

Hindi News Anchors as Influencers: Personality-Driven News and Its Audience Appeal

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, Hindi news anchors have transcended their traditional roles as mere disseminators of information, evolving into influential public figures. Their personalities, rhetoric, and on-screen demeanour shape how news is consumed by millions. This research explores the phenomenon of Hindi news anchors as influencers, focusing on personality-driven news and its appeal to the audience. A survey-based methodology was employed to understand audience perception, preference, and response to news content driven by anchor personalities. The findings suggest a growing trend where audiences are drawn not merely by the content but by the persona of the anchor, creating a shift in news consumption patterns.

1. Introduction

Over the past two decades, the Indian media landscape has witnessed significant transformation, with the role of television news anchors evolving dramatically. Anchors, particularly those on Hindi news channels, have moved beyond their traditional role of simply presenting news stories to become influential public figures who shape the narrative, offer opinions, and often steer public discourse. With the rapid rise of 24-hour news channels and the increased accessibility of media, especially in Hindi-speaking regions, news anchors have gained unprecedented visibility and power. As a result, many of them are now regarded not just as journalists, but as influencers who actively engage with their audiences, sway public opinion, and even set social and political agendas.

The rise of "personality-driven news" in the Indian media ecosystem represents a critical shift in how information is delivered and consumed. Traditionally, news anchors maintained a neutral stance, serving as mediators between the news and the audience. They were expected to report facts without imparting personal bias or influencing the viewer's perspective. However, with the advent of private television news channels, the competition for ratings has driven a shift towards more engaging, dramatic, and sometimes sensational presentation styles. This shift has been particularly evident in Hindi news, where certain anchors have gained substantial fame and influence, becoming household names in India.

1.1. The Role of Personality in News Media

The term "personality-driven news" refers to the increasing trend where the personality, style, and opinions of a news anchor take center stage in the presentation of news content. The focus moves from purely fact-based reporting to a blend of information and entertainment, with the anchor's persona playing a crucial role in engaging the audience. As a result, the line between news and entertainment has blurred, creating a genre often referred to as "infotainment." This type of journalism is characterized by news anchors who are not just passive conveyors of information but active participants in shaping the narrative, often injecting their views, emotions, and opinions into their presentations (Kumar, 2022).

In India, and especially on Hindi news channels, this trend has led to the rise of several prominent news anchors who have become influential figures in their own right. Anchors such as Arnab Goswami, Sudhir Chaudhary, and Anjana Om Kashyap have become more than just reporters; they are viewed as authoritative voices on socio-political issues. Their assertive, and at times confrontational, styles have made them popular with specific segments of the audience, who often tune in not just for the news itself but for the way these personalities deliver it. Their ability to infuse emotion, passion, and opinion into news delivery has transformed them into media personalities with substantial followings, akin to social media influencers.

1.1. The Impact of Anchor Personalities on Audience Engagement

Research indicates that the personalities of Hindi news anchors significantly influence audience engagement and retention. A study by Verma (2019) found that viewers tend to develop a sense of familiarity and trust with news anchors who exhibit strong personalities, particularly those who are seen as relatable, passionate, or articulate. This connection leads to higher viewership loyalty, as audiences are more likely to return to a particular news channel not just for the content but for the persona of the anchor. In this way, news anchors have become akin to brand ambassadors for their respective channels, with their personal styles shaping the overall identity and appeal of the station.

This phenomenon is not unique to India. In the United States, for instance, anchors like Tucker Carlson and Rachel Maddow have similarly cultivated loyal audiences who tune in as much for the personalities of these hosts as for the news they report. However, in India, and especially on Hindi news channels, the cultural and socio-political context makes this dynamic even more pronounced. The Indian media landscape is highly competitive, with dozens of news channels vying for audience attention. In this environment, the ability of an anchor to stand out and create a distinct personal brand has become a key factor in determining a channel's success (Bhattacharya, 2020).

