

## INAUGURAL SESSION

The First International Conference on Media and Communication: Prospects and Challenges was held at SIMC on October 6-7, 2016. The inaugural function was held at SIU Convention Centre on October 6 at 10 am.

**SIMC Director Prof. Ruchi Jaggi**, in her opening remarks, highlighted the importance of the first International Conference on Media and Communication to give a fillip to research in media and communication.

**Vice-Chancellor Dr Rajani Gupte**, giving an account of the research activity across all constituent centres in SIU, said how ICMAC forms a part of SIU's decision to sponsor international conferences, faculty-wise and not institute wise, once in two years to boost inter-disciplinary research in the university.

**Principal Director Dr. Vidya Yeravdekar**, in her address, exhorted the delegates and faculty to mould young minds and help them communicate what is right and what is wrong. She said we should be aware of what is happening in our border, nation, state and city. We should project happenings to the outside world in the right way and find solutions to problems.

**Chancellor Dr S.B. Mujumdar** said the Faculty of Media and Communication can play greater role in the development of a nation. He said he was happy with the Government of India's Smart City Mission, but then this will remain incomplete without the comprehensive development of India's six lakh villages. India will develop only when all the villages also develop in addition to the country's towns and cities.

Dr Mujumdar said there is a big dichotomy between India representing the urban population and Bharat covering the rural population. Because of this dichotomy, students in rural areas, though brilliant in mathematics and other subjects, are unable to do speak and write well in English compared with their counterparts in urban areas. The problem is mainly because of their poor communication skills. He exhorted ICMAC delegates and SIMC faculty to find out how we can promote the English language skills among rural youth.

## PLENARY SESSION

Our plenary session was scholarly and intellectually stimulating and inspiring. We had four academic luminaries of the media and communication world: **Dr Daya**

**Thussu, Dr Nishant Shah, Dr Suresh Ramanathan and Dr Steve McDowell.**

The theme of the Plenary Session was “The Past, Present and Future in Media and Communication Research” It was aimed at setting the agenda for the two-day conference. It examined the conceptual issues as well as future directions for media and communications research.

Our four plenary speakers spoke on the theme of emerging research paradigms in media and communications research.

**Dr Daya Thussu** enlightened us on global media and communications research in particular, drawing lessons from his scholarly work over the years. In particular, he examined the areas of international communication and soft power.

**Dr Nishant Shah** focused on the emerging methodological frameworks that are shaping research on digital technologies in the political, social and cultural contexts. Additionally, he spoke on the challenges that scholars in the field of Internet Studies must be prepared to encounter.

**Dr Suresh Ramanathan** spoke on the theme of consumer behavior research. He particularly focused on Innovation which holds the key for consumer behavior research. Innovation holds the key and in today’s place there is no place for mediocrity, he said.

**Dr Steve McDowell** spoke on the theme of emerging research paradigms in media and communication research. He enlightened us on global media and communications research in particular.

### **Skype Session with Dr Nick Couldry**

In the evening, Dr Nick Couldry, Professor of International Communication, London School of Economics and Political Science, addressed us on skype on the theme, ‘The Social Construction of Reality’. Speaking on his long-term interest in the social consequences of the concentration of symbolic power in media institutions, he said the issue of media institutions’ role in the social construction of reality now goes much wider. He cited four examples to substantiate his thesis:

1. The rise of social media platforms as alternative foci of attention
2. The increasing interdependence of mainstream media and social media
3. The increasing push across the wider corporate sector

Dr Couldry said we can and will change the reality. He raised the pertinent question:

Is it enough to deconstruct the myth? It is important but insufficient to deconstruct the myth of us (and identity at work). It is a part of reality.

### **Skype Session with Dr Patrick O'Donoghue**

On October 7 at 9 am, we had another brilliant address on skype by Dr Brian Patrick O'Donoghue of University of Alaska, Fairbanks.

He said governments, businesses, marketing professionals, community and social organizations are encroaching, if not entirely displacing, traditional news organizations as sources of information about events, even breaking news today. News media no longer serves as society's news gatekeeper, deciding what the audience needs to know, when and how.

The vital role for journalists today is getting unfiltered answers about issues and questions troubling readers and viewers. We can and should add value to information channels: putting our fact-collecting and analytical skills to work. That starts with listening to concerns raised by the audience. Success requires getting and reporting answers, earning the public's trust.

In December 2016, convictions against four Native Alaskans serving decades in U.S. prison were overturned in a settlement fueled by 14-years of investigative reporting by Dr Brian and many years of student journalists

The impetus for investigating innocence claims by the Fairbanks Four began in the most traditional of news forums: letters to the editor from readers in Native villages. Dr Brian discussed how that came about and case lessons about the importance of public service journalism in the digital age.

