

Investigative Journalism in India in the Digital Age: With Special Reference to Web Portals

Arvind Kumar

BBA University Lucknow

***Corresponding Author:** Arvind Kumar, BBA University Lucknow

Abstract: Investigative journalism commonly involves reporting crime, corruption, and unethical business practices. Such reporting aims to educate the public about the unnoticed social evils. Investigative reporting, therefore, effectively acts as a watchdog for society. In the digital era, many eminent journalists started their independent journalism, focusing more on investigating journalism. Digital web portals are more accessible and more democratic in disseminating information to society.

In this research, the paper researcher has chosen purposive sampling (Non-random sampling) to select the four independent web portals. The researcher randomly selected four reputed separate web portals, Carwan, The Wire, Cobrapost, and Newlaundry.

The study provides investigative journalism's current status and challenges in the digital age. Investigative journalism involves exposing made government accountable and plays a more significant role in democracy when citizens can get authentic, reliable, and fact-based information to give feedback against the government's wrongdoings.

1. INTRODUCTION

The emerging significance and power of media in the present time is often considered the fourth pillar of democracy. Investigative journalism is a reporting that focuses on journalists and researchers doing in-depth, researched, and empirical fact-based reporting. Investigative journalism makes the government accountable; it makes democracy more constitutional and informed, concerned citizens. Suppose citizens will get informed and have correct and authentic information to perform their duties towards the country. Investigative journalism plays an essential role in democratic countries. The emerging significance and power of media in the present time is often considered the fourth pillar of democracy. Article 19[a] "freedom of expression" of the Indian constitution provides fundamental rights and protection to the journalist. After the advent of the Internet, several independent media houses emerged and claimed investigative journalism. Because the Internet is more accessible and democratized in terms of information dissemination where anyone can find and share with others.

According to the most recent Internet Trends report, India is the lone star of the worldwide Web. India Has More Internet Users than the US. Mary Meeker Report 2019 India has almost 12 percent of the global internet user base. Because of that, many investigations in sting operations investigative journalism in-depth reports. It felt like someone was coming; it happened only because the online portal of investigative journalism was started. It was very significant to say that new investigative journalism brings the truth to the audience because of the online web portal; there is no fear of powerful personality this investigative journalism becomes very flexible and powerful. If you have an instigative, you have to post and all over the world can read. You don't have to hesitate like the Government etc.

In this period when online web portals started, some online web portals protected investigative journalism and created an excellent opportunity for others. Cobrapost, Caravan, the Wire, and Newslaundry, these are some of the credible web portals which is doing investigative journalism in India. In the digital space these website has credible impact in the Indian media ecosystem. They are providing in-depth, researched reporting. Like Cyberport has done many exposes in curuption, administrative abuses, political anarchy, health and child trafficking. These exposes have changed the social perception about the investigative journalism. Beyond social perceptions it has made government accountable.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Investigative journalism is a critical feature in mass media outlets around the globe and is an effective method of societal control over institutions and governmental power in a civil society. Although there is a relatively limited theoretical foundation for investigative journalism in the field of media studies, several media scholars define it as:

Hugo De Burgh, a British media expert, asserts that investigative journalism is crucial in advancing civilization through spotting corruption, promoting openness, and bolstering public opinion. The burden of exposing corruption and other misconduct frequently falls on investigative journalists (de Burgh, 2008; Kaplan, 2008; O'Neill, 2010).

The ability of investigative journalists to exercise intellectual and professional freedom is, however, affected by several concerns. Other influencing elements that affect journalists include the requirements of media owners, advertisers' preferences, and the expensive expense of investigative journalism (Griffin, 2014; Raphael et al., 2004).

According to the Dutch-Flemish Association for investigative journalism, VVOJ, "Investigative journalism is CRITICAL & THOROUGH journalism" Journalism that is necessary means it is not only relaying "news" that already exists. It implies news, which is not possible without the help of journalists. This could be accomplished by coming up with brand-new information, but it can also be done by reinterpreting or correlating already-existing facts.

