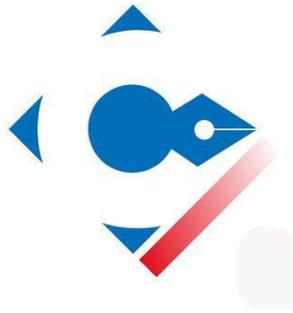


JOURNALIST & SOCIAL MEDIA

2011 National Survey on Nepali Journalists



Center for Media Research - Nepal

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INTRODUCTION

“Journalists have never before been able to tell stories so effectively, bouncing off each other, linking to each other, linking out, citing sources, allowing response – harnessing the best qualities of text, print, data, sound and visual media.”

Alan Rusbridger, the editor of Guardian of United Kingdom, said while evaluating the impact of growing use of social media during his Hugh Cudlipp lecture in 2010. Rusbridger further added that ‘the fluid, constantly-iterative world of linked reporting and responses’ has allowed ‘readers to follow conversations, compare multiple sources and links’.

He said that the result is ‘journalistically better – a collaborative-as-well-as-competitive approach which is usually likely to get to the truth of things, faster’.

Despite the internet’s visible impact on journalism, for a journalist, its advent of the new technology has been more a blessing than a curse. The internet has snatched away a small pie off the role of journalists. The internet is breaking the news faster than journalists do and it has pushed out journalists from the privilege of being among a small number of ‘sender’ in the mass communication.

The internet allowed anyone with a computer and a camera not only to file stories, but more importantly fact check and feedback (*Knight, 2011*).

The advent and growth of the internet has opened opportunities for communication that never existed before (*Raymond and Lu, 2011*).

The internet therefore is more a blessing for journalists. It offers multi-dimensional tools that can aid to journalistic process of gathering information, increasing contacts, maintaining relationships, sourcing information and editing. “The net is a multi-functional tool which plays a vital role in today’s reporting and editing...” (*Khan, 2005*).

Social media, a combination of interactive tools on internet for sharing information in various forms, is grown into a vital tool for journalists to find out leads to news, sources, feel the atmosphere of public opinion over the information and even conduct journalistic activities for producing news.

“Thanks to the rise of social media, news is no longer gathered exclusively by reporters and turned into a story but emerges from an ecosystem in which journalists, sources, readers and viewers exchange information” (*Future of the News: 2011*).

This many-to-many communication, as pointed out by social media expert Clay Shirky in his book *Here Comes Everybody* (2008), is changing the way journalism is practiced thus also changing the way journalists perform their roles.

“Social media and user-generated content is increasingly moving centre stage; influencing the strategic direction and practice of journalism” (*Newman: 2009*).

Although such an influence is multidimensional, social media’s impact is vital in the journalistic reporting of events. “We can conclude that social media is playing an increasingly vital role in news-gathering” (*Clicks, Communities and Conversations: 2011*).

However, amidst the chaos of information in the internet where everyone is publishing journalistically unverified pieces of information, “journalists will continue to authorize information, providing signposts for discerning audience” (*Knight, 2011*).

Journalists also need to have skills of utilizing the internet to use the technology for better journalism. “Journalists are using social media for typical social networking reasons but also for purposes that are beneficial to their work (*Raymond and Lu, 2011*).

The rise of social media as a mass communication medium is changing the process through which a professional journalist would have worked five years ago. The stream of information on social media and the possibility to use social media to complement established techniques and tools of journalism demands that journalists need to master the social media to remain competent in journalism.

Despite fears that the internet is killing print media and that the rise of citizen journalism is obsoleting journalism as a profession, scholars are now convinced that the emergence of social media complements journalism.

Newman (2009) argued that ‘there is growing consensus that citizen journalism and social media are not going to replace mainstream media, but will be complementary to it’.

Instead of viewing citizen journalists as adversaries or competitors or simply dismissing the value of their contribution, a significant number of journalists are discovering that social media can be good sources for leads, research and even breaking news that the mainstream media

can pick up on and amplify (*McClure, 2010*).

While it is still early to assess the impact of social media on mainstream journalism in Nepal, some mainstream media organizations are beginning to look seriously into the possibility of using social media to complement their publications.

Most importantly for journalists, social media have fast becoming a tool that they could use for better journalistic practice.

In this background, this survey was conducted among journalists in Nepal to assess their use of the internet-based technologies, the purposes of their usages, and their perceptions about social media and information flowing on it.

