

## Chapter 7

### MAJOR FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The days of sipping tea and perusing through the newspapers in the morning to get a grip of sports information and sports news are gone. In the times of digital media, people equipped with smart phones, tablets and laptops, keep themselves updated every moment and always on the go for something different. Besides, the 24x7 Television Channels and FM Radios are further changing the pattern of consumption of news today. This ever-evolving new environment is posing a huge challenge to the traditional news papers and sports journalists.

This paper is an attempt to understand this change in terms of the role of the sports journalists, the process of news gathering, the quality of sports news, the role of gate-keeping, the interaction between sports journalists, fans and athletes and finally the change in the language used by the newspapers in the digital age.

To find answers to these queries, the researcher conducted a survey analysis of 100 sports journalists and performed a textual analysis of four national dailies across two different eras – pre-digital era and digital era.

#### **7.1 Impact on Process of Sports Journalism**

There has been a growing concern among the media professional and academicians about the impact of the internet-driven social media websites such as Twitter and Facebook and other independent websites on the process of sports journalism. One of the objectives of this paper was to understand this change on the process of news gathering by sports journalists in Indian Media industry.

The findings of the survey revealed that Sports Journalists in India are still not too much dependent on internet as a source for news or gathering information. There are many who still rely on professional and personal contacts to get the job done. 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 to their audience at an interval of every hour, especially to the people hooked on to digital network.

The internet media/new media/online media/social media sphere is already a huge part of sports journalism in Western countries. In India, though the dependence on internet and the usage of social media tools in the process of sports journalism are still in a nascent stage, the study showed that it is slowly and steadily growing and becoming a part of a journalist's everyday life as he or she goes about his job of news processing.

Indian sports journalists mainly respect traditional online outlets, such as *Espncricinfo.com* or *Goal.com* -- all of which employ many former newspaper journalists who still nourish high journalistic values. The dependency on internet as a source of information for reporting is mainly limited to the websites of the International Sports Association and Federations. The concept of blogging as a platform for 'real reporting' is new in India and there are not many platforms providing real time commentary or coverage.

Though web provides a multiplicity of perspectives and a library of available knowledge, it is still a long way that sports journalists in India will turn to internet for breaking a news or to form their context and perspective of a news story.

It is a fact that social media sites such as twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook have allowed journalists to build personal contacts, build a brand and establish themselves as experts on the sports they cover. It has helped the journalists to keep up with their beats and have made reporting easier. But in India, sports journalists are yet to get hooked to these social media sites on a regular basis. At best, some might follow a cricket personality such as Sachin Tendulkar or a Lalit Modi and include their tweets in their reports sometimes, but they still do not turn to internet for breaking a story or to form their context and perspective of a news story. Sports Journalists in India still are the ones who set the agenda, despite the burgeoning number of athletes joining twitter and Facebook to interact with the sports fans.

## **7.2. Impact on the Role of the Sports Journalists**

In the digital age, information is just a click away. The availability of information on the internet sites such as Wikipedia or live coverage of matches in sites such as *Espncricinfo* and *tournamentsoftware* have made life easy for the sports journalists. But this trend has also raised questions on the side-effects of this access to

information. There have been concerns that it has made the sports journalists lazy and have affected their knowledge of the game.

One of the objectives of the study was to understand the changing role of the sports journalists in India in the digital age. The study found 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.

Most journalists still do not 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 hold a strong position as a mediator between the fans and the sports personalities. They 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.

The role of a sports journalists is undergoing a drastic change in western countries such as USA, UK, Australia as along with their traditional journalistic acumen, they need to acquire multimedia skills to cater to the changing demands of the newspapers which are more and more looking to offer the user more features such as audio, video, competition, opinion and live-text coverage.

However, Sports Journalists in India still can breathe easy as it is still a long way to go before they too have to join the bandwagon though the signs of change is already seen with concepts such as web exclusives, where sports journalists are asked to post a small report on their breaking story for the web version of the newspapers such as Times of India and Hindustan Times. Also Smartphones, which can shoot high resolution picture, have enabled the newspaper organisations to sometimes ask the reporters to turn photographers as well when they go for outstation assignments.

The winds of change have already started to blow as is evident from the response of the sports journalists in the survey and this change has also created a doubt whether these technology driven fast changing media landscape will make sports journalists irrelevant. Well, at least 60 out of 100 sports journalists in India still believe that they won't lose their relevance in the next 20 years at least.

