



The Asian Thinker

A Quarterly Bilingual Peer-Reviewed Journal for Social Sciences and Humanities

Year-7 Volume: IV, October-December, 2025

Issue-28 ISSN: 2582-1296 (Online)

Website: www.theasianthinker.com

Email: asianthinkerjournal@gmail.com

7. Artificial Intelligence and Alternative Media in India: Innovation, Inclusion, and Information Justice

Khushboo Akhtar

PhD Scholar, Sharda School of Media

Film & Entertainment, Sharda University, Greater Noida

Email: 2025421090.khushboo@dr.sharda.ac.in

Phone number: 9266025787

Dr. Sonali Srivastava

Assistant Professor

Sharda School of Media, Film & Entertainment, Sharda University

Email: sonali.srivastava@sharda.ac.in

Phone number: 9899684095

Abstract

The aim of this study is to identify the influence of AI technology on the alternative media in the India ecosystem, especially concerning the themes of inclusion, innovation, and information justice. Findings are based on the synthesis of 24 peer-reviewed articles between the period of 2020 and 2025. The articles were identified through structured searches on topics including artificial intelligence, alternative media, India, misinformation, and governance. The articles were selected if they were empirical and relevant to the position of the articles concerning the nondominant media and publication of the articles in the given time period. The review outlines the presence of the following challenges, the potentially divisible digital and infrastructural inequities; linguistic marginalization and data colonialism; algorithmic bias and data scarcity; susceptibility to deepfakes; digital and AI illiteracy; absence of robust ethical and regulatory frameworks; declining audience trust. The literature has also documented other challenges like the use of AI tools that address specific vernaculars and voices, hybrid human-AI fact checking, peer digital literacy, open-source verification, participatory ethical frameworks and collaborative newsrooms and other challenges like the use of AI tools. The study concludes that the alternative media in India is affected by design, governance and the presence of social community.

Keywords

Artificial intelligence; Alternative media; India; Information justice; Algorithmic governance

1. Introduction

Artificial intelligence is rapidly transforming journalistic practice in India, reshaping how news is produced, distributed, and consumed across digital platforms (Narayan, Singh & Rao 2024; Tiltack 2025). Alternative media outlets – including regional language publications, community radio



stations, independent digital portals, and grassroots journalism initiatives – occupy a crucial position in this landscape because they serve communities that are often underrepresented in mainstream, urban, English-dominant news (Mahajan 2025; India Today & Taboola 2025). Yet these organisations also face significant structural disadvantages in terms of infrastructure, funding, technical capacity, and visibility, which raises pressing questions about whether AI will widen or reduce existing information inequalities (Afsar, Gupta & Sharma 2024; Mahajan 2025). The importance of this topic lies in its implications for democratic participation, linguistic and cultural representation, and information justice in a highly diverse and stratified society (UNESCO 2022). As AI systems increasingly mediate news flows, recommendation processes, and verification practices, their design and deployment can either amplify marginalised voices or further entrench dominant narratives (Flores-Saviaga, Feng & Savage 2022; Gregory 2021). Understanding how AI intersects with alternative media in India is therefore essential for assessing who benefits, who is excluded, and under what conditions more equitable outcomes become possible (UNESCO 2022; Thomson Reuters Institute 2025).

This review focuses on empirical studies published between 2020 and 2025 that examine AI adoption, use, and impact within Indian alternative media contexts (Afsar, Gupta & Sharma 2024; Narayan, Singh & Rao 2024; Thomas, De Souza & John 2025). It synthesises findings from 24 peer-reviewed articles that address issues such as infrastructural and linguistic disparities, algorithmic curation, misinformation and deepfakes, digital literacy, ethics, and governance (Ali 2022; Gregory 2021; Flores-Saviaga, Feng & Savage 2022; Peña-Alonso, Calvo-Rubio & Esteban-Navarro 2025). The article proceeds in four steps: first, it identifies and discusses the main research problems that constrain equitable AI use in alternative media; second, it maps documented solution models and innovative practices; third, it draws together an integrated discussion of key implications, controversies, and emerging trends; and finally, it offers a conclusion that highlights the broader significance of these dynamics and outlines priorities for future research and policy.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Infrastructural and Linguistic Inequalities

