Year-7 Volume: III, July-September, 2025 Issue-27 ISSN: 2582-1296 (Online)
**The Asian Thinker**
A Quarterly Bilingual Peer-Reviewed Journal for Social Sciences and Humanities
**Website:** www.theasianthinker.com **Email**: asianthinkerjournal@gmail.com

# 9. Role of Print Media during General Election 2024 of Bihar (Special Reference: Begusarai District of Munger Division)

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## Abstract

*The media in Begusarai, Bihar, became a vital driving force, influencing public opinion in multiple ways. It has served as a vehicle of public communication; an instrument of citizen election awareness on critical debates of political and social issues, orienting human behavior before, during, and after the electoral period and the announcement of results. Through the transmission of prompt and pertinent information, the media also contributed to the creation of a more informed and active population.*

*Finally, there was considerable scope for studies to examine how the dynamics of media influence were likely to change in the near or distant future in the democratic polity of India. The present research was designed to examine and interpret the cognitions, awareness, and political participation of individuals aged 18-50 years during the 2024 General Elections. To achieve this purpose, the study employed a survey with a sample of 100 respondents, comprising both male and female individuals within the 18-50 age bracket, which accurately represented the demographic variables.*

*Another part of the study analyzed two widely read Hindi dailies, Prabhat Khabar and Bhaskar. This analysis provided insights into the volume and nature of media coverage surrounding the election. It covered news reports, election activity coverage, editorials, and political ads. These results helped explain how the press covered political events and influenced public opinion during the campaign.*

*The study highlighted the news media's role in warning against misinformation and mitigating political tensions. By following social responsibility norms, the media helped correct misinformation and provided citizens with accurate, verified information.*

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*The article discussed the role of print media in informing the public about policies, manifestos, and government promises. This focus highlighted how responsible journalism fosters democracy and enhances the electoral process.*

**Keywords:** Election, political, Voter, Democracy and Society.

**Introduction**

In India, with highly fragmented regional conditions, the media have been the most widely used channel for spreading political information for an extended period. Media organizations in a society where caste, religion, and regional aspirations weigh heavily in politics frame critical narratives in influencing public opinion and voter conduct. Bihar, particularly Begusarai, is an excellent case in point. Known as the "Leningrad of Bihar" (Kumar, 2023, p. 45), the town has traditionally been the bastion of the left, but of late it has turned into a theatre of confrontation between the right and the left.

As the heart of Bihar's shifting political map, Begusarai embodies the knot of Indian democracy, where class warfare, caste math, and development dreams all come with disconcerting caveats. This paper discusses the coverage of the media during the 2024 General Elections in three stages: pre-election, election, and post-election. The study looks at coverage of political parties and candidates — both nationally and locally — from BJP's Giriraj Singh to JD(U), RJD, CPI, apart from independents, and the influence it may have on voters in Bihar.

The role of the media in elections is complex. Quraishi (2014) explains that newspapers are likely to print cartoons and cartoonish material during elections, and these sorts of materials help shape public opinion in a gentle but thorough-going manner. These artistic forms can communicate serious political messages even to semi-literate readers. In the same breath, Vanita Khandekar (2013, p. 67) posits that "rather than a clear-cut stance in favor of diversity and plurality, media sometimes succumbs to distortions prompted by profit, sacrificing information flow in the process".

Additionally, Nikolenyi (2010) points to "differences in ballot technology between state and national elections in India that lower voter turnout, noting that the actual structure of elections—projected and repeated in the media accounts—affects the rates of democratic participation. These results illustrate the double-edged effect of media influence in that, while it stimulates voter interest by reducing information and discourse costs, it also leads to apathy or misinformation.

The role played by digital media tools, such as YouTube channels and local influencers, is now larger in Begusarai's 2024 elections than it has ever been. Young, mobile-dependent voters (those aged 18-30) are being spoon-fed algorithmic political content that – dare we say it – only substantiates what we already knew. Old-fashioned newspapers, such as Hindustan or Dainik

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Bhaskar, are still a major player among older voters. However, the new digital frontier is gaining the upper hand in the public sphere (Jha, 2024, p. 112).

