

## **INSTAGRAM VS. NEWSPAPERS AS SOURCES OF NEWS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY AMONG JOURNALISM STUDENTS IN GUWAHATI**

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### **Abstract**

This paper investigates the contrasting roles of Instagram and Newspapers as news sources among journalism students in Guwahati. Utilizing a quantitative survey of 101 undergraduates and postgraduates, the study examines platform preferences, influencing factors, and perceptions regarding credibility, engagement, and career alignment. Results reveal a strong generational shift toward Instagram, with 69.3% favoring it for ease of access, entertainment, and engaging storytelling, while newspapers remain preferred for in-depth analysis and credibility with 64.4% and 72.3% respectively valuing these aspects. Instagram is the go-to platform for human interest and entertainment news, whereas newspapers are used primarily for political reporting and hard news. Despite a slight professional tilt toward Instagram, students recognize the continued relevance of traditional journalism. The findings indicate that the future of news consumption and journalism education in Guwahati is envisioned as hybrid, integrating the immediacy and visual strengths of social media with the analytical rigor and trustworthiness of traditional media. The study highlights the necessity for journalism curricula to bridge digital and conventional domains, preparing students with skills for a convergent media landscape.

**Key Words:** Instagram, Newspapers, Journalism Students, News Consumption, Media Credibility.

### **Introduction**

In the evolving landscape of media consumption, digital platforms have significantly altered the way people access news. Social media platforms, particularly Instagram, have emerged as popular sources of information, particularly among young audiences (Newman et al., 2023). In the meantime, the traditional newspapers continue to play a crucial role in journalism, offering in-depth reporting and credibility. The debate surrounding the effectiveness, reliability, and impact of social media versus traditional print media has gained

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traction, particularly among journalism students who are both consumers and future producers of news (Molyneux & Coddington, 2020).

The increasing dependency on social media for news intake is part of a broader trend where younger generations prefer quick, visually engaging content over long-form reading (Shearer & Mitchell, 2021). Instagram, initially a photo-sharing app, has evolved into a major news dissemination platform, where news organizations, independent journalists, and influencers deliver information through reels and stories (Boczkowski et al., 2021). This shift aligns with the global rise of mobile-based news consumption, where traditional news formats are being replaced by interactive and user-generated content (Newman et al., 2023).

However, while Instagram provides immediacy and accessibility, it also raises concerns regarding misinformation, lack of depth, and algorithmic bias (Tandoc et al., 2018). Unlike newspapers, which are bound by journalistic ethics and editorial oversight, Instagram's content is often influenced by virality rather than factual accuracy (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). Studies indicate that journalism students, despite being media-literate, are susceptible to the engagement-driven nature of social media, which may affect their ability to critically assess news credibility (Vosoughi et al., 2018).

On the other hand, newspapers have long been regarded as the gold standard of journalism, offering well-researched, thoroughly vetted, and contextually rich news articles (Hermida, 2019). Despite declining print readership, newspapers maintain a reputation for credibility and depth, especially in investigative journalism (Carlson, 2020). Journalism students, who are trained to appreciate rigorous reporting, may still recognize the value of newspapers in providing in-depth perspectives compared to the fragmented, often sensationalized news found on Instagram (Schapals et al., 2019).

In the context of Guwahati, a rapidly urbanizing city in Northeast India, journalism students are uniquely positioned to experience both global and local influences in media consumption. With the proliferation of digital news platforms, coupled with a strong tradition of print journalism in India, it is crucial to understand how journalism students navigate between Instagram and newspapers for news intake (Thakurta, 2019). This study aims to explore the preferences, habits, and perceptions of journalism students in Guwahati regarding news consumption through Instagram and newspapers. By analyzing their trust, engagement levels, and critical evaluation of news sources, this research seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on media literacy and news consumption patterns in the digital era.

Instagram is now a significant platform for social activity and news distribution in addition to its commercial functions. The term "news" describes information regarding current affairs or trends, particularly as it is presented by different media outlets such as newspapers, radio, television, and internet platforms. Politics, the economy, culture, sports, entertainment, and a wide range of other subjects are covered, and the audience is given regular and pertinent updates to keep them up to date on what's going on in the globe. News can be presented in a variety of ways, such as articles, broadcasts, films, and social media posts, and it plays a vital role in educating, informing, and occasionally influencing the public.

By sharing news articles, updates, and exclusive content on the platform like Instagram, media companies and journalists reach a younger audience that is becoming more and more reliant on social media for news. Using Instagram's visual elements to engage and inspire followers, activists and social movements use the site to spread awareness about topics including social justice, climate change, and current political events.

