

Probing Tagore in 21st-century Bangladesh: Shifting Faces of Metaphysical Reality and the Role of New Media

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Abstract

This study explores the shifting faces of reality in 21st-century Bangladesh as propagated by the questionable role of new media. The research hypothesizes that the stakeholders of the new media are fragmented into disparate groups, and the faces and aspects of metaphysics have been substantially altered to fit the motives of those in power, reversing the original intent. The study critically analyses the role of faith in goodness in human life, compares the views of Tagore to contemporary power relations, and investigates how the new media acts as a catalyst in perpetuating these mechanisms. The findings suggest that further research is needed to comprehend the potential benefits and limits of new media in these subjects.

Keywords: new media, Rabindranath Tagore, metaphysics, 21-century Bangladesh

1. Introduction

Recent media industry advancements have resulted in a substantial increase in the use of digital platforms for the broadcast of information. As the infamous theory asserts that information is the 21st century's money, the new media is frequently portrayed as a tool in the hands of corporate entities, prominent groups, and the system itself. Tagore, on the other hand, instils a feeling of utopian reality in the minds of his readers through his extensive metaphysical writings. His works, which offer us hope and inspiration, are infused with optimism and belief in the goodness of the human heart. Unfortunately, in the case of new media trends, the time has arrived for TRP to take precedence over the news itself. If The Daily A publishes an article condemning someone, The Daily B will write a counterargument, resulting in a conundrum. Facebook and other social media platforms have become distorted and performative because readers do not have access to sufficient data on any site, unwanted sharing is not checked, and Bangladesh's socioeconomic status is still below the norm. People are so invested in the topic that they neglect to evaluate the reliability of the source. Scammers and exploiters are utilising these possibilities to induce mass hallucinations. Currently, everything is regarded as beneficial from the perspective of the populace. If a person believes that "X" is terrible, someone must have a link indicating that "X" is good, is not so awful, or that the prior source is of disputed provenance. Everyone seeks to disprove everyone else. In the end, the bottom line stays unchanged. Who is correct? Who is in error? In a word, we all reside in a metaphysical universe devoid of any negativity. When you find something unattractive, a thousand other things will be waiting for you to demonstrate that it is desirable or ought to be wanted. We all fly our own flags, whether in the comment sections of social media sites, blogs, or live performances. We have the freedom to transform any problem into a struggle of religion, geography, or ethics. The fundamental question remains unanswered: What happened to the first topic? Surprisingly, Rabindranath Tagore is correct in 'Nabojatak' when he writes, "The human child brings back again and again/ the message of eternal hope/ As if bringing along/ the light of freedom at a new dawn." It is obvious that the remnant of metaphysics has reformed, and the mass is in a limbo of factual news (or a metaphysical state) in the hands of such entities.

The article examines the emergence of digital media in Bangladesh, its impact on society, and the news consuming habits of individuals. The author contends that modern media has become performative, with readers unable to evaluate the credibility of their sources, resulting in the dissemination of false information. In addition, the study examines the effect of new media on visual communication design and shows the potential of social media beyond human interaction and policy execution. The essay concludes with an examination of the function of media in Asia, focusing on the impact of individualism and collectivism on media consumption and production. The impact of new media on society is complex and multidimensional. While the Internet gives us with quick access to information and a platform for self-expression, it has also introduced issues, including as the prioritization of TRP above factual news, the dissemination of disinformation,

and the deterioration of critical thinking abilities. This study attempted to examine the types of news individuals often consume, their awareness of the media's role in Bangladesh, and their faith in the profit-and-TRP power relationship. By addressing these issues, we can gain a deeper understanding of the challenges we confront in the media world of today and work to develop answers. It is essential that we stay attentive and critical regarding the information we consume and the sources we rely on, and that we continue to uphold the journalistic ideals of truth, accuracy, and objectivity. This study addressed three questions in a mixed mode approach. The questions were explorative and following the responses a hypothesis was formed and tested using SPSS 26. The questions are given below.

- i. What are the types of news people generally follow?
- ii. How critically aware are the readers about the role of media in Bangladesh?
- iii. How far do they have faith in the power relation between profit and TRP?