1.1. The Appeal of Emotion and Opinion in Hindi News

One of the defining characteristics of personality-driven news is the use of emotion and opinion as tools for audience engagement. Hindi news anchors, in particular, have been noted for their use of emotive language, dramatic expressions, and often strong political or social opinions. This style of news presentation appeals to a wide audience, particularly in a country like India, where news is often seen not just as a source of information but as a form of social engagement. Hindi news anchors frequently take on the roles of commentators, advocates, or even activists, using their platforms to raise issues, voice grievances, or rally support for particular causes.

This approach resonates with a large segment of the Hindi-speaking population, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas where the audience may not have access to a wide range of media sources. Anchors who can effectively connect with their viewers on an emotional level are often perceived as more trustworthy and credible than those who simply present facts. For many viewers, the anchor's persona becomes synonymous with the news itself, and their opinions are often taken as facts. This is particularly true in politically charged environments, where anchors with strong political leanings can significantly influence public opinion and political discourse (Gupta, 2021).

1.1. The Risks of Personality-Driven News

While the rise of personality-driven news has undoubtedly transformed the way news is consumed in India, it also raises important questions about the objectivity and credibility of news media. Anchors who inject personal opinions into their reporting can blur the line between fact and opinion, leading to biased or sensationalized coverage. In some cases, this can result in the audience being misled or manipulated, especially when anchors present their views as authoritative or factual. Moreover, the focus on personality over content can lead to a reduction in the quality of news coverage, as the emphasis shifts from providing in-depth analysis and balanced reporting to creating dramatic and attention-grabbing broadcasts (Singh, 2021).

This trend also reflects a broader global shift towards "opinionated journalism," where news is increasingly presented through the lens of the anchor's personal beliefs and ideologies. While this style of journalism can attract larger audiences, it can also polarize viewers and contribute to the spread of misinformation or one-sided narratives. In India, where political and social divisions are deeply entrenched, the influence of opinionated news anchors can further exacerbate these divisions by reinforcing existing biases and prejudices.

The rise of Hindi news anchors as influencers represents a significant shift in the Indian media landscape. Anchors have become more than just reporters; they are powerful public figures who shape news narratives, influence

public opinion, and engage with their audiences on a deeply personal level. While this trend has increased viewer engagement and loyalty, it also poses challenges to the objectivity and credibility of news media. The shift towards personality-driven news reflects broader changes in how audiences consume information, with news increasingly seen as a form of entertainment or social engagement rather than a source of neutral, fact-based reporting. This study seeks to explore these dynamics further, investigating how Hindi news anchors influence audience perceptions and the implications of this trend for the future of journalism in India.

2. Literature Review

The emergence of personality-driven news, particularly in the Indian context, has garnered significant attention in recent years. As Hindi news channels have expanded, the role of news anchors has evolved from being neutral conveyors of information to influential public figures. This review explores the existing literature on the influence of Hindi news anchors as personalities, the impact of their presentation style on audience engagement, and the implications for news consumption.

1. News Anchors as Public Figures

The transformation of news anchors into influencers and public figures is a relatively recent phenomenon, coinciding with the liberalization of Indian media in the 1990s. With the rise of private news channels, competition for ratings intensified, prompting a shift in the way news was presented. Anchors, especially those on Hindi news channels, began to distinguish themselves through their presentation styles and personal brand. According to Kumar (2020), this trend led to the "starification" of news anchors, who became symbols of the news channels they represented. They moved from mere presenters to influential figures with the power to sway public opinion.

This shift was particularly visible in the rise of popular anchors like Rajat Sharma, Arnab Goswami, and Ravish Kumar. Their distinct styles—whether it be Sharma's calm and conversational tone or Goswami's aggressive and confrontational approach—helped create loyal viewer bases. Bhattacharya (2020) argues that such anchors are able to maintain strong viewer loyalty due to their ability to emotionally engage their audience. This emotional connection fosters a sense of trust, and audiences begin to associate the credibility of the news with the personality of the anchor, rather than the factual content of the broadcast.

2. The Role of Personality in News Presentation

The personality of news anchors plays a significant role in shaping how news is perceived and consumed by the audience. Research suggests that the personal style, tone, and demeanor of an anchor can influence not only the popularity of a news channel but also the audience's perception of the news itself. According to a study by Verma (2019), 70% of viewers of Hindi news channels in India stated that they were more likely to watch a particular news show because of their attachment to the anchor. This indicates that audiences are increasingly drawn to personality-driven news, where the anchor's persona can overshadow the news content.

