



# The Pressure to Stay Relevant Online



ANHISKA

In today's digital world, relevance is no longer an abstract idea—it is visible, measurable, and constantly evaluated. Likes, views, shares, comments, and followers have become markers of presence and importance. For young people, especially students, staying relevant online often feels less like a choice and more like an obligation. The pressure to remain visible in a fast-moving digital space has quietly reshaped how youth see themselves, communicate, and even measure self-worth.

Social media platforms function on algorithms that reward activity and engagement. Posting regularly, reacting quickly, and following trends increases visibility, while silence leads to invisibility. This system subtly trains users to believe that absence equals irrelevance. As a result, many feel compelled to stay active even when they have nothing meaningful to share. Relevance shifts from substance to frequency, turning self-expression into a routine performance.

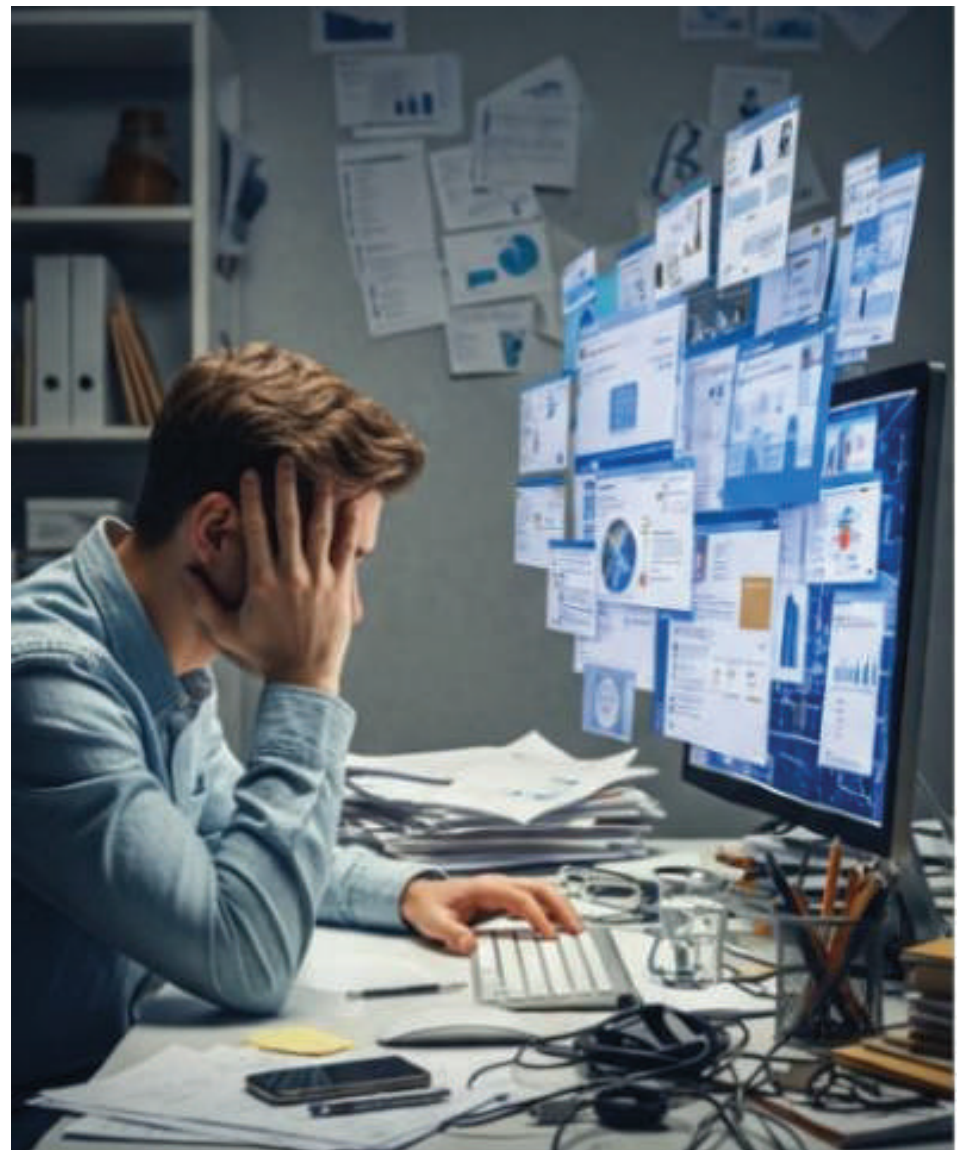
This pressure affects mental and emotional well-being. When attention becomes a form of validation, self-esteem begins to depend on numbers. A post that performs well brings a sense of acceptance, while low engagement can create anxiety and

self-doubt. Constant comparison intensifies the problem. Social media rarely shows failure, uncertainty, or struggle; it presents carefully curated highlights. Watching others appear successful, confident, and constantly active online can make individuals question their own progress and worth.

