INTRODUCTION
Chapter I
Introduction and Rationale

1.1 Introduction
In the world of today, media has become as necessary as food and clothing. It has played a significant role in strengthening the society. Media is considered as "mirror" of the modern society, in fact, it is the media which shapes our lives. It will not be an exaggeration to state that like food and water, media is also a necessity for human existence.

Communication is one thing that binds the society together. Man being a social animal needs to constantly communicate and be communicated to. This cycle of communication can be seen in the way we consume mass media today. Society is influenced by media in so many ways. It is the media for the masses that helps them to get information about a lot of things and also to form opinions and make judgments regarding various issues. It is the media which keeps the people updated and informed about what is happening around them and the world. Everyone can draw something from it.

Many forms of media have evolved over the years. From being one way forms of communication, now we have a new set of media in the form of digital or internet based forms that allow us two-way communication. Today, we have more choices about where to get our news, be it radio, TV, print or digital editions of newspapers and magazines, online journals, podcasts, or even blogs. Our options for informing ourselves of current affairs are seemingly limitless and certainly of varying quality. The media landscape has changed exponentially in the last 100 years, challenging media leaders and journalists who seek to put important issues into the common discourse.

“The purpose of journalism,” write Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel in The Elements of Journalism, “is not defined by technology, nor by journalists or the techniques they employ.” Rather, “the principles and purpose of journalism are defined by something more basic: the function news plays in the lives of people.”

News is that part of communication that keeps us informed of the changing events, issues, and characters in the world outside. Though it may be interesting or even
entertaining, the foremost value of news is as a utility to empower the informed. The purpose of journalism is thus to provide citizens with the information they need to make the best possible decisions about their lives, their communities, their societies, and their governments.

The question then is, are people in a country provided all the news that is important in a fair and balanced manner? If not, democracy which is supposedly, ‘by the people, of the people and for the people’, has very little relevance. People depend on mass media and it is imperative that media fulfils its functions in a democracy, with sincerity and honestly.

1.2 Power of the Press

The press, in the present form, has persisted for close to five hundred years. The struggles the press had to go through to achieve its position and status in the society is synonymous with the struggle of the people to be free and have a say in their affairs. Only in the last one hundred years the press has emerged as the watch dog of democracy and is truly the fourth estate. Press has traditionally been associated with newspapers; with the changes in technology, television and new media have also given the press extra teeth. Now it has the power to reach millions and truly bring about change and development in society.

Five functions of a socially responsible press, based on the 1947 Hutchins Commission report, "A Free and Responsible Press" are:

1. The press should offer a truthful, comprehensive account of the day's events in a context which gives them meaning. Perspective is important, not only objectivity.

2. The press should serve as a forum for comment and criticism.

3. The press should offer a representative picture of constituent groups in society; that is, no stereotyping.

4. The press should transmit cultural heritage, present and clarify goals and values for society.

5. The press should offer full access to the day's intelligence, that is, to reflect the public's right to know.
Freedom of the press refers to freedom of speech and expression which is and always should be a fundamental right. Without this right the liberty of man is not complete. A country pledged to democracy must ensure that its citizens enjoy a free and fair daily press. Press keeps a constant vigil on the liberty of the people. To remove any harsh Government or to fight against dictatorship, anarchy and malpractices, press serves the best. That is why, it may be called in the right proportion that press is the necessary pre-condition to the fulfillment of democratic ideologies.

It is said that the closing down of a newspaper or a news channel is equivalent to inflicting a grievous wound on the society as it comes in the way of people having access to a diversity of news and views on issues of public importance. Dictators and overzealous governments around the world are fearful of an independent and fearless press and therefore use methods to curtail the access to independent information for their people.

Press is the voice of the people in a democratic set up. Press plays an important role in bringing forward the real picture of the society to the common people. They raise voices against anti-social practices such as dowry system, sati, child-labour, etc. In this way, malpractices prevailing in the society are checked and stopped. Today, the press serves the society’s interest by bringing out the corruption in the government and thus holds them accountable to the people at large. Without the press, people in a democracy would not have a means of keeping the government in check.

Figure 1: Media today
1.3 Television medium

Television has had a profound impact on our society. It has changed the life styles of the people and has become a major influence on our culture. Unlike printing, which took hundreds of years to influence the culture, TV’s impact has been almost instantaneous.

The most important feature of television is its ability to deliver simultaneously into the intimate environment of millions of homes, touching lives of the entire household, ideas mingled with powerful drama. Research studies have pointed out that perceptions of the television messages, images and ideas shape the entire social system.

From daily soaps to insightful debates, television has the innate ability to showcase the world around us, both visually and emotionally. How can one not live through the experience of watching *Hum Log* or the election analysis hosted by Prannoy Roy on *Doordarshan* in the 1980s? Today, the intensity of content has not only heightened but the sheer variety of what we are exposed to is unimaginable. One can truly be a couch potato and still know the world around. It is truly a window to the world outside.

Digital media is the source of news for the majority of the young in cities like Bangalore. News is read or watched on smart phones increasingly as the gadget becomes cheaper and connectivity improves. People source news from both traditional media and new media. Whichever is convenient at a given time becomes the source for their daily consumption of news and current affairs. For breaking news, Twitter is the number one choice; for insightful debates people turn to news channels; and for interpretation on the day’s happenings one reads the newspaper. Each medium has a place and following as long as they have unique features to boast of. This is precisely the reason why all forms of news media in the country is showing an upward trend.

1.4 Source Credibility

The credibility of newspapers is something that has a history of over 200 years. There have been ups and downs during the internal emergency newspapers were under intense censorship. But more or less people have accepted newspapers as being source of credible news. Is it the same for television news or do people who watch television news not believe all that they consume? The hold of the government over television for nearly
three decades, the commercial interests of the private channels and the general feeling that television is a medium of entertainment has not helped in the overall perception of this all pervasive medium. But at the same time, we have a proliferation of news channels, which seems to indicate an increasing reliance on television for news and opinion. Television news channels are available in all regions, in all languages and have differing priorities. With these change, it is but natural for the issue of source credibility to surface yet again in the context of the Nira Radia tapes and the issue of ‘paid news’.

Credibility of media is an important principle on which media content is disseminated to the masses. The value which the audience give to the content of news media especially television, is directly related to the perceived credibility of media. The more credible the media is perceived by the people the more important the content will be for them. Source credibility has been a driving factor for centuries when it comes to messages having an impact on the audience. Aristotle, more than two thousand years ago, in his famous communication model emphasized on the importance of source credibility for the messages to have an effect on the receivers.

The dictionary defines credibility as a source, capable of being believed or worthy of belief and confidence. Credibility is the basis for accepting someone or something. Wikipedia states, “Credibility refers to the objective and subjective components of the believability of a source or message”. It comprises of two components: trustworthiness and expertise. Trustworthiness depends on subjective factors, but can include objective measurements like established reliability. Expertise can be subjectively perceived but has objective components like credentials of the source.

According to the Society of Professional Journalists of America, professional integrity is the cornerstone of a journalist’s credibility. We see this at work in India every day when it comes to our newspapers and news channels. The fact that a journalist is considered reliable is the reason for us to believe and accept the news given by him/her. Even a single doubt about the integrity casts a long shadow on the journalist’s credibility. According to Aristotle’s theory of argument, ethos or credibility is the most important element in the speaker’s ability to persuade an audience to accept his/her claims. Aristotle considered intelligence, character and goodwill most essential in assessing credibility of the speaker. Today, the means of communication have reached a stage where audience
demands fast, reliable and accurate information. In this race to be the first with news, sometimes credibility can be a casualty.