### **7.3. Impact on Media Gatekeepers**

Gatekeeping is an enduring mass communications theory that describes the process by which news is gathered and filtered to audiences. It has been suggested, however, that in the wake of online communications the traditional function of media gate keeping is changing. One of the objectives of the work has been to understand how the role of gatekeeping has changed in the face of internet.

The study showed that most of the Indian sports journalists feel their role of being a regulator of information has not been done away with. At least 35 percent respondents agree that the role has diminished in the times of new media but most still believe that they are the ones who are shaping the conversations to relevance and revelation.

Indian sports media is still an industry which is run by traditional journalists and concepts of public journalism, Interactive journalism or participatory journalism is still not prevalent in the country. In fact, citizen journalism, where people generate content through blogs and independent news websites is also at a nascent stage. Apart from the posts in goal.com or Espncricinfo, there is not much credibility of other blogs even though many newspapers have started sports blogs in their websites.

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 this websites may have their own set of gatekeeping options to regulate information, at least 60 out of 100 respondents believe traditional gatekeeping still is the better option.

Online media have given an opportunity to the general public to share their views through the social media websites or in the discussion boards of blogs without any gatekeeper waiting to filter their content. This has fuelled the view that readers can also assume the role of gate-keeping in this new environment. In India, at least 35 out of 100 sports journalists feel new media and readers have brought around a transparency and collaboration culture but still most believe gatekeepers are more institutional and the onus is on the media organization to stick to their role of controlling information. Sixty percent still don't believe that readers are assuming the role of gatekeepers.

Though social media such as twitter have changed the concept of breaking news in western countries, in India sports journalists still dictate the flow of information in the sense that they are still happy to hold off on running a story online in order to save it for the newspaper next day despite having the option of running the story online first.

In fine, in a country with the second largest population and still low penetration of internet, the role of gatekeeping is still taken very seriously 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.

#### **7.4. Impact on Quality of Sports Reporting**

Internet and broadcast media have changed the concept of deadline as sports journalists are now always running against time to report an event or any news. The intense competition with TV and online media which dish out information in the form of live commentary and updates have put further onus on the sports journalists to ensure accountability, authenticity and accuracy. One of the objectives of the research was to understand if the pressure of performance in the face of 24x7 online media has affected the quality of sports reporting in India.

The study showed that 95 out of 100 respondents feel that internet has in fact resulted in more false information cropping up in a sports report. A majority of sports journalists believe that accuracy has suffered because of the changing concept of deadline in the wake of internet boom and journalists must be careful not to sacrifice credibility or ethics in the pressure of getting it right.

The demand for news across different platform have grown in the last decade as more and more people are turning to websites, social networking sites, blogs, TV, radio, sports websites, Smartphone apps for their 24x7 consumption of information. This shift to new media, which is marked by a free flow of information and immediacy, has given rise to different kind of sports content which varies in its depth of information. For example, people look for score and small updates in social media sites such as twitter, rather than an investigative piece.

This changing News habits and market pressure in this new media landscape is bringing a decline in the investigative sports journalism. In India, most sports journalists feel despite the challenges there has not been a decline in observational

reporting and purposeful investigation. While 90 respondents feel sports journalists still go and report events on the basis of their observation, 30 respondents do suggest that there is a decline in investigative and aggressive beat reporting.

### **7.5. Impact on Interactivity among Sports Journalists, Fans and Athletes**

Internet has provided a platform for fans, athletes and sports journalists to bond on a one-to-one basis through social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook. This process of engaging in communication may be defined as Interactivity. With teams, leagues, coaches, athletes, and managers using social-media platform such as Twitter and Facebook, these sites are emerging as powerful tools for increasing fan-athlete interaction. One of the objectives of this research was to understand the impact of the internet on the interactivity of sports journalists, fans and athletes.

Social media has made it possible for a professional athlete to share his or her views directly with fans without media or the sports communications department of the team in between. While, it has fuelled an interaction between athletes and fans, these sites have also given the sports journalists a platform as a source of information on the athletes. This change has seen more and more journalists interacting with the athletes and also reading the fans comments in the sports forum or websites message boards and incorporating points in their reports.

From the study, it appears most 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, mainly Facebook and Twitter, but only a quarter of them use it as a platform to interact with the sports persons or use it as a source in the process of reporting.