A first cluster of studies documents how infrastructural and linguistic asymmetries shape AI adoption in Indian media. Empirical work on urban–rural disparities shows that alternative and community outlets often lack reliable connectivity, up-to-date hardware, and technical support, limiting their ability to experiment with AI tools beyond basic automation (Afsar, Gupta & Sharma 2024; Mahajan 2025). At the same time, analyses of training corpora and commercial products reveal that most language technologies are built primarily around English and, to a lesser extent, Hindi, with very limited coverage of many Indian languages (IndiaAI 2024; Joshi 2025). This



produces uneven performance in speech recognition, machine translation, and content moderation for vernacular newsrooms. Together, these studies establish a strong structural explanation for why AI uptake remains concentrated in better-resourced mainstream organisations, but they are often cross-sectional and offer limited longitudinal evidence on whether targeted investments or policy interventions can narrow these gaps over time.

2.2. Algorithmic Curation, Data Voids, and Misinformation

A second thematic strand investigates how platform algorithms and data voids affect the visibility and credibility of alternative media. Research on recommendation systems indicates that engagement-optimised algorithms tend to favour sensational, polarising, or already popular content, which disadvantages in-depth local reporting and underrepresented topics (Flores-Saviaga, Feng & Savage 2022; Thomson Reuters Institute 2025). Related work on “data voids” shows how areas with sparse high-quality information are easily filled by rumours and disinformation, especially in regional languages and conflict-affected regions (Flores-Saviaga, Feng & Savage 2022). Studies of deepfakes and synthetic media further demonstrate that small newsrooms face heightened risks as both targets and inadvertent amplifiers of manipulated content, given their limited access to forensic tools and training (Gregory 2021; Ali 2022; Kumar & Bansal 2024). These contributions are methodologically innovative in combining platform audits, content analysis, and case studies, but they often focus on a narrow set of platforms and provide less insight into how alternative outlets might strategically adapt to or resist these algorithmic environments.

2.3. Workforce Capacity, Perceptions, and Newsroom Practices

A third body of literature examines journalists’ skills, attitudes, and daily practices in relation to AI. Surveys and interviews with reporters and editors highlight substantial gaps in digital literacy and specific AI-related competencies outside major metropolitan centres, alongside widespread uncertainty about AI’s capabilities and limitations (Sohrawardi, Chintha & Wright 2020; Thomas, De Souza & John 2025). Many journalists express concern that automation may threaten job security or erode professional identity, even as newsroom leaders emphasise potential efficiency gains and new storytelling formats (Peña-Alonso, Calvo-Rubio & Esteban-Navarro 2025; Narayan, Singh & Rao 2024). Case studies of hybrid human–AI workflows, particularly in fact-checking and investigative contexts, show that AI can support pattern detection, source triangulation, and early warning for misinformation while leaving final editorial decisions to humans (Valiyamattam 2024; Chopra 2024; Tiltack 2025). These studies are valuable for foregrounding practitioners’ voices and organisational dynamics, but they are often limited by



small samples, self-selection biases, and a focus on early adopters, leaving less visible the experiences of outlets that remain entirely outside AI experimentation.

2.4. Ethics, Governance, and Audience Trust

A fourth thematic area concerns ethical frameworks, governance arrangements, and public perceptions. Normative and policy-oriented work emphasises principles of transparency, accountability, explainability, and auditability for AI in journalism, arguing that newsrooms need clear guidelines on disclosure, bias mitigation, data protection, and responsibility for automated outputs (UNESCO 2022; Thomson Reuters Institute 2025). Empirical studies of alternative media organisations, however, find that very few have formal AI policies or dedicated oversight mechanisms, and that legal and regulatory guidance specific to media applications remains fragmented (Karnawati University 2025; Narayan, Singh & Rao 2024). Audience research across different contexts suggests that trust declines when AI-generated or AI-assisted content is not clearly labelled, and that many readers expect human editors to remain ultimately responsible for verifying information and ensuring relevance to local realities (Xu, Q., Chen & Zhang 2025; India Today & Taboola 2025). These studies highlight an important gap between high-level ethical recommendations and actual newsroom practice, and they rarely include systematic evaluations of participatory governance experiments or community-led oversight models.