Source credibility is the believability of a communicator, as perceived by the recipient of the message. Academic studies of this topic began in the 20th century and were given a special emphasis during World War II, when the US government sought to use propaganda to influence public opinion in support of the war effort (Schramm, 1997). Psychologist Carl Hovland and his colleagues worked at the War Department upon this during the 1940s and then continued experimental studies at Yale University. They built upon the work of researchers in the first half of the 20th century who had developed a *Source-Message-Channel-Receiver* model of communication and, with Muzafwer Sherif, developed this as part of their theories of persuasion and social judgement.

Due to the competitive environment in the field of media, one must always evaluate the information one receives from newspapers, television channels, and internet. Most often, information that is presented contains biases or misleading information that can persuade the public to take a position or action without reasonable cause. When we critically evaluate news media, we find the probable reasons why media behaves the way it does. The media structure in a country- where a few big companies dominate the market; the political ideology- capitalism, and increasingly economic ideology- neoliberalism; and flawed democratic ideals- the very idea that we are democratic, work together in bringing us news and views that benefit only an entrenched group. At times, we are confused about what information to believe or distrust, especially during times of war or tension. Thus, knowing what factors influence the credibility of each source is important.

### 1.5 Rationale for the study

College students are not only young but educated and constantly work with lot of information and data. One important source of empowerment is the media. Information flowing from television news channels will certainly impact their lives and the lives of millions. The decisions they take and the conclusions they reach will definitely be on the basis of adequate and objective news that they consume. The proliferation of 24-hour news channels, both at the national level and increasingly at the local level have provided the students and people large access to various sources of news, the credibility of each
source and medium are necessary for creating any impact on the audience. This encourages us to look into credibility and reliability of news channels, hence this research.

The English news media is considered to wield disproportionate power over the government at the center and its policies. The likes of The Indian Express and The Hindu are today part of myth for having taken on the government and succeeded in either directly or indirectly even ousting them from power. The power seems to have shifted today to the 24x7 English news channels. The four big and popular channels- NDTV 24x7, CNN-IBN, Times Now and India Today exert huge amount of influence on the government of the day. The way these channels covered the CWG and 2G Spectrum scams among others put the government on the back foot and led to many changes. It seems that the government simply cannot ignore the warnings of the news channels and therefore seems to move fast to comply with the ‘will of the people’ as represented by the news channels. Government accountability to some extent has been established.

One caution about the reach of the English news channels- it is confined to the major urban areas of the country and again limited to the elite sections of the society. Rough estimate on the numbers put them at close to 10% of the television viewing audience. The English news channels therefore compete to target this small segment of the India’s population. On the bright side, this segment is growing with the rapid economic growth India is experiencing in the last two decades. As aspiration levels go up, the tendency to watch English news channels will grow as it is perceived to put them into this exclusive club and thus elevate their social standing in the Indian society.

This brings out a pertinent question: How credible are these news channels and do the viewers believe what they hear and see? The 24-hour English news channels don’t have a history unlike their newspaper counterpart, who have been around for close to two hundred years. News channels in the private sector have mushroomed in the last 10-15 years. The perception of the viewers about the credibility of news organizations is important in evaluating its importance for the readers and viewers and at the same time the influence or power it exerts on the power structure in the country. The more the credibility news channels carry among the people, the more power they will in turn be able to exert on the government in power.
1.6 24-hour Television News Channels

![Television Channels](image)

Figure 2: Television channels

It is not unusual to watch rolling 24-hour coverage of a significant news event on television today. We want to switch to a news channel any time of the day, particularly when there is big breaking news - a natural disaster, a plane crash or a terror attack - and get updates with what is going on in a few minutes. From traditional television news channels with half-hour news bulletins two- three times a day, we have moved on to a 24-hour news cycle filled with news updates every hour, news analysis, talk shows based on breaking news and so on.

The 24-hour news channels have fed into public’s desire to know what is going on in the world. There is a sense of impatience amongst the news media. The news media demand instant answers from those in authority and then provide an analysis of a developing news story on the spot based on first impressions and first thoughts in the minds of the speakers rather than a considered opinion.

Television is no longer just a medium of entertainment. Television is serious business. The small screen is growing bigger everyday - not just in size but also in popularity, reach, glamour and returns on investments. The cultural products that are news, reality shows and prime time serials in India in the new millennium have borrowed from several sources and have brought their own conventions and traditions of performance to bear on form, giving it a distinctly Indian identity. The genre of 24x7 news consistently maintain high viewership ratings. This makes the small screen a big medium to reach out to people.
News is much more than a mere media product- it is in the words of Daya Thussu: ‘... a vehicle for engagement in the democratic process, feeding off and into domestic politics and international relations. The growing commercialization of airwaves as a result of the privatization of global communication hard and software, the deregulation of broadcasting and the technological convergence between television, telecom and computing industries have fundamentally changed the ecology of broadcasting... the general shift from public to a rating-conscious television, dependent on corporate advertising and broadcasting to a heterogeneous audience, has implications for news agendas and editorial priorities.’

Media today sees itself as a business quite overtly. It is not particularly good sense to barter away credibility for money, India’s 24x7 news channels have shown an unmistakable trend towards infotainment in an effort to garner maximum viewership. But with increasing corporate interest and stake in news channels, business interest is being given importance.

Given the diversity and size of India, a lot of news content is available for 24x7 news channels to deliver to audiences. This appetite for news and discussions is not new to India. Earlier, radio and print fulfilled this need, and now the audio-visual medium of television is playing a significant role in satisfying this hunger. This rise and success of India’s television channels in particular can in part be attributed to a culture that enjoys a strong oral tradition- that Nobel laureate, economist Amartya Sen has labelled as ‘the argumentative tradition of India’. For Sen these traditions provide a bulwark for the nurturing of Indian democracy.

Nalin Mehta in his book on the development of 24x7 news channels in India, develops this point further by discussing what he terms ‘argumentative television’. Indian television, Mehta writes, ‘thrives on programming genres that marry older argumentative traditions with new technology and notions of liberal democracy to create new hybrid form that strengthens democracy. The appetite for debates is seen in the high decibel nightly news hour on national English news channels. Even though it looks futile, thousands tune into the debate every night to get a quick understanding of the main issues confronting the nation.

One more reason for the fast growth of television sector is the country’s massive news market with 140 dedicated news channels, according to TAM data of October 2011.
The lack of hard regulation has, in one sense, spurred the growth of India’s television sector because many times, it is not multinational corporations that dominate the industry. Rather, local entrepreneurs—such as Pramod Roy and Radhika Roy with NDTV, Subhash Chandra with Zee, the Times of India Group with Times Now, Subroto Roy with Sahara and Rajat Sharma with India TV—have successfully gone into the business of television. Locals know what the market demands and therefore, what content to deliver.

Unlike the West, Advertising remains the primary source of revenue for broadcasters in India. In such a situation, the entire system of metering television viewership is dependent upon where the advertiser is headed. So, advertisers are looking for those shows that have a connection to that audience base. In turn, broadcasters also have to cater to a similar base.

The emergence and rapid growth of 24x7 news channels in India has made India the largest market for television news in the world. Since the Doordarshan years, the media has come to see itself as a business in a much more overt and public way and how 24x7 news channels are now increasingly veering towards infotainment in an effort to outdo the competition and stay ahead of the pack.

The 24-hour television is one where, as Desai puts it, ‘content is squeezing out the awareness of context, stimulation is privileged over perspective and the idea of significance itself is getting reshaped. By making everything equally loud and determinedly transient, memory gets converted… where everything is noticed but little is retained. 24x7 media does not merely reflect the world as it exists, it also helps shape the world it purports to document- the nature of news coverage is altering the consumer’s view of reality. The question raised is, public discourse fostered by television is an expression of democracy or one of consumerist narcissism.