Usually, traditional news media consumption involves receiving news from reliable sources like radio, television, and newspapers. Providing background, analysis, and a variety of viewpoints on current affairs, these platforms provide in-depth coverage of a wide range of issues. Traditional news media consumers normally stick to a fixed schedule, such as watching the evening news or reading the morning newspaper, in order to keep up with local, national, and worldwide news.

On the other hand, news consumption on Instagram requires using a social media platform that is largely recognized for its interactive and visual elements to obtain news material. Instagram delivers news in a more visual and compact format, frequently using photos, videos, and brief descriptions, whereas traditional news media prioritizes textual content and journalistic reporting. Individual users, news outlets, and influencers all regularly contribute news on Instagram, resulting in a dynamic and varied flow of content. While browsing hashtags, watching Stories, or exploring through their Instagram feed, users may come across news content in addition to other kinds of content like memes, lifestyle updates, and commercials.

When comparing content depth, user interaction, and source reliability, there is a clear contrast in the consumption patterns of traditional news media and Instagram. Standard news media, which adheres to professional journalistic standards and editorial oversight, provides thorough coverage and analysis. On the other hand, the consumption of news on Instagram can place more emphasis on visual attractiveness and conciseness, which could result in a shorter interaction and more susceptible to distortions. In contrast, Instagram's algorithmic suggestions, interactive features, and user-generated material make for a more immediate and social interaction with news items, making it a more customized and participatory news experience. Therefore, Instagram news consumption reflects the changing digital media landscape, giving both opportunities and problems for news dissemination and consumption in the age of social media, even while traditional news media continues to be a cornerstone of informed citizenship.

## Review of Literature

In recent years, Instagram has emerged as a prominent news source among younger audiences, often surpassing traditional outlets such as newspapers. Studies indicate that journalism students increasingly rely on Instagram for news gathering due to its accessibility, immediacy, and visually engaging content. Maharani and Wahyunengsih (n.d.) found that journalism students not only consumed news via Instagram but also regarded it as a credible source for academic and professional purposes, integrating it into their reporting practices.

The shift toward social media for news consumption reflects broader generational changes.

The effectiveness of Instagram as a news medium is not solely about reach but also about retention. The Observatory (2025) reported that 89% of college students accessed news via social media, compared to only 33% through print newspapers. In the United Kingdom, Ofcom's (2022) report revealed that Instagram had overtaken traditional media as a news source among teenagers, with 29% citing it as their primary channel. Globally, the Reuters Institute's findings, cited in *The Guardian* (2025), show that social media is now the dominant news source for younger audiences, particularly in countries such as India.

The implications of this migration toward Instagram are complex. Burn-Murdoch (2024) noted that while

Instagram and TikTok present news in concise, visually compelling formats, they often prioritize attention-grabbing content over substantive reporting. This trend raises concerns regarding news depth, misinformation, and potential news avoidance. Nonetheless, Instagram's popularity among younger demographics, including journalism students, indicates that its role as a news source is both significant and expanding, warranting continued comparative study alongside traditional newspapers.

### **Instagram vs. Newspapers in the Guwahati Context**

Journalism students in Guwahati inhabit a media environment shaped by both deep-rooted newspaper traditions and a rapidly evolving digital news culture. Assam has a vibrant print media ecosystem anchored by iconic publications. *The Assam Tribune*, an English daily founded in 1939, boasts a daily circulation exceeding 700,000 and a readership of over 3 million across the Northeast (Wikipedia; learn.releasemyad.com). In the Assamese-language sphere, *Asomiya Pratidin* has the highest circulation among vernacular dailies, followed by *Asomiya Khabar* (Prag News; Wikipedia). *Amar Asom*, published from Guwahati and Jorhat, also represents a strong local voice in Assamese journalism (Wikipedia). These newspapers provide journalism students with content depth, cultural relevance, and adherence to professional journalistic standards.

Reading habits in Assam present both opportunities and challenges. Youths in the Northeast have higher leisure reading rates (39% in Assam) than the national average (28%), though library use remains low, with only 3.6% of the population using libraries (The Telegraph India). Digital penetration, however, is expanding rapidly. According to the **Annual Status of Education Report (ASER, 2024)**, over 90% of students aged 14-16 in Assam have smartphone access, with many capable of basic digital tasks, while only around 1% reportedly read print newspapers regularly.

While region-specific academic studies are still emerging, survey insights suggest that many Guwahati-based students have shifted away from print newspapers toward digital platforms. Some even consider e-paper versions or Twitter feeds as their "newspapers." While sensational platforms such as *GPlus* or *The Truth* offer immediacy, they are often perceived as lacking journalistic depth, whereas established outlets such as *The Assam Tribune* and *EastMojo* remain preferred when accuracy is essential. This hybrid pattern underscores the evolving role of social media as both a supplement to and a competitor with print journalism in the local news ecosystem.