SOCIAL MEDIA IN JOURNALISM

Social media is relatively new in Nepal but the users is growing at such a pace that Nepal Telecomm, the main Internet Service Provider (ISP), has to think a strategy to meet the challenges caused by high use of bandwidth of Facebook, a social networking site (*Bhatta, 2011*).

There are a total of 1,189,600 Facebook users in Nepal which is 4.11 per cent of the total population. Most of those, 45 per cent, are youths between 18 to 24 years old (*Socialbaker, 2011*). The number of users of Twitter, a microblogging service, is far less but “...the number of those tweeting rising exponentially with the spread of smart phones” (*Mahato, 2011*).

Alexa, a popular website popularity measurement tool, enlists Facebook, a social networking site, as the most used site in Nepal followed by other social media sites such as video sharing site YouTube (4), blog hosting site Blogger (7), crowdsourced encyclopedia Wikipedia (8), microblogging service Twitter (10), and blog hosting site WordPress (14) and social networking site aimed at professionals LinkedIn (17) (*Top Sites in Nepal, 2011*).

It is believed that many Nepali journalists have Facebook accounts while a few regularly use Twitter for communication, though there has been no study on exact use of social media and utilization of it in journalistic activities.

In developed world, use of social media for journalistic activities is increasing and almost at an unavoidable stage. In December 2009, George Washington

University and Cision, a research firm, conducted a survey to assess the use of social media by US journalists. The findings indicate that:

Most journalists (56 per cent) said social media was important or somewhat important for reporting while 89 per cent used blogs during their online research for stories. Approximately two-thirds reported using social networking sites and just over half make use of Twitter for online research.

Journalists used blogs (64 per cent), social networking sites (60 per cent) and microblogging site (57 per cent) to publish, promote and distribute what they wrote.

(Social Media & Online Usage Study: 2009)

According to a research by the Society for New Communications Research, 70 per cent of journalists are using social networking sites, 66 per cent are using blogs, 48 per cent online video, 47 per cent Twitter and 25 per cent are using podcasts to assist them with their reporting. Additionally, 70 per cent quote bloggers in their articles, and 80 per cent believe that bloggers have become important opinion shapers for the twenty-first century (*McClure, 2010*).

“Journalists are turning to Facebook and other social networking sites to acquire information; to assist them in their story research and investigation” (*Raymond and Lu, 2011*).

A more recent study, *Clicks, Communities and Conversations* by Oriella PR Network in 2011, found out that almost half (47 per cent) US journalists used Twitter and a third (35 per cent) used Facebook to source new story angles. It also states that a third of journalists used Twitter to verify their stories and a quarter used Facebook and blogs to verify information.

THE SURVEY

Journalist and Social Media: 2011 National Survey on Nepali Journalists was conducted using a specially designed online form. The system was open from February 21 to May 31, 2011 and professional journalists around the country were invited to participate.

A total of 259 journalists participated out of which only 192 surveys were considered good for analysis.

All feedbacks which were incomplete and/or mismatching responses were not considered to ensure validity and less than one percent margin of error in the survey results.

The survey was conducted online and in English language and prospective respondents were contacted via emails, social networking site Facebook and microblogging site Twitter.

This is a limitation of the study as all those who responded were at least users of basic internet service. The survey hasn't included those journalists who do not use internet at all.

The total number of respondents represents more than 3.25 per cent of Nepali journalists.

According to Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ), there are 8,013 journalists in the country and this survey results represents inputs from 2.4 per cent of total journalists.

DEMOGRAPHY OF RESPONDENTS

For the survey, although 259 journalists participated, only 192 completed responses have been included for data analysis. Those journalists represent 29 districts¹ of Nepal.

Most number of respondents were from Kathmandu (73.4 per cent) followed by Banke (2.6 per cent) and Chitwan (2.1 per cent). The number of respondent journalists based in Central Development Region is high because more than half of the journalists in the country are based in the Kathmandu and internet access is also easier in the capital city.

The origin of the respondent according to their base development region and geography is as follow:

SN	Region	Total Journalists*	Total Respondents
1	Eastern Region	13.4 %	5 %
2	Central Region	54 %	82 %
3	Western Region	14 %	5 %
4	Mid-Western Region	12.4 %	5 %
5	Far Western Region	6.2 %	3 %

*Table 1: Region-wise Respondents (*FNJ, 2011)*

SN	Geographic Region	Total Respondents
1	Mountainous Region	3 %
2	Hilly Region	87 %
3	Tarai (Plains) Region	10 %

Table 2: Geographic Base of Respondents

Similarly, the male-female ratio of respondents matches the ratio of members at the Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ). Among the respondents, 13.5 per cent were female journalists while 86.5 per cent were male journalists.