The daily construction of social reality through televised debates has a real impact on the thinking and decision making abilities of the public. In a way, democracy is held to ransom day after day, perceptions of people undergoing constant change with each debate they consume. One cannot thus deny the impact of 24-hour news channels on the psyche of Indians- in the words of McCombs and Shaw, news media is setting the agenda for people to think about certain things as opposed to others, but in certain ways as opposed to other ways.
1.7 Important International News Channels

*Al Jazeera*

![Al Jazeera logo]

*Figure 3: Al Jazeera news channel*

*Al Jazeera* crept quietly onto the international 24-hour news landscape in 1996 and five years later during the second Gulf War the news channel, aimed primarily at Middle Eastern audiences, was a major media player in the American battle to win ‘hearts and minds’. *Al-Jazeera* was started as a 24-hour news channel to give an Arab perspective on the various issues affecting Middle-East in particular and the entire globe. *CNN* coverage lacked depth and perspective and America is perceived as an ally of Israel. The Arab world was ready for a news channel that is truly independent and was willing to take on the monopoly of *CNN*. The coverage of the first Gulf War of 1992 by *CNN* was the spark that ignited the Arab world for an alternative coverage- without Western bias. *Al-Jazeera* was set up in 1996 in the kingdom of Qatar without political or state patronage. The senior staff mostly was trained in the *BBC* school of Broadcast journalism.

Funded by progressive Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Khalifa Al-Thani, who introduced democratization in the state, *Al-Jazeera* was conceived as an independent and non-partisan satellite TV network free from government scrutiny, control and manipulation. 70% of the Arabs with satellite dish rely on *Al-Jazeera* for news, documentaries and political information. Staff was trained in Western journalistic tradition, wielding the expert knowledge and understanding of Arab politics and audiences. In 2007 *Al-Jazeera*
had a staff of 350 journalists and 50 foreign correspondents in 31 countries and an estimated audience of 35 million worldwide.

Before Al-Jazeera came on the scene, there were six Arab satellite networks, either state owned or state supported. They mostly contained official propaganda and spent more money on technology side than on quality. They had audience but they lacked credibility.

Some of the features for the success of Al-Jazeera are: 1. it is a public corporation modeled after BBC, with editorial freedom and independence. During political talk show viewers are encouraged to call in and voice their opinion- programmes are open to all opinions. The channel prioritizes stories according to their news worthiness and not acceptability to local politics. 2. They have a diverse staff from different Arab countries which helped establish a Pan-Arab identity and a broader editorial commitment. 3. Language is an important aspect of communication and Al-Jazeera spoke to the Arab world in Arabic and thus was effective and believable.

Al-Jazeera according to Sharon Waxman, staff writer for Washington Post: “Every news organization is a product of the native culture in which it was conceived.”

The news channel succeeded in mobilizing support for Palestinian cause through coverage of Intifada 2 during the month of September 2000. Al-Jazeera correspondent Jamal Domiloj in the Christian Science Monitor said that, “Al-Jazeera provides a space of freedom to the Arab viewer. Before, Arabs didn’t have any idea of media freedom.”

Al-Jazeera’s role in the context of covering Intifada is built on its ability to air contending ideas and issues. When the Palestinian Intifada is openly discussed in public sphere, as with any democratic issue, it is less likely that any radical position will prevail.

Al Jazeera appeared, at least in conflict, to have burst the bubble of Western news dominance. As Mohamed Zayani observes, ‘The rise of Al Jazeera on the world scene represents a rupture in a hegemonic West-centric media order’ (Miles, 2005). Even Ryan Lackey, who has criticized Al Jazeera Arabic as being biased and does only the bidding of Qatar and Saudi Arabia, acknowledges the news channel as being fair and objective in its coverage of issues. ‘Al Jazeera English is a good source of news’, is a grudging acknowledgement by Lackey, the Editor-in-Chief of The Crescent.
**Cable News Network (CNN)**

CNN was launched in 1980 as a single network to 1.7 million American homes. 30 years later it has the potential to reach 2 billion people in over 200 countries. The editorial distinction over other television news channels is the communication that happens mostly through visuals rather than aural journalism.

CNN delivered immediate liveness. As a rolling news channel it had the ability to report live news but at the cost of encouraging ‘black hole’ - an empty, vacuous form of journalism that privileges content over context (Tuggle and Huffman, 2001).

According to Mary Anne Doane, there is a danger of automatic truth value of liveness - what we see is somehow more believable than what we hear or read. The nightly network channels packaged together well polished news reports, rolling news production appeared, by contrast, a semiotically disorganized medium, according to critics.

The most potent impact attributed to the power of 24-hour news television, however, is what has become widely known as the CNN effect - possible influence CNN was having on foreign policy, most notably in encouraging military interventions into Iraq and Somalia. What CNN did was to bring international issues into sharp focus, with governments expected to act or publicly respond more swiftly than ever before to ongoing events. CNN effect is empirically difficult to assess (Livingstone, 1997). Policy makers in US have very little time to maneuver when visuals of US hostages come beaming live to millions of homes in United States of America. These decisions taken in haste have had devastating effect on the countries targeted by the US like Somalia, Iraq and Afghanistan.

![Figure 4: CNN news channel](image)
The 1991 Persian Gulf War was the first televised war. The war was covered live by three main American networks and the 24-hour news channel CNN. It had the necessary equipment and experience to follow the events in Baghdad on a 24-hour basis. According to Kellner (1992) the media framed the war as an exciting narrative, turning it into a kind of dramatic, patriotic spectacle. It was a narrative, which was influenced by commercial interest, thus, providing a biased account of the events. Going live to the sites of unfolding news is one of the defining characteristics of 24/7 news networks, which has increasingly meant less time for research and verification of information, according to Thussu.

Some of the strategies adopted by global media players, starting with the first 24x7 news network, CNN, include the use of graphics and rhetorical and sensational headlines often presented by glamorous anchors. The nature of 24-hour news also demands that the gap between live reporting from the location of the conflict, and the ensuing recaps and summaries, is filled with talk shows and speculations about the conflict as demonstrated by the CNN case study.

As other international news channels arrived on the scene, the CNN effect began to refer more generally to the influence of global forms of communications on foreign policy making. But while the perceived power of the CNN effect entered into political and media discourse, academic studies began to suggest the relationship between news coverage and foreign policy intervention was something of a myth (Robinson, 2002).

CNN’s coverage of the US Presidential election is exhaustive to say the least. In addition to the debates around the issues in the news, CNN conducts its famous polls that give an assessment of the impact these issues had on public opinion. The ultimate poll is the instant poll that is taken within minutes of the coverage of the speeches made by the presidential candidates. CNN goes out of its way to make people in America believe that only the coverage by CNN news channel matters when it comes to the most important issues facing the country.
CNN, of course, was not the first news organization to establish a transnational news agenda. The BBC’s radio World Service has over many decades been an important source of information across a wide range of countries and contexts, most notably in times of conflict or warfare when information is tightly controlled (Curran & Seaton, 2010). Having built up a reputation for supplying balanced and impartial news around the world (Walker, 1992), a television news channel called BBC World Service News was launched in 1991, now known as BBC World News, with similar public service objectives. It immediately began to penetrate global markets and compete with the reach of CNN.