### **Research Gap**

Although prior research has explored the growing role of Instagram as a news source and compared it with the credibility and depth of traditional newspapers, there is limited understanding of how these dynamics play out in specific regional contexts. In Guwahati, a rapidly urbanising city with both a strong print journalism tradition and increasing digital adoption, journalism students occupy a unique position as both critical consumers and future producers of news. Existing studies have not adequately examined their comparative trust, engagement, and evaluation of news from Instagram versus newspapers, nor how local media culture shapes these patterns. Addressing this gap can provide valuable insights into media literacy and news consumption behaviours in the evolving digital era.

**Research Objectives:**

1. To examine the preferences of journalism students regarding news consumption through Instagram and newspapers.
2. To analyse the underlying factors influencing their choice of news consumption platform.

**Research Methodology**

This study adopted a quantitative research design to examine journalism students’ preferences for news consumption through Instagram and newspapers. The approach was chosen to allow for the systematic collection and statistical analysis of numerical data, enabling the identification of patterns and trends.

**Sample**

The sample consisted of 101 journalism students enrolled in various universities and colleges in Guwahati, Assam. A convenience sampling method was employed, whereby participants were selected based on accessibility and willingness to participate. The sample included both undergraduate and postgraduate students, representing a mix of academic years and institutional backgrounds.

**Data Collection**

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire created using Google Forms. The questionnaire contained closed-ended and multiple-choice items covering demographic information, preferred news platforms, and reasons for platform preference. The survey link was distributed via email and social media platforms to reach participants from different institutions.

**Data Analysis**

Responses from the Google Form were compiled and analysed using descriptive statistical techniques, including frequency distributions and percentage analysis. The results were presented in tabular and graphical formats to illustrate key trends. Interpretations of the data were made in the context of the existing literature to identify consistencies, divergences, and potential research implications.

**Data Interpretation**

**Demographic details**

**Table 1**

Demographic	Categories	Percentage
Gender	Male	27%
	Female	73%
Age	15 - 20 Years	36%
	21 - 25 Years	64%
Highest Education	BA JMC	91%
	MA JMC	9%

The demographic profile of the respondents reveals that a substantial majority of the journalism students surveyed were female (73%), with males comprising only 27% of the sample. In terms of age distribution, most participants (64%) fell within the 21–25 age bracket, indicating that the survey primarily captured perspectives of senior undergraduate and postgraduate students, while 36% were between 15 and 20 years old.

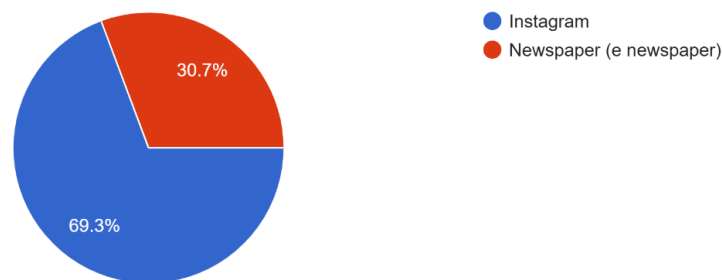
Regarding educational qualifications, an overwhelming proportion (91%) were pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Journalism and Mass Communication (BA JMC), whereas only 9% were enrolled in a Master's program (MA JMC). This demographic composition suggests that the findings are largely reflective of younger, undergraduate female students in Guwahati's journalism programs.

### Platform preference for consuming news online

Figure 1

1. Which platform do you prefer more for consuming news?

101 responses



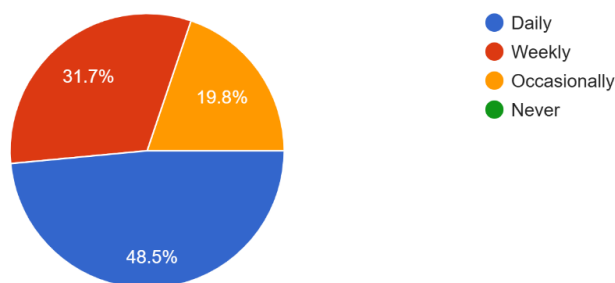
The above figure indicates a clear preference for Instagram as the primary platform for consuming news among the respondents. Out of 101 participants, 69.3% reported favoring Instagram, whereas only 30.7% preferred newspapers (including e-newspapers). This suggests a significant shift toward social media-based news consumption, reflecting the growing reliance on digital and interactive platforms for timely information. The findings align with broader media consumption trends, where visual and easily accessible content on social networking sites appeals more to younger audiences compared to the traditional and relatively static format of newspapers.

