

Role of New Media in Spreading Awareness of Yoga in India



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Abstract

This research paper explores the influential role of new media platforms in promoting and disseminating yoga awareness. As the popularity of yoga continues to grow globally, new media technologies, such as social media, websites, mobile apps, and online communities, have played a significant role in reaching wider audiences and creating a global yoga community. The study examines the impact of new media in spreading awareness about the physical, mental, and spiritual benefits of yoga and its contribution to overall health and well-being. Through a comprehensive review of literature and case studies, this paper highlights the various ways in which new media platforms have been leveraged to propagate yoga awareness, addressing challenges and opportunities in the digital age.

Keywords: Yoga; New Media; Growth of Yoga; Promotion

Introduction

Yoga, an ancient practice originating in India, has gained immense popularity worldwide in recent decades. The physical, mental, and spiritual benefits of yoga have attracted a diverse range of individuals seeking a holistic approach to health and well-being [1]. With the advent of new media technologies, the dissemination of information about yoga has accelerated, contributing significantly to its global reach and accessibility. "The term 'Media' holds tremendous influence as a source of information, not only raising awareness but also serving as a tool for promoting propaganda, aside from its responsibility to provide accurate information to the masses. Over the centuries, the role of media has evolved from being a 'public voice' to representing 'personal or group voices.' However, the entry of private media organizations has brought attention to issues concerning media bias and manipulation (Vivian 2002). The public often finds themselves caught between discerning truth from falsehood, leading to confusion due to the constant bombardment of media messages.

Yoga, defined as the perfect harmony between the nerves of action and nerves of knowledge, strengthens our conscience, guiding our perspective. A robust conscience acts as a sensitive balance, enabling us to distinguish between right and wrong. It teaches us how to find peace with imperfections in others

and ourselves, breaking patterns through timely and voluntary disengagement of our sense organs [2]. By doing so, we reduce stress and respond appropriately to the issues that affect us and our surroundings. The wise sage Shankara, in VIVEKA CHUDAMANI, highlights that our attachment to material existence rather than its essence is the root cause of continued suffering, transcending lifetimes [3]. Therefore, the existing code of media ethics and practices requires a spiritual re-evaluation, fostering good and dispassionate thinking habits during knowledge acquisition and its dissemination to the public through media. Such practices can transform an otherwise stressful career into an exciting, successful, and socially responsible profession, aligning individual needs with the universal order."

The media, which began as a single source, has now evolved into a vast ecosystem. Our modern societies are inundated with information, creating what we refer to as "information-loaded societies." Compared to our fathers and ancestors, we process an unprecedented amount of information. This information reaches us through various channels and mediums, shaping our behaviours and perceptions. However, the acceptance of information disseminated through different media channels, including print media, is susceptible to irregularities such as message distortions and deliberate neglect of facts [1]. Consequently, this can lead to incorrect perceptions and confusion among the masses. Dealing

with these issues has become a pressing concern, demanding thoughtful strategies to address this virtual threat.

Regrettably, regardless of the source, many media organizations and agencies can't be fully trusted, as they tend to manipulate information to suit their organizational needs or protect certain interests. Moreover, media often fails to provide accurate information and instead embellishes it with sensational language to gain a short-term competitive advantage over the public good. The rapid growth of new technologies and corporatization has further eroded media credibility, as news agencies strive to report news hastily without thorough fact-checking.

The freedom of the press, both in India and elsewhere, has empowered the media, sometimes even overshadowing the state's authority. The historic newspaper wars between William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer II gave birth to the term "yellow journalism," which represented news lacking authenticity and relying on speculative and unreliable sources. Despite some efforts to address issues like paid news and political investments, there remains a critical need for stringent monitoring across various media divisions.

Today, media often serves hidden agendas of specific individuals or groups, disguising their interests as news. Certain Bollywood movies, such as *Peepli Live*, *Joker*, *Mumbai Meri Jaan*, and *Phir Bhi Dil Hai Hindustani*, shed light on the positive and negative aspects of the present media industry, illustrating its management by powerful figures and the importance of TRP ratings for revenue generation through advertisements. Prominent journalist P. Sainath emphasizes the urgency of eradicating paid news, as failure to do so may have detrimental consequences. In the vast sea of information, the most challenging task for media is to choose fact-based and constructive information that benefits the audience. Media plays a pivotal role in shaping our democracy and the future generation, with the public increasingly relying on it for day-to-day decisions [1]. To induce media literacy among the masses would lead to a social and political revolution. Media literacy enables common people to question information rather than accepting everything as true, particularly when it comes from media agencies and organizations. In achieving this, media can become a truly empowering force for society [4-8].