2. Literature Review

The development of the Internet and the rise of the digital era have contributed to the expansion of digital media, such as social media, that allows access to large quantities of current, freely available, and open-source material (Pieterse et al., 2022). In visual communication design, the application of new media has been proven to be essential for optimising the benefits of visual communication, though previous works have not identified a substantial effect of new media applications on visual communication design (Yu et al., 2022). The new media has been termed to contain a particular type of intelligence that is termed as open-source intelligence and studies, like Morais et al. (2021) and Awais et al. (2022), have discovered that the social media has power beyond the control of rapid human intervention and policy implementation. New media has had a substantial influence on election campaigns, critical policy decisions, and the conduct and activities of political officials (Axford & Huggins, 2001). With the integration of advanced technology and modern devices, everyone has access to free-flowing human-computer dialogue systems with potential uses in ideological and political instruction (Yan, 2023). In uncertain situations, like as the COVID-19 epidemic, individuals seek pertinent knowledge to lessen uncertainty and avert harm. However, Noor (2022) claims that different communication channels, including the news media, social media, and interpersonal contact, have benefits and drawbacks for conveying risk-related information to the public. On the other hand, the media landscape in Asia is diverse and intricate, with several elements impacting the role and influence of media in various nations and areas. Influence of individuality and collectivism on media consumption and production is a significant aspect of the Asian media landscape. Hamamura (2011) examines the variations in individuality and collectivism through time in the United States and Japan. Individualistic societies may stress personal expression and a variety of media options, which has ramifications for the media environment. Alternatively, collectivist civilizations could promote common ideals and shared media experiences. Another key component of the media in Asia is the function of influencers in creating political discourses. Soriano and Gaw (2022) investigate the role of YouTube influencers in the dissemination of anti-media populism in the Philippines. Through their networked assemblages, they suggest that influencers play a vital role in building political views and defining political concerns. This demonstrates the impact of influencers in affecting public opinion and political discourse. In Asia, religion and its influence on media framing are equally crucial topics. Sari (2016) refers to the effect of religious affiliation on news production and framing, focusing on economic news released in Indonesian mass media. Abidin (2016) explores the phenomena of Instagram influencer photos and suggests that they may be viewed as subversive gestures that question traditional ideals of femininity and beauty. The influence of globalisation on the media and culture of South Asia is another prominent subject of research, where Das (2022) studies transcultural flow in the era of globalisation and its consequences for digital platforms, fandom, and mediated culture in South Asia. Beyond cross-cultural and comparative research, the study contends that transcultural communication provides a methodological perspective for comprehending the global connection of media and culture. Understanding the Asian media environment requires an examination of the media consumption and mobility of Asian women. Kim (2010) upholds that transnational mobility and media consumption habits of Asian women, with a particular focus on South Korea, Japan, and China. The significance of video cultures in moulding the Asian experience of global media should also be considered. Nevertheless, it must be noted that understanding the media environment in Asia requires taking media exposure and its consequences on behaviour and attitudes into account. The advent of social media and its influence on society is an important trend in the Asian media landscape. To make educated judgments on the usage of new media, it is vital to examine its limits and potential downsides.

In terms of media language, understanding the media environment necessitates considering the standard of media reporting and its adherence to standards. Chandra et al. (2013) study newspaper accounts of suicides in Bangalore, India, and compare their adherence to reporting norms to those of other Asian nations. In Asia, where suicides are highly newsworthy, adherence to standards appears to be particularly poor, according to the study. This emphasises the necessity for responsible and ethical media reporting techniques. The influence of media on consumer behaviour and innovation is another significant part of the new media. A study by McBride and Gillespie (2000) reveals that street sellers' adoption of

new techniques is impacted by both mass media and personal networks. This emphasises the media's role in spreading information and changing customer behaviour. Influence of the media system, the function of journalism, and the paradigm on the vulnerability of media workers and journalists (Kalaloi et al., 2023) are also crucial in understanding the media environment in Asia (Dyke et al., 2020). Thus, new media with a combination of social media networks has encapsulated every aspect of human lives including customer behaviour (Vatanasakdakul et al., 2023), public relations (Anani-Bossman & Tandoh, 2022), social power dynamics (Le-Phuong et al., 2022), ideology and familial belief (Das, 2022), and formation of public opinion (Leung & Buchanan, 2021).

