



## Travel journalism: Possibilities and challenges of Infotainment-Journalism concepts

Lijin Joseph,

Research Scholar, DoS In Communication and Journalism, University of Mysore.

Dr .N. Mamatha ,

Assistant Professor, DoS in Communication and Journalism, University of Mysore

**Abstract:** The history of travelling profoundly shaped by the legacies of human evolution which includes invasion, conquest, hunting and adventure. Nomadic, merchants, rulers, religious people have been written about travelling for centuries. The colonial era reshaped the basic concept of travel writing where it has been performed a crucial role in circulating ideas and information over the world. Every narratives form has under gone several re- creations and reshaping in response to post colonization and globalization, where travel writing has no exception. The concept of Travel Journalism comes with more socially signified form of travel writing, which goes beyond usual individual reflections of travel writing. The risen number of travel articles, travel magazines, travel shows, travel-lovers blogs, and finally the travel channels clearly indicates the growth of travel journalism globally. Ever changing communication technologies and social needs resulted in opening of divergent professions and it demands more skilled professionals, journalism is unquestionably no exception. Travel journalism is a term which goes beyond technical and social sense. Journalism, one of most efficient communication mechanism always has a great impact on society on its history, present and future. This paper tries to analyse the recent trends in travel journalism with its practices and possibilities. It also evaluates the challenges facing by travel journalist in their working scenario.

**Key word:** Travel Literature, Travel Journalism, Media

### Introduction

The history of travelling profoundly shaped by the legacies of human evolution which includes invasion, conquest, hunting and adventure. Nomadic, merchants, rulers, religious people have been written about travelling for centuries. The colonial era reshaped the basic concept of travel writing where it has been performed a crucial role in circulating ideas and information over the world. Every narratives form has under gone several re- creations and reshaping in response to post colonization and globalization, where travel writing has no exception. Critical and theoretical arguments still going on

regarding the outcome of these inventions. The critics are deeply doubtful whether these new commentators/writers merely re-inscribe the neo colonial privilege in different ways. Controversies are still going on regarding the importance of travel writing on exchanging cross-cultural ideas which comprehensively influence global views on diverse regions and societies. Since the half of 19 the century when tourism had widely accepted as medium of exchanging expression of distinctive societies, the 'culture of Travel' became a part of popular consciousness,



### Changes from travel narratives to travel journalism

In Late 19 century, travel narratives had begun to show a clear boundary from Travel journalism. Hanusch and Fürsich said, we define travel journalism as factual accounts that address audiences as consumers of travel or tourism experiences, by providing information and entertainment, but also critical perspectives. Travel journalism operates within the broader ethical framework of professional journalism, but with specific constraints brought on by the economic environment of its production. Published memoirs of particular tours were extremely popular while discussions of the Tour's value featured prominently in the 18th-century press (Towner, 1985). Nineteenth-century travel literature took a number of forms ranging from the well-established formats of the conventional travelogue, diaries and letters and articles in the periodical press and the daily papers, to the memoirs of 'special' or How and Where To Go 41 'foreign correspondents' (Matthews, 1986: 23-4) Soares (2009) writes that there is also a debate between who is a tourist and who is a traveler. "Tourists are the beneficiaries of the advent of mass tourism promoted by such agents as Tomas Cook, whereas travelers on a quest are the heirs of the learned traveler doing the Grand Tour for educational purposes to the ancient sites of European civilization".

Travel writing and travel journalism have two differently motivated audience. Travel writing is aiming towards tourists, while travel journalism is meant to travelers. The tourist visits the destination which is

only designed or suited for him and merely watching things. The same time traveler, is potential tourist are striving to identify the history, heritage, culture and unique identity of a region. Traveler usually interacts with people, other travelers, locals and try to involve their festivals and activities. Travel journalism helps to breaks the misconceptions and stereotypes regarding a particular area or a community. With a reliable and authentic travel journalism any country can protect their traditions and it can also raise their tourism, business and development extensively.

The ethical standards are also different for travel journalism and travel writing. Since the investigative nature of travel journalism begun, any potential traveler can understand the nature, problems and challenges regarding a particular community/ destination, which helps them to act in certain mutually benefited way. Travel literature is a "nonfiction prose form that depends largely on the wit, powers of observation, and character of the traveler for its success. In past centuries, the traveler tended to be an adventurer or a connoisseur of art, landscape, or strange customs who may also have been a writer of merit." Defines the Merriam Webster's Encyclopedia of Literature. Travel narratives usually records the people, incidents and activities of a particular area. An individual work is often called as a travelogue. In travel narrative genre writer intentionally documenting his/her personal experiences for future reference. Travelling and documenting could extensively help to understand generations. Sometimes it connected generations with the tale of invasion, exploration and journey in non-fictional manner rather than mere cataloging of



incidents. Narrator's perceptions and values definitely have crucial role in interpreting things in travel narratives. Any perception on any writer about any society is unique, which is directly connected with their culture, value and identity, and most of these works are conceived as monograph, letter, diaries, or portraits. The concept of travel journalism always goes beyond the normal travel narratives which are written out of the personal experience of a traveler/ writer. Like all other journalism scenarios travel journalism is also mostly centered on social concerns of both traveler and destination. As a journalistic activity it describes the both traveler and destination more socially, politically and economically. Journalism is always a term which goes beyond technical and social sense. Now it's become a creative, dynamic and socially important mainstream genre.