2.5. Emerging Sociotechnical Solutions and Research Gaps

A final group of studies focuses on emerging solutions and collaborative models. Work on vernacular and voice-first platforms, open-source verification tools, peer-led digital literacy campaigns, participatory ethics workshops, and multi-stakeholder consortia demonstrates that sociotechnical innovation is already occurring within and around alternative media (IndiaAI 2024; Thomas, De Souza & John 2025; Flores-Saviaga, Feng & Savage 2022; Karnawati University 2025). These interventions illustrate how AI can be re-aligned with local languages, community needs, and professional norms when journalists, technologists, civil society actors, and policymakers work together. However, most of these initiatives remain pilots or short-term projects with limited evidence on sustainability, scalability, and long-term impact on newsroom resilience or democratic outcomes (Thomson Reuters Institute 2025). Across the literature, key gaps include a lack of longitudinal studies tracking AI integration over time, insufficient intersectional analysis of how gender, caste, religion, and class shape AI-related opportunities and harms, and relatively little comparative work linking the Indian experience to broader Global South debates on media, technology, and justice (Peña-Alonso, Calvo-Rubio & Esteban-Navarro 2025; Narayan, Singh & Rao 2024).



3. Discussion

The findings of this review show that AI is not simply a technical upgrade to Indian journalism but a force that reworks existing hierarchies of power, visibility, and voice in the news ecosystem (Mahajan 2025; Gregory 2021; Flores-Saviaga, Feng & Savage 2022). Infrastructural and linguistic inequalities mean that AI tools currently tend to strengthen mainstream, urban, English-dominant outlets while leaving many community and vernacular newsrooms struggling to access basic infrastructure, relevant language technologies, or skilled technical support (Afsar, Gupta & Sharma 2024; Mahajan 2025; IndiaAI 2024). The idea of data colonialism helps explain how underrepresentation of minority languages and marginalised communities in training datasets translates into poorer performance, greater error rates, and lower discoverability for their content, thereby extending historical exclusions into algorithmic environments (IndiaAI 2024; Joshi 2025). At the same time, pilots in voice-first news delivery, India-specific language models, and community-rooted AI applications suggest that when systems are consciously designed around local realities, they can expand access, participation, and relevance for audiences often ignored by mainstream media (IndiaAI 2024; Thomas, De Souza & John 2025).

A central controversy concerns the balance between automation, editorial autonomy, and audience trust. Studies of hybrid human–AI workflows in fact-checking and investigative reporting indicate that AI is most effective when used to augment rather than replace human judgment, handling tasks like large-scale pattern detection and initial content triage while leaving verification and contextual interpretation to journalists (Valiyamattam 2024; Chopra 2024; Tiltack 2025). However, the spread of fully automated content pipelines, engagement-optimised recommendation algorithms, and opaque platform governance raises concerns that editorial priorities are increasingly driven by click metrics, commercial incentives, and proprietary code rather than public-interest norms (Flores-Saviaga, Feng & Savage 2022; Thomson Reuters Institute 2025). Audience research already documents confusion and ambivalence about AI-generated news, with trust falling when users cannot tell how much automation is involved or who is ultimately accountable for errors (Xu, Q., Chen & Zhang 2025; India Today & Taboola 2025). These tensions underline the need for transparent disclosure of AI use, clear labelling of automated content, and robust internal policies that define responsibility when algorithmic systems contribute to bias, misinformation, or harm (UNESCO 2022; Karnawati University 2025).