### Use of platforms for news updates

Figure 2

9. How often do you use the platforms for news update?

101 responses

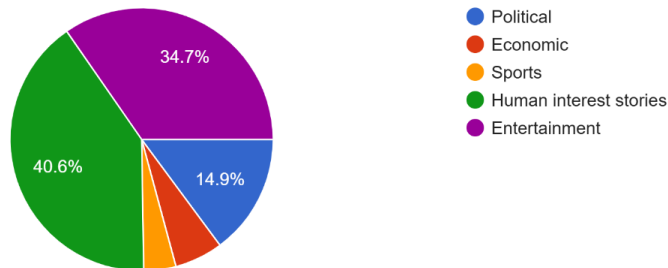


The above figure reveals that a substantial proportion of respondents engage with news platforms on a daily basis, accounting for 48.5%. Weekly usage is also notable, with 31.7% reporting regular but less frequent engagement, while 19.8% access news only occasionally. Interestingly, no respondents indicated that they never use these platforms for news updates, suggesting that all participants are at least minimally engaged with news consumption. This distribution underscores the pervasive role of digital and print news platforms in respondents' routines, with daily and weekly use dominating, which reflects an active information-seeking behavior.

**Kinds of news content consume more on Instagram**

**Figure 3**

10. What kind of news contents do you consume more in Instagram?  
101 responses

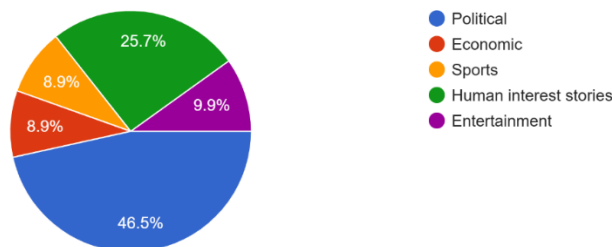


The figure above indicate that human interest stories constitute the most consumed news content on Instagram, with 40.6% of respondents favoring such narratives, followed by entertainment news at 34.7%. Political news ranks third, attracting 14.9% of the audience, while economic and sports news register minimal engagement, each capturing only a small fraction of the responses. This pattern reflects Instagram’s positioning as a visually driven and emotionally engaging platform, where audiences are more inclined toward relatable, lifestyle-oriented, and entertainment-based content rather than hard news categories such as politics, economics, or sports. The results highlight the role of social media in shaping news consumption preferences toward soft news formats.

**Kinds of news content consumed more on Newspaper (e newspaper)**

**Figure 4**

11. What kind of news contents do you consume more in Newspaper (e newspaper)?  
101 responses

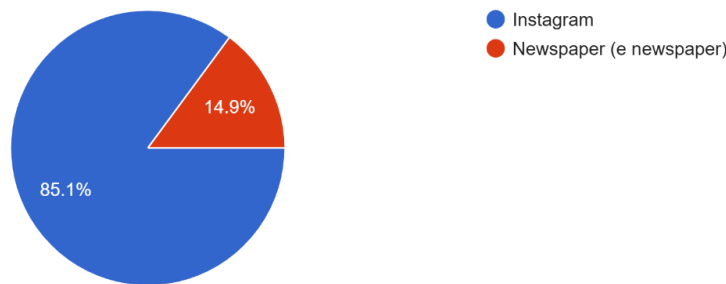


The data in the figure reveals that political news is the most consumed category in newspapers (including e-newspapers), accounting for 46.5% of responses, indicating a strong association between traditional news platforms and hard news content. Human interest stories follow at 25.7%, while economic and sports news share equal attention at 8.9% each. Entertainment news holds a marginal share of 9.9%. This distribution suggests that newspapers remain a primary source for in-depth, policy-driven, and politically oriented reporting, while still catering to a moderate audience interested in human-centered narratives. The comparatively lower consumption of entertainment and sports content reflects the traditional role of newspapers as authoritative platforms for serious and analytical journalism.