### **Concurrent Panel Sessions**

Our concurrent panel sessions in all four tracks spread across 28 panels were a roaring success. Delegates and Track Chairs have appreciated the efforts of the paper presenters and the quality of research.

### **TRACK I**

#### **Media, Culture and Society**

Over 45 research papers were presented in 11 sessions during the course of conference.

This track was conceptualised to discuss and argue on one of the most critical facets of media studies – culture and to investigate media discourses on different dimensions of the social, political and cultural framework of society. During the course of the conference, scholars presented and discussed several concepts, themes, issues, and ideas. Paper presenters covered the following topics:

1. Role of newspapers in diminishing knowledge gap, paid news, coverage of social issues, coverage of election in the context of women candidates
2. Use of information, communication, technology for health communication and effect of education on woman and child health.
3. Representation of gender in animated films, Bollywood and regional films and representation of metropolis in Hindi film songs
4. Gender representation in cartoon shows on Indian Television,
5. Analysis of Indian and foreign television soaps and reality shows through the lens of diverse theories.
6. Use of participatory video for social change.
7. Adoption of technology for agro-based industry
8. Media literacy
9. Use of smartphones and Whatsapp
10. Studies related to various segments of the audience.

## **TRACK II**

### **Media Laws, Ethics and Policies**

This track generated a lot of interest because of the increasing importance of law in modern-day world. The importance of media laws and ethics has been increasing day by day. There has been a perennial conflict between a citizen's civil liberties and societal expectations and goals. In defining the limits of the citizen's protection, one faces at every stage difficult questions arising from conflict of values. Where does a citizen's right to free speech begin and end? Of late, the law of sedition, for instance, has become the most controversial piece of legislation as questions have been raised over its legitimate application and enforcement. What constitutes incitement to violence and whether the government can book anyone under this law merely for hate speech (which can be tried under other laws) even if there is no explicit incitement to violence as ruled by the Supreme Court of India? Though the freedom of speech is the sheet anchor of democracy, it is circumscribed by reasonable restrictions. The media – print, electronic and digital - is free in India and many other countries. However, it does not enjoy a special status vis-à-vis the citizens with respect to laws such as the freedom of speech and expression, law of sedition and law of defamation.

There were 14 papers in total spread over three sessions and they dealt with both macro and micro dimensions of law in diversified areas. The topics ranged from sedition law to television broadcasting rules and regulations, enforcement of the Right to Information Act, corporate frauds and journalistic ethics at the time of natural disasters like the Uttarakhand floods.

While Dr Biswajit Das, Director, Centre for Governance, Jamia Millia University, New Delhi, was the Chair on Oct 6, Dr Shashikala Gurpur, Dean, Faculty of Law, SIU, chaired two sessions on Oct 7.

### **TRACK III**

#### **Focus on New Media**

Track III focused on the emergence of new media and its impact on society at large. As brought out by the researchers, new media has created a strong impact on multiple stake holders of the society. The penetration of social media platforms is altering the social behaviour and the changing ways in which communities are negotiating the personal and digital/social spaces.

Just like the digital natives, the aging population considered to be digital immigrants too have accepted and learned to use social media networks as platforms for contact, cooperation and socialisation. Social media is an empowering tool, which are being used by marginalized communities to raise awareness and gather support at the global level.

The manner in which news was disseminated has changed owing to the advent of social media. Now news can be immediate, backed by instant videos and a larger volume of public opinion can be garnered instantly.

New media has helped individuals create a digital identity and the research outcome indicates that each gender exhibits a different online behavior. This is an interesting revelation. The use of smartphone has gone beyond basic telephony and is creating a community culture in society which is beneficial for all stakeholders. However, online safety of vulnerable audiences is also an emerging concern. There is an immediate need to introduce stringent laws preventing mobile cyber crimes. New media is the new buzz word, and marketers are using this platform to reach out to diverse target groups. However, research papers insights suggest that the user generated content enjoys a higher acceptance amongst the public compared to banner ads and pop up ads by marketers. In a young country like India, even political parties have started using social media for influencing the youth voters and this trend will only increase looking at the penetration of the new media.

New media provides for day-to-day utility also. Rural population too benefits from social media by using it for purpose like health and agricultural information. The lack of formal education may not limit digital literacy. However, the government has a huge onus to ensure social inclusion in this major disruption called the New Media.

### **TRACK IV**

#### **Business and Marketing Communication**

In all, 29 papers were presented in this track. It emphasised on the recent trends of consumer research, use of big data in various sectors. It also laid emphasis on the various mediums through which marketing has emerged to the consumers. Special emphasis was put on various digital marketing strategies and how the response of respondents has changed with changing environment.

Looking into this, the session stressed the need to include online branding theories and models as a part of the digital research. The correlation of online marketing with personal branding was discussed. Apart from discussing digital world at large, the issues also revolved around other marketing mediums like celebrity endorsements, cartoons and gender issues relating to online purchase behavior among millennial.

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