

FIGHTING FAKE NEWS AT SCALE: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY OF BOOM LIVE'S OPERATIONAL EFFICACY WITHIN INDIA'S FACT-CHECKING ECOSYSTEM

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of the swift growth of digital platforms has aggravated the dissemination of online false information, revealing structural issues in platform regulation and content regulation models. In India, this is increased by linguistic diversity, penetration and virality of social media, and algorithms. The paper focuses on the functioning of professional fact-checking in this environment by looking at the example of a qualitative study of BOOM Live, a prominent Indian fact-checking group. The study takes the form of a process analysis to examine the work of fact-checking professionals in two in-depth, semi-structured interviews instead of focusing on content findings. The results show that fact-checking is rather an action that should be described as a reactive form of governance, which only interferes once misinformation has already become visible. There are triage

logics that influence the operational decisions, which are determined by the virality, harm potential and source authority. The aspect of verification turns out to be an example of forensic epistemic labour, integrating digital technologies with human reasoning, but existing AI-driven detection systems are far less contextual and multilingual. Another platform dependency paradox identified in the study is that fact-checkers cannot do without digital platforms because they are economically supported and enforced, and platform incentives have so far given preference to engagement and monetisation over action. This shift will help policy-makers focus more on organisational processes rather than accuracy metrics, which is a valuable contribution of this research to the current state of institutional views of fact-checking.

KEYWORDS: Fact-checking misinformation platform governance qualitative case study

India

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND & PROBLEM STATEMENT

In the last decade, online circulation of false, misleading and out-of-context information has grown exponentially in volume, velocity, as well as social impact. In India, this process is unique due to (a) very high social-media coverage in a variety of languages, (b) big informal information networks (WhatsApp groups, local forums), and (c) high political and communal salience, which strengthens some types of claims. Research on the misinformation situation in India holds the view that the issue is not merely the existence of false content but the nature of its financial or infrastructural preconditions, which allow for a quick circulation and re-use of old information as new evidence, which is best described as an information-ecosystem vulnerability and not a set of discrete errors (Madan, 2022).

The print channels (Facebook/Meta, X, YouTube, WhatsApp) are the main channels via which such content gains popularity. However, these same platforms hold an ambivalent normative space: they are the venues of and profiting from the participation created by scandal content and are at the same time the subject of policy formulation and participation depicted by policy makers and the general population as agents that need to curb the information disorder. This has been termed a vacuum of responsibility: the platforms have the motivation and technical abilities to reduce harm, but enforcement is uneven, redress mechanisms are inconsistent across

services, and self-regulation sometimes fails to meet the expectations of the people (Owen, 2019).

Fact-checking has become a forceful institutional reaction to this vacuum. Fact-checkers are the creators of verifications, corrections and explainers (designed to fight fake news and enhance the quality of information accessible to the general population). Nevertheless, various analyses of the world and of India in particular suggest that fact-checks have serious constraints in both quantity and impact: corrections often reach much fewer audiences than the original fake news, enforcement of platforms is irregular across platforms, and fact-checkers themselves have limited resources, legal, and technological constraints. Briefly, falsifying is a means of correcting, but not of the end: it will respond to the symptoms rather than the underlying causes (Porter & Wood, 2021).

1.2 RESEARCH GAP

In spite of an increasing empirical literature regarding misinformation and a strong base of assessing literature regarding what corrections do, there are three critical gaps that have not been addressed, particularly as pertains to India.

To begin with, the available research focuses mostly on the content outcomes: experimental studies of the efficacy of rumours, prevalence research of the viral rumours, or characterisations of years of misinformation. They are informative but say not much about the institutional dynamics of the operation of professional fact-checking organisations within the platform ecosystem (Al-Zaman, 2021).

Second, but little has been done with regard to investigating organisational processes, the internal triage, verification toolchains, editorial logics, and funding relationships, and legal risk-management practices that determine what fact-checkers can or cannot accomplish. Studies that do examine the practice of fact-checking typically assume that organisations are operated as black boxes or are very specific to the contents of fact-checks as opposed to institutional restrictions and decision principles. The field reviews have suggested the need to establish more methodological, process-based studies that expose the organisational dynamics of fact-checking labour (Siapera, 2022).