Singh (2021) highlights that the trend of personality-driven news is also influenced by the socio-cultural context in India. Hindi-speaking audiences, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas, are often more receptive to anchors who inject emotion and opinion into their news delivery. This emotional appeal resonates with audiences who may see the anchor as a representative of their own views and concerns. The study suggests that in such settings, anchors with strong personalities are often perceived as more credible, irrespective of the factual accuracy of their reporting.

Furthermore, Gupta (2021) explores the idea of "performative journalism," where the line between journalism and performance becomes blurred. In this style of reporting, news anchors adopt roles that go beyond reporting facts; they become opinion-makers, and in some cases, advocates. This is particularly evident in Hindi news media, where anchors frequently express strong personal opinions on political and social issues, often with dramatic flair. This style of journalism appeals to a large

audience base, but it also raises questions about the objectivity of the news and the potential for bias.

3. Emotional and Opinionated News in India

One of the defining characteristics of personality-driven news is the use of emotional and opinionated reporting, which has become a hallmark of many Hindi news channels. According to Sharma (2018), this trend has led to the emergence of a form of news that is often more akin to entertainment than traditional journalism. In an effort to engage audiences and maintain high viewership ratings, anchors tend to dramatize news events, emphasizing conflict, controversy, and sensationalism. This has led to the rise of "infotainment," where the distinction between news and entertainment is increasingly blurred.

Research by Bhattacharya (2020) confirms this observation, noting that viewers are more likely to engage with news content that evokes strong emotional responses. Anchors who use emotive language and express clear opinions on social or political issues tend to attract more attention. However, this trend also poses risks. Bhattacharya argues that such reporting can contribute to the spread of misinformation, as audiences may be more inclined to accept the anchor's opinion as fact, particularly when the anchor is highly charismatic or influential.

Verma (2019) further examines the implications of this shift, arguing that the rise of opinionated journalism has led to a fragmentation of the news audience in India. Viewers are more likely to align themselves with anchors who share their own ideological views, leading to the creation of echo chambers where only one side of a story is presented. This is particularly concerning in the context of Hindi news, where political and social biases can be amplified by anchors with strong personal opinions.

4. Impact on Public Discourse and Audience Perception

The role of Hindi news anchors as influencers has significant implications for public discourse in India. Anchors who present the news with a clear bias or strong personal opinions can shape how issues are perceived by the public. According to Singh (2021), this has led to a situation where the anchor's views often overshadow the factual content of the news. This phenomenon is particularly evident in politically charged environments, where anchors with strong political affiliations can significantly influence the way their audience perceives political events.

Kumar (2020) supports this view, noting that the increasing influence of news anchors in shaping public opinion has made it more difficult to distinguish between news and propaganda. Anchors who align themselves with particular political ideologies can skew the presentation of facts to support their viewpoints. This has raised concerns about the objectivity and impartiality of Hindi news media, particularly in the context of important political and social issues.

Gupta (2021) argues that the rise of personality-driven news has had a polarizing effect on public discourse. Viewers are more likely to trust and align with anchors who share their own views, leading to a division of the news audience along ideological lines. This polarization has the potential to exacerbate social and political divisions, as different segments of the population are exposed to only one-sided or biased interpretations of events.

The literature on personality-driven news in the Indian context highlights a significant shift in how news is consumed and perceived by audiences. Hindi news anchors have become influential public figures, whose personalities and opinions shape not only news narratives but also public opinion. While this trend has increased viewer engagement and loyalty, it has also raised concerns about the objectivity and impartiality of the news media. Anchors who use emotion and opinion to engage their audience

can blur the line between fact and opinion, leading to biased reporting and the potential for misinformation. As this trend continues, it is crucial for media organizations to balance the appeal of personality-driven news with the need for factual, unbiased reporting.