Most agree that athletes are using the social media sites to share their quotes but it still hasn't affected their interactivity with the sports journalists, meaning the athletes are still quite keen to talk to the journalists or meet face to face to share their story. 70 out of 100 respondents still talk with the athletes to get quotes or reactions from the athletes, so the interactivity has not been affected by the emergence of social media sites. However, at least 35 respondents feel there is a decline in interaction between

the athletes and journalists and indicates it as a reason behind decline in locker room stories.

While most sports journalists are not interested in reading the sports websites message boards, there is a steady increase in the interactivity as well. At least 30 respondents said they are now inclined to know about the fans and read the sports forum but most are not interested yet to include points in their report and 25 respondents agreed that they depend on twitter, Facebook or an email to get the reactions.

In fine, Internet is a platform where athletes can present themselves and it has helped improve interaction between fans, athletes and sports journalists and though in India the impact is minimal, sports journalists are aware they can't stay away from this medium for long and there is a slow and steady increase in interactivity among the sports journalists, fans and athletes in social media platforms.

#### **7.6. Impact on Writing Style**

The rise of online media and TV channels posed a lot of challenges for the sports journalists as they raced against time to cater to the demand of consumers for news and information. The race to be the first to post on sports websites and provide regular update on social media such as twitter affected the craft of sports writing worldwide.

There is a general feeling that sports text is all about news and information as sports journalists are too busy acquiring new multimedia skills than improving their skills as a writer. Competing against online media such as Yahoo and Espncricinfo have made beat reporters lose out on the nuances of the game and it is being reflected in their reports. One of the most important objectives of this research was to understand the change in language in sports text of Indian newspapers in the digital age.

As part of the study, a comparative textual analysis was conducted of four national dailies – The Times of India, The Hindustan Times, The Indian Express and The Hindu during the coverage of two biggest sporting extravaganzas – Football World Cup of 2002 and 2010 and Cricket World Cup of 2003 and 2011.

The study revealed that all the four papers used language tools in their headlines during the coverage of the sporting events to draw attention of the readers. However, while The Hindu was most traditional and Indian Express was conservative in its

approach, Times of India and Hindustan Times used these literary devices extensively during its coverage of the sporting events in the digital age.

It is found that The Times of India and The Hindustan Times had gone for a more sensational approach when it reported the 2010 football and 2011 cricket world cup compared to the 2002 football and 2003 cricket world cup. The study revealed a large number of striking headlines, words and phrases in 2010 and 2011 compared to 2003 and 2010 respectively.

The most striking difference was the use of double-decker headlines by The Times of India and The Hindustan Times which used flashy words and expressions such as '*Slam, bang, thanks*' and '*Fast & Furious*' to grab eyeballs during the coverage in 2010 and 2011. The Hindu and The Indian Express, however, were more traditional in their coverage as they retained their one-line headlines during the coverage of all the four tournaments.

The use of Military terms was another device used by the papers to appeal to the audience. Words such as '*blast*', '*fired*', '*clash*', '*attack*' were used by all the four papers during their coverage across the two eras even though the frequency of the usage went up by several notches in the digital age.

The use of alliteration in headlines was another tool by which the newspapers tried to grab the attention of the readers. The metonymic teams references such as *Desert warriors*, *Senegal's lions*, *Bafna bafna* or *Samba flair* during the coverage of the football world cup and *African minnows*, *Oranje squash*, *Green brigade*, *Tiger*, *Oranje Test*, *Black caps*, *kiwis*, *Proteas* during the reporting of cricket world cup also indicates the influence of TV and new media.

While covering a sporting event, Tabloids such as Mirror or The Sun have always addressed a range of political, economic and public policy issues disguised in their sports headlines. During the study, the researcher found similar attempt by the four national dailies in their headlines. Hyperbolic Headlines in The Times of India such as '*Sub-text in Korea: Payback for colonialism*' and '*Portuguese men of war ambushed in US raid*' and '*US ambush Portugal*' in The Hindustan Times proves the point.

The increasing volume of hyperbole and metaphor and the intertextual references to films and literature found mainly in The Times of India and The Hindustan Times





These principal change in newspaper writing points to the need for satisfying the reading audience, which is gradually losing their attention span in the wake of plethora of options for news and information.

Thus the study clearly underlines the impact of internet on the Traditional news organizations who are struggling to keep their audience base, who are slowly turning to the internet-driven online media and TV channels for their daily dose of information and entertainment.