BBC World News claims to be watched by a weekly audience of 74 million in over 200 countries and territories worldwide. It broadcasts television programming including BBC News bulletins, documentaries, lifestyle programmes and interviews. It employs more correspondents and reporters and has more international bureau than any other news channel. The recent makeover by the channel is an acknowledgement of the fact that BBC needs a new image to stay in the race to compete with other international news channels. Gone are the days when people around the world associated BBC and credible news together. There is a perception war and every news channel is using all their ammunition to come out on top.

BBC in the recent years is increasingly coming under attack for its weak coverage and outright propaganda- the coverage of Iran’s nuclear activities and the Syrian civil war are just two examples of BBC’s failure to report in a balanced and truthful manner.
**Fox News**

The most criticized 24-hour news channel, in respect to encouraging other broadcasters to pursue a tabloid approach to rolling news, is the American station *Fox News*. Launched in 1996, the Murdoch-owned channel took advantage of the relaxation of the ‘fairness doctrine’ a decade earlier- a piece of legislation that ensured broadcasters had to provide balance in reporting- and developed a channel that was, despite the station’s own protestations, explicitly right-wing in its agenda and style of reporting (Outfoxed, 2004).

![Fox News Channel Logo](image)

**Figure 6: Fox news channel**

Rival US news channels have begun to mimic Fox’s polemical approach to news reporting and adopt some of its conventions used to sensationalize rolling coverage (Cushion & Lewis, 2009). For example, where once a ‘breaking news’ tag was used to interrupt the news agenda because a new and important story had broken on air, *Fox News* raised the stakes by producing a ‘News Alert’ in addition to its breaking news stories. Over time, according to the producers who created news alert, it has been used far more liberally and applied to soft news, such as celebrity gossip about Hollywood movie stars (Outfoxed, 2004).

It will be unfair to tar all 24-hour news channels with the same brush. Not all rolling news channels share the same editorial priorities and news agenda. Raymond Khun suggests for instance that *France 24*, ‘accords a relatively low priority to breaking news when it comes to modifying its schedule.’ Likewise, a recent study of *Euronews*
found no breaking news item nor a channel that operates at the pace of other action-packed rolling news stations (Garcia-Blanco & Cushion, 2010).

Some theorists herald the arrival of satellite technology and 24-hour news channels as definitive of processes of globalization (Chalaby, 2003). Building on Marshall McLuhan’s notion of global village these theorists argue that their de-territorializing effect coupled with the ability to simultaneously broadcast around the world and bring audiences together during key moments of breaking news is engendering the emergence of a genuinely global public sphere and laying cosmopolitan foundations of citizenship. Others are less convinced. Much like the broader international media market, the contemporary satellite news landscape continues to be dominated by the major Western players and economic processes (McChesney, 2000). The cultural imperialism thesis, underlined in the 1974 UNESCO report on international media flows, essentially still holds firm: proliferating 24-hour satellite news channels are simply vehicles for the global expansion of corporate capitalism and continuing Western dominance.

In South Asia, the news market is still indisputably dominated by the Indian media juggernaut. The appetite for 24-hour news channels continues to be insatiable in this region (Page & Crawley, 2001). With several Indian channels broadcasting to the region and beyond, as well as dozens of nationally based channels, there are grounds for arguing that new forms of regional little cultural imperialisms may be taking place (Sonwalker, 2001). The ability of non-Western news channels to generate ‘contraflows’ is also called into question by the inequalities of access (Volkmer, 1999). To take an example, CNNI is available in virtually every Indian household with satellite television, while in the USA it is considerably more difficult and expensive to gain access to Zee news broadcasts.

The next stage of development in case of Indian news channels is the internationalization of its content to target audience in other countries. The first step would obviously be to give more coverage to South-Asia and Asia in general if Indian news media has to go global. Indian market, thankfully, is still not saturated as the country has a long way to go in bringing about all round development. English news channels have laid the foundation for future growth in the last decade. It can only get better and bigger from here onwards.
1.8 History of Indian Television and News Channels

Broadcasting in India began with the practice of amateur broadcasting in 1923. By 1927, broadcast stations were established by the Indian Broadcasting Company in metropolises of Bombay and Calcutta. Broadcasting in India was given new impetus under the leadership of Lionel Fielden of the BBC, who took charge as Controller of Broadcasting in 1935. Under Fielden’s guidance, the All India Radio (AIR) network consisting of medium-wave radio stations at principal centers was set in motion.

The birth of television in India came about in 1959. To begin with, 21 television sets were provided in rural locations near Delhi. Following which, UNESCO provided 50 sets, which were also installed in rural areas. During 1960-61, an educational experiment was carried out under UNESCO’s auspices, which was designed to air content aimed at changing the audience’s attitude toward particular issues (Chatterji, 1991).

The Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE) was an important milestone in the growth of Indian television. In SITE, the United States’ NASA satellite (ATS-6) was used to broadcast TV programmes to receivers in 2,400 villages in six states (Singhal and Rogers 1989). Doordarshan produced the programmes aired over ATS service, and they consisted of a mix of educational, news, general interest, and cultural programmes.

SITE illustrated the importance of using satellites in expanding television coverage in India. This in turn assisted in paving the way for India’s own communication satellites. NASA launched the Indian National Satellite, the INSAT-1A in 1982. Another
multi-purpose satellite, the INSAT-1B was launched for the purpose of providing broadcasting in India in 1983. Over the period 1984-85, 120 television transmitters were installed in India to increase television coverage via INSAT-1B satellite.

In tandem with the liberalization that was to occur in other sectors of the Indian economy, the communication sector, especially electronic communications, underwent a sea change in the last two decades. The advent of satellite television has made a huge difference to the broadcasting scenario in India.

It is not accidental that India’s opening of its skies to cable and satellite television were a fallout of the country opening its doors to economic liberalization resulting in choice for the Indian consumer, something the Nehruvian years of development and monopolies had not left us prepared for. Consequently, India’s consumer revolution got a jump start when cable and satellite television reconfigured India’s media scape.

The advent of satellite delivery of television programming brought about a sea change in the Indian broadcasting landscape. The decade of 1990s saw private television players establish themselves in India, changing the contours of the industry. The provision of television was no longer the monopoly of the state; vibrant competition had grown from both transnational and local media groups.

The major news channels in English and Hindi that Indians tune into apart from DD are NDTV, Cable News Network-Indian Broadcasting Network (CNN-IBN), STAR News, Headlines Today, Aaj Tak, India TV, Zee TV, British Broadcasting Corporation World (BBC), Times Network (Times Now), and Cable News Network (CNN). In August 2000, Zee News and STAR News were the undisputed market leaders with Zee News having 51 per cent and STAR News following with 38 percent of the total viewership among news channels. CNN-IBN was launched in December 2005 and rapidly became a popular English language news channel viewed across India (Ninan, 2000).

The two global brand names in news, CNN and BBC, had a smaller viewership in India in 2000. BBC World was however way ahead of CNN with a reach of 8.5 million cable homes as opposed to 4.5 million for CNN (Vidyasagar, 2000). CNN South Asia was launched in July 2000 to cater to India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. CNN was wooing regional audiences by putting country specific content on prime time, a strategy pursued from September 1997. It seems that this strategy has paid off as CNN’s viewers had

Don Flournoy (2004) claims that CNN owner Ted Turner took a conscious decision to regionalize its broadcasting. It hired journalists from around the world to provide a better perspective of news emerging from their place of origin and later regional editions of CNNI for targeted regions like India were launched to provide regional flavor but through regional eyes. This has impacted the credibility of CNN positively.

According to Santosh Desai, social commentator, television plays a critical role in creation of a consumer society. As technological form, television is designed to make consumers out of human beings. “Overall television helps create a world in which we are what we desire and thus we are what we consume,” Desai says.