3. Research Methodology

The methodology of this study is designed to explore the growing phenomenon of Hindi news anchors as influencers in the Indian media landscape. Specifically, it examines how personality-driven news affects audience engagement, perceptions of news credibility, and public discourse. The study employs a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative and qualitative techniques to provide a comprehensive understanding of the subject. Below is a detailed breakdown of the research design, sample selection, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques used in this study.

3.1 Research Design

This study follows an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. The rationale for using this approach is to first obtain generalizable insights through quantitative data and then delve deeper into the underlying reasons and perspectives through qualitative research. The study was conducted in two phases:

1. **Quantitative Phase:** A survey was conducted to gather data on audience preferences, perceptions of Hindi news anchors, and the influence of personality-driven news on audience trust and engagement.
2. **Qualitative Phase:** Semi-structured interviews were carried out with a smaller subset of the survey participants, providing an in-depth exploration of how specific Hindi news anchors influence public opinion, and how viewers perceive the objectivity and emotional appeal of personality-driven news.

3.2 Sampling Method

Given the wide audience base for Hindi news channels across India, the sample for this study was drawn using a combination of purposive and random sampling methods. The study focused on viewers of Hindi news channels, specifically those who watch prime-time shows anchored by prominent personalities. The two-stage sampling process was as follows:

1. Stage 1: Quantitative Survey Sampling

Target Population: The study targeted adult viewers (aged 18 and above) from Hindi-speaking states of India, such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana, and Delhi. The selection of these states was based on their significant contribution to Hindi news viewership.

Sample Size: A sample of 500 respondents was selected for the survey. The sample size was calculated using a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%. The participants were selected using random sampling techniques from various socio-economic backgrounds to ensure diversity in the sample.

2. Stage 2: Qualitative Interview Sampling

From the survey participants, 25 respondents were purposively selected for in-depth interviews. The criteria for selection were based on their expressed preferences for specific Hindi news anchors and their frequency of news consumption.

This subset included a mix of individuals from rural, semi-urban, and urban areas to capture varied perspectives on the role of Hindi news anchors.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

Surveys:

Developed a structured online questionnaire that includes:

Demographic Information: Age, gender, education, income, and location.

Viewing Habits: Frequency of watching Hindi news, preferred channels, and specific anchors.

Perceptions of Anchors: Likert scale items assessing traits such as credibility, charisma, trustworthiness, and relatability.

Open-Ended Questions: To gather insights on the reasons behind their preferences for certain anchors.

Survey Questions:

1. Which Hindi news anchor do you prefer and why?
2. How often do you watch Hindi news channels?
3. Do you trust news content based on the anchor's personality?
4. Do you believe anchors influence your perception of news? If yes, how?

Interviews:

Conducted semi-structured interviews with selected participants, focusing on:

- Personal experiences with Hindi news anchors.
- The impact of anchors' personalities on their understanding of news stories.
- Specific examples of how certain anchors have influenced their opinions or attitudes.

Focus Groups:

- Organized focus group discussions to encourage interactive exploration of views on news anchors and their influence.
- Used guided questions to facilitate discussions around specific anchors, their styles, and the perceived impact on audiences.

3.3 Data Analysis

The analysis aims to understand how the personalities of Hindi news anchors influence audience perceptions, trust, and engagement. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, we will analyze quantitative survey data alongside qualitative insights from interviews and focus groups.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Data Preparation

- The survey collected responses from 500 participants. Data was cleaned to remove incomplete responses, resulting in 480 usable surveys.

Descriptive Statistics

Demographics:

- **Age:**
 - 18-24 years: 25% (120 respondents)
 - 25-34 years: 30% (144 respondents)
 - 35-44 years: 20% (96 respondents)
 - 45+ years: 25% (120 respondents)
- **Gender:**
 - Male: 52% (250 respondents)
 - Female: 46% (220 respondents)
 - Non-binary/Other: 2% (10 respondents)
- **Viewing Habits:**
 - Frequency of watching Hindi news:
 - Daily: 60% (288 respondents)
 - 2-3 times a week: 25% (120 respondents)
 - Once a week or less: 15% (72 respondents)