The study, therefore, takes account not only of the volume of media coverage but also of its quality, bias, framing, and effects on voters. Situating this intersection of media in electoral politics, this time in a politically vibrant region like Begusarai, helps illuminate the general contours of India's changing democratic processes. It also serves to highlight the extreme importance of media literacy programs, so that new communication technologies can uplift, as opposed to chisel away at, the democratic participatory process.

**Objective**

1. To conduct a content analysis of Hindi newspapers during the General Election 2024.
2. To evaluate the impact of media coverage on voter attitudes.

**Methodology**

The content analysis covered selected regions and India's two leading Hindi newspapers, Prabhat Khabar (a local and regional newspaper) and Dainik Bhaskar (a national newspaper), during the **pre-election (March)**, **election period (May)**, and **post-election period (July)** of Begusarai. Under survey research, 100 respondents were selected (50 male and 50 female). The respondents are residents of Begusarai and are in the age group of 18 – 50 years.

The survey question focused on the most used media by the voters in the election, about the media's impact on the election process, based on media influence awareness among voters. The study also analyzed the contribution of print media in the dissemination of information and misinformation.

**Limitations**

**1. Restricted Area of Study: The** study was restricted to Begusarai, and so the results may not be generalized to other regions.

**2. Limitation of sample size:** The sample population in this survey is up to 100 individuals (from 18 to 50 years of age).

**3. Time-bound Analysis:** The content being analyzed spans only three months (March, May, and July 2024), which might overlook long-term trends in media representation.

**4. Medium Emphasized:** The study focused specifically on print media and may not necessarily generalize to other media like television or digital media.

**Analysis**

**TABLE 1:** frequency and Percentage of Published items in PRABHAT KHABAR

| MONTH | FEATURES | ARTICLES | EDITORIALS | OTHERS | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **MARCH 2024** | 4 (9.52%) | 5 (11.90%) | 0 (0%) | 33 (78.57%) | 42 (37.17%) |
| **MAY 2024** | 1 (3.33%) | 6 (20.00%) | 1 (3.33%) | 22 (73.33%) | 30 (26.55%) |

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| **JULY 2024** | 5 (12.20%) | 7 (17.07%) | 2 (4.88%) | 27 (65.85%) | 41 (36.28%) |
| **TOTAL** | **10 (8.85%)** | **18 (15.93%)** | **3 (2.65%)** | **82 (72.57%)** | **113 (100%)** |

The content distribution of the selected newspaper issues for the years March, May, and July 2024 reveals a clear trend when considering the categories in charge. Data shows how category 'Others' remains top contributor for all three months where the contribution rate of the category stood at 78.57% in March, 73.33% in May and further lowered to a modest share of 65.85% in July In sum, this segment constituted 72.57% of the total coverage, suggesting a peculiar reliance on miscellaneous or generic pieces — which indeed usually overshadow more interesting journalistic segments.

On the other hand, the editorial occupied the fewest number of pages, with no single piece published in March, a meager 3.33 percent in May, and only 4.88 percent of all newsprint during July. Perhaps the most alarming aspect of my study is the almost absurdly low level of analysis — a mere 2.65% of all content over the three months was considered an editorial.

As for features and articles, the distribution is more even-handed. The principal contributors were features that ranged from 3.33% in May to 12.20% in July, resulting in a net contribution of 8.85%. Articles, on the other hand, exhibited a consistent profile, ranging from 11.90% in March to 20.00% in May, and ultimately reaching an overall total of… This means that while the paper does have some depth in terms of features and articles, it is still secondary when compared to "Others," which occupy much more space.

In total, across all story types, including features, articles, and editorials, we found only 31 out of 113 were doing interpretative or analytical journalism; That is a little over one-fourth (27.43%) of the content in total, with the most considerable portion given to less impactful or odds and ends type stuff. This underscores an urgent need for the newspaper to fundamentally reconsider its editorial approach. The publication should decisively prioritize meaningful journalistic genres—offering content that informs, analyzes, and supports public opinion—by dedicating more space and resources to such work, ensuring it does not remain secondary but becomes central to the paper's identity and mission.