### Medium's easy accessibility for news consumption

Figure 5

3. Which medium do you find easier to access for news consumption?  
101 responses

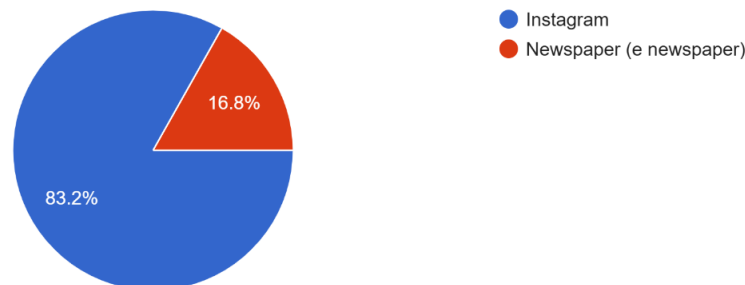


The results in the figure indicate a strong preference for Instagram as the easier medium for news consumption, with 85.1% of the 101 respondents favoring it over newspapers (including e-newspapers), which account for only 14.9%. This substantial gap highlights the growing appeal of social media platforms for their accessibility, convenience, and instant updates, particularly among digital-native audiences. The findings suggest that the ease of navigation, mobile-friendly interfaces, and personalized content delivery on Instagram contribute significantly to its perceived accessibility, whereas traditional or even digitized newspaper formats may be viewed as comparatively less convenient for quick, on-the-go news consumption.

### Most engaging storytelling pattern

Figure 6

4. Which platform's storytelling pattern is more engaging in your opinion?  
101 responses



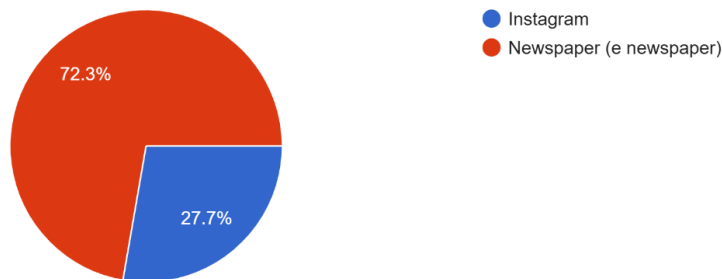
The data in the above figure indicates that majority of respondents (83.2%) perceive Instagram’s storytelling pattern as more engaging compared to newspapers (including e-newspapers), which are favored by only 16.8%. This overwhelming preference for Instagram underscores the impact of visual-driven, interactive, and concise content formats in capturing audience attention in the digital era. Instagram’s use of multimedia elements such as images, videos, reels, and infographics likely enhances narrative appeal, making stories more dynamic and immersive. In contrast, the more text-heavy and static nature of newspaper storytelling may be perceived as less stimulating, particularly among audiences accustomed to fast-paced, visually enriched information consumption.

**In-depth news analysis**

**Figure 7**

5. Which medium provides more in-depth news analysis in your opinion?

101 responses



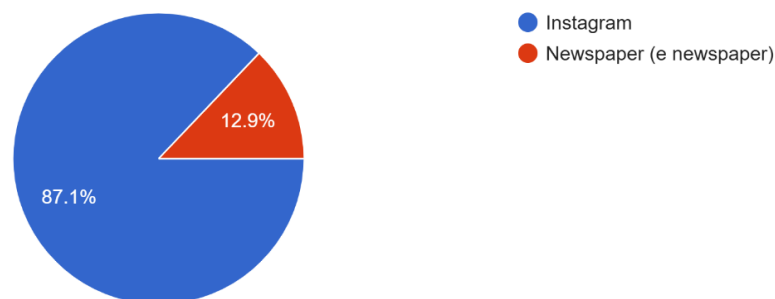
According to the above figure, it is revealed that a substantial majority of respondents (72.3%) consider newspapers, including e-newspapers, as the medium that provides more in-depth news analysis, whereas only 27.7% attribute this quality to Instagram. This indicates that despite Instagram’s popularity for quick and engaging content delivery, newspapers continue to be perceived as more credible and comprehensive sources for detailed reporting and critical examination of events. The structured format, editorial rigor, and emphasis on investigative journalism in newspapers contribute to this perception, highlighting their enduring role in delivering analytical and context-rich news coverage, which is less characteristic of the fast-paced, concise nature of Instagram content.

**More entertaining/informative for news consumption**

**Figure 8**

6. Which platform do you think is more entertaining/informative for news consumption?

101 responses



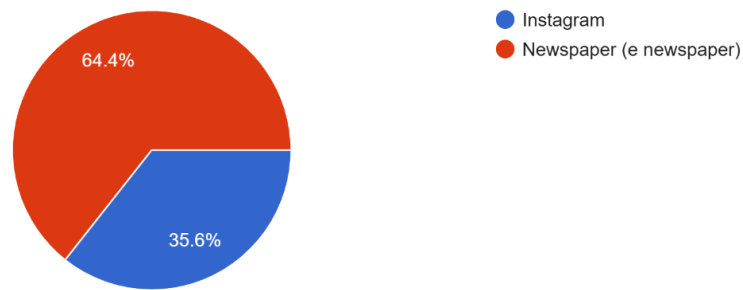
The above figure demonstrate that a majority of respondents (87.1%) perceive Instagram as the more entertaining and informative platform for news consumption, while only 12.9% favor newspapers (including e-newspapers) in this regard. This dominant preference for Instagram highlights the platform’s ability to blend information with entertainment through visually appealing formats, interactive features, and algorithm-driven personalization, which likely enhances user engagement. The relatively low percentage for newspapers suggests that their traditional, text-heavy presentation may be viewed as less dynamic or stimulating, especially among audiences accustomed to fast, multimedia-rich content in the digital environment.