Inferential Statistics

- **Correlation Analysis:**
 - A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between perceived credibility of anchors and audience engagement. The results indicated a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.01$).
- **Regression Analysis:**
 - A multiple regression analysis was performed with viewer trust as the dependent variable and anchor charisma, empathy, and credibility as independent variables. The model explained 45% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.45$, $F(3, 476) = 75.32$, $p < 0.001$).
- **Key Findings:**

- Charisma: $\beta = 0.35$ ($p < 0.001$)
- Empathy: $\beta = 0.25$ ($p < 0.01$)
- Credibility: $\beta = 0.30$ ($p < 0.001$)
- **Comparative Analysis:**
 - An ANOVA was conducted to compare viewer trust levels between different age groups. Results showed significant differences ($F(3, 476) = 6.47, p < 0.01$), with post-hoc tests revealing that viewers aged 18-24 had higher trust in anchors ($M = 4.2$) compared to those aged 45+ ($M = 3.5$).

3. Qualitative Data Analysis

Transcription

- Interviews and focus groups were transcribed, yielding 150 pages of verbatim data. Key themes were identified through thematic analysis.

Thematic Analysis

- **Key Themes Identified:**
 - **Influence of Personality Traits:** Participants emphasized the importance of anchors' charisma and empathy. Many noted, "I feel more connected when the anchor seems genuinely concerned about the news."
 - **Trust and Credibility:** Viewers frequently mentioned that credibility is essential for trusting news. One participant stated, "I only trust anchors who I feel are honest and transparent."
 - **Engagement Strategies:** Several respondents highlighted interactive segments (e.g., Q&A with viewers) as effective in engaging them with news content.

4. Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Data

- **Triangulation:**
 - The quantitative data showing a strong correlation between anchor charisma and viewer trust ($r = 0.68$) aligns with qualitative insights, where many participants noted that they are more likely to trust anchors who display charisma and empathy.
- **Joint Presentation:**
 - For example, while 70% of survey respondents rated charisma as a critical factor in their trust, qualitative responses indicated that viewers feel "drawn" to anchors who exhibit warmth and relatability.

5. Reporting Findings

- **Clear Presentation:**
 - Findings will be presented systematically, with quantitative results supported by qualitative quotes to illustrate key points. For example, the significant regression results ($\beta = 0.35$ for charisma) will be accompanied by a quote from an interviewee who said, "A charismatic anchor makes the news more engaging."
- **Visual Aids:**
 - Graphs and tables will visually represent key findings, enhancing clarity and understanding.

This detailed data analysis provides a thorough examination of the influence of Hindi news anchors on audience perceptions and engagement. By integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods, the research offers a nuanced understanding of the dynamics between news anchors and their viewers.

4. Results

4.1 Audience Preference for Personality-Driven News

From the survey, it was found that 65% of respondents preferred news anchors with strong, engaging personalities over anchors who adhered to a neutral, fact-based style. This suggests that for the majority of the Hindi news audience, the appeal of an anchor's personality is a significant factor in their viewing habits.

4.2 Impact of Personality on Trust and Perception

Interestingly, 58% of respondents reported that they trusted news more when delivered by anchors they found relatable or charismatic, even if the news was opinionated. This indicates a shift in the traditional understanding

of news as an objective and unbiased medium.

4.3 Media Consumption Patterns

The data showed that Hindi news audiences consume more news content when they feel emotionally connected to the presenter. Over 70% of respondents stated that they would regularly watch a particular channel because of their favorite anchor, even if the news content was repetitive or opinionated.

5. Discussion

1. Overview of Findings

This study aimed to explore the influence of Hindi news anchors on audience perceptions and engagement, emphasizing the role of anchor personalities. The analysis revealed significant relationships between personality traits (such as charisma and empathy) and viewer trust, highlighting the importance of these attributes in shaping audience engagement with news content.

2. Impact of Anchor Personality Traits

The findings indicate that specific personality traits of Hindi news anchors have a profound impact on viewer trust and engagement.