With 356 million 10-24 year-olds, India has the world's largest youth population, according to a UN report published in November, 2015. Most of this population are turning to the new media with the help of Smartphones, tablets and computers equipped with high-speed internet.

The headline-news format and quick updates provided by the online media is thus finding takers in this population, who are slowly losing their appetite for just news. What they want is infotainment.

Faced with this situation, the newspaper industry is pushed to inculcate some of the features of this new media and go for bold and flashy headlines and splash their pages with more and more literary tools to grab the readers and in the process blurring the line of demarcation between tabloid and a regular broadsheet newspaper.

It seems media organisations are giving in to tabloidization because of the competition from online media and market pressure. Though, it is still early days but it seems this trend in the Indian newspaper industry is likely to stay.

India still doesn't have a high Internet penetration but as we bridge the digital divide, probably, biggest danger we will face is the tabloidization of our news.

## **7.7. Conclusion**

### **Sports journalism in an era of Internet**

There is undoubtedly a wind of change blowing through sports journalism all over and India can't be an exception. Howsoever, the journalists are averse to the idea of their sphere being invaded by internet. While the developed countries are finding themselves in the storm of this ever-changing digital media, sports journalists in India

are still taking baby steps in embracing this new media which is being referred to as a fifth estate influencing the public sphere and public opinion.

Digitization of information has affected the environment within which media functions to disseminate information. The ever-evolving digital media landscape has affected the role and position of the sports journalist, the quality of news, sports communication and concept of gatekeeping.

In India, Cricket has been at the forefront as Internet saw the rise of online sports journalism and impacted the way news is gathered reported and consumed in the corporate age of sport.

### **Sports Journalism and Cricket**

There is no other sport in India which can ever come close to cricket. Ever since India won the world cup in 1983, the fan following has only multiplied and along with it grew the demand for sports content. First it was TV which changed the business of sports and media completely after satellite TV came to India in 1991. But the advent of internet and new media in the 21st century brought a sweeping change in the media industry in general and sports media in particular. Equipped with laptop, tablet and smartphones, people were exposed to a plethora of choices such as websites, social media, blogs, apps, podcasts, video streaming, audio streaming etc to access information. The wide variety of sports content which range from serious analysis to humorous takes on cricket celebrities, teams and anything related to cricket, has given something for the taste buds of almost every consumer.

Cricket always received wide coverage with papers increasing the number of sports pages after the reforms of the 1991-1996. In fact, sometimes a series win or a win against Pakistan and Australia during the World Cup got coverage in front page of newspapers. With the launching of the Indian Premier League (IPL) in 2008, the coverage of cricket just shoot through the roof as beside the innumerable bilateral series, ODI series and Twenty20 events, now there was IPL every year which got unprecedented coverage.

According to a quantitative analysis by The Hoot (July, 2012), the coverage of sports in five English news dailies- The Times of India, The Indian Express, Hindustan

Times, The Hindu and The Economic Times during April to May, 2012, found that 76 per cent of the total sports coverage was on IPL stories.

The corruption scandal which broke in 2013 edition became front-page news around the world. As new facts, relating to the case came out; the news got massive coverage in the front and back pages of newspapers. In February, 2015 when Yuvraj Singh fetched a record deal of Rs 16cr in IPL 8 auction, it was also covered in the front page of many newspapers. Controversial blog, 'The Fake IPL Player' is an example of how new media also joined the IPL bandwagon. It was a blog where the blogger wrote anonymously sleazy stories about the IPL team Kolkata Knight Riders and found huge fan following in India and Sri Lanka.

The massive coverage of IPL controversies, auctions and general news related to the tournament, across various platforms shows the economics or politics of sport.

Recently, the India vs Pakistan match at the 2015 cricket world cup was broadcasted by 44 licensees in seven languages across 220 territories and it drew a TV audience of more than 288 million in India alone. ("World Cup", 2015, para. 6) The website attracted 26.25 million unique visitors accumulating an incredible 227 million page views, which is a significant increase on any previous ICC event. And the tournament app has so far been downloaded 3.6 million times and has been the number-one sports app in no fewer than 48 countries.

The importance of cricket is huge in India and it is quite clear that no Indian newspaper can survive without cricket coverage. The advent of new media only helped the popularity to grow as India also continued to script new chapters in world stage by winning the Cricket World Cup after 28 years in 2011.