Literature Rivew

various studies, research papers, and articles that shed light on the impact and effectiveness of digital platforms in promoting yoga practice and its benefits. The review focuses on key themes related to the use of new media, its advantages and challenges, and its contribution to creating a global yoga community. The following are some of the key findings from the literature:

1. Social Media as a Powerful Tool: Numerous studies highlight the significance of social media platforms, such as

Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube, in reaching a wide audience and creating awareness about yoga. Social media's visual nature allows for the easy sharing of yoga poses, videos, and testimonials, engaging users and encouraging them to explore the practice.

2. Global Reach and Accessibility: Researchers emphasize how new media has broken geographical barriers, enabling yoga instructors and practitioners to connect with people from diverse cultural backgrounds worldwide. Online platforms provide accessibility to yoga classes, workshops, and tutorials, making yoga available to individuals in remote areas and those with time or mobility constraints.

3. Influencer Marketing and Online Communities: Influencer marketing has emerged as a powerful tool in the yoga industry. Yoga influencers with a large following use their platforms to endorse yoga brands, products, and classes, increasing their visibility and credibility. Additionally, online yoga communities foster a sense of belonging and support, allowing practitioners to share their experiences, challenges, and progress.

4. Mobile Apps and Virtual Platforms: The rise of mobile apps and virtual platforms dedicated to yoga practice has made it easier for individuals to incorporate yoga into their daily lives. Apps provide personalized routines, tracking features, and community engagement, making the practice more engaging and interactive.

5. Challenges of Misinformation: The literature also addresses the challenge of misinformation and the need for credible sources in promoting yoga awareness. With the proliferation of digital content, there is a risk of inaccurate information and potentially harmful practices being spread, which can be detrimental to beginners and uninformed practitioners.

6. Maintaining Authenticity and Tradition: Some scholars highlight concerns about the potential dilution of traditional yoga practices in the digital space. It is essential to strike a balance between using new media to reach a wider audience while preserving the authenticity and essence of yoga as an ancient and spiritual practice.

7. Online Yoga Teacher Training: The literature reveals a growing trend of online yoga teacher training programs. While they offer convenience and accessibility, debates arise over the effectiveness of virtual training in providing comprehensive and hands-on learning experiences.

8. Engagement and Interactivity: Studies emphasize the significance of engaging and interactive content in new media platforms to capture and sustain users' interest. Live-streamed yoga classes, virtual workshops, and Q&A sessions with instructors enhance the overall learning experience. Overall, the literature review emphasizes that new media platforms play a pivotal role in disseminating yoga awareness and connecting the global yoga

community. However, maintaining authenticity, credibility, and a responsible approach to information sharing remain crucial aspects to consider in promoting yoga through digital channels. As technology continues to evolve, the role of new media in spreading yoga awareness is expected to grow, influencing how yoga is practiced and perceived worldwide.

New Media and Yoga Awareness

New media platforms have proven to be powerful tools for promoting yoga awareness and reaching a broader audience. Here are some case studies and examples of how these platforms have been utilized effectively:

1. Targeted Advertising: Yoga studios and organizations have leveraged targeted advertising on social media platforms to reach specific demographics interested in yoga. By using data-driven targeting techniques, they can reach potential yoga enthusiasts based on their interests, location, age, and other relevant factors. This approach ensures that the right audience is exposed to yoga-related content, increasing the likelihood of engagement and participation.

2. Influencer Marketing: Yoga influencers with a significant following on social media platforms have been instrumental in spreading yoga awareness. These influencers share their yoga journeys, post videos of their practices, and endorse products and classes they believe in. Their authenticity and credibility resonate with their followers, leading to increased interest in yoga and its benefits.

3. Live Streaming Yoga Classes: Yoga instructors and studios have embraced live streaming to conduct virtual yoga classes. Platforms like YouTube, Instagram Live, and Zoom have allowed practitioners from around the world to join real-time sessions. Live streaming creates a sense of community and encourages interactive engagement, as participants can interact with the instructor and fellow practitioners during the class.

4. User-Generated Content (UGC): UGC plays a significant role in spreading yoga awareness. Many yoga enthusiasts share their yoga practice videos, transformation stories, and testimonials on social media. These user-generated posts not only inspire others but also contribute to building a supportive and encouraging online yoga community.

5. Yoga Challenges and Hashtags: Yoga challenges and hashtags have become popular on social media platforms like Instagram. Yoga instructors and enthusiasts create challenges with specific poses or themes, encouraging others to participate and share their progress. These challenges amplify the reach of yoga-related content and foster a sense of camaraderie among participants.

6. Virtual Yoga Retreats and Workshops: New media platforms have facilitated the organization of virtual yoga

retreats and workshops. Yoga teachers and studios can connect with participants from various locations and offer immersive experiences through online platforms. This approach provides flexibility and convenience for participants while promoting yoga awareness on a global scale.