**TABLE 2:** frequency and Percentage of Published items in DAINIK BHASKAR

| MONTH | FEATURES | ARTICLES | EDITORIALS | OTHERS | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **MARCH 2024** | 4 (6.56%) | 11 (18.03%) | 3 (4.92%) | 43 (70.49%) | 61 (100%) |
| **MAY 2024** | 3 (4.23%) | 10 (14.08%) | 2 (2.82%) | 56 (78.87%) | 71 (100%) |

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| **JULY 2024** | 0 (0%) | 11 (39.29%) | 2 (7.14%) | 15 (53.57%) | 28 (100%) |
| **TOTAL** | **7 (4.38%)** | **32 (20.00%)** | **7 (4.38%)** | **114 (71.25%)** | **160 (100%)** |

The paper published 61 items in March 2024 (notably, there were no Notes), with a clear majority dedicated to others (70.49%), while among the analytic sections, a strong preference was given to articles (18.03%). Features (6.56%>) and editorials (4.92%>) were far less restricted. This clearly suggests that before the election period, Dainik Bhaskar was too preoccupied with reports and general news coverage, rather than its usual in-depth features or opinion pieces.

In May 2024, the trend of others overtaking was observed, with a total of 71 items, at a percentage of 78.87%, featuring (4.23%) and editorial (2.82%). Articles held a sizable presence (14.08%), indicating some analysis but lagging general news. That suggests a focus on quick-turn reporting and fast-breaking news during the election month, rather than long-form explanatory journalism.

However, by July 2024, the tide turned. Articles skyrocketed to 39.29% of the total across the period (the highest level), up from just 12.5% at the start, out of a total of 28 items. The analysis found that 7.14% of the issues included editorials, and 0% of the problems printed features. Others anchored at 53.57% but saw a drop compared to past months. The changeover suggests that after the election, Dainik Bhaskar began to shift towards greater scrutiny, analysis, and opinion-based journalism in its coverage, with more interpretation rather than just news reporting.

Between the three months total (160 items), 71.25% of the coverage was on others, articles accounted for 20%, while features and editorials both made up 4.38%. This also means that, although the paper allocated space for analytical and interpretive content, most of the reporting was general coverage. However, the increasing proportion of articles in July seems to indicate a post-poll phase where news reporting introspects and takes stock.

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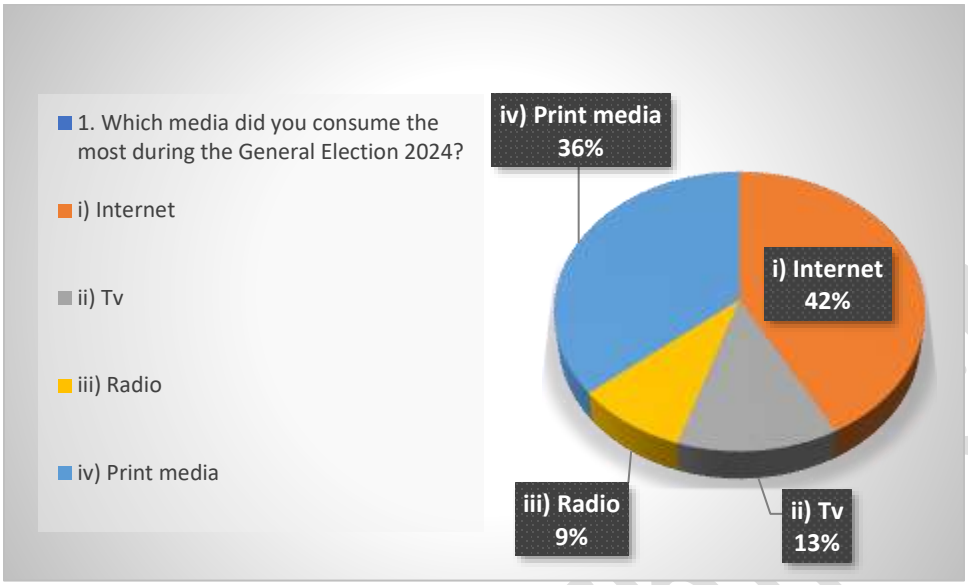
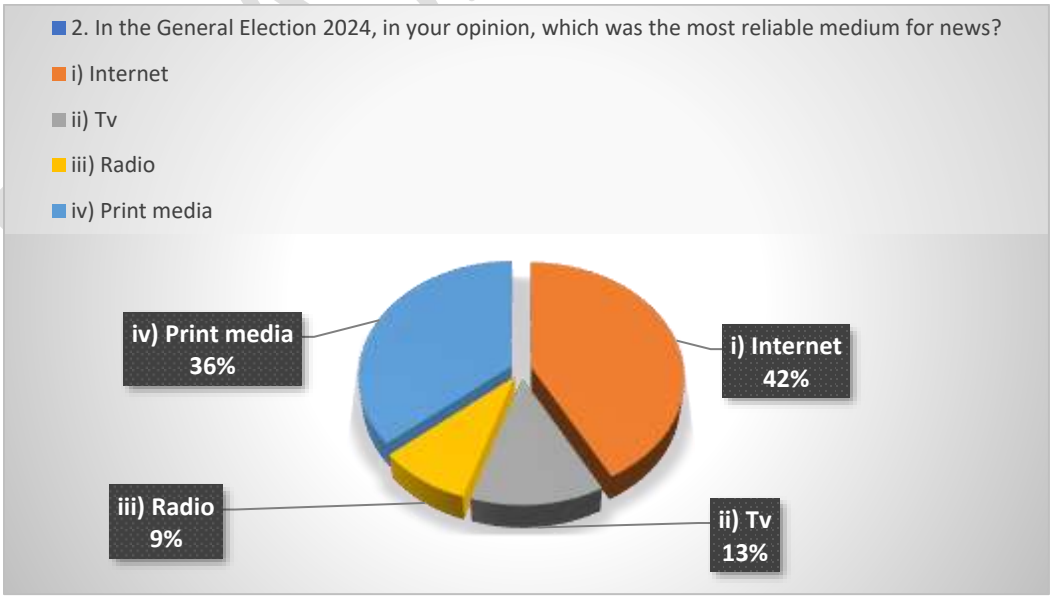