- **Charisma:** The regression analysis showed that charisma was the strongest predictor of viewer trust ($\beta = 0.35$). Qualitative data corroborated this, with participants often expressing a preference for anchors who exhibit warmth and enthusiasm. This suggests that charismatic anchors can create a stronger emotional connection with viewers, making the news feel more relatable and engaging.
- **Empathy:** Similarly, empathy emerged as a significant factor, with a notable β of 0.25. Many interviewees remarked that when anchors demonstrate genuine concern for the issues being reported, they are more likely to trust the information presented. This finding aligns with existing literature that posits empathy as a crucial element in effective communication, particularly in journalism.

3. Viewer Trust and Credibility

Trust is a cornerstone of effective news delivery, and the data revealed that viewers' perceptions of anchor credibility are intricately linked to their personal characteristics.

- **Credibility Ratings:** The survey revealed that 80% of respondents rated credibility as the most critical trait for news anchors. This is consistent with previous studies showing that perceived credibility significantly influences information acceptance and trust in news media.
- **Demographic Variations:** The ANOVA results indicated that younger viewers (18-24 years) reported higher trust levels in news anchors compared to older viewers (45+ years). This generational difference could reflect varying expectations of media engagement, with younger audiences perhaps seeking more relatable and charismatic figures in news presentation.

4. Engagement Strategies

The study also explored how engagement strategies employed by anchors can influence viewer interactions.

- **Interactive Segments:** Qualitative feedback indicated that viewers appreciate when anchors incorporate interactive elements, such as Q&A sessions or viewer polls. This suggests that anchors who foster a participatory environment may enhance audience loyalty and engagement. The growing trend of digital media may further amplify this need for interaction, as younger audiences increasingly seek active participation in content consumption.
- **Media Consumption Patterns:** The quantitative data indicated that 60% of respondents watch Hindi news daily, highlighting the significance of habitual engagement with news anchors. This regular exposure likely enhances the influence of anchors on public opinion and perceptions, emphasizing the need for responsible journalism.

5. Cultural Context and Regional Variations

The findings of this study are set against the backdrop of a diverse media landscape in India, where cultural nuances play a vital role in audience perceptions.

- **Cultural Relevance:** Hindi news anchors often serve as cultural interpreters, bridging complex news narratives with the socio-political realities of their audiences. The personality traits that resonate most with viewers may differ based on regional and cultural contexts. Future research could explore these

variations, investigating how different regional languages and cultures influence viewer preferences for news anchors.

6. Implications for News Media

The implications of these findings are significant for news organizations and media professionals.

- **Training and Development:** News organizations should consider investing in training programs that focus on developing anchors' communication skills, particularly in enhancing empathy and charisma. This training could contribute to building a more trusted and engaging news media landscape.
- **Content Strategy:** As audiences increasingly prioritize personal connections with news anchors, media outlets might benefit from tailoring their content strategies to foster these relationships. This could involve creating more personal narratives or human interest stories that resonate with viewers.

7. Limitations and Future Research

While this study provides valuable insights, several limitations should be acknowledged.

- **Sample Diversity:** The study's sample may not fully capture the diversity of Hindi news audiences across different regions and socio-economic backgrounds. Future research should aim for a broader and more representative sample to enhance generalizability.
- **Evolving Media Landscape:** Given the rapidly changing nature of media consumption, further studies could explore how emerging platforms (e.g., social media, streaming services) impact the dynamics of audience engagement with news anchors.

6. Conclusion

This study has examined the significant role that Hindi news anchors play as influencers within the Indian media landscape, particularly focusing on how their personality traits affect audience perceptions, trust, and engagement. Through a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, key insights have emerged regarding the attributes that resonate most with viewers.

Hindi news anchors serve as vital influencers within the Indian media ecosystem, with their personalities significantly shaping audience perceptions and engagement. As the media landscape continues to evolve, understanding the nuances of this relationship will be essential for journalists, media professionals, and scholars alike. The influence of prominent figures like **Rajdeep Sardesai, Shweta Singh, Chitra Tripathi, Sayeed Ansari, Kishore Ajwani and Ashok Shrivastav** illustrates the critical role that personality-driven news plays in contemporary society, emphasizing the need for responsible journalism that resonates with the audience's expectations and trust.

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