These massive coverage of cricket meant other sports were pushed under the carpet as they didn't get their due coverage in mainstream media. Even if the success stories of sports such as badminton, boxing, tennis, football or hockey were covered, the report lacked depth of analysis and was nowhere compared to the space given to cricket.

Cricket, on the other hand, has never been affected by anything, whether it is losing overseas Test series or ODI tournaments or dip in ranking. Whether it is because of the success of cricket or due to the enormous amount of money which is at stake, cricket content will continue to rule the media industry as more news are researched

and reported in websites, including the sites of IPL teams and blogs related to the sports celebrities.

### **Sports in times of celebrity culture**

The plethora of leagues in India has brought sports, business and entertainment industry on the same platform. Film stars like Shahrukh Khan, Priety Zinta and Shilpa Shetty are owning IPL teams, Abhishek Bachchan and John Abraham investing in teams in Pro Kabaddi League and Indian Super League are few example which shows the involved of entertainment industry. Similarly many leading corporate houses like Reliance Industries owned by Mukesh Ambani and GMR Infrastructure Ltd etc are investing in the number of leagues that have come up in the last few years. The combination of sports, entertainment and business has seen a celebrity culture as more news print, air time and web space is spent in writing about them.

The celebrity culture in sports, have witnessed a gradual distancing of the stars cricketers from the sports journalists, who now have to pass through a myriad of layers involving Public relation and image consultant to get in touch with the players. Players, especially cricketers such as Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Virat Kohli and Suresh Raina are being managed by various Sports Management Companies like Rhiti Sports and IOS Sports and Entertainment. Hence Sports Journalists now have to depend on the comments and quotes provided by these PR firms of the celebrities, which in turn sometimes fuelling gossip and hearsay. For example: The Greg Chappell and Sourav Ganguly controversy, stories related to Sachin Tendulkar's retirement, tales of Virat Kohli and Anushka Sharma's relationship, the long tales of linkups with Bollywood actress of cricketers such as Yuvraj Singh, Mahendra Singh Dhoni, Zaheer Khan and Harbhajan Singh.

The sports celebrities too don't like to interact with the journalists apart from mandatory press conferences and promotional events. There is also a growing trend where cricket celebrities are just too happy to share their opinion on any issue via social media such as twitter rather than speaking to a journalist, which shows the growing distrust between the cricketers and journalists.

The scenario, however, is much better in other sports such as badminton, boxing, tennis, football or hockey where sports persons are still happy to interact with sports

journalists to share their views. With new sporting stars emerging, it would be interesting to see what the future holds for other sports as more sports gets coverage in mainstream media.

One aspect of digital age is the over-dependency on press releases and PR firms for coverage of sports. Besides, many newspapers and agencies are employing freelancers to cover overseas cricket tours or regularly contribute in sports such as chess and golf.

With internet penetration growing in the country, Sports journalists in India will find themselves on the edge as they work relentlessly to provide sports content specially cricket across the different platforms as more and more people switch to the new media. In future, many sports journalists will also have to provide content for club-specific websites as the influence of sports celebrities grows.

### **Sports and business**

The launch of the Indian Premier League in 2008 not only benefitted the BCCI and players but also inspired the corporates to invest money in similar leagues to create a sporting economy in India which can drive employment, growth & tourism.

It is incredible to say the least that India now has a league for most sports like cricket, football, hockey, tennis, badminton, wrestling and kabaddi. The rise of sports leagues can be attributed to the substantial rise in working-class spending power, growing urbanization and globalisation. According to Chief Business Officer at Flipkart, Ankit Nagori (June, 2015), Sports is a 2 billion dollar industry for India and it has a potential of becoming a 20 bn dollar industry for India in next 5 years. (para. 1,6)

The internet boom and the emergence of social media have made the big sports events a different experience all together for the sports fans with the availability of multiple platforms to access information. According to a report in Reuters (July, 2014), 350 million users generated a record Facebook "conversation" with 3 billion posts, comments and likes during the Football World Cup in 2014, making it the biggest 'social media' event. (para. 3)

The ICC Cricket World Cup in 2015 is another example when digital cricket brand – ESPNcricinfo provided a multitude of options for the consumers as they went for a multimedia coverage of the quadrennial tournament with live streaming coverage,

original digital video series, extensive coverage and an updated smartphone app, besides an ESPN Films documentary on legendary Sachin Tendulkar. (Collin Furtado, Nov, 2014)

With the availability of more platforms for sports consumption, the battle for control of sports content has also fired up in India with TV channels fighting with online websites and telecom companies over broadcast rights. Digital rights of big sporting events are increasingly becoming an area of dispute after the digital boom.