The mean age of journalists participating in the survey is 30 and the mean years of their experience as journalists is 9.23 years. The minimum age of journalist who participated in the survey is 20, and the maximum is 55 years. The years of experiences of participating journalist range from less than 1 to 35 years.

The respondents are also spread among mediums they primarily work for. About half of the respondents (49 per cent) work for print medium while 22.4 per cent work for television channels. The number of high respondents from print and television media is because of two reasons: first, the number of regular newspaper is very high compared to other medium. The number of published newspapers in Nepal stands at 807, according to Annual Report 2011 of Press Council of Nepal. Secondly, all operating 14 television stations at the time of survey were based in Kathmandu from where the survey has highest number of respondents.

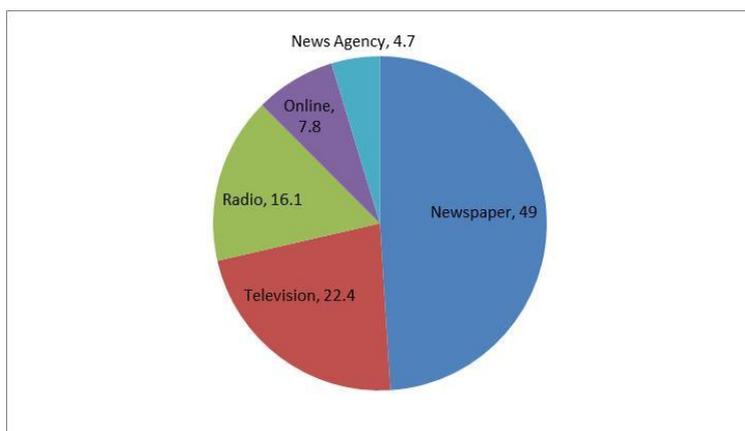


Illustration 1: Medium-wise distribution of Respondents

Similarly, 16.1 per cent of respondents work for radio

stations; 7.3 per cent for online medium – both including website of mainstream medium and independent news website, and 4.7 per cent work for news agencies.

Beat-wise distribution of respondents shows that most of the respondents are those covering political affairs (32.8 per cent) closely followed by journalists covering social affairs, such as health, education, society, crime, youth issues and city (28.1 per cent).

SN	Categories	Respondents	Percent
1	Political Affairs	63	32.80%
2	Social Affairs	54	28.10%
3	Multiple categories	18	9.40%
4	Business & Economy	17	8.90%
5	Sports	15	7.80%
6	Editing	13	6.80%
7	Entertainment	7	3.60%
8	Information Technology	5	2.60%
	Total	192	100 %

Table 3: Beatwise distribution of respondents

Those covering more than one beat amounted for 9.4 per cent followed by business and economy journalists (8.9 per cent), sports (7.8 per cent), entertainment (3.6 per cent), government and administrative affairs (3.1 per cent) and information technology (2.6 per cent).

The number of respondents who were not involved in news gathering but were in editing and non-reporting journalistic jobs at media is 6.8 per cent.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The questionnaire for the survey has two sections.

The first section required factual answers to assess the situation of usage of social media on quantitative base.

The section deals with the journalists' use of internet tools such as email, social networking, microblogging, photo/video sharing, blogging, search engines and their use of social media in information gathering and verification.

Second section has questions requiring answers on qualitative base so to assess how journalists perceive the social media.

It deals with how journalists take social media tools as an aid to journalistic activities; how important they think social media is for their activities as well as how reliable they consider the social media is for information gathering.

FINDINGS

USAGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS

EMAIL SERVICES

Google's Gmail is the most popular email service used by journalists in Nepal. Nine out of 10 journalists have an account on Gmail while Yahoo's Mail is second favorite with 44.3 per cent journalists using it followed by Microsoft's Hotmail (30.2 per cent).