Third, India does not have methodological case-based institutional studies that place the local fact-checking organisations into the context of a multilingual, socio-politically heterogeneous audience and in platform partner design. Although descriptive summaries of Indian fact-checkers exist and a few comparative ones, there are not many single-case studies that are able to locate the complete package of operational, financial and governance relationships that identify the effectiveness of a fact-checker in the Indian context. This creates a vacuum between the generalised policy recommendations and the realities on the ground through the institutions (Noor, 2025).

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS

This paper fills such gaps by a narrow institutional case study of BOOM Live, a multilingual Indian fact-checking organisation. The discussion objectives are clearly outlined:

- To document BOOM Live's institutional emergence, funding and legal/organizational profile.
- To map BOOM Live's internal triage and verification processes (how claims are selected, investigated and published).
- To analyse the technological and epistemic toolset used in verification (human-AI interactions, software, workflows).
- To evaluate the constraints on BOOM Live's impact - platform policy asymmetries, audience reach gaps, and legal vulnerabilities.
- To situate the case findings within broader debates on platform governance and delegated accountability.

Based on these aims, three research questions of the paper will be answered:

- **RQ1:** What organisational processes and decision rules structure BOOM Live's fact-checking operations?
- **RQ2:** How do platform policies and funding relationships shape BOOM Live's practical capacity to reduce misinformation?
- **RQ3:** What institutional reforms or technological changes would materially improve the efficacy of professional fact-checking in India?

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The research has three contributions to make. On the academic front, it changes the focus on content-based assessments to a processual framework of institutional explanation of fact-checking-establishes the effect of organisational practices in mediating correctional outcomes. Practically

and for policy, it provides granular evidence on the limits of current platform–fact-checker partnerships and supplies actionable insights for regulators, platforms and funders who aim to strengthen information integrity. Lastly, it directly contributes to the debate on platform governance by both describing and recording how delegated fact-checking mitigates, as well as reproduces, governance gaps: fact-checkers lessen noise without being able to substitute equitable, platform-level governance and design. Briefly, it is this type of process-based case-study which provides the missing organisational middle between policy rhetoric and any tangible increase in quality of information to the populace (Owen, 2019).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 EVOLUTION OF FACT-CHECKING AS AN INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE

The scholarly consensus places modern fact-checking as an institutional reaction to the disaster of misinformation as a post-2016 phenomenon, instead of a journalistic genre. Although fact-checking has existed as an internal newsroom practice, it became an outward-facing institutional actor during and after the 2016 U.S. presidential election, as the platforms were subjected to unprecedented attention over the spreading of disinformation (Graves & Amazeen, 2019). Graves and Amazeen describe this change as the transition of the ante-hoc verification to the post-hoc public responsibility, in which fact-checkers publicly decide truth claims that are already in circulation.

This development was not organically occurring but was structurally brought about by platforms. Since platforms were no longer willing to be declared as the truth-tellers, the duty to evaluate the misinformation began to be transferred to third-party fact-checking organisations (Caplan, 2023). The structure of networked governance proposed by Caplan depicts how platforms spread the epistemic power but retain the infrastructural power and generate a type of delegated responsibility that protects platforms against the direct responsibility of normative liability.

Empirical studies also indicate that this delegation transformed the fact-checking processes as the world knows them. Semi-automated and automated tools were ushered in to handle scale, but these tools were meant to help in decision-making rather than decision-making (Nakov et al., 2021). Nakov et al. reason that fact-checking is still very human-centred, as claims are interpretively complex, especially when they feature multilingual and multimodal cases.

This has made fact-checking less a policy to rectify a misinformation problem than it is a platform governance tool in platform ecosystems where institutional functions of fact-checking are often determined not by journalistic principles but by what platforms can and cannot allow.

2.2 NEUTRALITY VS. ACTIVISM: THE NORMATIVE TENSION

One of the main arguments in the literature is whether the practice of fact-checking should be perceived as neutral in the news or as a norm-activist intervention. The model of the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN) puts a lot of emphasis on

neutrality, transparency, and non-partisanship as its mechanisms of legitimacy-building (Kumar, 2022). Specifically, Indian fact-checkers predict the transparency in methodology in advance with the aim of defeating the masses with suspicion and biased allegations.