Like any other blessings, the new media comes with many challenging facets of human responsibilities ranging from data manipulation, fabrication of facts, deception, and maltreatment of statistics. The panorama of new media in Asia is continuously transforming, with several variables impacting its development and influence. The advent of new media channels has had a substantial effect on the control of infectious illnesses. The 2002-2003 SARS epidemic is an illustration of how new media played a vital role in sharing information and increasing awareness about the disease (Cui et al., 2007). The interconnection of media networks allowed the fast transmission of the news updates throughout Asia and other areas of the world. The Internet has enabled a unique expansion of access to health information and services, especially for the young generation. Delany-Moretlwe et al. (2015) believe that the concept of new media often creates confusion and essentially draws the young generation into its domain. However, it has a longer history, and it is essential to comprehend the historical context in which new media technologies arose and evolved throughout Asia (Slama & Barendregt, 2018). Kluver (2003) postulates that new media poses a challenge to authoritarian governments and stresses on the intricate link between new media and political power. Kusumasondjaja (2018) warns about the overdependency on social media stretching that these platforms are often unmonitored and seeks profit over ethical application. The extensive usage of the internet in Asia has generated new contact and communication spaces, such as TikTok, which can have both beneficial and bad consequences (Razali & Yulianti, 2022). Numerous case studies have projected the manipulative function of social media where many leading conglomerates were found to be problematic and scheming, e.g., the Coca-Cola Company (Huse et al., 2022). (Alzubi, 2023) talks about the faulty practices adopted by even the media stakeholders in the creation, distribution, and consumption of information, impacting conventional forms of media such as newspapers, magazines, and television. Many other factors interplay in the new media trends in the Southeast Asia like digital media literacy and generational disparities (Sawari et al., 2022) and religious beliefs (Hasan & Bose, 2022).

In digital Asia, the power dynamics and institutional features of media conglomerates and mega applications have been questioned rapidly. Here the social media market is dominated by Facebook with 1.3 billion (approx.) users giving it 65.6% of the whole market (statista.com). Understanding the dynamics of digital media in Asia is dependent upon media control and power (Steinberg et al., 2022). In such a scenario, a resilient monitoring system becomes essential to keep the political and social state of any economy in shape. In Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand, the function of government fact-checking in combating false news has been studied with an increased demand on creating media literacy (Schuldt, 2021). In India, the dissemination of disinformation and propaganda via digital media platforms has become a serious problem, underlining the necessity for media awareness and critical thinking (Muhammed T & Mathew, 2022). In Southeast Asia's Islamic digital domains, ambivalence, dissatisfaction, and divisions have been investigated by Slama and Hoesterey (2021) and a complicated interaction between digital media and religion has been revealed. The influence of digital media on the growing disparities in newspaper and television news consumption has also been studied and the way how the introduction of digital media has altered patterns of news consumption with ramifications for socioeconomic inequality has been investigated (Neo, 2018). Dutta (2021) observed the usage of social media platforms, particularly Twitter, by firms in Islamic nations claiming that social media has become a crucial tool for businesses to engage with their consumers and disseminate company information. In Bangladesh, the influence of new media on the development of Islam in the daily lives of young Bangladeshis has been researched by Udupa (2019) who discovered a peculiar pattern through which new media technologies and platforms have contributed to the development of an Islamist public sphere by diversifying interpretations of religion. In Indonesian society, social media has become a vital aspect of communication, giving new means of connecting and communicating (Ulum & Syaputri, 2022). The time has come when, particularly in Bangladesh, when the question is to be raised about the acceptance of social media propaganda and check whether the consumers are in a state of belief or disbelief. At this point of juncture, the metaphysical aspects of reality come into the scene.

The famed Indian poet, philosopher, and Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore's writings have had a tremendous effect on literature, education, and cultural dialogue. Tagore's works cover a vast array of topics, including love, nature, spirituality, and societal challenges. His creative efforts have not only affected the literary landscape of India, but also the literature of the world. The lyrical beauty, profound insights, and study of human emotions in his poems, novels, short tales, and plays have enthralled readers. *Gitanjali* (Song Offerings), Tagore's most renowned work, earned him the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913, making him the first non-European to win this coveted prize. Invoking a feeling of universality and transcendence, his poetry displays a profound relationship with nature, spirituality, and the human predicament. Tagore

was a visionary educator and philosopher in addition to his literary accomplishments. In Santiniketan, he established Visva-Bharati University, which intended to combine the best of Indian and Western education systems. Tagore emphasised the value of arts, music, and nature in education because he believed in the holistic development of humans. His educational philosophy stressed the integration of information and life experiences, which fostered innovation, critical thinking, and a feeling of social responsibility. Tagore's writings also dealt with societal concerns and promoted social justice. Tagore's works, often referred to as Rabindra Sangeet, have become a vital element of Indian classical music and continue to inspire musicians and artists. Contemporary debates on diversity, inclusiveness, and intercultural conversation connect with his emphasis on universal humanism, cultural interaction, and the potential of art as a channel for social transformation. The metaphysical themes explored by Tagore in his poems, novels, and plays are evident. His poetry explores the nature of existence, the soul, and the divine. Tagore's poetry frequently evokes a sense of mysticism and transcendence, prompting readers to ponder the deeper depths of existence. Tagore examines metaphysical topics via the experiences and journeys of his characters in his books and plays.