The fear of being left behind is another powerful factor. Social media frequently promotes stories of viral success—content creators, influencers, entrepreneurs, and students who gain recognition through online platforms. These narratives suggest that relevance equals opportunity. For young people building careers, this creates the belief that stepping away from digital spaces could mean missing out on internships, networks, or visibility. As a result, many remain online not out of interest, but out of fear.

In the race to stay relevant, authenticity often suffers. Trends dictate opinions, aesthetics, and even emotions. People begin to post what is expected rather than what is honest. Serious issues are simplified for reach, and personal moments are shared for approval rather than connection. Over time, individuality gets diluted. When everyone follows the same trends and speaks in the same digital language, originality is replaced by imitation.

Silence, which once indicated thoughtfulness or privacy, is now misunderstood. Taking a break from social media is often seen as disengagement or failure. The culture of constant updates leaves little room for rest, reflection, or growth. This leads to burnout—creative exhaustion caused by the need to remain visible at all times. Ironically, platforms designed for expression end up limiting it



by demanding constant output.

The pressure also blurs the boundary between life and performance. Experiences are increasingly viewed through the lens of potential content. Instead of living moments fully, users think about how those moments will appear online. Vacations, friendships, achievements, and even struggles become part of a digital narrative. Over time, this creates emotional fatigue and a sense of being continuously observed.

Understanding the role of algorithms is crucial in addressing this pressure. Algorithms prioritise engagement, not value or truth. A drop in reach or likes is often a technical outcome rather than a personal failure. Yet without media literacy, users internalise these changes as reflections of their worth.

Recognising how platforms operate helps detach self-esteem from online metrics.

Relevance, however, does not have to be defined by visibility alone. It can mean being informed rather than popular, thoughtful rather than loud, and consistent rather than constant. True relevance lies in impact, credibility, and growth—qualities that develop over time and often away from screens. For students, skills, ideas, and real-world experiences form a stronger foundation than any digital following.

Choosing balance is essential. Social media is a powerful tool for connection and expression, but it should serve users, not control them. Relevance gained at the cost of peace is not sustainable.



# Objectivity in the Age of Virality



AADYA SISODIA

Journalism has long been guided by the principle of objectivity—reporting facts fairly, accurately, and without personal bias. However, in the age of virality, this foundational value faces unprecedented pressure. News today does not travel slowly through newspapers or scheduled bulletins; it spreads instantly through timelines, notifications, and trending lists. In this fast-paced digital ecosystem, the race for attention often overshadows the responsibility to remain objective.

Virality thrives on emotion. Content that provokes anger, fear, pride, or shock is more likely to be shared than content that is balanced or nuanced. Algorithms reward engagement, not accuracy. As a result, stories that are simplified, sensationalised, or polarised often outperform carefully verified reports. This creates a dilemma for media organisations and journalists: remain objective and risk being ignored, or adapt to viral logic and compromise editorial standards.

The structure of digital platforms has significantly altered news production. Headlines are no longer written only to inform; they are designed to attract clicks. Visuals are selected for impact rather than context. Breaking news is prioritised over verified news. In this environment, objectivity struggles to survive because it demands time, restraint, and complexity—qualities that rarely go viral.

Social media has also blurred the line between news and opinion. Journalists, anchors, and reporters now maintain personal profiles where they share views, reactions, and commentary. While this humanises journalists, it also raises questions about credibility. When reporters openly express opinions online, audiences find it difficult to separate personal views from professional reporting. Objectivity, once associated with institutional distance, is challenged by this constant visibility.

Another major challenge comes from the audience itself. Digital audiences no

longer passively consume news; they interact, react, and respond instantly. Newsrooms face pressure from comment sections, trending hashtags, and online backlash. Stories that do not align with dominant online narratives risk being attacked, labelled, or dismissed. In such a climate, maintaining objectivity requires courage, as balanced reporting may satisfy neither side of a polarised debate.

misinformation and disinformation. False content often mimics the style of credible journalism, making it difficult for audiences to distinguish fact from fiction. In response, journalists are expected not only to report news but also to debunk falsehoods. This defensive role can sometimes be misinterpreted as bias, especially when fact-checking challenges popular but misleading narratives.

However, objectivity does not mean neutrality in the face of falsehood. Reporting verified facts, exposing misinformation, and holding power accountable are not acts

can be honest about sources, methods, and limitations. Transparency about how information is gathered builds trust, even when complete neutrality is impossible.