By 2000, the success of satellite and cable television in India had become a matter of fact. From mere two channels owned by the state owned broadcaster Doordarshan prior to 1991, Indian viewers could access more than fifty channels by 1996. Just fifteen years later, by 2011, India had 647 television channels… and counting. Homes with cable and satellite television connections, which numbered just 1.2 million in 1992 had grown to 103 million by 2010 and 108 million by 2011. The number of digital pay – television homes numbered 32 million and this figure is expected to rise to 69 million by 2014. This rise has been aided by huge increase in advertising revenue as advertisers work to tap into India’s rapidly growing consumer market with disposable incomes and media induced aspirations to a consumerist lifestyle.

![Figure 8: Public service broadcaster](image)

Television in India has come a long way since the days of a single, state owned channel in 1959 to having an estimated 250 channels and still counting. Doordarshan

During the period prior to 1990s Indian television programming focused mainly on developmental issues such as agriculture and family welfare and little emphasis on television as a medium of entertainment. Doordarshan shifted to colour broadcasting with the live telecast of the 1982 Asian Games in New Delhi. In the mid-1980s onwards, Doordarshan started to broadcast more entertainment based genres, such as serials and soap operas.

News has become an essential component of our life, and is calling for our attention with other popular soaps in different channels. The recent trend being every broadcaster is adding a news channel to their offerings. These channels not only revolutionized the concept of news on Indian television but also changed the news formats. Before 1991 Government had complete control and monopolized newscast on Indian television through Doordarshan. Post liberalization in 1991, the entry of private channels has made the news an essential commodity like food, clothing and shelter. The strong point of today’s news bulletins is their topicality, objectivity, and glossy editing and high-quality visuals. News has traveled a long way from the DD era, from Local events to International events, breaking news to news analysis; television soap to page3 news, every happening comes under purview of news.

As a public broadcaster, Doordarshan presented the news in naturalized manner. All controversial issues were pushed under the carpet. The ruling government had a strong hold on the television broadcasting. Doordarshan news bulletins were unable to provide the international news to the national viewers. Objectivity had been the first casualty as news was invariably slanted to suit the party in power.

One of the many strands of Doordarshan’s response to the growing popularity of satellite channels in 1994 was the blueprint for an upmarket and informed current affairs channel. With live news and business programming from around the world, this channel, DD3, was envisaged as a serious attempt to win back the elites who watched BBC World and Star Plus instead of Doordarshan. Bhaskar Ghose planned to provide independent news bulletins outsourced to private producers, instead of Doordarshan’s usual propaganda, with live discussions, chat shows and foreign entertainment programmes.
The channel was formally inaugurated in October 1994. On the question of showing live current affairs programmes, the then Prime Minister of India P V Narasimha Rao immediately ordered the closure of the channel. The Congress was afraid that there would be no way of controlling anybody from saying anything against the ruling party. Rao was convinced that live television would subvert the government. (Ghose, 2005).

The news was liberated from the confines of the DD newsroom and gained in objectivity and credibility when New Delhi Television (NDTV) produced ‘The World This Week’ in 1988. Everyone was waiting for the Friday night to watch ‘The World This Week’. This was the only India-based program, which looked at the rest of the world. The World This Week was the best current affairs program on the international scenario and carried good stuff of news, which the regular DD news failed to carry. This programme is ranked as one of the country’s finest and most popular television shows. In 1989, NDTV produced India’s first live televised coverage of the country’s general elections. The critical and commercial success of the coverage set a new standard for Indian television. After the Gulf War the media panorama has changed forever.

CNN was the first non-Doordarshan channel to beam news to Indian households. The live coverage of the first Gulf war in 1991 increased the appetite among the middle-class Indians for live, on-the-stop and extensive coverage of incidents and issues. Slowly, Indian private channels started offering entertainment based programming for the country. The nation had to wait a while before the Indian news channels took on the challenge from both Doordarshan on one hand and the international broadcasters CNN and BBC on the other.

Post-1990 satellite television in India has become transnational in nature. It coincided with the entry of multinational companies in the Indian markets under the Government policy of privatization. By 1991, new satellite technology allowed the Hong Kong based Star TV network to bypass Doordarshan’s authority in India. International satellite television was introduced in India by CNN through its coverage of the Gulf War in 1991; anything unlike shown on Doordarshan, and the middle classes in India eagerly watched.

Zee TV of Subhash Chandra in 1992 became the first channel to start airing Hindi soaps, talk shows and sitcoms- national language, beyond that offered by Doordarshan.
Zee was not subject to direct governmental control over programming content, and this factor alone offered audiences the chance to witness democratic debate on television.

Aap ki Adalat hosted by Rajat Sharma became the most popular show on Zee. People witnessed politicians, business people and celebrities subject to mock trials and rapid fire question and answer sessions. The fact that for a brief period people witnessed politicians, powerful and arrogant, being grilled, their face unmasked and put in a spot was cathartic enough. Aap ki Adalat opened up the space for public debate on television for the first time. By offering an audience base with disposable incomes to be targeted by advertisers during advertisement breaks, Zee benefitted commercially too.

![Times Now](https://example.com/times_now.png)

**Figure 9: Times Now news channel**

The forays by NDTV and Aaj Tak in the late 1990s gave way to an unprecedented growth of 24-hour news channels in India. According to TAM data, as of October 2011, there were 140 news channels in various languages including sixteen in English and 30 in Hindi. Among the English news channels, Times Now is the clear front runner commanding the highest percentage of viewership at 33.8 %, followed by CNN-IBN at 22.8 % and NDTV 24x7 with 21.6 %.

After its negotiations with CNN for a collaborative news channel in India broke down, Purie decided to go it alone- India’s first stand-alone private news channel. Aaj Tak was built on a low-cost, high-technology model. It was the first channel in India, and possibly in the world to have a complete newsroom automation system. This meant that all editing operations were conducted on non-linear systems, which was a great advantage for faster production. The tremendous rate of obsolescence of technology also brought down studio and equipment cost drastically. TV Today invested in small Panasonic cameras costing $4,000-$5000 each compared with Sony cameras that NDTV had invested in, costing roughly $20,000- $25,000 each. This low cost of investment in hardware was a significant factor in its success.
The other innovation that *Aaj Tak* introduced was mobile outside broadcast (OB) vans. Other channels had fixed V-SAT facilities at their bureaus across the country for live coverage, they did not have the ability to regularly produce live broadcasts outside the studio on short notice. *Aaj Tak* invested Rs. 36 million on two initial OB vans that could broadcast live to a satellite within 15 minutes of reaching the location.

The above reasons allowed *Aaj Tak* to break even on its initial investment within a year of its launch and become the leader in news market, a position it retains till date. Some credit its success to the aggressive use of Khari Boli, the language of the Hindi heartland, others to the live element in its broadcast.

In the year 1998, *Star TV* beamed the first 24-hours news channel *Star News* to India. *Aaj Tak*, 24 hours Hindi news channel, soon followed in 2000. *NDTV 24x7* took the place of *Star News* in 2003 as the contract with *Star TV* expired and Prannoy Roy ventured on his own. Earlier New Delhi Television Company (*NDTV*), which incidentally completed 25 years of its existence as a software provider, was producing a one-hour, once in a week news based content ‘The World This Week’, which was aired on *Doordarshan*. Eventually, *NDTV 24x7* was born and it heralded the revolution in news television.
Journalists like Prannoy Roy, Rajdeep Sardesai, Arnab Goswami and Barkha Dutt rose to fame on the success of NDTV. As viewership increased with the steady economic growth happening in the country, there was scope for more news channels to come up. Rajdeep Sardesai established his own television news channel CNN-IBN with US based CNN as a collaborator and stakeholder. Simultaneously, Arnab Goswami also broke ranks with NDTV and became the founder Editor-in-Chief of Times Now, with expertise and international programming from Reuters. The Times group sought to consolidate their hold on the Indian news market by adding a television news channel to their already dominant hold over print with The Times of India and Economic Times newspapers. Eventually, all the three ventured into business news by launching business news channels; NDTV Profit, CNBC, and Times ET respectively.