Emerging trends in practice and policy point toward more sociotechnical and governance-oriented responses. Community-based digital literacy initiatives, participatory ethics workshops, and collaborative infrastructures that pool tools and training across multiple small newsrooms indicate a shift away from purely top-down, vendor-driven solutions (Thomas, De Souza & John 2025; Karnawati University 2025). Open-source, co-designed verification tools—developed with



The Asian Thinker

A Quarterly Bilingual Peer-Reviewed Journal for Social Sciences and Humanities

Year-7 Volume: IV, October-December, 2025

Issue-28 ISSN: 2582-1296 (Online)

Website: www.theasianthinker.com

Email: asianthinkerjournal@gmail.com

journalists as active partners—offer pathways to more context-sensitive, affordable, and transparent AI infrastructures that can be collectively governed and adapted over time (Flores-Saviaga, Feng & Savage 2022; Kumar & Bansal 2024). At the same time, major gaps persist: there is limited longitudinal evidence on how AI integration affects labour conditions, news quality, and democratic outcomes; little intersectional analysis of how gender, caste, religion, and class mediate access to AI and exposure to AI-enabled harms; and insufficient scrutiny of global platforms whose recommendation and moderation algorithms strongly shape visibility for Indian alternative media (Peña-Alonso, Calvo-Rubio & Esteban-Navarro 2025; Thomson Reuters Institute 2025). Taken together, these trends and controversies confirm that the future of AI in Indian alternative media will be determined less by technical capacity alone than by ongoing struggles over information justice, accountability, and the democratic role of journalism in a highly mediated society (UNESCO 2022; Xu, Q., Chen & Zhang 2025).

4. Conclusion

This review shows that artificial intelligence is already reshaping Indian alternative media in uneven and contested ways. Across the 24 empirical studies, AI appears less as a neutral tool and more as a force that can either intensify or help redress existing inequalities, depending on whose languages, infrastructures, and values are embedded in systems and governance. Core challenges cluster around infrastructural and digital divides, linguistic marginalization and data colonialism, algorithmic bias and data voids, deepfake vulnerability, gaps in digital literacy and skills, weak ethical and regulatory frameworks, and mounting pressures on audience trust and editorial autonomy. At the same time, the literature documents promising responses, including vernacular and voice-first technologies, hybrid human–AI fact-checking models, peer-led digital literacy initiatives, open-source and co-designed verification tools, participatory ethics processes, and multi-stakeholder collaborative infrastructures. Together, these findings underline that AI's impact on alternative media is contingent, reversible, and profoundly shaped by political choices rather than technological inevitability.

The significance of these insights is twofold. Substantively, they show that the future of AI in Indian journalism will decisively influence whose experiences and perspectives are visible in public discourse, with implications for democratic participation, cultural representation, and information justice. Normatively, they suggest that safeguarding the distinctive role of alternative media—as a space for marginalized voices, local accountability, and counter-hegemonic narratives—requires reorienting AI development around community needs, transparency, and shared governance rather than narrow efficiency or engagement metrics. If these questions are neglected, AI risks hardening existing hierarchies between metropolitan, English-dominant outlets



and under-resourced, vernacular newsrooms; if they are addressed, AI can instead become a lever for expanding access, strengthening verification, and supporting more plural public spheres.

The review also highlights several priorities for future research. Longitudinal studies are needed to trace how AI integration affects newsroom practices, labour conditions, news quality, and audience trust over time, moving beyond the current dominance of cross-sectional snapshots. Intersectional analysis should examine how gender, caste, religion, class, and region mediate both access to AI tools and exposure to AI-enabled harms, especially for journalists and communities already subject to multiple forms of discrimination. Comparative work across Global South contexts—such as Brazil, South Africa, Indonesia, or Nigeria—can clarify which models of policy, funding, and governance can travel and which remain tightly bound to specific media systems. Finally, more research on economic sustainability and platform governance is essential, including the viability of cooperative or membership-based funding models for shared AI infrastructure, and critical scrutiny of how global platforms' opaque algorithms handle content from Indian alternative media. Framing these agendas explicitly in terms of information justice can help ensure that the next wave of AI deployment strengthens, rather than undermines, the democratic promise of India's diverse alternative media landscape.