In the context of this study, the complex and multidimensional topic of media and culture scrutinises the dynamic interaction between media platforms, cultural activities, and societal norms. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the complex relationship between media and culture, analysing their reciprocal influence and impact on numerous facets of society and human psyche.

3. Methodology

This study was conducted using a mixed-mode structure through three stages. A conceptual framework is given below (Figure 1).

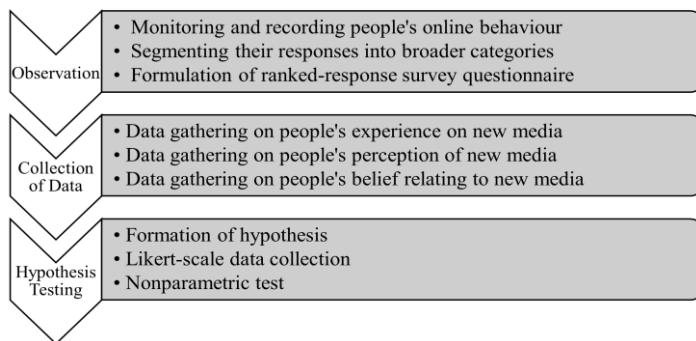


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

Several mainstream news channels and their respective Facebook pages were observed during the first stage. The author particularly followed nationally and internationally significant news where a massive segment of audience was engaged online. Out of 22 instances, the recorded responses projected into three major divides: religious segmentation mostly relating to Bangladesh-India international relationship, religious debate over Muslim-Hindu community in Bangladesh, and political argument. One eccentric pattern in these hateful and provocative remarks is that none were connected to the actual news, the one with the war of comments going on. This points towards the acceptability of such platforms and the way people treat them. For the second stage, the author followed a convenience sampling technique to collect data. The demographic profile is given below.

Table 1. Demographic profile of the respondents

Age																							
16-20	21-25	26-30	31-35	36-40	41-45	46-50	51-55	56-60	61-65	66-70	71-75	76-80											
14.01	23.43	27.05	10.87	7.97	6.76	1.45	2.90	4.35	0.24	0.24	0.48	0.24											
Sex				Male				Female			Prefer not to disclose												
53.38				44.69				1.93															
Region								Dhaka		Chattogram		Rajshahi		Rangpur		Barishal		Sylhet		Rangpur		Mymensingh	
22.46		31.88		17.15		9.18		2.90		3.62		2.90		9.90									
Educational Qualification												SSC		HSC		Bachelor's		Master's		PhD		Others	
14.98		27.05		23.67		23.19		9.90		1.21													
Profession						Public service		Private service		Semi-autonomous organisations		Student		Self employed		Not employed							
23.67		29.47		9.90		19.32		9.90		7.73													

The researcher prepared the first instrument with 9 items each containing a 7-point ranked responses (please refer to the appendix for the questionnaire). These items addressed elementary perceptions and people’s online experience relating to news coverage and the new media literacy. Later, based on the findings, a hypothesis was formed to be tested using nonparametric One-Sample Chi-Square Test. The reliability (Cronbach's Alpha) turned out to be 0.874 that is good (Hulin et al., 2001).

4. Findings

Out of 7 options, the top 3 responses are given below in percentile.

Table 2. Top three responses from each category (In percentile)

Item	First	Second	Third
Rank the following topics based on coverage.	Celebrity News and Gossips	Mariam Mannan	Padma Bridge
How would you justify your choices made earlier?	The newspapers share such topics on their pages more than the other ones.	They reach my social media newsfeed.	My friends share these very often.
What makes a news important?	It includes religious/political issues.	It involves business interests.	It is of national/international interest.
What should be the purpose of a news?	To follow and respond to trendy and viral events	To create sensation	To cover celebrity and lifestyle news
What should be the objective of a media entity?	To investigate critically and present natural and non-manipulated reports in the capacity of news reporting	To enlighten the society with carefully composed and bias-free news	To prioritize trends over substantial and thoughtful topics
What should be the responsibility of a reader?	To use media as a source of enlightenment and research	To explore and ponder over the published news with an active mind	To stay updated with the latest news
What should be the attitude of the readers towards the news?	A source of entertainment	Maintaining with the trends	Updates on celebrities and fashion
What is the role of digital media (electronic and online media)?	To maintain consistency between the headline and the news itself	To cover news without arousing any sense of fundamentalism and extremism	To present the news from objective point of view
What is the role of social media?	Acting as a platform for expressing one’s opinion	To share feeds with friends and family	To serve as a platform for gossiping and leisure activities

These responses cumulatively indicate some rudimental aspects of social media and the mass's attitude towards these platforms. It is evident that these services have failed to sustain people's faith in terms of neutrality and reliability. The users are also not aware of the impact they might have by following these entities. To confirm their insight and test whether they really trust the online portals, hypothesis testing was performed.

