

Chapter 4

AUDIENCE SURVEY

As part of the study, the researcher has conducted an audience survey of sports journalists. The participants for this survey have been chosen from main stream traditional news organizations i.e Print Media Organisations and Agencies. The respondents were purely professionals like Senior Sports Journalists, Principal Sports Correspondents and Editors of some renowned organizations. The researcher expects to get a clear idea about the impact of internet on sport journalism from these selected respondents.

The survey design consisted of 35 close ended questions that can be answered quickly by the professionals. The questions asked in the survey were framed to find out the level of dependency on internet in the daily sports news coverage, extent of the use of social media tools for sports reporting, possibility of interaction among journalists, fans and sports persons and role of gate keeping in the digital age.

The survey questionnaire was sent to about 150 working journalists in the National Capital Region (NCR) and 100 people responded to these questionnaires. The study was conducted over a period of two months in the year 2012.

4.1. Process of Sports Journalism

In this section, the answer of the working sports journalists on the following points is written after tabulation.

- Getting tips or leads and to find the changing concept of breaking news
- Beat monitoring
- Getting interviewees or quotes for a story

Table No.1

Do you find Internet becoming increasingly the prime source of information for sports journalists for doing a story?

Sl. No.	Answers	Total number of respondents out of 100
1	Yes	35
2	No	60
3	Don't Know	5
	Total	100

The above table shows that 60 respondents feel that even with the presence of Internet, the prime source of gathering information is still traditional in nature. Only 35 respondents feel that in recent times internet is becoming increasingly the prime source of information for sports journalists.

Table No.2

Do you think sports journalists depend too much on Twitter, Facebook and blogs for sports news reporting?

Sl. No.	Answers	Total number of respondents out of 100
1	Yes	25
2	No	70
3	Don't know	5
	Total	100

The above table shows that 70 respondents feel they still use their own contacts and sources and do field reporting and are not too dependent on social media and websites in this age of online media.

Table No.3

Do you think technology has improved the processes of identifying stories that are news worthy?

Sl. No.	Answers	Total number of respondents out of 100
1	Yes	35
2	No	60
3	Don't Know	5
	Total	100

Table No 3 shows that most respondents don't believe that technology has improved the process of identifying news worthy stories. This means that they still depend on the traditional method of identifying news worthy stories i.e using their own contacts and sources respectively.

From the above tables it can be stated that internet is still not the primary source of information in India nor Indian sports journalists are too dependent on social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter for reporting and dissemination of news or identifying the newsworthiness of a story. However, having said that, there are at least 35 journalists who agree with the proposition. They believe that internet is becoming the first place to visit to gather primary information or even identifying a story.

4.2. Quality of Sports Reporting

In this section, the researcher attempts to answer the following points in tabular form with the data collected from working journalists.

- Decline in observational and investigational reporting
- Increase of factual errors
- Lack of accuracy of story in times of changing concept of deadline

Table No.4

Do you think role of pure observational reporting has reduced in digital age?

Sl. No.	Answers	Total number of respondents out of 100
1	Yes	5
2	No	90
3	Don't Know	5
	Total	100

The above table shows that 90 respondents feel that dependency on internet has not reduced the role of pure observational reporting. Here, by 'pure observational reporting', the researcher refers to the very process where the reporters go to the field and collect information from the spot. They don't prefer to sit back in the office and collect the news from the internet.

Table No.5

Do you find a decline in purposeful investigation in sports reporting due to intrusion from the internet?

Sl. No.	Answers	Total number of respondents out of 100
1	Yes	30
2	No	60
3	Don't know	10
	Total	100

In the above table, it is seen that 60 of the total respondents feel that there is no decline in purposeful investigation in sports reporting due to the intrusion from the internet. On the contrary, only 30 respondents feel the opposite. Here, it shows that in India, the trend of reporting news stories is going through a slow but gradual change.

Table No.6

Do you think information from internet is always not authentic and since it is impossible to check all the information available on web, it is impossible to avoid the damage done because of false information?