Sheila Coronel, the director of the Stabile Centre for Investigative Journalism at Columbia University in New York, offers five definitions of investigative journalism in her 2009 book *Digging Deeper*, along with three of what it is not. Investigative reporting IS NOT... Daily reporting, journalism that leaks information, single-source reporting and information misuse, Investigative journalism, watchdog journalism, revealing how rules and laws are broken, and holding the powerful accountable are all examples of paparazzi journalism.

3. INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM AND CONSTITUTION OF INDIA

The effectiveness of the three pillars, namely the Legislature, the Executive, and the Judiciary, determines the success of a democracy. The media, aptly dubbed the fourth pillar, serves as a watchdog by exposing these three pillars to public examination. Undeniably, people have benefited due to the journalists' bold approach that creates a good understanding of democracy. In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In law

- **Article 15:** the right to form, hold, receive, and communicate one's own opinions.
- **Article 16:** Access to information is free and equitable within and outside state borders.
- **Article 17:** freedom of speech and expression and equal access to all forms of communication. There is no censorship and no limits on communication (however, defamation laws do apply);
- **Article 18:** the obligation to convey news and information in a fair and accurate manner
- **Article 19:** Everyone has the right to freedom of thought and expression, which includes the freedom to hold beliefs without interference and the freedom to seek, receive, and transmit information and ideas through any medium and across all borders.

These are the tools investigative journalism makes by law that protect democracy and values and have a good impact on social life and freedom which makes a good impact on investigative journalism.

4. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research paper is to explore investigative journalism in India's digital age with a particular reference to web portal. This study will look in to the current status of the investigative journalism doing by the independent web portals. The researcher randomly selected four reputed separate web portals, Carwan, The Wire, Cobrapost, and Newlaundy.

5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Investigative journalism in India is not satisfactory yet, but several digital outlets since the advent of the Internet web journalism has been an emerging field. Using technology, investigative journalism is becoming more vibrant, excessive, and researched to the citizens. They are providing more authentic, reliable, and investigative reporting and investigations.

Democracy like India, a free press plays an essential role in the development process. Investigative journalism makes citizens informed and the government accountable.

6. METHODOLOGY

Several web portals claim they are doing investigative journalism, but studying all web portals is impossible. I have chosen purposely sampling for selecting four web portals for the case study.

6.1 Cobrapost

6.2 The Wire

6.3 News laundry

6.4 Caravan

These are some of the most credible independent portals that are dedicated to investigative journalism in India. Numerous well-known journalists are actively working to advance and enhance investigative journalism. The research methodology would be the case study.

7. CARAVAN

The caravan is India's first extended narrative journalism magazine. It was launched in 2010; it was resurrected as a political and cultural publication dedicated to thorough reporting and the art of narrative. Since then, The Caravan has become one of India's most recognized and intellectually flexible magazines, setting new standards for Indian journalism.

Caravan, articles are fashioned into dramatic narratives that employ pace, color, character, and literary style and are based on months of reporting and research. They infuse stories with actual characters, plots, and consequences with the excitement and readability of fantastic fiction.

They work very hard all over the world, especially in South Asia. They have a reporter in large numbers to cover the story and investigate, and they provide unique news with low support all over India. They have lots of reporters in India to cover the story, and in public, in an online portal, they don't have to fear influential personalities posting their story and bringing in a crowd,

Impact on the government policy -

When the online news site was launched in 2011, it impacted government policy from 2011 to 2014. The Government is in a position to address any errors that may occur. If the government is aware of the issues in our region, they can take action or find solutions. Many problems have been resolved thanks to the internet web portals that report on and publish these stories.

Over the years, the caravan has conducted numerous investigations. Nikita Vachani, an investigative journalist, detailed how West Bengali housekeeper Manju Das was taken advantage of by tycoon Raj Rajaratnam in her article "Inside Job" (November 2015).

