories

The graph chart shows 51.5% of the respondents use public feedback via the internet to create or follow up the news stories less often or never. 27% of the respondents use public feedback via the internet to create or follow up the news stories at least once a month. 21.5% of the respondents use public feedback via the internet to create or follow up the news stories at least once a week. From the data it can be drawn that around 80% of the respondents don't notice or do not take serious note to the feedback that they receive via the internet for follow up stories.

Key findings

Based on the above analysis, major findings of the study are as under:

- Social media has become an important tool for journalists in news gathering process. It gives journalists clues about new stories, helps them to find sources and information. However they still don't completely rely on the social media but cross check the facts from sources.
- Twitter is one of the important social media handles that is used by famous personalities to break the news.
- Earlier it was going out and finding news but now journalists find most of the news via internet by browsing different websites.
- Journalists claimed that they regularly keep an eye on different news websites, official Twitter handles, Instagram, Facebook account handles of famous personalities to get leads into a story.
- Although internet has become an important tool for sourcing news but there are very less number of journalists who totally rely on internet sources and don't use any other news gathering techniques. Journalists believe that after finding source via social media it's always important to go for traditional ways of news gathering to cross check it.
- Social media is widely used by journalists in news gathering technique but journalists believe that one cannot wholly and solely depend on social media for their news. It is in rare cases that social media is used as a source in routine newspaper coverage but majority of the times journalist have to find proper sources and leads for news.
- While reporting an event one cannot use online information as the only or primary news source rather than one needs to cross check online

information with the concerned person or with the circumstances.

- If journalists receive any sort of information online for the news making, then the online source is given full credit in the news story.
- Apart from conventional ways of going to the field and collecting news, internet has somehow eased the news gathering process for journalists.
- Journalists say that sometimes internet plays a key role in finding information or story that would not have been accessed otherwise.

Conclusion

Social media has become an important tool for different media organizations in both news gathering and news distribution. In no time every media organization has felt need to make its presence on social media to utilize the unlimited audience reach without any geographical boundary. It has been always in debates that social media lacks authenticity and was often criticized to spread fake news. But the blue verified badge on Twitter and other social media handles lets media organizations and people know that an account of public interest is authentic. And only these verified accounts are sometimes used as sources in routine newspaper coverage. And above all the traditional print media, with its social media account or online version, is becoming more visible and powerful since it has brand name and authenticity attached to it. However, it's not the last word. Basic principles of journalism - accuracy, authenticity and facts - are essential for any piece of information that's circulating on internet. So while social media may be a trigger for a story, a reporter still needs to ascertain and establish its authenticity and veracity.

References

- [1] Willinson T, Bhandarkar P (2010) Methodology and Techniques of social science, Himalaya Pub House New Delhi.