The growing audience has migrated to digital platforms as a primary source for political information, with the 2024 General Election results showing that the media landscape is changing faster than before. The survey found that 42 percent of people got news through the Internet, indicating the increasing dependence on digital media for rapid, up-to-the-minute, and widespread news. Print media continued to play a pivotal role — 36 per cent of respondents preferred newspapers, especially among the semi-urban and rural audiences, where readability, in-depth reporting, and the availability of print played a critical role. On the other hand, TV viewers showed a notable drop, with only 13% watching TV as their primary source of news — an indication that shifts in generations and technologies are displacing traditional broadcast media.



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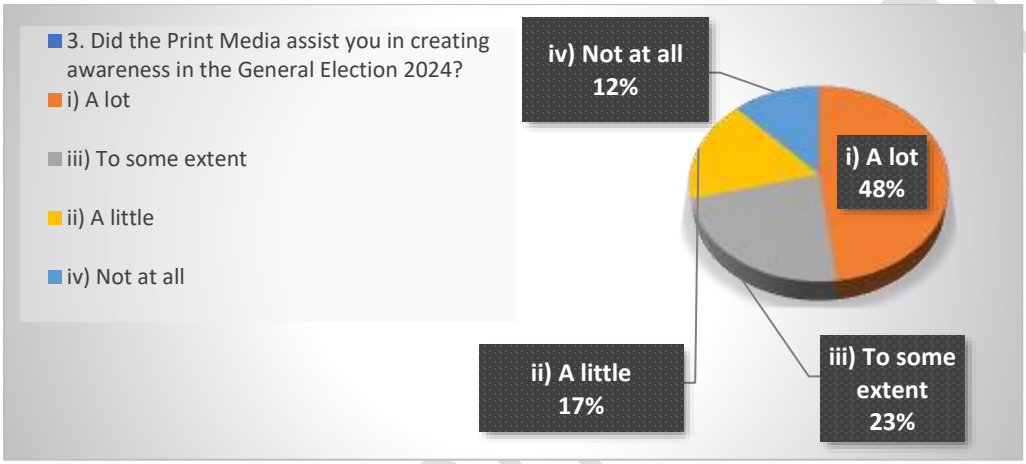
For the General Election 2024, when asked about the most trusted source of news, the Internet (42%) emerged as the number one choice, indicating that confidence in digital platforms is rapidly growing as they deliver near real-time information and diverse opinions. Print media (36%) was next, indicating that newspapers and magazines continue to have authority — especially for source material content. Although discovered to be slightly less reliable, television (13%) still played a significant role in live coverage and debates. While the radio (9%) was named as less trustworthy, it still retains a strong following — particularly in rural parts of the country — because it is so widely available.