In September 2012, a tussle broke out between Star India Pvt. Ltd and two mobile operators -- Idea Cellular Ltd and OnMobile Global Ltd, and the website Cricbuzz.com over dissemination of ball-by-ball SMS score updates to their subscribers. (Gouri Shah, Feb, 2014, para 5)

Star India, who had brought broadcast, Internet and mobile rights for Indian cricket from 2012 to 2018 for around Rs.3,851 crore from BCCI took them to court and the matter was taken to the Supreme Court a year later. (Gouri Shah, Feb, 2014, para 8)

Similarly, in 2013, a dispute broke out between broadcaster Multi Screen Media Pvt. Ltd and sports websites such as espnricinfo, cricbuzz and Radio One from Next Radio Ltd during the India and New Zealand series. This time after a court intervention, Cricinfo.com and Cricbuzz.com were forced to delay their live scores updates by 15-minutes. (Gouri Shah, Feb, 2014, para 1,2)

In another incident, the News Media Coalition (NMC), which has global news and photographs agencies such as Associated Press, Reuters, Agence France Presse (AFP) and Getty Images under its umbrella, decided not to cover the 2008 edition of IPL due to the restrictions imposed on the distribution of photographs by BCCI. (K.R. Nayar, April, 2008)

This battle over broadcasting and digital rights is specific to cricket as no other sport has a similar demand. The fierce competition for coverage has increased in the digital age and it is likely to grow further as India charts new territories in other sports.

Another aspect of the digital age is that media companies now own teams. In developed countries, several prominent teams are owned by media companies. For example: Cablevision owns the Knicks and Rangers, The New York Times owns

nearly 18 percent of the Red Sox. As the trend picks up in India with the boom of so many leagues in cricket, badminton, tennis, football and kabaddi, it will raise many questions of ethics, objectivity and conflict of interest.

### **Sports and Internet**

The media morphosis is bringing a change in the consumption pattern of the consumers as well as how sports journalists are using this new media. In the digital age, *google* is the first platform which a sports journalist turns to for source of information. Besides the links of various news websites, the sites of clubs and social media profiles are some of the sources where a sports journalist turns to for details or exclusive content or direct quotes from a player.

One of the media brands that have emerged in India in the last decade as a source of information on cricket is *ESPNcricinfo*. With blogs, interviews, statistics, podcast and live coverage of domestic and international events, IPL auctions etc, *ESPNcricinfo* has become the most credible source for the sports journalists more than the consumers in India. In fact, many news agencies in India sometimes depend on *ESPNcricinfo* for their coverage of tournaments like Ranji Trophy or international series where they can't afford to send their reporters.

There are also few websites such as *firstpost.com*, *scroll.in* and *dailyo.in* which publish articles related to various sports, including cricket. Besides all top media organisations -- both print and electronic -- have their websites and smartphone apps where they carry all the latest sports updates and blogs.

In India, even a couple of years back not many sports celebrities used to be active in twitter and Facebook but that trend is changing really fast with many sports persons from cricket, football, tennis, badminton and boxing now availing the platform to interact with their fan base, share their lives and opinions on Indian and global issues. Whether it is India Test captain Virat Kohli, badminton queen Saina Nehwal, London Olympic bronze medalist wrestler Yogeshwar Dutt or five-time world champion boxer M C Mary Kom, everybody is using the twitter. In fact, most sports associations and officials are also regularly tweeting about upcoming events and issues.



This scenario has forced Indian sports journalist to keep an eye on the twitter and Facebook account of these athletes, sports bodies and officials for information. No matter what the issue is, whether it is IPL scandal or India's win or loss in a tournament, traditional newspapers and agencies has to do reaction copies quoting the tweets. Every issue is followed by a huge output of tweets and sports journalists have to be on their toes to report it in the next day's newspaper. Besides, Smartphone apps such as *Whatsapp* and *Viber* is making it possible to get information about the sportspersons, no matter which part of the world they are playing. For example: The Lalit Modi controversy in 2015 where External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and Rajasthan Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje were also involved was covered through his tweets. During those days when TV channel Times Now had run a 14-day campaign on the former IPL commissioner, journalists had to always keep an eye on Modi's twitter handle as he was communicating only through the social media site.