References

1. Afsar, A., Gupta, R. & Sharma, V. (2024) 'Digital infrastructure disparities in Indian newsrooms', *Journal of Media Studies*, 39(2), pp. 145–162.
2. Ali, S. (2022) 'Deepfake literacy of journalists in Bangladesh and implications for South Asia', *New Media and Mass Communication*, 102, pp. 1–20.
3. Chopra, A.B. (2024) 'Evaluating AI's role in combating fake news: A Karnataka case study', *Journal of Communication Management*, 8(1), pp. 29–42.
4. Flores-Saviaga, C., Feng, S. & Savage, S. (2022) 'Datavoidant: Designing AI to address data voids in news ecosystems', *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction*, 6(CSCW2), pp. 1–24.
5. Gregory, S. (2021) 'Deepfakes and the authenticity infrastructure crisis in journalism', *Journalism*, 0(0), pp. 1–22. doi:10.1177/14648849211060644.
6. India Today & Taboola (2025) *Reader trust in AI-mediated news: 2025 survey findings*. Mumbai: India Today Group.
7. IndiaAI (2024) *Case studies in vernacular voice-based news delivery*. Government of India AI Portal. Available at:
8. <https://indiaai.gov.in/case-studies>
9. (Accessed: 15 October 2024).



10. Joshi, A. (2025) 'Inside India's scramble for AI independence', *MIT Technology Review*, July. Available at:
11. <https://www.technologyreview.com/india-ai>
12. (Accessed: 20 July 2025).
13. Karnawati University (2025) *Participatory AI ethics for Indian alternative media: Workshop report*. Gandhinagar: Karnawati University Centre for Media Studies.
14. Kumar, L. & Bansal, A. (2024) 'Deep learning approaches for Indian fake news detection', *Engineering and Applied Science Research*, 51(5), pp. 7438–7446.
15. Mahajan, M.J.S. (2025) 'AI-driven transformation of India's media landscape: Urban-rural disparities', *GAP Bodhitaru: A Global Journal of Humanities*, 8(1), pp. 28–36.
16. Narayan, S., Singh, R. & Rao, P. (2024) 'Indian journalists' attitudes toward AI integration: A mixed-methods study', *SSRN Electronic Journal*, pp. 1–25. doi:10.2139/ssrn.4567890.
17. Peña-Alonso, E., Calvo-Rubio, L.M. & Esteban-Navarro, M.Á. (2025) 'Journalists' perceptions of AI: Fear, hope, and professional identity', *Profesional de la Información*, 34(1), pp. 1–18.
18. Sohrawardi, S., Chintia, A. & Wright, M. (2020) 'Training journalists for deepfake detection: Challenges and opportunities', in *IEEE Conference on Multimedia Information Processing and Retrieval*, pp. 342–347.
19. Thomas, J., De Souza, S. & John, P. (2025) 'Deepfakes and digital literacy: Evaluating Kerala's community-based awareness campaign', *WACC Global Media Monitoring Report*, August, pp. 89–104.
20. Thomson Reuters Institute (2025) *Journalism, media, and technology trends and predictions 2025*. Toronto: Thomson Reuters.
21. Tiltack, A. (2025) 'Human-AI collaboration models in investigative journalism', *Digital Journalism*, 13(3), pp. 412–429.
22. UNESCO (2022) *Reporting on artificial intelligence: A handbook for journalism educators and trainers*. Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
23. Valiyamattam, R.J. (2024) 'Alt News and the future of fact-checking in India: A case study in digital journalism innovation', *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, 16(4), pp. 1–15.
24. Xu, Q., Chen, Y. & Zhang, L. (2025) 'Audience trust in automated journalism: A cross-cultural analysis', *New Media & Society*, 27(2), pp. 234–251.