For his article ("Blood in The Water," November 2014), Salil Tripathi, a contributing editor of The Caravan, conducted research in 2014 into the contentious history of one of Bangladesh's deadliest wartime atrocities. Excellent human rights. In 2014, she wrote a report about how a well-known cigarette company circumvented Indian laws banning tobacco advertising ("Smokescreen," September 2014). Nikita Saxena conducted an inquiry, and there have been and will continue to be several instigations.

8. THE WIRE

The Wire is an Indian nonprofit news and opinion website published in English, Hindi, Marathi, and Urdu. It was founded in 2015 by Siddharth Varadarajan, Sidharth Bhatia, and M. K. Venu and is a nonprofit organization named the Foundation for Independent Journalism. The publication's reporters have won several national and international awards, including three Ramnath Goenka Excellence in Journalism Awards and the CPJ International Press Freedom Award. The website has been subject to several defamation suits by business people and politicians, some of which have been described as strategic lawsuits against public participation.

9. COBRAPOST

Cobrapost is a well-known Indian Nonprofit news organization and television production company for its investigative reporting. Aniruddha Bahal, a Tehelka co-founder, began it in 2003. Cobrapost has covered many topics, including politics, business, corruption, social issues, and bank scams. They conduct on-the-ground investigations in India and present the viewers with the facts. & Cobrapost also provides news across India, including breaking news on sports, business, entertainment, and world events. Cobrapost is committed to addressing social issues, courageous journalism, and freedom of

expression. It also supports up-and-coming talent in the industry and gives alternative views a platform to be heard outside of the flashy mainstream media show.

- Investigation journalism by Cobrapost - **Cobrapost**, in collaboration with Aaj Tak, undertook Operation Duryodhana in 2005, revealing eleven Parliament members (MPs) taking money to put forward questions in Parliament. These eleven MPs were expelled from Parliament due to the probe, making it the most excellent expulsion of MPs in the country's history.
- The investigation results, Operation Janambhoomi, were published on April 3, 2014, by Cobrapost, exposing the plot behind the demolition of the Babri Masjid in December 1992, rewriting the history of contemporary India along sectarian lines. Our most recent investigation, Operation Juliet, debunked India's Love Jihad myth.
- Cobrapost discovered that several IT businesses were utilizing phony identities on social media to help politicians boost their popularity as part of Operation Blue Virus.
- Operation Red Spider, launched in March 2013, revealed that certain big Indian banks were engaged in money laundering.
- Cobrapost has worked in lots of investigations underground, and that's happened because of the online web portal and investigation. And challenge all problems.

10. NEWSLAUNDRY

Newslandry was launched on February 6, 2012, by Abhyangas Sekhri, Madhu Trehan, and Prashant Sareen. Newslandry is an independent news media firm that its readers support. We strongly believe in the necessity for an independent news model and a free and accountable press in an industry dominated by corporate and Governmental interests.

Newslandry, based on her policy to protect their values, said about media, "We believe news organizations should be accountable, including us. That belief drives our stories on the media." They believe in research in deep-ground investigative journalism. That makes new development, and investigative journalism needs to happen these days; many web portals work better than anyone.

11. INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM BY NEWSLAUNDRY

- By Manisha Pande December 5, 2014. Where Are the Women? We examine the country's most prominent English newspapers for gender representation, and the picture isn't pretty.
- RTI Investigation (part 1): How politicians use PSUs as cash-vending machines MPs across parties get PSUs to fund boat races, a Brahman Manas magazine, and more. By Sandeep Pai August 26, 2015
- We will die doing our duty': How ASHAs are battling coronavirus without safety gear or training. These workers are on the frontlines, reporting symptomatic patients, tracking those in quarantine and abroad, and conducting contact tracing. By Menaka Rao April 7, 2020

Many investigations are happening in Newslandry, which protects their values and reveals the truth to the audience and did hard work this time. In five off-web portals, that's made quite good to hear and write off the paper because, in India, the scope of investigative journalism is unsatisfactory. Still, with the advent of the Internet and technology, they are getting wings. In technology and the digital age, investigative journalism has become more comfortable for journalism and digital websites. The 21st century is the digital era; journalists and citizens have more information and access to the data so they can easily access and reach their readers and audiences in a short time. This digital age brings opportunities for understanding investigative journalism concerning the Internet and technology.