Sl. No.	Answers	Total number of respondents out of 100
1	Yes	95
2	No	0
3	Don't Know	5
	Total	100

The above table shows 95 respondents feel that information derived from internet is not authentic and since it's not possible to check all the information available on web, it's impossible to avoid the damage done because of false information. This means that sports journalists in India agree that false information is creeping into the news reports.

Table No.7

Do you think accuracy of sports reporting suffers because of changed concept of deadline?

Sl. No.	Answers	Total number of respondents out of 100
1	Yes	30
2	No	70
3	Don't Know	0
	Total	100

Immediacy of online media has changed the concepts of deadline as news has become 24-7 in the internet age. It has pushed the traditional sports reporters to speed up the process of filing a news story. The above table shows 70 of the respondents feel that accuracy of sports reporting suffered because of changed concept of deadline. On the contrary, only 30 feel that the changing concept of deadline is not affecting the accuracy of reporting.

Table No. 8

Do you think internet is adversely affecting the quality of reports that are coming out nowadays?

Sl. No.	Answers	Total number of respondents out of 100
1	Yes	35
2	No	60
3	Don't Know	5
	Total	100

The above table shows that 60 respondents think that internet is adversely affecting the quality of sports that are coming out nowadays, while 35 respondents feel otherwise.

In this age of digital media, live streaming and live updates of score are fast becoming the norm in sports media, however, the above tables suggest that in India, internet streaming of news yet has not affected observational reporting and purposeful investigation to that extent. While 90 respondents feel sports journalists still go to the

spot and report events on the basis of their observation, 30 feels that there is a decline in investigative reporting. When it comes to errors, however, 95 respondents agree that internet has resulted in more false information cropping up in a sports report. A majority of respondents believe that accuracy of news reports have suffered because of the changing concept of deadline in the wake of internet boom.

4.3. Interactivity Among Journalists, Fans and the Athletes

In this section, the researcher has measured the response of the working journalists on the following issues with the help of tables.

- Reduction in face-to-face interaction with athletes
- Consideration of the feedback of sports fans
- Exploring the relation among journalists, fans and athletes.

Table No.9

Do you think one-on-one interactions between athletes and journalists have gone down because of internet which provides easy access to matches and post-match players' comments?

Sl. No.	Answers	Total number of respondents out of 100
1	Yes	35
2	No	60
3	Don't Know	5
	Total	100

The above table shows that 60 respondents feel that one-on-one interactions between athletes and journalists haven't gone down because of internet, which provides easy access to matches and post-match players' comments. This means that even today despite the emergence of online media, the journalists still stick to the one-to-one interactions with the athletes and sports celebrities and are not depending on internet for comments or to cover an event. The journalists believe that this process is much more authentic and reliable as compared to collecting quotes and comments from internet.

Table No.10

Do you think because of internet, athletes are happy to post their views and comments on online forums like Twitter and Facebook instead of interacting with journalists on a one-on-one basis?

Sl. No.	Answers	Total number of respondents out of 100
1	Yes	30
2	No	65
3	Don't Know	5
	Total	100

The above table shows that 65 respondents think that athletes still prefer one-on-one interaction with journalists. This reveals that athletes are more comfortable in the traditional form of interaction rather than posting comments and giving quotes through the forums like Twitter and Facebook.

Table No.11

Do you think because of internet, athletes post their views and comments on online forums like Twitter and Facebook but that doesn't affect the level of their interaction with sports journalists?

Sl. No.	Answers	Total number of respondents out of 100
1	Yes	35
2	No	60
3	Don't Know	5
	Total	100

The above table shows that majority of the respondents feel that even with the emergence of internet, the interactivity between journalists and athletes has not been affected. This further clarifies that the athletes are more comfortable interacting with the journalists face-to-face as compared to conveying their message through social media as and when required.

Table No.12

Are you aware of the changing interest pattern of sports fans?