7. Podcasts and Webinars: Yoga practitioners and experts have ventured into podcasting and hosting webinars to share their knowledge and insights. These audio and video formats offer valuable information on yoga philosophy, techniques, and its impact on mental and physical health. Podcasts and webinars serve as educational resources, spreading awareness about the benefits of yoga.

8. Community Building through Social Media Groups: Yoga enthusiasts have created online communities and groups on platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp. These communities serve as spaces for practitioners to exchange ideas, seek advice, and share their experiences with yoga. Such groups foster a sense of belonging and encourage more people to explore the practice.

Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges:

1. Navigating the Ever-Changing Digital Landscape: The fast-paced nature of the digital world poses a challenge for yoga practitioners and organizations to keep up with emerging technologies and trends. Platforms and algorithms evolve quickly, requiring continuous adaptation and learning to effectively reach and engage with audiences.

2. Maintaining Authenticity: In the digital realm, there is a risk of diluting the authentic essence of yoga to appeal to a broader audience. Yoga practitioners and organizations must strike a balance between using new media strategies and staying true to the traditional principles and values of yoga.

3. Handling Misinformation: With the abundance of information on digital platforms, misinformation about yoga practices and benefits can spread easily. Ensuring accurate and evidence-based content becomes crucial to avoid misleading practitioners and potential harm to their well-being.

4. Ensuring Inclusivity in Online Yoga Communities: Online yoga communities may unintentionally exclude certain groups due to language barriers, cultural differences, or accessibility issues. Creating an inclusive and diverse space that caters to practitioners from various backgrounds becomes essential for fostering a welcoming yoga community.

Opportunities:

1. Connecting with Diverse Audiences: New media platforms allow yoga practitioners and organizations to reach a diverse global audience. They can cater to specific interests and needs, making yoga accessible to individuals from different

cultures, ages, and backgrounds.

2. Cultural Exchange and Global Outreach: New media offers opportunities for cultural exchange, where yoga practitioners from various parts of the world can share their unique practices, perspectives, and experiences. This global exchange fosters a deeper understanding and appreciation of yoga's universal appeal.

3. Expanding Educational Resources: Digital platforms provide the means to create and share educational resources about yoga, including tutorials, workshops, and informative articles. These resources empower practitioners with valuable knowledge and insights to deepen their practice.

4. Engaging with Influencers and Experts: Collaborating with yoga influencers and experts on social media can amplify yoga awareness and credibility. These partnerships can lead to engaging campaigns, challenges, and discussions that inspire and educate a broader audience.

5. Encouraging User Participation: New media encourages user-generated content, such as sharing yoga experiences, transformation stories, and progress updates. By encouraging user participation, yoga practitioners and organizations can build a supportive and interactive community.

6. Bridging Online and Offline Experiences: Digital platforms can serve as a bridge between online and offline yoga experiences. Virtual yoga classes, workshops, and retreats can complement in-person practices, offering practitioners more flexibility and variety.

7. Promoting Mindfulness and Well-Being: New media can be utilized to promote mindfulness and well-being beyond yoga poses. Sharing content related to meditation, stress relief, and mental health can enhance the holistic understanding of yoga's benefits.

Conclusion

This research has demonstrated the significant role of new media in the spread of yoga awareness, showcasing its potential to connect with a diverse global audience and create a thriving online yoga community. Through targeted advertising, influencer marketing, live streaming, user-generated content, and virtual experiences, yoga practitioners, studios, organizations, and enthusiasts have effectively leveraged digital platforms to promote yoga and its numerous benefits. However, as we embrace the opportunities presented by new media, it is essential to navigate the challenges responsibly. Maintaining authenticity and upholding the traditional principles of yoga

while adapting to the ever-changing digital landscape is crucial. Handling misinformation and ensuring inclusivity in online yoga communities are vital considerations to foster a safe and supportive environment for practitioners worldwide. The opportunities offered by new media for cultural exchange, global outreach, and educational resources have immense potential for enhancing yoga awareness. By engaging with influencers, experts, and practitioners, we can amplify the impact of yoga campaigns and discussions on digital platforms, encouraging mindfulness and overall well-being. As we look to the future, it is crucial to continue exploring how new media can be harnessed to expand yoga's global reach and influence on public health and well-being. Emphasizing evidence-based content and providing accessible resources will further strengthen yoga's position as a holistic practice for physical, mental, and spiritual growth. In conclusion, by utilizing new media responsibly and mindfully, we can promote the essence of yoga, preserve its authenticity, and inspire more individuals to embrace this ancient practice. The integration of new media with yoga awareness holds great potential for shaping a healthier and more connected world, fostering a sense of unity and well-being among individuals from different walks of life. As technology continues to evolve, the positive impact of new media on the dissemination of yoga's benefits is poised to grow, leaving a lasting legacy on public health and well-being globally.

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