By early 2002, cable and satellite subscription was as high as 50 percent of all homes with television sets, reaching 40 million according to the NRS 2002 survey. In 2001, a cable subscriber could watch news on a number of 24-hour channels, such as STAR News, Zee News, CNN, BBC, and daily newscasts on several regional channels such as Udaya TV and Raj TV. It was in this media ecology that the riots of Gujarat took place in 2002, leading to the first 24-hour coverage of communal conflict in India. The 24-hour television channels captured the riots live, etching the horror of communal riots in audiences’ mind. It created a sense of outrage against revenge attacks and the victimization of a minority community.

Ashutosh, former Managing Director, IBN7 referred to the coverage of the Gujarat riots as the greatest contribution of the Indian news media to society. Similarly, B.V.Rao, former Editor, Governance Now, and Group Editor, Samay Network, felt that the exposure to international news media’s coverage of conflict and war, and a general in
your face kind of news coverage too influenced the national news media, particularly the 24-hour television coverage of the Gujarat riots. Some even argue that the first 24-hour television’s communal riot coverage tainted the then Gujarat CM and BJP leader, Narendra Modi’s candidature as the future Prime Minister of India. Both the US and UK governments refused to issue a travel visa to Modi on the basis of the allegations of human rights abuses during the communal riots in Gujarat in 2002, according to Naqvi.

What the Gulf War coverage did to the international news segment, the coverage of the terrorist attack on Mumbai in November 2008 did to the Indian television news market. For 72 hours there was non-stop coverage of the now infamous 26/11 attack on Taj Hotel and other prominent venues in the financial capital of India by the national news networks. Just about every aspect was looked into, instant surveys done, opinions highlighted and conclusions drawn. This was unprecedented in the history of news, not just in India but anywhere around the world. The initial shock at the audacity of the attack was transformed into jingoistic calls for revenge against Pakistan. One television channel kept up the pressure on the government to take action for the delay in sending for the NSG commandos, who finally brought the 3-day old drama to a dramatic end. The chief minister of Maharashtra was forced to resign as was then Home Minister of India. The power of the media was there for all to see - media not only informed the people but went all out to drum up public opinion for a cause.

When the dust settled over the Mumbai carnage, critics took on the media and television news channels in particular, to task. Their contention was that the detailed live coverage gave the terrorists and their masters in Pakistan an opportunity to showcase their destructive ability to the world. There was also the issue of information about commando action that could have helped the terrorists to evade and thus cause further harm and delay to the counter action by the security forces. News media ironically had their highest TRPs during the coverage of 26/11 as just about everyone was glued to the television sets. But on the flip side there were calls for restraint and restriction on future coverage of similar sensitive incidents by the television news media. The Broadcast Regulation Bill, which was gathering dust, suddenly made sense to the government and people at large.
Television Citizen Journalism in India

Figure 12: CNN-IBN news channel

The third phase in the global expansion of television news channels saw a marked scaling down of aspirations, with the proliferation in national news channels competing within nations. By early 2009, for example, India had over 70 rolling news channels. The global rise of 24-hour news channels has meant stations operate in far more crowded and competitive marketplace. Many media scholars and journalists claim this has encouraged news conventions that champion greater speed and immediacy at the expense of balance and accuracy. Overall, the third phase has also seen a regionalization of the 24-hour news channels, the more competitive broadcast news environment has arguably encouraged a growth in market-led news conventions in rolling news provisions.

The Ernst and Young report states that in 2010, the Entertainment & Media industry in India was valued at US $16.3 billion and the industry is forecast to grow at a compounded annual growth rate of 12% to reach a value of US$ 25.8 billion in the next four years. Within this the broadcasting and cable television industry revenue for 2010
was estimated at US$ 7.2 billion, up 13.3% from the previous year, mainly driven by a 19% growth in advertising revenue. The report suggests that the continued digitalization of distribution infrastructure, the demand for regional and niche content, and low television penetration will drive growth in the television segment of E&M industry. The latest figures of 2015 puts the revenue of the broadcast and cable industry in India at $ 8.2 billion and is expected to cross the $15 billion mark by 2019.

1.9 Regulation of Broadcast and Cable Media

“Private TV channels beam their programmes from outside the country. Some of these channels, at times, do not exhibit the requisite degree of sensitivity to Indian values and culture. Government intends to introduce a bill in the Parliament which would seek to facilitate the broadcasting of such channels within the ambit of the proposed law and among other things provide for application of a broadcasting and advertising code on such channels.”

C.M. Ibrahim, the then Information and Broadcasting minister, said in reply to a question pertaining to private broadcasters in Parliament on 27 February 1997.

The intention of the Union government in the introduction of the proposed legislation on broadcasting were fairly clear. Amongst other things, the government wished to exert authority over the private broadcasters by seeking adherence to a broadcasting code. Here indeed is an expression of the fear of the nation-state, evoked by the spectre of global television. All these factors came to play in the drafting and introduction of the Broadcasting Bill in 1997 (Narayan, 2014).

The Indian news market has been growing exponentially in the past two decades. By early 2009, the Indian audience were subjected to a cacophony of nearly 450 commercially driven broadcasts, which catering to around 500 million viewers in India. According to the then I&B Minister Anand Sharma, in February 2009, there were a total of 215 news and current affairs television channels being received by Indian viewers.

According to Justice Markandey Katju, a large section of the media, particularly the electronic media, does not serve the interest of the people, in fact some of it is positively anti-people (Katju, 2011). They concentrate on sensational stories and ignore important news that affect people at large.
Three specific charges against the media-
1. It diverts the attention from the real issues to non-issues,
2. It divides the people by charging a community/group of crimes without verification, like in case of bomb blasts, and
3. It promotes superstition instead of rational and scientific ideas.

Justice Katju gave two suggestions to correct this anomaly-
1. Through consultation and discussion prevail upon the good sense and responsibility of media to society and
2. Use the stick and force them to adhere to rules, in extreme cases.

1.10 Media Credibility

Mrs. Indira Gandhi was assassinated at around 9.20 am on 31 October 1984. She was rushed to the Safdarjung hospital and the doctors tried to save her by removing the bullets. The PM died in the hospital about one and half hours later. The BBC in its radio broadcast reported the death of Mrs. Gandhi at 11 am. *All India Radio (AIR)* gave information of the shooting at 12 noon but both *AIR* and *Doordarshan* reported the death of the Prime Minister only at 6 pm.

The nation knew about the death of Mrs. Gandhi many hours before the public broadcasters *AIR* and *Doordarshan* made in official. There are reasons why the government run media held back the information about the death- to see that law and order is maintained once the news is official communicated- but it once again called into question the credibility of the official media organisations. The delay, coupled with alternative sources that had broadcast the news of the death of Mrs. Gandhi, compromised the integrity of the public broadcaster.

The press came under severe censorship during the Internal Emergency (1975-1977). Most accepted their fate but only *The Indian Express* and *Statesmen* stood up to the pressures of government restrictions and emerged more credible in the aftermath of emergency. *AIR*, on the other hand, became the official mouth piece of the government and lost its focus and credibility. People turned to other sources that they found was more credible- this was also the time that the print media, which was in private hands, had the golden era.
“You don’t realize how little accuracy there is in network TV reporting until they cover a story in your hometown.” A quote attributed to the American freelance writer Robert Brault who has written the book ‘Round up the Usual Suspects’.