Using technology and the digital medium makes investigative journalism more transformative and accessible in India. Investigative journalism is the most effective and authentic branch of journalism—investigative journalism genuinely impacts the country's social-cultural, economic, and democratic setup.

12. CONCLUSION

From the above discussion, we can easily conclude that in the present situation, there is a need for investigative journalism in a democratic country like India.

So, it can be concluded that investigative journalism is needed for time. But in a competitive media environment. We have discussed many scenarios in the web portal, and how they are working on it in

today's world, Investigative journalism is critical for democratic countries like India. As free speech or expression can only be expected when citizens are informed, the information does not refer just to government plans and policies. We must promote investigative journalism because the current media ecosystem is unsatisfactory and not doing its duty. According to the latest report released by Reporters Without Borders, India's ranking in the 2022 World Press Freedom Index has fallen to 150 out of 180 countries.

Apart from the mainstream media, several independent news portals are doing investigative journalism, but the status of investigative journalism is not good yet. It involves many factors, such as governments' rules and regulations curtailing journalistic freedom of expression. Several journalists have been arrested and booked in many cases.

Therefore, journalists need more support and protection for their journalism. Investigative journalism frequently involves reporting crime, corruption, and unethical business practices. Such reporting aims to educate the public about the unnoticed social evils. Investigative reporting, therefore, effectively acts as a watchdog for society.

REFERENCES

- [1] de Burgh, 2., Kaplan, 2., & O'Neill, 2. (2008). The emergence of investigative journalism. *Investigative Journalism*.
- [2] Griffin, S. (2014). The death of investigative reporting: Survey of mass media.
- [3] Henderson and Hilton. (2018). The media and public health: where next for critical analysis?
- [4] Ilagan, J. M. (2020). Journalism, public health, and COVID-19: some preliminary insights from the Philippines. *Media International Australia*.
- [5] Tatke, S. (May 6, 2020). Indian Journalists Challenge Government Over Coronavirus Transparency. *Global Investigative Journalism Network*.
- [6] Kaplan, A (de Burgh, Kaplan, & O'Neill, 2008) (Griffin, 2014). D. (2008). *Investigating the Investigators: Examining the Attitudes, Perceptions, and Experiences of Investigative Journalists in the Internet Age*: ProQuest
- [7] Griffin, S. (2014). The death of investigative reporting: Survey of mass media. Available at: <<https://medium.com/survey-of-mass-media/the-death-of-investigative-reporting->
- [8] Spark, D. (1999). *Investigative Reporting: A Study in Technique*. Oxford: Focal Press.
- [9] 1 <https://caravanmagazine.in/pages/about-us>
- [10] 2 <https://theprint.in/about-us/>
- [11] 3 <https://thewire.in/about-us>
- [12] 4 <https://www.newslaundry.com/about-us>
- [13] 5 <https://www.cobrapost.com/pages/About%20us/1>
- [14] 6 <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>
- [15] 7 <https://www.thequint.com/tech-and-auto/tech-news/mary-meecker-report-2019-highlights-india>
- [16] 8 https://www.cjr.org/special_report/india_digital_revolution_startups_scoopwhoop_wire_times.

Citation: Arvind Kumar, "Investigative journalism in India in the digital age: with special reference to web portals". *International Journal of Media, Journalism and Mass Communications (IJMJMC)*, vol 8, no. 2, 2022, pp. 25-29 doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.20431/2454-9479.0802003>

Copyright: © 2022 Authors. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.