Media literacy plays a crucial role in preserving objectivity. Audiences must learn to recognise the difference between news, opinion, and sponsored content. Understanding how algorithms amplify certain stories helps readers question why specific narratives dominate their feeds. An informed audience is less likely to demand sensationalism and more likely to value credible reporting.

For journalism students and young media professionals, the age of virality presents both a challenge and an opportunity. While digital platforms reward speed, they also allow space for explanatory journalism, long-form analysis, and fact-checking initiatives. Objectivity can survive if it evolves—by adapting formats without sacrificing principles.

Ultimately, the survival of objectivity depends on collective responsibility. Media organisations must resist reducing journalism to content creation. Journalists must prioritise ethics over engagement. Audiences must support credible news, even when it is uncomfortable or less entertaining. In a world driven by clicks and shares, choosing objectivity is an act of integrity.

Objectivity may not trend, but it remains essential. In the noise of viral media, it is the anchor that keeps journalism grounded. Without it, information loses meaning, trust erodes, and the very purpose of journalism is weakened. In the age of virality, objectivity is not outdated—it is more necessary.



The problem is further intensified by

of bias; they are core journalistic duties. The challenge lies in communicating this distinction to audiences accustomed to equating balance with giving equal weight to all opinions, even when some lack factual basis.

In the age of virality, objectivity must be redefined rather than abandoned. It should be understood as a commitment to evidence, transparency, and context. Journalists may not be free from perspective, but they



# Who Decides What You See?

Algorithms, Echo Chambers, and Invisible Media Control



**AMIT SHARMA**  
EDITOR

Every day, we scroll. We scroll through news, reels, posts, stories, headlines, outrage, humour, tragedy, and celebration—often without asking a crucial question: *who decided that this is what I should see?*

The uncomfortable truth is that in today's digital world, our view of reality is not accidental. It is curated.

At the centre of this curation lies the algorithm—a silent, invisible editor that decides which content appears on our screens and which disappears without a trace. Unlike traditional editors, algorithms do not operate on journalistic values such as public interest, balance, or truth. They function on one primary principle: engagement. What keeps you watching, clicking, liking, sharing, and scrolling is what survives.

Algorithms learn from us. They track what we pause on, what we react to, what we ignore. Over time, they begin to show us more of the same—similar opinions, familiar narratives, and reinforcing beliefs. Slowly and subtly, this creates what scholars call echo chambers: digital spaces where we mostly hear voices that agree

with us and rarely encounter opposing perspectives.

At first glance, echo chambers feel comfortable. They validate our opinions and make us feel informed and confident. But comfort is dangerous when it replaces critical thinking. When we are repeatedly exposed to one-sided information, our understanding of reality becomes narrow. We begin to assume that “everyone thinks like this,” that dissenting voices are rare or wrong, and that complex issues have simple answers. This is not awareness—it is conditioning.

The danger deepens when algorithms amplify misinformation. False or misleading content often travels faster than verified news because it is designed to provoke emotion—fear, anger, pride, or outrage. Algorithms, blind to truth but sensitive to reaction, push such content further. In this system, sensationalism wins over substance, speed defeats accuracy, and emotion replaces evidence.

What makes this control

particularly alarming is its invisibility. Unlike censorship, which is visible and therefore resistible, algorithmic control is subtle. No one tells us what not to read; we simply never see it. Entire perspectives, communities, and realities remain hidden—not because they lack importance, but because they lack virality. Silence, in the digital age, is often engineered.

This has serious consequences for journalism and democracy. A well-functioning democracy depends on an informed public exposed to diverse viewpoints. But when information is filtered to suit individual preferences, public discourse fragments. We no longer debate the same facts; we live in parallel realities. This erosion of shared truth makes meaningful dialogue difficult and manipulation easier.

For young audiences, especially students, the impact is profound. Many now receive news primarily through social media feeds, influencers, and short videos. Traditional news literacy—checking sources, understanding context,

distinguishing opinion from fact—is often replaced by instant consumption. Being exposed to information is filtered to suit individual preferences, public discourse fragments. We no longer debate the same facts; we live in parallel realities. This erosion of shared truth makes meaningful dialogue difficult and manipulation easier.

So, who is responsible? Is it the platforms, the creators, the journalists, or the audience? The honest answer is: all of them. Platforms must be more transparent about how their algorithms function. Journalists must resist the pressure to sacrifice ethics for clicks. Content creators must acknowledge their influence. But equally important is the role of the audience.