This quote somehow seems apt for the Indian private television news media in the wake of mounting criticism of the quality of news coverage and the credibility crisis they are facing of late. News broadcasters, today, have faced flak for their coverage which is often dubbed as misleading, hyped-up and downright insensitive, especially when it comes to reporting disasters and other tragic incidents. Debates on private news channels have been censured for being raucous and shrill.

Addressing the gathering at the Mumbai Press Club on 30 April 2015, Pranay Roy, executive co-chairman of NDTV group, said the biggest danger that TV news faced today was “tabloidization”, which is the death of good journalism. He received the lifetime achievement award for excellence in journalism on the occasion.

What is credibility and why media credibility is the core to the success or failure of a news organization? When someone talks about credible information, BBC comes to mind. When Mrs. Indira Gandhi was assassinated by her bodyguards on 31st October 1984, the state owned AIR and Doordarshan simply held back the news of the death of the Prime Minister for almost 7 hours on the instructions of the government. People came to know about the news from BBC radio first. There are many such examples that bring home the point that people accept news to be authentic from a source that they find credible.

According to the Society of Professional Journalists of America, professional integrity is the cornerstone of journalist’s credibility. We see this at work every day when it comes to our newspapers and news channels. The fact that a journalist is considered reliable is the reason for us to believe and accept the news given by him/her. Even a single doubt about the integrity casts a long shadow on the journalist’s credibility. Barkha Dutt has earned a reputation for her reporting skills, especially during the Kargil conflict. Later, doubts were cast on the authenticity of the information she had given- this made a big dent on her credibility and career as a journalist. Years of hard work to earn a reputation and maintaining it with rigor can be damaged by one oversight or exaggeration.
Today, the means of communication have reached a stage where audience demands fast, reliable and accurate information. Due to the competitive environment in the field of media, one must always evaluate the information one receives from newspapers, television channels, and internet. Most often, information that is presented contains biases or misleading information that can persuade the public to take a position or action without reasonable cause. At times, we are confused about what information to believe or distrust, especially during times of war or tension. Thus, knowing what factors influence the credibility of each source is important.

Although TV news has its moments of shining success, such as the coverage of the terrorist attacks on the East Coast of the United States in September, 2001, the Gujarat riots of Feb-March 2002 and the invasion of Iraq in March, 2003, over the last few decades the credibility of TV news in general has declined. Many scholars have gone into this phenomenon and generated a host of debates on the issue of credibility of news channels. There is a lot of speculation, not based on studies, on the reasons for the decline in news credibility on television channels.

Here are just a few reasons why:

- TV news is no longer seen as public interest programming the way it once was during the monopoly years of Doordarshan. It's now a moneymaking endeavor driven only by ratings and self-interest to be the first in the rat race to the top. As media mergers continue and there is more of an emphasis on corporate profits, business interests have taken over news operations and cut back on reporters, writers, videographers, and technicians.

- Since rating points translate into profits, maximizing audience size is now the driving force behind most TV news. This has resulted in a shift away from stories which have social and political significance to stories that are "more engaging" and more easily understood by viewers.

- Some local stations do little to cover the fact that in order to boost station ratings they regularly use their news casts to promote and cash in on the popularity of shows on their network.
• Audiences are having a difficult time distinguishing between reality (hard news), reenactment (drama), and opinions and editorial content. As a result, the line between them has become blurred in the minds of many TV viewers, and the credibility and believability of hard news has diminished.

• With the emphasis shifting to form over substance, stations tend to favor "news actors" over competent news reporters.

• In order to increase ratings some cable news channels are slanting news toward the preferred views of their audience.

Many broadcast professionals remember a time when newspapers and electronic journalism were held in much higher esteem — primarily because there was a "high wall" separating news departments and bottom-line corporate interests.

"[we have seen] a 20-year trend in which the media...have steadily replaced journalistic standards with those of show business." - Frank Rich, The New York Times.

The English news media, though small in size and reach compared to regional language news channels, has a perceived power to impact public opinion and thereby the policy decisions of the government at the center. This was the case in the past when newspapers like Indian Express, Statesman and The Hindu exerted power far exceeding their reach in terms of political decisions.

In the recent years, there is a feeling that this power seems to have shifted to the 24x7 English news channels. The four big and popular channels- NDTV 24x7, CNN-IBN, Times Now and Headlines Today exert huge amount of influence on the government of the day. Each channel claims to have unearthed scams involving the government officials and politicians. The way these channels covered the CWG and 2G Spectrum scandals among others has put the government on the back foot and led to many changes. The government in all such cases has quickly in some instances, but surely in all cases, taken appropriate action to rectify the wrong. The will of the people, as represented by the English news channels, to a large extent has prevailed.
Figure 13: Promotional ad for News X news channel

This brings out a pertinent question: How credible are these news channels and do the viewers believe what they hear and see? The perception of the viewers about the credibility of news organizations is important in evaluating its importance for the readers and viewers and at the same time the influence or power it exerts on the power structure in the country.

A study is the only way one can get answers to the question of people’s trust in media today. It is not easy for any media organization to fool the people for a long time as it is possible to verify the news from other sources. At the same time people trust one news organization over the rest on the basis of many real and perceived criteria. For example, The Hindu as a national newspaper has overwhelming trust among the reading population, even among those who subscribe and read other newspapers. This is something that did not happen overnight. The newspaper in question had to build this credibility slowly over the last hundred years. When The Hindu during the debate on ‘The Indo-US civil nuclear bill’ took a differing stance and attacked the government of selling
out to the United States, everyone sat up and took notice. Its credibility went up further as people realized that its stand was purely influenced by national considerations and political in nature.

Daya Thussu has argued that the Murdoch owned 24-hour news channel *Star News* in India, over the previous decade, has diminished the quality of Indian television journalism. What Murdoch has achieved was not so much global dominance with one news channel- the type of evil James Bond had defeated- but a more cumulative impact on the 24-hour news genre. With *Star News*, Murdoch had captured a key regional market, one that sat lucratively alongside other Murdoch channels around the world.

The credibility of *NDTV 24x7* is something everyone swears by and incidents like Mumbai terrorist attack of 26/11 and Nira Radia tapes controversy have not dented it. Its reputation is now a consequence of the trust built over two decades starting with ‘The World this Week’. Most people attribute this to the founder and co-chairperson Prannoy Roy and his personal credibility.

In News as Entertainment, Daya Thussu (2007) suggests that 24-hour news stations around the world have been encouraged to adopt more tabloid-like news practices by US production models and news conventions. In reaction to the coverage of the Mumbai terrorist attacks in November 2008, P.N. Vasanti has suggested that the copious number of television news channels in India have resulted in an ‘extraordinary pressure to sensationalize, claim specious “exclusives” and do almost anything else to attract attention.’ Rolling news competition, in this context, appears to have led to a more tabloid agenda of 24-hour news reporting.

*Times Now* is synonymous today with its Editor-in-Chief Arnab Goswami. And after the exit of Mini Menon, the other familiar face from *NDTV 24x7*, it is now Arnab who carries the entire weight of *Times Now*. Therefore, the credibility of *Times Now* news channel is synonymous with the credibility that Arnab has among the viewers. Many consider *Times Now* to be sensational, in comparison to *NDTV 24x7* or even *CNN-IBN*- both are sober in contrast. As the viewership war intensifies there is a concerted effort on part of all news channels to stand out and stand apart from the others. This quest at identity creation has led some channels to take the populist option. If one looks at the history of newspapers in the world, many examples at resorting to sensationalism will come to the fore. The newspaper wars of the 19th Century New York City between
Pulitzer and Hearst are legendary. People lap up stories that have an element of fear and emotion.

