

Truth is a rare commodity despite freedom of print and electronic media

1. Introduction

2. Thesis statement:

'Though freedom of media exists but still truth is hard to find.'

2. Freedom of media is the fourth estate in democracy

3. Truth is rare to find despite freedom of media

i - Media commercialization prioritizes Profit over truth making truth a rare commodity.

ii - Spread of misinformation over media suppress the truth

iii - Race of ratings and sensationalization defeats the pursuit of truth

iv. Advertisement funding tilt the media and thus make truth a rare commodity.

v. National Laws also often creates hinderances in the way of media to play its true role.

Truth
Identify
man
truth
truth
truth
co

- vi. Algorithm-driven content is suppressing truth in the vast ocean of media
- vii. Lack of verification promotes spread of misinformation further denying pursuit of truth.
- viii. Media is being used as a weapon to further person interests and harmful agendas, thus undermining truth
- ix. Political influences over media shapes the truth.
- x. Cooperate influences over media reforms the truth in its favor

4. Pragmatic Measures to ensure truth is not suppressed

- i. Policies to regulate Algorithm of media.
- ii. Verification Mechanisms for information being displayed on media
- iii. Promotion of private news channels
- iv. Legal checks and balances over media
- v. Accountability of those promoting biased journalism.

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Conclusion

Truth has always been hard to identify. Since the start of the civilizations man is running after the truth, truth of universe, truth of existence, truth of God, truth of nature, and truth of life. Man being a curious creature has always sought ways of knowing and exploring the truth. With the advent of print and electronic media, the pursuit of truth seemed easier. It was thought that now may be truth lies just one book ahead or one article ahead. Media has great potential to be the whistleblower and reveals such truth which were hard to access in previous eras.

But the real question is whether media has fulfilled this job. By just looking on the surface of the issue one can tell, despite

empowerment of media throughout the globe, truth is difficult to find. Various factors in media influences hinders the pursuit of truth. For example, media commercialization prioritizes profit over truth, Misinformation and hate speeches gain more views and attention thus being prioritized on media. Sometime, National laws through censorship suppress the truth. There exist no proper mechanism for verification of information being promoted via media. Furthermore, media bears the burden of the political and cooperate influences. All of these and many others hinder the role of media as a torchbearer of truth and thus, making truth a rare commodity.

In the democratic form of government, which is the most dominant form of government all over the globe

freedom of media is considered as the ¹⁰fourth estate. ²⁰Media both electronic and print media act as the watchdog over the actions of government, ills of the society, form public opinion on a range of issues, ranging from individual to global issues. Media acts as the bridge between the tongues of the citizens and ears of those concerned. Therefore, because of undeniable importance of media in a healthy society, its freedom has been advocated since decades. Free media is sought as basic tenet of democracy and healthy society. It ensure everyone has voice of their own. It also ensures healthy dissent that further strengthen the country. The biggest advocate of dissent Hegel gave whole philosophy highlighting

role of dissent in the growth of civilization. Thus, time and again progressive societies have advocated for freedom of media and also met for with success in this regard. Media is being protected with national laws around the globe and also by international protocols. But the dilemma is that despite the protections and freedoms enjoyed by media, in the vast ocean of information it contains, truth is rare to find.

One of the reasons for this situation might be that media commercialization prioritizes profit over truth. In the world of capitalist mindset and race of riches, it is no wonder that monetary benefits are advanced over the truth. From an individual

journalism on youtube to the big names on newschannel, often news, and topic bring more commercial value are prioritized.

Those involved often justify this by explaining how a certain kind of media brings more commercial value that justifies their hardwork and input in the work. But this justification is not enough for the silence over moral duty and the impact of these trends over the suppression of truth and true role of media. For example, in a survey of Youtube content creators, it was revealed that 80% of Youtubers shape their content around Google AdSense policies. Thus, this behaviours results in prioritization of profit over truth, making truth a rare commodity.

Another reason that truth has become a rare gem

is the spread of misinformation over electronic and print media. Specially on sensitive issues there is bombardment of news and information which confuses the consumers of such news to and further makes truth a rare gem. Misinformation has potential to destabilize the country and thus media further enhances it. For example in October, 2024 during the times of SCO summit there were huge protests in Lahore, causing chaos on a serious matter of rape allegation on a security guard. Many students were hurt in the process and later on investigations revealed that the whole protest was based on misinformation thus, making truth a distant dream.

Furthermore, a race of ratings in

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electronic media and over sensationalization of news defeats the pursuit of truth in media. The success of news channels depends mostly on the ratings therefore, news channels prioritize the news that brings more rating. It has been observed in the trends sensationalization of news and overstretching of sensitive topics or news bring more ratings, ∴ thus generate more revenue and are therefore, prioritized. A study of news channels ratings revealed that there is significant increase in viewership during times of crises as compared to peacetimes.

So often in the peacetimes, newschannels over-sensationalizes the evils of societies to generate more rating. This behaviour further pushes away the truth and change the perception of secure society.

In addition to its advertisement funding also tilt the media and pushes truth further away. Most of the revenue generated by print and electronic media depends on the advertisements. For example, Youtube revenue depends on Google Ads, Newchannel journalism also run on commercial advertisements. The information displayed on such ads is often false and focused on more sale of a certain product or service. The consumers of such content are being subconsciously trained in favour of advertised commodity based on the shown traits that might be false. Thus, media shapes the truth of people but the guiding force behind this shape are those who invest millions in advertisements.