Sl. No.	Answers	Total number of respondents out of 100
1	Yes	30
2	No	70
3	Don't Know	0
	Total	100

The above table shows that 70 out of 100 respondents are not aware of the changing interest's pattern of sports fans. On the other hand, 30 are aware of the changing interests of the sports fans. This means that very few journalists take an initiative to know the changing interests pattern of fans when it comes to doing their jobs.

Table No.13

Are you inclined to know the sports fan's likes and dislikes with regard to sports coverage pattern?

Sl. No.	Answers	Total number of respondents out of 100
1	Yes	35
2	No	60
3	Don't Know	5
	Total	100

In the above table it is observed that 60 respondents feel that they are not interested to know the likes and dislikes of the sports fans with regard to sports coverage pattern. Only 35 of the total respondents want to know the interests of sports fans. This clearly shows that most Indian sports journalists are not inclined to know what interests sports fans, though the trend is slowly and gradually changing as is suggested by 35 respondents.

Table No.14

Do you read sports websites message boards?

Sl. No.	Answers	Total number of respondents out of 100
1	Yes	30
2	No	65
3	Don't Know	5
	Total	100

The above table shows that 65 respondents don't read the sports websites message boards. This means that the journalists aren't interested to know what the common people have to say about any aspect of sports. It can well be noted here that only 30 journalists read the sports websites message boards.

Table No.15

Do you read sports website message boards to find out what topics sports fans are interested in?

Sl. No.	Answers	Total number of respondents out of 100
1	Yes	35
2	No	60
3	Don't Know	5
	Total	100

The above table suggests that 60 of the respondents are not interested to find out what interests the sports fans in particular. Only 35 read the same section.

Table No.16

Do you get story ideas by reading sports websites message boards?

Sl. No.	Answers	Total number of respondents out of 100
1	Yes	35
2	No	60
3	Don't Know	5
	Total	100

The above table shows that the news worthy stories that need to be covered by journalists do not come from sports websites message boards. Rather, the journalists use their own contacts and experiences to gain story ideas. However, there is a minor group of journalists represented by 35 respondents who do get ideas from sports websites message boards.

Table No.17

Do you cover a topic because it was discussed on sports websites message boards?

Sl. No.	Answers	Total number of respondents out of 100
1	Yes	25
2	No	70
3	Don't Know	5
	Total	100

In the above table it's found that 70 respondents don't cover a topic just because it was discussed on sports message boards. This means that for most sports journalists, sports message boards hardly carry any significance when it comes to doing their jobs. However, 25 respondents said they cover an issue discussed by fans on sports websites message boards.

Table No.18

Do you respond to something that was posted on a sports websites message board?

Sl. No.	Answers	Total number of respondents out of 100
1	Yes	25
2	No	70
3	Don't Know	5
	Total	100

In the above table it's found that 70 respondents don't react to any comments that are posted on a sports message board. This figure again emphasises that most sports journalists do not depend on any message boards and neither do they give any type of responses on any comments by sports fans. However, there is a minor group of sports journalists who give their response to comments posted in message boards.

Table No.19

Do you refer in your column or sports report something that was posted by fans on a sports website message board?

Sl. No.	Answers	Total number of respondents out of 100
1	Yes	25
2	No	70
3	Don't Know	5
	Total	100

The above table shows that 70 respondents don't refer to any comment in their report found in the sports message boards. But there are 25 respondents who seem to refer to comments posted by fan in the sports message boards in their column or sports report.

Table No.20

Do you get the reactions of the athletes from social media like Twitter and Facebook and other sports websites?

Sl. No.	Answers	Total number of respondents out of 100
1	Yes	25
2	No	70
3	Don't Know	5
	Total	100

The above table shows that 70 respondents do not get the reactions of the athletes from any social media websites. This means that most sports journalists are not dependent on social media when it comes to getting reactions as and when required. However, there are 25 journalists who do depend on the social media websites for getting reactions of the sports athletes.

Table No. 21

Do you follow sports persons in social media?

Sl. No.	Answers	Total number of respondents out of 100
1	Yes	25
2	No	70
3	Don't Know	5
	Total	100

The above table reveals that 70 out of 100 sports journalists do not follow sports persons in social media. Only 25 of them are found to follow the sports celebrities in social media which can help them in news reporting.