### Global and Indian Representation

Through the travel writing and travel shows, during last two-three decades travel journalism has been evolved as a distinct type of life style journalism. The risen number of travel articles, travel magazines, travel shows, travel-lovers blogs, and finally the travel channels clearly indicates the growth of travel journalism globally. Much before the online- travel communities, the magazines were drastically helps to lead any journalism field to a specific area of interest. History, gender-oriented, lifestyle, fashion, health, nature and finally travel magazines has been received wide audience attention. The national Geographic society established in Washington D.C in 1888 has started publishing of *National Geographic* magazine basically for diffusion of

geographic knowledge and exploration. In 1930 American motor association begun publishing *Holiday* a travel oriented monthly, later it had been merged with *Travel* which is dated back to 1902. The post second world war era witnessed large number of travel writings and travel news to general audience. *Smart traveler (1945-47)* a journalistic approach for middle income traveler only experienced short life. The term 'pictorial journalism' has been accepted through travel magazines after fashion magazines. Although it experienced short span of publication *travel and camera* magazine has been identified the importance of the mutual interaction between travel and photography. Everywhere, *Globe*, *Let's Go*, *Playtime*, *Trek*, *Travel time* were the some of the magazines died before their first issues, and others withered on the newsstands. Some of the magazines had face shifted and shrunk into mere Sunday special or supplements. Even though it was a small pace, In the middle of 21<sup>st</sup> century most of the publications including new papers, magazines, weeklies and slot of television and radio timing spared time for travel oriented activities. Later regular travel columns were appeared on Sunday editions and supplements.

A 5000 year history Of civilization, culture, religion, and alternative medicine fascinates and motivate travelers to India all the time. The traditional concept "Athiti Devo Bhavah" (Guest is God) has been welcoming travelers around the globe to Indian sub continental. In early days with its agricultural and raw material abundance, India had connected with very extensive trade link. Later pilgrims, trade men, invaders, rulers were fascinated on Indian land for



different reasons. From their inscriptions, writings, messengers and pictorial art Indian travel narratives gone much wider around the world. Later books, diaries, magazines, travelogues and newspaper supplements gave more space for travel and tourism related activities. Recently travel journalism in India is thrived through magazines, travel shows and channels. Recently both regional and international media irrespective of print, broadcast or digital give much attention to travel journalism in India. Foreign magazines and channel always have great interest on Indian diaspora. Regional media especially through magazines and channels exploring their own possibilities of travel journalism. *National Geographic traveler, Travel + leisure magazine, Departure, Elite Traveler, France Magazine* are the leading international travel magazines in India. Same time Indian magazines *Outlook Traveler, Lonely planet, Discover India, Travel Plus* are also well circulated.

### Why travel Journalism Is important

Ever changing communication technologies and social needs resulted in opening of divergent professions and it demands more skilled professionals, journalism is unquestionably no exception., one of most efficient communication mechanism always has a great impact on society on its history, present and future. Academic research on media and journalism are mostly concentrated on effects, organization structure, identity and communication patterns of a medium. Audience analysis and advertising or promotion strategies are the key consideration of market driven researches.

**Boom of Tourism Industry:** Any media content of every infotainment choice whether it's a magazine, show or channel has been massively getting support from their respective industry, automobile, food and sports are best examples. World tourism statistics clearly indicates the boom of tourism industry with development, prosperity and well-being goals. Especially in developing countries, they highly focusing on tourism for development purpose. 1,235 million international tourist arrivals happened in 2016 worldwide. 10% world GDP and 7% world exports hold by tourism industry alone. The report published by United nation world tourism organization sharply indicates that one in every 10<sup>th</sup> job is tourism related. (*UNWTO Tourism Highlights, 2017 Edition*) Indian tourism statistics shown the boom of tourism industry in India. 2017 reports published by Ministry of tourism indicates 9.7% and 12.7% annual growth rate for foreign and domestic tourist visitors respectively. India collects 1,541,46 crore Indian rupee form tourism in 2016 with annual growth rate of 14% which unmatched with any other economic field. (Indian Tourism Statistics, 2017). All these figures clearly pointing the marketing possibilities of travel related activities and journalism is one of the best option.

### Leisure as significant social practice

In early stages studies considered travel and leisure activities are purely a personal sphere and no public relevance. For many fieldworkers, tourists did not fit their framework, 'like weeds in the garden plot, tourists spoil the character of the researcher's carefully cultivated community' (Pearce,1982: 1). Later anthropology, history, economy, communication and marketing studies



has given serious attention to travel and tourism studies. For better understanding of culture, social mobilization, communication, and history tourism studies has been widely used. In critical studies traveling goes beyond a leisure activity. It helps to study history, culture and identity of both people and society.