Another major contributor of truth suppressor in the times of

free media ~~can~~ is national laws. As stated before media act as the watchdog over the actions of government that promotes freedom of speech, freedom of expression and ensures accountability. This role of media often does not align with government and this pushes legislature to enact laws to restrict media on discussing certain topics and issues. The United States Espionage Act is a major example of suppressing freedom of media to reveal truth. Thus state institutions use legislation that further enhances hindrances in way of free media and promotion of truth.

Not only this but algorithm-driven content is also contributing in making truth a rare commodity. Truth, to survive has to deal with

dissent for which majority of
the population is not ready. This
problem further exacerbates when the
algorithm-driven content only brings the
content to people that matches their
belief. Google, Youtube and Meta via
Facebook, Instagram and Whatsapp
channels spends millions of dollars and
human resource to strengthen the
Algorithm of these platforms. Thus, they
mostly bring the selective data in
front of selective people whose ideologies
and beliefs align with the content.
Further narrowing the space for truth.
Such data reassure people that their
beliefs and presumptions are truth
while everything else is a lie and
the real truth is lost in between
those lines.

Lack of verification of
information adds salt to the injury.
People being fed on news that

don't have any factual standing as become norm of the day. Lack of verification of news before being published, uploaded or run on-air cause spread of misinformation. During times of Covid-19 social media, television media and some of print media were spread latest updates of Covid-19 cases, causalities and remedies, which were often denied latter on and called as propaganda. So it can be safely concluded that in the media industry lack of verification makes truth a rare commodity.

Moreover, role of media has often been observed as a character undermining truth by being used for personal interests and harmful agendas. Free media in theory should easy the way for truth but it has been observed that

freedom enjoyed by electronic and
print media is manipulated to
further individual interests and agendas.
Biggest example of manipulation of
media is use of media by
Israel and the United States of
America. At 1st the United States
of America used media to
advance its interests in Russia -
Ukraine war and later on
Israel manipulated media to
generate soft corners in the global
society and justify its evils actions
with advocating right to self-defence.
Thus, media being manipulated
at the hands of big powers
deny pursuit of truth of media.

One of crucial influence
over media that further pushes
away the truth is political influences
over it. Through out the globe it
has been observed that major political

parties use media as a weapon
in the electoral process. This promotes
'Yellow journalism'. Political parties
polarizes media channels to advance
their manifestos and sometime to
dig the weakness of opposition
or built public narrative in
favor or against of a certain
political party or political figure.

In the U.S.A the news delivery of
CNN and Fox News clearly
indicates this difference. Thus, it
will not be wrong to state
that political influences over the
media shapes truth.

Another major influence on
media that hinders the truth is
cooperate influence. ~~over~~ Big
conglomerates offer advertise their
products, and services at the
cost of truth. Often they prevent
media to play its role of

watchdog to maintain their reputation.
Pakistan's largest chain of colleges,
Punjab Group of Colleges called police
on students, rendering many students
injured, to control the situation and
maintain its honorable reputation.

Moreover, many industrialist stop
media channels to raise awareness
on environmental issues because
they themselves are the emitters
of Green House Gases and the consumers
of fossil fuels. Therefore, to keep
their pace with honor, they
influence the media in their
favor turning themselves into
heroes and craving stories far
from reality.

If the media continues
to be influence like this,
those days are not far when
truth will become impossible to
find and societies will be so

instable that only revolution of media will be left. Therefore, it is need to the time to take pragmatic measures to ensure that the not suppressed. One of major measure in this regard is reforming the Algorithms of media. There is need of specific policies to reform and regulate algorithm of media in such a way that content based on verified information, and backed by certain criteria such as facts, researchs, or institutions is promoted rather than the interests, biasness and beliefs of individuals which is the correct scenario.

The information being spread is fed into brains and almost 80% of the time there is no way to verify journalists claim. This can be countered by

establishing a fact finding institutions where people can access on-line and off-line inquiry portals. Article 19-A of the Constitution of Pakistan 1973 declares right to information as the fundamental right. Establishment of such a fact finding or checking institution will provide the citizens their right to information.

Moreover, there is further need to enhance and promote private news channels. During the decline of democracy in Pakistan in the era of Zia-ul-Haq, there were strict laws on freedom of media and starting a private news body was next to impossible. It was observed that it caused polarization and monopoly of media outlets and it was easier to push the truth away. Therefore,

multiple news outlet being run
by private body will bring variety
of content, and this will be
healthy competition of truth
findings.

One of the most
important step in ensuring truth's
survival in media industry is
legal checks and balances. Right
now ~~PRMRA~~ PECA and Telegraph
Act are among some of the
legislations that tries to balance the
truth and freedom of media but
despite their presence both are
being questioned everyday. There
is a need to draft special
law with the assistance of
technocrats on the special issue
of balance of truth alongside
freedom of media and speech.

Last but not the least,
there is a need to hold

those accountable responsible for promoting biased journalism. Quacks needs to be revealed and brought to public. This will create awareness among masses and realization that whatever is fed by media by their favorite respective media outlet might be totally based on propaganda and false facts.

In conclusion, the whole discussion can be summed up as although freedom of media that is the basic tenet in a healthy democratic society is advocated since ages and is ensured by some laws both on national and international fronts, but still due to numerous factors it is unable to convey the truth, making it a rare commodity. Major reasons may that

hinders the truth and stops the freedom enjoyed by media to play a healthy role and political influences over the media industry. Those in power, whether they are governments, or conglomerates they cooperate which is far from reality often times. Furthermore, lack of verification of media narratives adds salt to the injury. Owing to all these factors and many more, one reaches to the conclusion that truth is indeed a rare commodity. Fortunately all is not lost, if right steps are taken in the right direction, truth can still be protected, which is also the need of the time and demand of the freedom enjoyed by electronic and print media.