Table No.22

Do you think Social media helps in building sources and contacts in the sports fraternity?

Sl. No.	Answers	Total number of respondents out of 100
1	Yes	30
2	No	70
3	Don't Know	0
	Total	100

The table above reveals that 70 respondents think that social media doesn't help in building sources and contacts in the sports fraternity. This signifies that the print media sports journalists in India still depend on conventional ways to build their sources.

At a time when social media platforms are extensively used by sports journalists in the more advanced countries, India still remains less affected by this boon of internet.

The above tables show that most sports journalists in India don't read sports websites message boards or even if some do, very few try to incorporate something from the messages in their stories. The sports journalists are not aware of the interest of the audience; neither have they strived to learn their views.

From the above findings, most agree that athletes are using the social media sites to share their quotes but it still didn't affect their interactivity with the sports journalists which means the athletes are still quite keen to talk to the journalists or meet face to face to share their stories. 70 out of 100 sports professionals still talk with the athletes to get quotes or reactions from the celebrities which reveals that the interactivity has not been affected by the emergence of social media sites. However, there is a steady increase in online interactivity between sports journalists and sports celebrities as well. At least 25 journalists agreed that they depend on Twitter, Facebook, Whaatsap or email to get the reactions.

4.4. Role of Sports Journalists

In this section, the researcher tries to assess the reaction of the working journalists with regard to following issues.

- Are sports journalists lazy and superficial due to the constant presence of internet and dependency of net if any?
- How do the journalists face challenges posed by internet?

Table No.23

Do you think that the understanding of sports and their rules have gone down among journalists because of real-time updates of scores in the websites?

Sl. No.	Answers	Total number of respondents out of 100
1	Yes	5
2	No	90
3	Don't Know	5
	Total	100

The above table portrays the fact that sports journalists in India do not feel that their level of understanding of sports has gone down with the arrival of internet. So while only 5 among the respondents agree with the proposition, while an emphatic 90 respondents disagree, who are confident about their knowledge and understanding about the nuances of the game.

Table No.24

Do you think the easily available information in internet has made the sports journalist lazy and superficial?

Sl. No.	Answers	Total number of respondents out of 100
1	Yes	30
2	No	60
3	Don't Know	10
	Total	100

The above table shows that most respondents feel that the easily found information in internet is not making journalists lazy and superficial. However, 30 respondents said that internet is making journalists in India office-bound, which shows the slow change in trend.

Table No.25

Do you think sports journalists are under pressure like never before and face the challenge of offering something new to readers who have seen the action live given that new media offers live coverage of almost all sports around the world?

Sl. No.	Answers	Total number of respondents out of 100
1	Yes	95
2	No	0
3	Don't Know	5
	Total	100

The above table shows that 95 respondents feel pressurized in facing the challenge of offering something new to the readers who have already experienced live coverage of sports events and games in electronic media. It is noteworthy here that print media comes up with one time news coverage in 24 hours as compared to electronic media which is 24 hours news medium. In order to survive in media industry, it's very important for the journalists to fulfil the expectations of the readers on a daily basis which in itself is a big challenge.

Table No.26

Do you think the role of sports journalist as a mediator between the fans and the sports personalities is on a down swing?

Sl. No.	Answers	Total number of respondents out of 100
1	Yes	35
2	No	60
3	Don't Know	5
	Total	100

In the above table, it's found that 60 out of 100 respondents feel that the role of sports journalists as a mediator between the fans and the athletes has not declined. However, 35 journalists feel that the role of sports journalists as a mediator is on a down swing.

Table No.27

Do you think in the digital age, Sports Journalists no more set the agenda and it's the sports persons who themselves have taken that role with the help of social media websites?

Sl. No.	Answers	Total number of respondents out of 100
1	Yes	0
2	No	95
3	Don't Know	5
	Total	100

The above table shows that 95 respondents feel that in the digital age, the sports journalists still set the agenda when it comes to news reporting. Even with the advent of online media, journalists still have a very strong hold on deciding what to publish, when to publish and which issue needs to be pursued further and for how long.