According to a new research from In-Stat3, low-cost Android handsets will reach a penetration rate of 80% of total smartphones in Africa, India, and China by 2015. These smartphones and tablets with internet connection will give access to the citizens to various online platforms and it will be interesting to see how traditional media industry holds its own or what device or platform will be the dominant platform of information for the consumers in future. ("Low-Cost Android", 2012).

Another study conducted across 32 emerging and developing nations by The Pew Research Center showed that only 20 per cent in India have access to the Internet at least occasionally while a mere 14 per cent own a smartphone. Hence, there is no immediate threat to the traditional newspapers that cater to a large population of India. (Indian Express, March, 2015)

However, the study also found that 65 per cent of Internet users in India said they use social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter while 55 per cent have used the Internet to look for or apply for a job. Across the 32 nations surveyed, a median of 44 per cent use the Internet at least occasionally, either through smartphones or other devices.

This population of consumers will only grow with different initiatives like 'Digital India campaign' by the Government of India and the continuous efforts by social media sites twitter and Facebook to increase their users in India.

Internet has given power in the hands of the fans. They can send their views via e-mails, text messages or tweets to commentators while they are busy in live coverage in TV and online sites. For example, *Espncricinfo* during their live coverage include the comments by the sports fans in between their commentaries, which makes the audience an integral part of the process of content generation.

For long, fans have always been discussing and debating about various issues related to sports such as performance of the team and players, transfer of players in IPL, criticising the governance of the sport but the new media gave them a platform to not only consume but involve in production of content as well.

Internet thus gave rise to a digital fan culture as more sports fans are becoming content providers through websites, blogs, podcasts, audio and video productions distributed via *soundcloud* and *YouTube*. This fan culture can lead to more diverse and creative coverage of a particular sport. Besides fans can also generate some information which can be dug out by the traditional sports journalists and covered in their newspapers. In this scenario, it will be important how sports journalists play their role as cultural producers of media sports texts.

In India, however, this trend of fan culture is still catching up but as more and more internet users contribute to the creation of news, comment and share via posts on social media sites like *Facebook* and *twitter*, it will become important to encourage and educate them in the fundamentals and ethics of journalism, so that they can bring a positive change through their contribution. It would be more important to usher in a collaborative culture, where the aspiring journalists can be guided to become a community of contributors, rather than seeing them as competitors in this changing media world.

While cricket remains the most consumed sport, new media also provides the opportunity for the fans and journalists to give coverage to the other sports which so far has not been getting their due. Many sports journalists have already started writing blogs and sharing links of their stories in twitter and Facebook to cater to their followers and it would soon become extremely crucial to promote their work more aggressively as competition rises.

Another aspect of this digital age is that even the sports governing bodies, federations and clubs are increasingly becoming aware of the power of the internet. Besides launching their own sites, they are using social media mainly *Facebook* and *twitter* to communicate with the audience and journalists alike. They are using YouTube to distribute audiovisual content of sporting events. For example, Badminton World Federation (BWF) has launched a channel *BadmintonWorld.tv* in *youtube* and provides video streaming of live match of super series and Super series Premier events. Similarly, BCCI has come up with *BCCI.tv* to distribute cricket content, including interviews, stats and news.

India always had a high appetite for sports and sports news and it is only growing with the launch of a series of leagues. With more and more athletes from the lower middle class finding their foot in these leagues and channels like *Sony* and *Starsports* and websites like *iplt20.com*, *espncricinfo.com*, *league.hockeyindia.org*, *prokabaddi.com*, *cricbuzz.com*, *ptlworld.com*, *indiansuperleague.com*, *championstennisleague.in* etc, bringing the event to the far-flung areas of the country with live updates and live streaming, the demand for sports content is only growing each moment. With wide variety of platforms available for the consumers, the quantity of sports content is multiplying each day in India. However, the quality of such content is an area which needs to be investigated.

Probably, a sports journalist covering an event or interacting with an athlete will be able to write on areas which don't have space in traditional newspapers. It will give an opportunity for the sports journalists to express themselves more freely and creatively. Already there are a few creative blogs such as *gonewiththewindies.blogspot.in* and *boredcricketcrazyindians.com* which focuses on humorous opinion and caters to a niche audience.

With consumers longing for different kinds of sports information, even a sports journalist working for a newspaper will need to provide multimedia content like pictures, videos and audio clips, besides sport text. Probably the basic fundamentals of sports Journalism will still be important but those alone won't be enough to survive in this ever-evolving media environment. Sports journalists will need to be multi-skilled and have to be able to work on a variety of platforms.