In most areas, print media played a key role in raising awareness and reaching many people during the 2024 General Election. The survey found that 48% of respondents said newspapers and magazines helped them a lot to stay informed about candidates and issues. Another 23% said print media helped them a lot, and 23% said it helped them somewhat, making a total of 55%. Seventeen percent said print media only slightly influenced their decisions, which may mean they relied more on other sources. Only 12% said print media was not helpful at all, showing that traditional media faces challenges as more information moves online.

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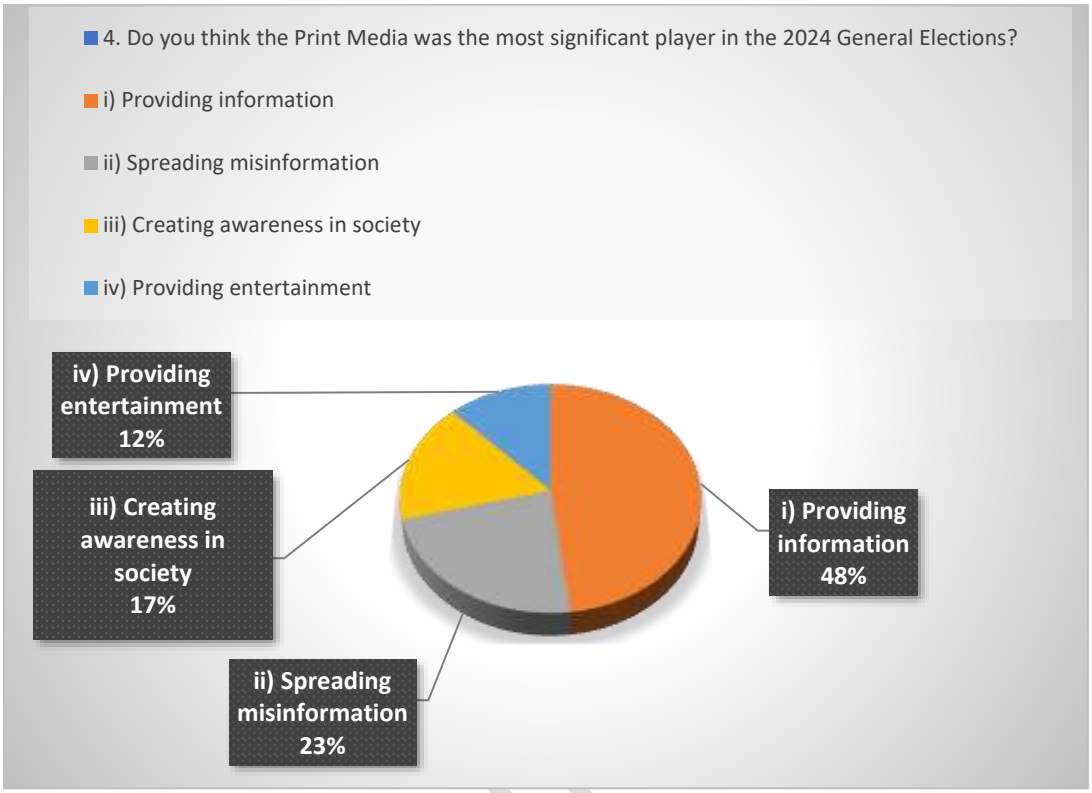


Most respondents agreed that print media will have a major impact, with 48% saying its main role is to provide information. Many also saw print media as credible, noting its influence on public opinion during the 2024 General Elections. Meanwhile, 23% believed print media can spread misinformation, especially when reporting is slanted or unverified. 17% said print journalism helps inform society about current events and civic issues. Finally, 12% found print media entertaining, likely because of its lighter content during the election.