Table No.28

Do you think sports journalists will lose their relevance in another 20 years?

Sl. No.	Answers	Total number of respondents out of 100
1	Yes	35
2	No	60
3	Don't Know	5
	Total	100

The above table shows that 60 respondents think that sports journalists won't lose their relevance in another 20 years. However, 35 respondents think the opposite, which shows that there is a growing fear regarding the future of sports journalism in India.

This section tries to understand how the role of sports journalist has changed in the internet age in terms of the understanding of the game, source building, agenda setting and what sort of challenges that Indian journalists face and if the sports journalists are losing their relevance.

The above tables make it amply clear that despite the spoon-feeding by Internet and Televisions in the form of live streaming and commentary, almost all sports journalists believe that it has not affected their knowledge and understanding of the sports and they are more than happy to go out in the field than cover the sport from the comfort of their office cubicles with high speed internet.

Further, most journalists don't believe that social media has helped them to grow their sources and contacts. Despite incidents of a few breaking news on social media sites such as Twitter, they firmly believe that they are still setting the agenda and hold a strong position as a mediator between the fans and the sports personalities. The respondents were almost unanimous in agreeing that they are facing immense pressure to dig out something new in the times of internet which brings the sports events to the audience with a click of the mouse.

4.5. Role of Media Gatekeepers

In this section, the research tried to assess of response of the journalists on the following issues.

- Gatekeepers are undervalued and becoming redundant
- Gatekeepers are being replaced by Google news, yahoo news etc
- People and readers are new emerging gatekeepers

Table No.29

Do you think the role of media gatekeepers have been done away with in the age of online media?

Sl. No.	Answers	Total number of respondents out of 100
1	Yes	30
2	No	70
3	Don't Know	0
	Total	100

In this table, 70 respondents feel that the role of media gatekeepers still holds relevance in the internet age. However, 30 out of 100 respondents feel that the role of media gatekeepers have invariably gone down with the advent of online media.

Table No.30

Do you think readers writing directly on newspaper websites have diminished the importance of media gatekeepers like editors?

Sl. No.	Answers	Total number of respondents out of 100
1	Yes	35
2	No	60
3	Don't Know	5
	Total	100

In the above table, majority of the respondents think that readers writing directly on newspaper websites have not diminished the importance of media gatekeepers. This signifies the very fact that even with the 'active' message boards as discussed earlier, the traditional journalists are still holding to their role as a gatekeeper even though there is a change in trend as is represented by the 35 respondents.

Table No.31

Do you think the idea of a gatekeeper shaping the conversation towards relevance and revelation is undervalued in the internet age?

Sl. No.	Answers	Total number of respondents out of 100
1	Yes	35
2	No	60
3	Don't Know	5
	Total	100

In the table, 60 respondents feel that even in the age of internet, the role of gatekeepers still have a strong significance when it comes to performing their roles and shaping the conversation towards relevance and revelation in the media world. However, 35 out of 100 respondents feel that role has changed.

Table No.32

Do you believe that traditional gatekeepers like editors have been replaced by automated ones such as Google news, Yahoo news which pull in content and give it back to us in a method approved by us?

Sl. No.	Answers	Total number of respondents out of 100
1	Yes	30
2	No	60
3	Don't Know	10
	Total	100

Here it's seen that 60 out of 100 respondents are of the opinion that the traditional gatekeepers have not been replaced by automated ones such as Google news and Yahoo news. It further clarifies that in Indian context, only 30 respondents feel gatekeepers have been replaced by automated ones in digital age.

Table No.33

Do you think customizing the locks on our gate is better than the traditional gatekeepers?

Sl. No.	Answers	Total number of respondents out of 100
1	Yes	35
2	No	60
3	Don't Know	5
	Total	100

The researcher found that 60 respondents don't feel that customising the locks on our gate is better than the traditional gatekeepers, while 35 out of 100 respondents feel in this digital age when the online media is slowly over-powering the traditional media industry, customizing the gates to filter information is better than the role played by traditional gatekeepers.