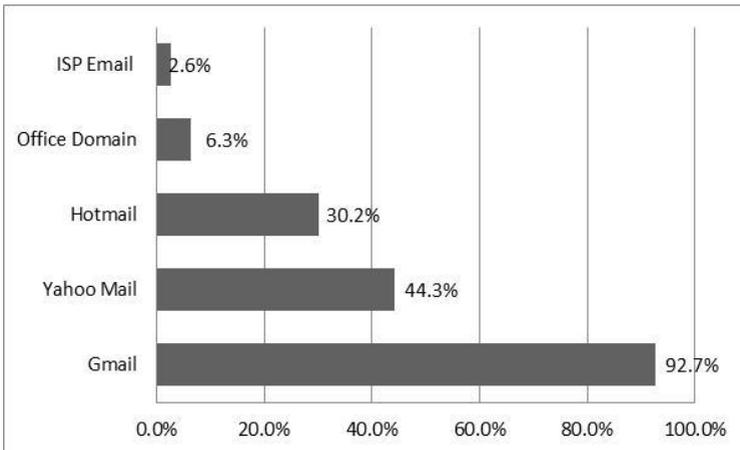


Illustration 2: Journalists' Use of Email Services

Although many journalists use multiple email services, it's noteworthy that only a few of them, 6.3 per cent, use the email services provided by their office on office domain (such as @kantipur.com.np / @myrepublica.com). Other 2.6 per cent of journalists use ISP-based email account.

SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

Social networking sites are ‘web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system; articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection; and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system’ (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

A social networking site is a website or online service or platform where users set up an online profile and connect to other people on it. The users can also share personal information, photos, and other interesting links.

Facebook is by far the most popular social networking site among journalists. It’s almost difficult to find a journalist without a Facebook account as nearly 97 per cent of journalists are on Facebook.

The second most popular, though the difference is huge, social networking site among journalists is Hi5 with 14.1 per cent usage followed by LinkedIn (8.3 per cent), Orkut (5.7 %) and MySpace (4.7 per cent). Some journalists (4.2 per cent) use other social networking sites.

MICROBLOGGING / MULTIMEDIA SHARING

Cambridge Dictionary defines microblogging as ‘the activity of sending short messages for anyone to read, especially from a mobile phone’. Multimedia sharing sites are the websites or online platforms that host audio, video or animation and distribute them to global public.

Online platforms or services that enable individual to

broadcast a short message globally such as Twitter and Tumblr are being popular among Nepali journalists.

Twitter and YouTube is almost equally popular among journalists. While nearly 40 per cent of journalist use microblogging service Twitter to share information; 38 per cent of them use video-sharing site, YouTube, mostly for viewing purpose only. Very few use Tumblr, a microblogging service.

Google Web Album is the most popular photo-sharing service among journalists with one among six journalists using it to share photos. Flickr is slightly behind with one among eight journalists using it.

Microblogging			Video sharing	
Twitter	Tumblr	Other	Youtube	Other
39.6 %	2.1 %	1 %	38 %	8.3 %

Table 4: Use of Microblogging & Multimedia Sharing by Journalists

BLOGGING

The activity of publishing to a blog, an online service allowing users to easily create a personalized website for the purpose of maintaining an online diary-like structure, is blogging. In its simplest form blog is a website with dated entries, presented in reverse chronological order and published on the internet (*Duffy & Bruns, 2006*).

Those who maintain a blog or writes for a blog are called bloggers and blogosphere refers to the ‘distributed, collective, and interlinked world of blogging’ (*Duffy & Bruns, 2006*).

Blogging is a popular activity for Nepali journalists. The number of journalists maintaining their own blog or writing on other's blog is quite high. Nearly half of the journalists, 45.3 per cent, maintain their own blog. Some, 6.8 per cent of journalists, write for other's blog.

More than half of the journalists in print media, 52 per cent, write blog followed by radio journalists, 41 per cent of whom write blogs. Among television journalists, 39.5 per cent write blog whereas journalists working for online news websites and news agencies blog less. Only 35.7 per cent of online journalists and 33.3 per cent of news agency journalists write blogs.

The biggest motivation for writing blogs is ability of being subjective to the issues they are reporting objectively for their media. One-fourth of the blogging journalists say they maintain or write blogs to express their feelings on issues around them. One-fourth others say they write opinions on current affairs on their blogs.