**Infotainment Media:** Since the adaptation of new communication technologies communication and media industry goes through several changes. In content, presentation, broadcasting, connectivity and interactivity everything got changed. The rising competition in media industry always seeking new possibilities for more audience. New media studies much concerns over infotainment media practices. Play and work western concepts are much deeply. Interactive online media platforms are much popular in communication scenario are mostly working on infotainment media principles. The success of Sports journalism, Automobile Journalism, Food Journalism are some best examples of infotainment media practices.

In communication and journalism academic scenario study on 'soft news' concepts are rarely getting research attention from media researchers. The much wider thought 'infotainment' become one the most adapted trend in modern mass media helps the universalization of travel communication. The growing infotainment trend of media causes severe problems and gone through much critical evaluations. That's why research on travel journalism became matters. Travel journalism has close link with international/intercultural communication and understanding. Travel journalism helps to identify the

culture, society and people from a foreign land, it can ensure international co-operations. It helps to break the stereotype of particular community. The presentation of 'others' in international media is goes much beyond the traditional 'war and conflict' news. When audience interest in "hard" international news falls, the media (like many U.S. media networks), in response to the loss of the audience, is forced to curtail traditional foreign columns and to reduce the number of foreign correspondents [Randal 2000]. The modern mass media industry receiving much support both from the audience and advertisers regarding travel journalism. Travel journalist are socio-cultural decoders who describes information's from different cultural contexts (Santos 2004). Travel journalism always takes a neutral position between market driven and independent journalism in mutually benefited ways.

### **Travel journalism Challenges**

#### **Professional identity**

Even though there is travel channels, travel shows, travel books and travel magazines, the term 'travel journalism/journalist' is still a blurred concept. The notion of professional identity is always what fundamentally challenges the travel journalist rather than wages, work tension or job security. Every journalism field take advantages of travel writing possibilities. Newspapers supplements, special editions, photography magazines, health magazines, automobile shows and magazines are always using the potentials of travel journalism, but they fail to clearly identify the boundaries of travel journalism as a distinct field. Professionalism is always attributed to



people with training, skills, experience, practices and decision-making power. Travel journalists have gone through identity crisis on professionalism over the world especially in developing nations. Journalistic professionalism actually demands an extensive study in its normative, cognitive and evaluative dimensions from both academic and marketing scenario. The notion of professional identity is always what fundamentally challenges the travel journalist rather than wages, work tension or job security. Online journalistic profession has deserved a clear-cut distinction from content writers, editors or technical workers.

### **Socio - Educational Backgrounds**

Professionalism is deeply correlated with societal understanding and academic knowledge in particular field. Journalist is supposed to have some basic level of communication power, public awareness, news sense and attitude. Education is always considered to be the most important requirement in all profession. Press Council of India (PCI) chairman justice Markendey Kadju's opinion on journalist's educational backgrounds has made sensible debates and discussion all over the country. Currently media organizations demand equal performance in academic knowledge and practical skills for its applicants. Our present state of journalism education and training practices are mostly suitable to hard news -oriented journalism. "The professional identities of media workers like journalists and advertisers have been carefully shaped through education at vocational schools and departments of journalism and mass communication".(Deuze). It stresses the

need for time bounded innovations and updations in journalism curriculum and training.

### **Working Condition.**

UNESCO World Press Freedom Day-2008 press release describes the journalists working condition as "the political, legal, professional and social environment in the society and in the workplace where the journalist live and operate". Nowadays journalists all over the world face intimidation, harassment, arrest or detention and even life threats. In case of digital journalism, issues related to piracy, privacy, plagiarism and intellectual property rights are also to be considered. As far as travel journalism is concerned lot of journalist are working as part-time workers and paid for part-time. Many of them do not have a strong employment contract with organization. Indian laws and constitutional acts which cover journalistic rights do not protects these kind journalists sufficiently. It has been resulted in denial of legal privileges makes serious legal concerns when compared with mainstream media. Over the last decade technological advancement in communication arena and online integration of mainstream media makes practical changes in journalist as professional body, and when things are highly technology-ridden it makes serious ethical issues also.

### **Highly market Driven**

Now a days all type journalism activities are highly market driven and travel journalism has no exception. Highly market oriented journalism activities are always deviates from its basic ethical purposes. The recent trends shows travel journalism is extensively used for destination promotion, tourism services



promotion, and automobile promotion. Fake destinations and advertised tourism services like transportations, hotels and activities are creating ethical issues. Travel photography also widely used for private promotions.

Despite occasional shocks both the media and travel industry is thriving in its own ways. In recent international political situations, especially in the growing conflicts, war and turmoil's, travel journalism is not merely infotainment media practice. It can ensure international understanding and co-operation through mutually benefited ways. It demanded professional journalist, well working condition and, support from media community for the effective functioning of travel journalism. Studies on divergence in journalism and new niche journalism have been obtained limited research attention. New Journalism perceptions, identities, roles, professionalism, backgrounds, working conditions are possible areas yet to be widely researched. Media industries are trying to get more niche markets. All the new journalism trends have their own possibilities and challenges. The ways to overcome the constrains are yet to be researched.

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