Table No.34

Do you think that the role of gatekeepers has changed and they now form, adapt and build around a transparency and collaborative culture?

Sl. No.	Answers	Total number of respondents out of 100
1	Yes	35
2	No	60
3	Don't Know	5
	Total	100

The above table shows that 60 respondents think that the role of gatekeepers has not changed. However, the fact that 35 respondents feel there is a change in the role of media gatekeepers and that the sports journalists form, adapt and build around a transparency and collaborative culture nowadays, shows the change in trend.

Table No.35

Do you think that readers are the new gatekeepers as they can flag comments as offensive, or rate them up and down on the internet sports websites?

Sl. No.	Answers	Total number of respondents out of 100
1	Yes	35
2	No	60
3	Don't Know	5
	Total	100

It is found that 60 respondents think that readers are not the gatekeepers just because they can come up with comments on any issue and also rate them on the basis of their choices. This emphasises the fact that in India, traditional gatekeepers still have a very distinct and significant role when it comes to filtering news stories and events on the basis of the requirement of the media industry.

Media gate-keeping is central to responsible journalism. It is a process of authenticating the sources, quotes and facts of a news story published in any newspaper, magazine or news broadcast. For long it has been considered the responsibility of journalists and editors to judge the relevance of a story before putting

it out for the audience. However, that role is going through a slow change after the advent of internet and new media.

This section has attempted to explore the change in Indian sports journalism in recent years. The number of people using social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter in India is increasing exponentially but despite that change, most of the Indian sports journalists feel their role of being a regulator of information has not been done away with. At least 35 respondents agree that the role has diminished in the times of new media but majority of the respondents still believe that they are the ones who are shaping the conversations to relevance and revelation.

Internet penetration and emergence of various news websites such as Google news, Yahoo news and others have given rise to a new audience who turn to online media for their daily dose of information. While these websites may have their own set of gate keeping options to regulate information, at least 60 respondents believe traditional gate keeping still is the better option.

At least 35 respondents feel new media and readers have brought around a transparency and cultural collaboration but still most believe gatekeepers are more institutional and the responsibility is on the media organization to stick to their role of controlling information. 60 out of 100 still don't believe that readers are assuming the role of gatekeepers.

4.6. Results and Conclusion

The survey is an attempt to get an overall idea about the sports journalism landscape in times of internet. It tries to gauge the sentiments of the sports journalists in the ever-evolving era of internet driven new media.

The findings of the survey reveal that Sports Journalists in India are still not too much dependent on internet as a primary source for news or gathering information. There are many who still rely on professional and personal contacts to get the job done.

The internet media sphere is already a huge part of sports journalism in developed countries and even in India it is gradually becoming an alternative platform that can't be ignored anymore. Though the dependence on internet and the usage of social media tools in the process of sports journalism are still in a nascent stage in the

country, the study shows that it is slowly and steadily growing and becoming a part of a journalist's everyday life.

In India, most sports reporting is still based on on-field observation but the changing concept of deadline and emergence of live streaming in internet has posed a challenge for the sports journalists, who have to find out something new to offer for their audience. But they still are the ones who set the agenda, despite the burgeoning number of athletes joining Twitter and Facebook to interact with the sports fans.

It appears that sports journalists in India are not too concerned about the taste of sports fans and they don't bother reading the sports websites message boards to identify a story or get the views of the audience. Though many sports journalists access social media websites but most don't use it as a platform to interact with the sports persons or use it as a source in the process of reporting.

In a country with the second largest population and still low penetration of internet, the role of gate keeping is still very seriously considered by the sports journalists, who feel it is the responsibility of the institution and individuals to regulate the flow of information and guiding the conversations towards relevance.

There also exists a minor population of journalists who vouch for the changing trends in sports reporting and the dwindling one-on-one interactivity among journalists and athletes. This group acknowledges the growing dependency on internet and changing role of a traditional sports journalist.