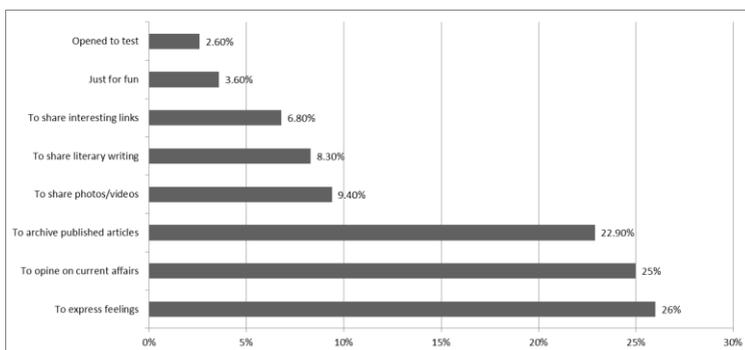


Table 5: Journalists' Use of Blogs

A little less than one-fourth journalists maintain blogs

to archive their published news and articles while one among 10 use blog to share their photos and videos. Some journalists, 8.3 per cent, maintain blogs to share their literary writings that do not get space on their media.

INFORMATION ONLINE

The trend of researching online for information is growing among journalists. Only around 4.6 per cent of journalists do not research online for information.

Not so surprisingly, the news sites are atop the list that journalists look for to gather information for the news they write. Nearly 85 per cent of journalist said that they frequently or very often visit news website for more information on news they are writing.

If available, corporate websites are source of background information for news with more than half, 52 per cent, journalists visiting corporate websites for information. If those who sometimes visit corporate websites are included, the percentage goes up to 87 per cent.

The surprising fact may be that for many journalists, social networking site, Facebook, is the second biggest source of information online after news website. Nearly 70 per cent journalists frequent to social networking sites for information with 64 per cent of them visiting Facebook very often in search for information.

Microblogging as well as photo and video sharing sites may also provide information to journalists but not as significantly as news website, social networking sites and corporate websites.

Blogs are not a big source of information for journalists as well. Little more than one-third of journalists frequently visit blogs for information while little less than one-third journalists never or rarely visit blogs. The remaining one-third journalist visit blogs sometimes.

SEARCH ENGINES

A search engine is a web-based service that ‘makes it possible to find a specific bit of information in the huge mass of data stored on the web’ (*Grossman, 2010*).

Google is the most popular search engine with whopping 98.4 per cent journalists using the service to find information on the internet.

Wikipedia, the crowd-sourced encyclopedia that anyone can edit, is one of the main sources of information for journalists as 44.8 per cent of them use Wikipedia to search information followed by Yahoo (25.5 per cent), Bing (6.8 per cent) and Ask (5.2 per cent).

STORY PROMOTION

Among the respondents, 16 per cent do not self-promote the news they have written for their media on internet. For remaining those who promote their news they have prepared online, social networking site is the first destination. Three-fourth of journalists put up links to their stories, and/or post a message on their Facebook wall asking people to read the news they have written.

Blogs are second most popular tool to promote stories. 37.5 per cent of journalists re-post the news in blogs

while 15.1 per cent, mostly television journalists, upload the video and/or post stills from the newspapers and TV programs on photo/video sharing sites.

One among 10 promote their stories on microblogging service; nine per cent promote on discussion forums while very few, one per cent, use email service or direct message service to promote their stories.

SN	Tools	Users
1	Social networking sites	72.4 %
2	Blogs	37.5 %
3	Photo/Video sharing	15.1 %
4	Microblogging	9.9 %
5	Discussion forums	8.9 %

Table 6: Tools for Promoting Stories

POPULARITY MEASUREMENT

Feedback is still what journalists crave for to measure the success. For the news stories they have written, nearly two-third journalists consider that the comments they receive, on news website, blog and social networking site define the popularity of their news.

Hits on any news is second measurement for popularity with 41.7 per cent counting on number of views of the news while ‘Like’ on social networking site Facebook is third with 29.7 per cent. Many journalists, 16.1 per cent, consider their news as popular if they are linked by blogs or sharing by other on social media while a few, 6.3 per cent, look for retweets on microblogging services to measure if they have done a good job.

PERCEPTION OF SOCIAL MEDIA

IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Majority of journalists believe that social media, and internet, has become or will become an important tool for reporting, and promoting news. More than three-fourth, 77.5 per cent, journalists said that social media and internet has already become important for reporting and promoting news. Additional 15 per cent journalists said that it is not important right now but will be very important in future.

Only a minor number of journalists were not sure about the importance of social media for reporting.

SN	Perception on Importance	Percent
1	Social media has become important for reporting / promoting news	77.5%
2	Social media is not important right now but will become very important for reporting / promoting news	15%
3	Social media is not important, and will not become important, for reporting / promoting news	0.5%
4	Not very sure about social media's importance in reporting / promoting news	7%

Table 7: Journalist perception on importance of social media

INCREASED RELIABILITY

Nearly one-third of journalists believe that social media are not reliable as source of information while exactly the same number of journalists believe that social media is as reliable as newspapers, televisions and radios.