This is where media literacy becomes essential. Media literacy is not just about identifying fake news; it is about understanding how media systems work. It means questioning why a particular story reached you, whose voice is missing, and what emotions the content is trying to trigger. It means stepping outside the algorithmic comfort zone—following diverse sources, reading beyond headlines, and engaging with ideas that challenge us.

In an era where algorithms act as invisible gatekeepers, awareness itself is a form of resistance. The goal is not to escape algorithms entirely—that is nearly impossible—but to outthink them. To remember that what appears on our screen is not a mirror of reality, but a carefully filtered version of it.



# Fact-Checking as a Career: The New Media Watchdogs



VANYA BHAGAT

In an era where information travels faster than verification, the role of the fact-checker has emerged as one of the most critical professions in modern media. Misinformation, half-truths, and deliberate falsehoods circulate widely across social media platforms, messaging apps, and even mainstream news outlets. In this chaotic information landscape, fact-checkers act as the new media watchdogs—guardians of truth whose work often remains invisible but is increasingly indispensable.

Traditionally, fact-checking was an internal newsroom function. Editors verified names, dates, quotations, and sources before a story went to print. Today, however, the scale and speed of digital content have transformed fact-checking into a specialised, standalone field. Independent fact-checking organisations, digital newsrooms, and research units now focus exclusively on verifying claims made by politicians, media houses, viral posts, and public figures.

The rise of misinformation has directly contributed to the professionalisation of fact-checking. False news is no longer limited to rumours;

it is often strategically designed to mislead, polarise, or manipulate public opinion. Deepfakes, edited videos, fabricated statistics, and misleading headlines make verification complex and technically demanding. Fact-checkers must now combine journalistic skills with digital literacy, data analysis, and technological awareness.

At its core, fact-checking is about evidence. Fact-checkers verify claims by cross-referencing multiple credible sources, examining official data, consulting experts, and using open-source intelligence tools. They assess not only whether a claim is true or false, but also whether it is misleading, taken out of context, or exaggerated. This nuanced approach distinguishes fact-checking from simple debunking and strengthens its credibility.

Fact-checking as a career demands a strong ethical foundation. Unlike opinion journalism, fact-checkers must maintain strict neutrality. Their role is not to support or oppose ideologies, but to uphold verifiable truth. This commitment often places them in the line of criticism. When fact-checks challenge popular beliefs or powerful narratives, they can trigger online harassment, political pressure, and public distrust. Despite this, the credibility of fact-checking depends on transparency, consistency, and methodological rigour.

One of the most significant contributions of fact-checkers is their impact on democratic discourse. Informed decision-making relies on accurate information. When false claims dominate public conversations, citizens are misled and trust in institutions erodes. Fact-checkers help restore balance by correcting misinformation and providing context. Their work does not silence opinions but ensures that debates are grounded in facts rather than fabrications.

The career path of a fact-checker is diverse and evolving. Fact-checkers work with digital news organisations, independent verification platforms, international media houses, research institutions, and even technology companies. Some specialise in political fact-checking, while others focus on health, science, environment, or economics. With the growth of artificial intelligence and data-driven misinformation, fact-checkers are increasingly required to understand algorithms, metadata, and digital forensics.

For students of journalism and mass communication, fact-checking offers a meaningful and impactful career option. It demands strong research skills, attention to detail, critical thinking, and a commitment to public service. Familiarity with data sources, legal frameworks, and verification tools such as

reverse image search and geolocation enhances professional competence. More importantly, fact-checkers must cultivate patience and intellectual honesty in an environment driven by speed.

However, fact-checking also faces limitations. Corrections often travel slower than falsehoods, and those who believe misinformation may resist correction due to cognitive bias. Fact-checkers cannot control what audiences choose to accept. Yet, their role remains vital—not because they eliminate falsehoods entirely, but because they provide a reliable reference point in an unreliable media ecosystem.

As misinformation becomes more sophisticated, the demand for skilled fact-checkers will continue to grow. Platforms and audiences alike are recognising that credibility is an asset. In this context, fact-checkers represent the conscience of modern media. They remind us that truth requires effort, verification requires discipline, and trust must be earned.

In the digital age, where everyone can publish but few verify, fact-checkers stand apart. They may not go viral, but their work sustains the integrity of information itself. As the new media watchdogs, fact-checkers do not chase attention—they protect truth.



RNI No.: DEL/BIL/2004/14598

**Publisher: Ram Kailash Gupta**

on behalf of Tecnia Institute of Advanced Studies, 3 PSP, Madhuban Chowk, Rohini, Delhi-85; **Printer: Ramesh Chander Dogra; Printed at: Dogra Printing Press, 17/69, Jhan Singh Nagar, Anand Parbat, New Delhi-5**

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