### Medium’s news credibility

Figure 9

2. Which medium do you find more credible for news?

101 responses



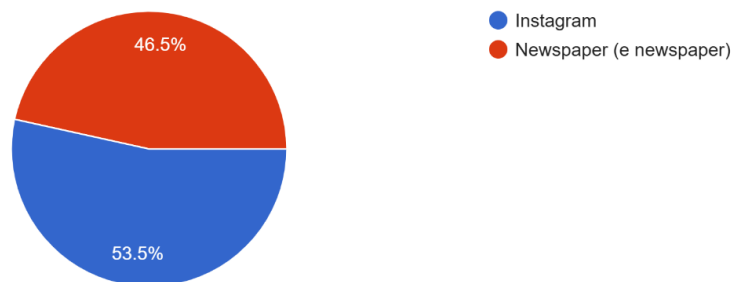
The above figure indicates a clear preference for newspapers (including e-newspapers) over Instagram as a credible source for news. The data shows that a significant majority, **64.4%**, of respondents consider newspapers to be more credible. In contrast, only **35.6%** of respondents find Instagram to be a more credible medium. This suggests that despite the growing popularity of social media platforms like Instagram for news consumption, traditional news sources, such as newspapers, are still widely perceived as more trustworthy. The substantial disparity between the two percentages highlights a prevailing sentiment that news from established journalistic institutions is more reliable than that disseminated through social media.

### Better career goal alignment for journalism students

Figure 10

7. As a journalism student, which platform do you think aligns better with your career goals?

101 responses



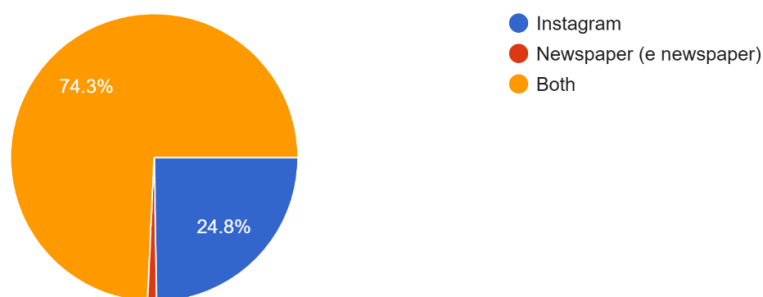
The figure reveals a slight preference for Instagram as the platform that better aligns with their career goals. The data indicates that **53.5%** of the respondents chose Instagram, while **46.5%** selected newspapers (including e-newspapers). Although the difference is not substantial, the majority's choice suggests a recognition of the growing importance of social media platforms in the modern media landscape. This finding implies that aspiring journalists perceive Instagram as a more relevant and promising avenue for their future careers, likely due to its wide reach, engagement potential, and direct interaction with audiences. The close division, however, also shows that a significant portion of journalism students still value traditional news platforms, acknowledging their continued relevance and perhaps the depth and credibility they offer.

### Future of journalism

Figure 11

8. In your opinion which medium will dominate the future of journalism?

101 responses



The data in the above figure reveals that a significant majority, 74.3%, believe that "Both" Instagram and newspapers (including e-newspapers) will be the dominant mediums. This overwhelming response suggests a widespread recognition of a hybrid media landscape where both traditional and social media platforms play crucial roles. In contrast, only 24.8% of respondents foresee Instagram dominating the future, and a negligible fraction (less than 1%) chose newspapers. The findings highlight a prevailing academic and public understanding that the future of journalism is not a zero-sum game between new and old media, but rather an integration of both, where different platforms cater to various audience needs and journalistic purposes.

### Findings

The findings of this study reveal a strong generational and platform-based divide in news consumption preferences among journalism students, with Instagram emerging as the dominant medium for entertainment, accessibility, and audience engagement, while newspapers (including e-newspapers) retain an edge in credibility and in-depth analysis. Demographically, the sample is predominantly female (73%), aged 21–25 (64%), and largely pursuing a Bachelor’s degree in Journalism and Mass Communication (91%), suggesting that the results primarily reflect the perspectives of young, undergraduate female journalism students in Guwahati.