*Times Now* has been accused of war-mongering during the 26/11 episode. The 24-hour coverage of the attack on Mumbai by Pakistan based terrorists by news channels forced just about everyone to be glued to their television screens. Once the episode was brought to its logical end by the intervention of NSG commandos the television news channels resorted to debates and discussions on who was to blame and what should India do? *Times Now* stood out of the crowd by taking the lead in whipping up anti-Pakistani sentiments and almost forcing the hand of the Indian government. The vicious campaign at war-mongering got *Times Now* the tag of a Nationalist news channel that espouses India-centric views. The racist attack in Melbourne and other Australian cities in May of 2009 was first given prominence by *Time Now*, which ran an emotional campaign around it. The network made the story its first headline and called it ‘an injury to Indian pride’. The consistently high ratings for *Times Now* during these controversial episodes’ point to the role of sensationalism in the popularity of news channels.

The central role of television in the discourses on National pride was best summed up in a tongue in cheek account published in the *Hindustan Times*:

Other countries have think-tanks, India makes do with prime-time chat shows…To media consumers who got initiated into Australian society this past week, that country must seem formidable scary, almost the fastness of Ming of Mongo. There was discussion on a “while Australia” policy that went out of business 30 years ago… On one television show, an anchor said Australia had been preceded by attacks on Indians in Germany, the United States, and Idi Amin’s Uganda and wondered why the world hated Indians…

…India’s television-propelled middle-class opinion is a clear and present reality…In some senses, the drama outside the Delhi airport during the IC-814 hijack was a teaser trailer. This is the new India. Now even Kevin Rudd knows that (Malik, 2009).

Nowadays, whenever you switch on the T.V set we find a bunch of news channels showing breaking news everyday…every hour. However, the percentage of truth in that news is very less. In the race of TRPs, news channels are losing their credibility.

What exactly does this breaking news phenomenon mean for those news channels? As soon as something happens, whether right or wrong, news channels
broadcast it without conclusively checking the veracity of such news. In the race to being the fastest news channel, they inadvertently keep spreading rumors and misconceptions. This may lead to a very serious problem. The only thing that they seem to care about is the TRP, money making and the fact that they want to run a 24-hour news channel. It has become a trend for news channels to show anything irrelevant and call it ‘breaking news’. The erstwhile high standard of news channels seems to be going to dogs by the day.

Another area of concern is the sting operations carried out by news channels. While it is true that such sting operations expose a lot of people and many unethical and corrupt practices are revealed about a person. However, with sting operations gathering good attention, news channels have started to show suspect stories under the guise of sting operations as well. This again raises the question of credibility of news channels.

In the initial stages, the frequency of this type of news was very less. However, now all the news channels are flooded with such news. Previously only one channel would be aired i.e. Doordarshan and it used to have evening news at 7 o’clock. The news stories were relevant and the viewers were lucky enough to get the right news. Such is not the case with today’s news. We have a number of news channels broadcasting news the whole day, but most of the news we see or hear is far from reality. To remain in the competition, they tend to forget their role of providing accurate news to the society. The hunger for any kind of news and the urge to sustain in the market seems to justify everything.

According to a seminar organized by FICCI in March 2010, credibility, brand building exercises and television ratings will be the key determinants of success in the news channel space, agree news broadcasters in the country.

Also, though the news channels being dominated by the traditional regional market, English channels will also have a hefty share in five years from now since over 80% of the population is between the age group 20-30 years and are increasingly English speaking.
1.11 TRP wars

Television channels are governed by ratings. There are two rating agencies in India—Television Audience Measurement (TAM) and Broadcast Audience Research Council of India (BARC). Every Friday top officials of the television channels exhaust themselves over the ratings in the form of Television Rating Point. Shows are either pulled out or new ones added in a quest for higher TRPs. Election analysis, Budget day review and terror attacks draw higher TRP for television news channels.

According to Caravan (Bhushan, 2015) magazine, the intensity of this Television Rating Point (TRP) driven war may not be proportional to the stakes involved: a minuscule 0.04 percent of the total time spent on the television (TV) by India's viewers. Nevertheless, it is being played out daily. Outside the news bulletin format through combative promotional advertisements, and within, mainly in the form of asides, innuendos and pot shots taken by the leading anchors against Arnab Goswami, the Editor-in-Chief of Times Now. The thinly veiled mockery is most often aimed at Goswami’s shrill, bombastic and hectoring style of anchoring that fosters a ritualized anarchy of sorts in his studio.

Eminent journalist Rajdeep Sardesai opined that journalism has changed with time and both journalists and readers will have to adjust themselves to the changing times.

"As far as content is concerned, channels have to dramatise programmes to increase TRP. Many a time stories with no national or public interest are prepared to get ranking. TV journalism has changed into a box office journalism," said Sardesai.
According to TAM Media Research, in the last one year a lot of activity was seen in the news channel arena. With a rise in the supply, the time spent on news channel has also registered an increase at an all-India level.

![Head-to-head table]

**Figure 15: Example of a TAM report on TV rating**

There are no English news channels in the top 20 news channels in India on the basis of viewership. The first four are not surprisingly Hindi news channels and then the regional language news channels find a presence. The population for English news channels is small and the competition among the six national and some regional English news channels is severe- the net result is that the most watched English news channel, *Time Now*, is nowhere in the top 20 in the country. The English speaking viewers are mostly concentrated in the Metros and some cosmopolitan cities of India and don’t add up to match the regional language numbers. As a result of constant gaps in credibility, the viewership shifts allegiance very quickly. During the election week in 2009, *CNN-IBN* took the top slot from *Time Now* as more people trust the election analysis by Sardesai-Yadav team, that seems to have built a reputation for clean, fair and balanced analysis of election results on a day when all channels pull out every shot in the book to claim more eye-balls. It is a do or die situation and an indication of the perception of credibility in the channel that gets high TRP.
To break the repetitive nature of the 24-hour news coverage, television channels often resort to instant analysis of the breaking news. Debates between commentators expressing extreme views on issues and a frenzied flow of information without much substance have become part of the 24-hour news cycle.

The 24-hour news channels have the time and the space to cover stories in depth, but the race to provide up-to-date news to consumers any time they switch on television channels has made them disregard their service in a democracy and go after the newest chunk of news, and disregard that as soon as another piece of information comes to hand. This, fashioning of news as a disposable and ephemeral commodity, has made the 24-hour news channels perform worse than the traditional news bulletin.

Newspapers have been around for many decades but the news channels in the private sector are less than a decade old. Some like Times Now and CNN-IBN just completed ten years of existence. NDTV 24x7 has a twenty-five-year history but as a distinct 24-hours news channel it is just thirteen years old. This poses a dilemma- how one can jump to the conclusion that one television channel is more credible than the rest and why is it so. A study is the only way to answer this and related questions.
The main research questions that the researcher through this study intends to answer are:

1. Is there any link between popularity of a news channel and its credibility?

2. What are the ingredients that go to make a news channel credible in the eyes of the viewer?

3. Is there a shift from the believability of newspapers to television news channels today?

4. Which national English news channel is most credible and why?

5. What is the role of popular news anchors in building a credible news channel brand?

6. Do people still watch a channel that is perceived to be not credible and why?

7. Will the popularity of a credible channel push the other channels to standardize their operations and thus aim for better credibility?

8. And, what kind of future can one envisage for news channels in India?