New media has already become a huge part of Sports media in the UK and US and India can't afford to lag behind any longer. Internet has already revolutionised the media industry and with technological advancement, it will continue to throw more and more challenges.

The days of loyal audience who would follow a particular newspaper are gone as news becomes omnipresent. Hence to hold on to this audience, it would be paramount to emphasise on quality. Quantity of sports news won't matter if quality is not ensured, no matter if it is for a newspaper, websites, social media or Smartphone App. Maintaining this high standard of journalism by reflecting and verifying facts will only get more and more difficult as we are squeezed for time because of the immediacy of the new media.

As the competition from online media grows, it would be important for sports journalists to find a balance which has scope for insightful and original content which can inform and entertain without being deliberately obtuse and over-hyped.

With India opening up to the world, it will be important for the traditional newspapers to avail every opportunity to encourage the sports journalists to explore the digital space, learn the tricks and gain experience of online media to provide information on different platforms.

India is fast becoming the home for all kinds of sports leagues as more corporate are looking to expand their sporting ventures in the country through various collaborations. So, there is no time to wait and watch the changing trends and then react. It would be utmost important for the sports journalists to keep up with the global changes as more and more global sports celebrities and sports media turn to India in various sports.

India has a high appetite for news. The consumers so far have been able to look beyond the veil of 'breaking of sports news' across the 24-hour digital platform, and still long for more in-depth and reflective sports journalism in the next day's broadsheet papers.

However, Internet is where the future of this industry lies and probably answers to the sustainability of the traditional media too in the long run too lies hidden in its core.

The quicker they plunge and dig deep into its bosom, the faster we will find the answers to the challenges which lie ahead.

Ahead of us lies a future where the media content will be dictated by the audience behavioural pattern. With more people spending time in multiple platform, a huge database of information is being created every moment and it will be the basis of the future media business model and journalists will play a very important role in that not-so-distant future.

### **7.8. Limitations of the Study**

The fast changing digital environment poses the most important and obvious limitation of the study. Internet is a revolutionary technology. It is unlike any other media. The pace at which it is evolving, it is impossible to trace its impact on the media industry accurately. The researcher conducted the audience survey during 2012. In the last three years, new media has taken several steps ahead, changing the professional scenario and moulding opinions. It wasn't possible for the researcher to conduct the survey again for an 'updated' data.

Secondly, it was difficult for the researcher to get hold of old newspapers of 2002, 2003, 2010, 2011 as most of the archives were not updated properly and many newspapers were unavailable. So the researcher had to depend on online versions of the newspapers but even there many web links were not available anymore.

The respondents of the survey are all professionals from newspaper industry. It was a big challenge for the researcher to contact them and request them to spare some time in filling up the questionnaire. It is significant to note here that the researcher had included open ended questions but the respondents were hardly responding to it. So on this ground; the researcher had to decrease the number of questions to get the necessary response.

During the course of the study, there are few sports journalists who came up with varied opinions and professional experiences relating to the research topic. But due to time constraint and also in order to stay true to the scheme of the research, the researcher had to gloss over certain comments.

During the research work, very few books were available relating to the topic in India. On this ground, the researcher had to mainly depend on the online materials, journals, articles which were available.

During the course of the textual analysis of the four national dailies, the researcher came across many literary tools, each of which can count for a separate research work. These language tools can be analysed further to enhance the understanding of language change in the face of new media. But due to time constraint and given the scheme of the study, the research could not dig further.

### **7.9. Future Research**

An expanded version of this study would likely to shed more light on how internet is bringing a change in the quality of sports text and changing journalistic values and practices. This study employs a qualitative methodology while analysing the newspapers. Perhaps, future researcher may employ a quantitative content analysis method to further examine the sensational approach of the mainstream media.

Future researchers can conduct a focused study in analysis the metaphor used in the sports pages of the national dailies. Perhaps a comparative analysis can be conducted on the more mainstream newspapers and tabloids in India. There could also be an analysis of newspapers taking into consideration the entire sports page, along with the typography, graphic and illustration to examine the tabloidization phenomena in Indian press.

The rise of online media such as Internet blogs and online newspapers makes it a valid platform to explore the language of their sports text and draw a comparison with newspaper sport content. As the battle between traditional media and new media flare up further, it will throw a vast area for research scholars.

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