A consistent pattern across multiple survey dimensions indicates Instagram’s overwhelming popularity for its ease of use, engaging storytelling, and entertainment value. Specifically, 85.1% of respondents found Instagram easier for news consumption, 83.2% preferred its storytelling style, and 87.1% considered it more

entertaining and informative than newspapers. Instagram's dominance is further reflected in content preferences, with human interest and entertainment stories leading the platform's consumption patterns, reflecting the platform's visually driven and emotionally resonant nature.

However, when it comes to credibility and depth, newspapers remain the preferred choice. A substantial 72.3% of respondents considered newspapers to provide more in-depth analysis, and 64.4% regarded them as more credible than Instagram. This reinforces the enduring value of traditional media in delivering investigative journalism and analytical coverage, even among a digitally oriented audience. Newspapers also dominate in hard news categories, with political reporting being the most consumed type of content, in contrast to Instagram's focus on soft news.

Career aspirations among respondents show a relatively balanced outlook, with a slight preference for Instagram (53.5%) over newspapers (46.5%) as the platform that aligns better with future professional goals. This indicates a recognition of the growing importance of social media in journalism careers, while still acknowledging the relevance and authority of traditional outlets.

Finally, future media landscape perceptions point toward a hybrid model: 74.3% of respondents believe that both Instagram and newspapers will coexist as dominant news mediums, suggesting that students foresee an integrated future where each platform complements the other by serving distinct journalistic functions. This reflects a nuanced understanding of the evolving media ecosystem, where digital immediacy and visual storytelling coexist with the depth and credibility of traditional journalism.

## Discussion

The findings of this study reflect the evolving dynamics of news consumption among journalism students in Guwahati, revealing a nuanced interplay between traditional and digital media preferences. The demographic profile indicates that the majority of respondents are young, female, undergraduate students pursuing journalism, a group that is both digitally native and professionally oriented toward media-related careers. This background provides an important lens through which to interpret the strong preference for Instagram in various aspects of news consumption, particularly its entertainment value, accessibility, and engaging storytelling formats. Instagram's dominance in these domains can be attributed to its visual orientation, algorithm-driven personalization, and mobile-friendly design, which align with the consumption habits of younger audiences accustomed to fast, interactive, and multimedia-rich content delivery.

Despite Instagram's overwhelming popularity in certain categories, the results reveal a clear distinction in how respondents perceive the strengths of different media platforms. While Instagram leads in terms of entertainment, engagement, and ease of use, newspapers (including e-newspapers) retain a stronghold in credibility and in-depth analysis. A substantial majority of respondents identify newspapers as more trustworthy and better suited for detailed, analytical reporting, underscoring the continued value of traditional journalistic practices such as editorial oversight, structured narrative formats, and investigative rigor. This bifurcation suggests that while Instagram fulfills the demand for immediacy and audience interaction, newspapers remain essential for delivering comprehensive, context-rich journalism.

The data further highlights a divergence in content preferences across platforms. On Instagram, respondents predominantly consume human interest and entertainment stories, reflecting the platform's emphasis on relatable, emotionally resonant, and visually engaging narratives. Conversely, newspapers are

primarily accessed for political news and other hard news categories, aligning with their longstanding reputation as providers of serious and policy-driven content. This difference reinforces the idea that audiences turn to different platforms based on their informational needs—Instagram for accessible and personalized updates, and newspapers for depth and reliability.

When it comes to career aspirations, respondents are nearly evenly divided, with a slight preference for Instagram. This suggests that aspiring journalists recognize the growing professional relevance of social media platforms, particularly in terms of audience reach, interactivity, and branding opportunities. However, the near-parity with newspapers indicates that traditional media still holds considerable professional value, likely due to its perceived credibility and established institutional infrastructure.

The most striking insight emerges in respondents' outlook on the future media landscape, with an overwhelming majority predicting the coexistence of both Instagram and newspapers as dominant mediums. This reflects an awareness that the future of journalism is likely to be hybrid, leveraging the strengths of both new and old media to meet diverse audience demands. Rather than viewing the rise of social media as signaling the decline of print or digital newspapers, respondents seem to anticipate a complementary relationship, wherein each medium serves distinct yet interconnected journalistic purposes.

Overall, these findings align with global research on shifting media consumption habits, where younger audiences are drawn to the immediacy, interactivity, and personalization of digital platforms but still value the credibility and analytical depth of traditional media. For journalism education and practice, the implications are clear: future journalists must be adept at navigating and integrating both domains, combining the speed and engagement of social media with the rigor and trustworthiness of traditional reporting. This dual competency will be essential for maintaining journalistic integrity while adapting to the rapidly evolving demands of contemporary news audiences.