H₁ - People of Bangladesh find the new media practices questionable.

H₀ - People trust these bodies completely.

H_A - People believe that these companies have other priorities over neutrality and objectivity.

The test results are provided below.

Table 3. Results of hypothesis testing

	Null Hypothesis	Sig.	Decision
1	Newspapers in Bangladesh are completely unbiased and free from internal conflicts between them.	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
2	Newspapers should be free from censorship and legal boundaries.	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
3	I believe that the newspapers cover all the events and incidents thoroughly and appropriately prioritizing neutrality over TRP, popularity, and visibility.	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
4	I can decide on believing or disbelieving anything by following the news.	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
5	The language and the manner of sentence construction adopted by the newspapers are acceptable and culturally suitable.	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.
6	Newspapers modify the way of headline presentation and news composition out of political pressure and business opportunities.	.000	Reject the null hypothesis.

* All items occur with equal probabilities.

** Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .050.

5. Discussion

The media and culture have a reciprocal connection in which one influences and shapes the other. The dissemination of cultural values, conventions, and ideologies relies heavily on media channels such as television, radio, print media, and internet platforms. They carry cultural messages and shape public opinion as potent agents of socialisation. Media depictions of culture facilitate the development of communal meanings and narratives practises, identities, and events. Unfortunately, the people of Bangladesh are still struggling with establishing a trustworthy relationship in the new media. The findings show that they are still trying to understand the role of media in their national and social life, though their faith in the goodness of human nature is evident. On the other hand, cultural norms and values impact the development and consumption of media material. Cultural tastes, beliefs, and ideologies influence media material production, distribution, and consumption. Frequently, media producers respond to the cultural preferences and expectations of their intended consumers, reflecting and strengthening pre-existing cultural norms and values. Media output may simultaneously question and subvert cultural conventions, creating debates and conversations that lead to cultural transformation. Multiple dimensions, including language, identity development, socialisation, and cultural behaviours, are impacted by media on culture. Media platforms can influence language usage and disseminate new linguistic trends and idioms. Media representations also play an important part in the formation of individual and societal identities, since they impact how people view themselves and others. Through the depiction of social roles, behaviours, and values, media socialisation helps to the construction of cultural identities and social norms. In addition, media platforms function as venues of cultural production and consumption, where cultural practises are performed, disseminated, and negotiated. The emergence of social media platforms has encouraged the formation of online communities and subcultures where individuals with common identities and interests may interact and engage in cultural activities. In addition to facilitating the circulation and remixing of cultural information, these platforms have fostered a participatory culture in which users actively participate in the development and transmission of media content. The link between media and culture is complicated and fraught with difficulties. The media may propagate prejudices, exacerbate inequities, and marginalise specific cultural groups through its depictions. Under- or misrepresentation of various cultural viewpoints can contribute to the perpetuation of dominant cultural narratives and power systems. In addition, the globalisation of media has resulted in the propagation of dominant cultural ideals and the standardisation of cultural practises, which has the potential to

undermine local cultural traditions and identities. Above all, the link between media and culture in Bangladesh is reciprocal and dynamic, with both shaping and affecting the other. Media platforms play an essential role in the dissemination of cultural values, norms, and ideologies, while cultural preferences and values influence the production and consumption of media material. Multiple dimensions, including language, identity development, socialisation, and cultural behaviours, are impacted by media on culture. Nonetheless, this connection is not without of complexity and obstacles since media portrayals can reinforce preconceptions and injustices. To understand the influence of media in influencing society values, identities, and practises, it is necessary to comprehend the relationship between media and culture.

6. Conclusion

The paper concludes with a discussion of a mixed-method approach to answering the research questions. The author hypothesised that readers lack a critical understanding of the media's role in Bangladesh. The purpose of the study is to address this issue by offering a complete understanding of the sorts of news people follow, their awareness of the function of the media, and their faith in the profit-to-TRP power relationship. Further research can be conducted with a wider range of population and timeframe.

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Authors contributions

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Data sharing statement

No additional data is available.

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