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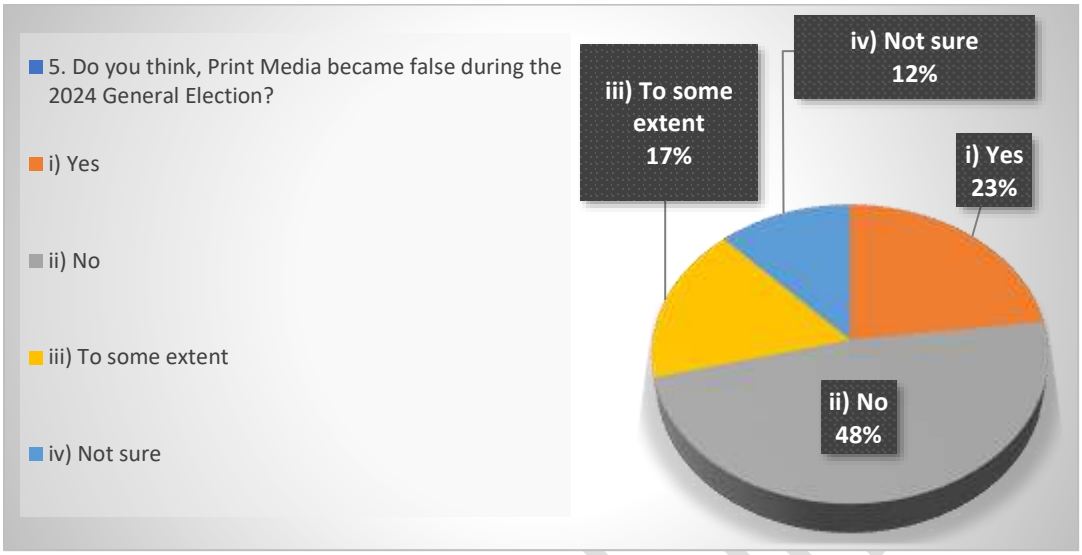


Public opinion about print media is divided in the 2024 General Election. Nearly half (48%) believe print media remains trustworthy, even though some newspapers and magazines are not available on smart devices. Meanwhile, 23% view print media as a source of fake news, showing skepticism about biased or misleading reporting. Another 17% think it is mostly false, questioning the accuracy of the information. The remaining 12% are unsure, reflecting uncertainty about media credibility.

**Conclusion**

The 2024 general election redefined mass media consumption and trust. Print media (36%) remains a powerful, second-most reliable information source. It follows the Internet in trustworthiness. Despite rapid digitization, newspapers continue to capture the imagination of readers across urban, semi-urban/rural areas. Approximately 48% of Indian citizens considered print media the second-best medium, which significantly helps in creating awareness. Overall, newspapers continue to serve as intermediaries of political knowledge and social choice. This is consistent with the known role of intellectuals.

An analysis of Prabhat Khabar and Dainik Bhaskar reveals that most content consisted of news briefs, advertisements, and listicles. In-depth articles and editorials were rare. Dainik Bhaskar published slightly more articles (20%) and editorials (4.38%) than Prabhat Khabar (15.93% articles, 2.65% editorials). This suggests a bit more focus on political analysis. Still, both newspapers published a few serious analytical pieces.

A concern is the perception of misinformation. While 48% said they trusted print media, 23% claimed it frequently reported false information. Another 17% declared it misleading. This duality

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shows that credibility is not yet eroded. However, readers are now more vigilant about news fabrication and manipulation.

In other words, despite the speed and popularity of digital media, print media continues to offer credibility, trust, and depth. These are essential requirements for effective electoral communication. Growing skepticism about misinformation and shrinking space for editorials and features signal a need for reform in journalistic practices.

**Recommendations**

To survive in the digital era, print media must adapt by making significant editorial changes, enhancing credibility, and embracing purifying journalistic practices. Newspapers should focus on delivering more value-added analysis and interpretation, as readers now seek content with greater context, depth, and balance rather than simple information. Print media offers an opportunity for deeper understanding, with detailed editorials, features, or opinion pieces that digital platforms often lack the time or space to provide.

In line with this argument, promoting transparency and rigorous fact-checking are key suggestions recently highlighted by Facebook. Subscribing to a newspaper encourages readers to fact-check, and newspapers should further enhance their value by implementing a transparent correction policy. Such measures would help restore trust and safeguard the established reputation of print journalism.

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