## Conclusion

Based on the findings, it is evident that while Instagram has emerged as a dominant platform for news consumption among journalism students, newspapers (including e-newspapers) continue to hold significant value in specific areas of journalism. The study reveals a clear generational and technological influence on media preferences, with the younger, predominantly female undergraduate demographic showing a strong inclination toward visually engaging, easily accessible, and interactive news formats offered by Instagram. This preference is consistent with global shifts toward social media as a primary news source, driven by mobile accessibility, multimedia integration, and personalized content delivery.

However, the data also underscores that despite Instagram's popularity for entertainment, ease of use, and storytelling, newspapers retain a distinct edge in credibility and in-depth news analysis, reaffirming their role as authoritative sources for comprehensive reporting.

The findings suggest that journalism students perceive Instagram as an essential tool for modern media engagement, particularly for its ability to merge news with entertainment and facilitate career-oriented exposure in a digital-first media environment. Nevertheless, the enduring trust in newspapers for credibility and analytical depth points toward a balanced media ecosystem where both platforms coexist, each fulfilling distinct journalistic and audience needs. This duality is further reflected in the overwhelming belief among respondents that the future of journalism will be hybrid in nature, integrating the immediacy and visual appeal

of social media with the investigative rigor and reliability of traditional journalism.

From a broader perspective, the results highlight the evolving skill set that future journalists will require encompassing both the technical proficiency to navigate and produce engaging social media content, and the editorial rigor necessary for credible, in-depth reporting. For journalism education, this underscores the importance of curricula that bridge digital storytelling techniques with traditional journalistic principles. Finally, the study reinforces the notion that the future of news lies not in the replacement of one medium by another, but in their convergence, offering audiences a multidimensional news experience that is both engaging and trustworthy.

### **Limitation**

While this study provides valuable insights into journalism students' news consumption preferences and platform perceptions, several limitations should be acknowledged.

1. The study focused only on journalism students in Guwahati, which limits how far the results can be generalized to students from other regions, disciplines, or broader audiences.
2. Since participants reported their own news habits, the findings may be affected by recall errors or the tendency to give socially desirable answers.
3. The study captured preferences at a single point in time, so it cannot show how media consumption patterns might evolve or shift over the long term.
4. The sample had a gender imbalance (with more female respondents), and the absence of qualitative methods (like interviews or focus groups) limited a deeper understanding of motivations behind platform choices.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

Future research should aim to broaden the sample beyond journalism students in Guwahati to include participants from diverse academic disciplines, professional backgrounds, and geographic regions, thereby enhancing the generalizability of findings. Longitudinal studies would be beneficial to track changes in news consumption habits over time, especially as digital platforms evolve and media literacy levels shift. To address potential gender skew, future studies should seek a more balanced demographic representation, ensuring that gender-related differences in platform preferences can be adequately analyzed. Incorporating qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews or focus groups, would provide richer insights into the motivations, attitudes, and contextual influences shaping media choices.

### **Acknowledgement**

The authors gratefully acknowledge the guidance of faculty mentors, the participation of journalism students of Guwahati who generously shared their insights and made this research possible, and the constant support of their families, all of which were instrumental in the successful completion of this study.


### **Declaration of conflicting interests**


The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.


## Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship or publication of this article.

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## Biographies

Champa Devi is an Assistant Professor at the Royal School of Communication and Media, The Assam Royal Global University, Guwahati, Assam. With a strong academic foundation and professional commitment, she brings expertise in journalism, radio broadcasting, digital media, and cultural communication. Her research work reflects a keen interest in exploring the evolving dynamics of media and its impact on society. Actively involved in teaching, research, and academic development, she strives to nurture future media professionals while contributing meaningfully to the advancement of knowledge in the field of media and communication.

Esha Chakraborty is a voracious reader, researcher and assiduous teacher with 9+ years' experience in teaching. She has been awarded Ph.D degree in October 2020 from the centre for Journalism and Mass Communication, Visva- Bharati. She has published research papers in national and international journals with ISSN and Book chapters in books with ISBN. Dr. Chakraborty has also published papers in MOOCs India. She is keen to indoctrinate students with proven teaching proficiencies.

Ms. Sharmista Pradhan, an academician with a history of working in television industry and digital platform as an experienced creative head/creative director in Mumbai for 8 years. Sharing these experiences with the students and preparing them for the industry gives her motivation to teach and give them firsthand experience of what she has learned during her years in the television industry. With 6 years of teaching experience, she aims to grow, guide and mentor the young minds to learn and excel in their academics as well as in the context of project work together with their individual professional development.

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