The survey shows that 30.7 per cent of journalists consider information on social media as reliable as in the mainstream media. 17.7 per cent think social media has become less reliable in last few years and another 13 per cent participants believe social media is not reliable at all.

The remaining journalists, 38.5 per cent of them, believe that social media's reliability has increased over last few years.

Gender wise, nearly 32 per cent of male journalists consider information on social media as reliable as mainstream media while only 23 per cent of female journalists consider social media reliable.

Almost half of the journalists, 45.3 per cent, believe that the non-reliability of information on social media is the result of individual's ability to post. Individuals post without fact-checking, verifying and they also lack reporting skills and knowledge to post valid information only.

Nearly one-third, 31.3 per cent, agreed that on the social media 'anyone can say anything – some lie, have agendas to push and individual biases' affecting the accuracy and credibility of information they publish. The individuals are not accountable for what they write.

Journalists, 22.4 per cent of them, also believe that information on social media are opinions rather than facts; and that the sources from which individuals receive information are not as reliable as sources from which journalists get information. Thus, for 7.3 per cent journalists, the social media lacks objectivity.

On a brighter side, one in every five journalists

believe that despite issues of non-reliability, social media are useful for tip, lead or get the feel of any issue. Twelve per cent of journalists say that social media are good for reading real person's actual experience to get the idea of how people are taking or being influenced by issue or event.

A quarter of journalists take social media as a good tool to disseminating information quickly.

CONCLUSION & DISCUSSIONS

The national survey pointed out that social media is not entirely new for the journalists in Nepal. The level of use varies according to the services and platforms, but nevertheless journalists are using social media for their benefits.

The use of email and social networking services is very high among the journalists indicating that Nepali journalists are technology-savvy in using. The level of use of microblogging and audio/video sharing indicates that they are also eager to try our new services and platforms in a way to enhance their works and promote themselves and their stories.

Blogging is most popular activity for Nepali journalists. The number of journalists maintaining their own blog or writing on other's blog is quite high. The biggest motivation for writing blogs is ability of being subjective to the issues they are reporting objectively for their media.

The finding on researching online for information to be included in the news stories shows that Nepali journalists consider the internet as a prime source for background information. Nepali journalists mostly look for background information, evident by the fact that news websites top the list they visit regularly for information for the news.

The surprising fact may be that for many journalists, social networking site, Facebook, is the second biggest source of information online. The finding indicates that Nepali journalists look for cues to news through posting on social media. A significant number of Nepali journalists believe that

social media are useful for tip, lead or get the feel of any issue.

The biggest use of social media is also for promoting stories they have published on mainstream media. Most of the Nepali journalists use social networking site to promote their stories, blogs to archive their stories. The promotion on social media is also important for Nepali journalists because most of them consider that feedback and popularity as the measures of success and social media offers instant feedback – thoughts hits, likes, comments and retweets.

A major finding to be noted is that majority of Nepali journalists believe that social media, and the internet, has become or will become an important tool for reporting, and promoting news. However, the number of those who believe information on social media reliable is not much encouraging. This may indicate that Nepali journalists are lacking social media information verification procedure to verify information they get on social media.

The findings of this survey clearly put social media as the foremost tool that Nepali journalists are using or will use despite lack of technical know-how and best practices for journalistic usages. It establishes that social media will become a non-avoidable part of the newsroom, and will redefine the way news is produced in mainstream media.



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ABOUT CMR-NEPAL

Center for Media Research - Nepal (CMR-Nepal) is a small group of researchers specializing in media research. Formed in 2010, the group has conducted researches on social, digital and mainstream media. The group also aims to specialize on media monitoring and media content analysis. Based in Kathmandu, Nepal, CMR-Nepal can be reached at cmrnepal@butmedia.org or <http://research.butmedia.org>

THANK YOU NOTE

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ⁱ Districts represented in the survey: Achham, Baglung, Banke, Chitwan, Dadeldhura, Dang, Dhading, Dolakha, Doti, Gorkha, Ilam, Jhapa, Jumla, Kaski, Kathmandu, Kavre, Lalitpur, Mahottari, Makwanpur, Morang, Nawalparasi, Palpa, Rautahat, Rukum, Sindhupalchowk, Siraha, Solukhumbhu, Sunsari and Tanahun.