Nonetheless, several researchers dispute the plausibility of neutrality in platform-imposed restrictions. Vinhas and Bastos demonstrate that fact-checkers practising outside Western democracies are facing more and more pressure to embrace the policy of both-sidesism in order to deliver on polarized audiences and platform demands (Vinhas & Bastos, 2023). Neutrality, in this case, is an enacted balance as opposed to an epistemic position, a conceptualised phenomenon of what is happening that is the performance of neutrality.

This debate can be further complicated by the audience perception studies. Brandtzaeg et al. discovered that social media users, as well as journalists, have ambivalence towards fact-checking services as being helpful but not entirely trustworthy (Brandtzaeg et al., 2017). This lack of trust remains alongside the actions of transparency, which may imply that the determinants of legitimacy are not necessarily limited to the methodology, but also to the situation in politics, on which platform framing, and polarisation of the audience.

The same is supported by Indian election-oriented studies. Roy et al. show that fact-checkers mostly act as ex post facto gatekeepers, which easily undermines the supposedly neutral position, but places fact-checkers in the position of crisis responders, not neutral judges (Roy et al., 2025).

All of these studies, taken together, imply that fact-checking neutrality is posed by a structural constraint and that institutional survival frequently involves strategic adjustment, and not the idealistic distance.

2.3 PLATFORM POLITICAL ECONOMY AND THE DEPENDENCY PARADOX

The most important structural restriction on the effectiveness of fact-checking is the resulting political economy of digital platforms. The nature of platforms is to monetise the interaction, and fact-checkers are interested in minimising the popularity of false information - a fundamental contradiction known as the dependency paradox (Caplan, 2023). These platforms also fund, distribute, and provide sanctions to fact-checkers, who are economically advantaged by the traffic of superficial falsities.

In his study of networked platform governance, Caplan has discovered that partnerships with fact-checkers have two purposes: solving the issue of public pressure without being directly liable (Caplan, 2023). Such an arrangement creates a situation that gives rise to asymmetric power relations, with the fact-checkers enjoying the epistemic labour with no enforcement ability.

The empirical studies indicate that there is a variety of enforcement among platforms. The third-party fact-checking program by Meta allows downranking flagged content, whereas YouTube and WhatsApp provide little or obscure systems to implement any intervention (Vinhas & Bastos, 2023). Such inconsistency constrains the ability to have a corrective effect and solidify the platform's control over information flows.

Multilingual misinformation and encrypted platforms act as stepping stones in creating this dependency within the Indian context. Roy et al. depict that linguistic fragmentation amplifies the reach of misinformation and at the same time restricts the visibility of corrective information of fact-checkers (Roy et al., 2025). The operation of fact-checkers is therefore caught in an ecosystem, with structural conditions, rather than accuracy of verification, defining effectiveness.

2.4 TECHNOLOGY, AI, AND THE LIMITS OF VERIFICATION

High investment has been made towards automated fact-checking systems under the influence of technological optimism, but their weaknesses are repeatedly stressed by those who practice it. Nakov et al. demonstrate that automated systems perform optimally in claim detection and evidence retrieval; however, it does not display feature contextual prediction, especially in non-English and multimodal interactions (Nakov et al., 2021). Juneja and Mitra's infrastructural analysis presents the reasons why automation in practice is problematic: fact-checking is a socio-technical task that involves editors, investigators, social media managers, and advocates, none of whom can be fully automated (Juneja & Mitra, 2022). Their results point to the chronic design reality disconnect between AI systems and newsroom processes.

The further complexification of verification is the Deepfake escalation. Indian election studies, a process of spreading synthetic media that propagates faster than

verification pipelines can catch up to, making fact-checking reactionary (Roy et al., 2025). Consequently, AI tools are perceived as helpful instead of authoritative, which supports the idea of human judgment as the one on the epistemic heart of fact-checking.

2.5 SYNTHESIS AND FRAMEWORK JUSTIFICATION

Three important lessons are synthesised through the strands. To begin with, the concept of fact-checking should be regarded more as a form of institutional policy embedded in platform governance in the first place rather than as a journalistic deliverable. Second, neutrality and other normative ideals are renewed through political and platform pressures constantly. Third, technological solutions are not able to offset structural asymmetries of reach, enforcement and accountability.

In spite of this, most of the available literature is outcome-based as it focuses on correction efficacy or change in audience belief, and little has been done to examine the processes within the organisation. By and large, researchers see fact-checking organisations as black boxes instead of organisations that have to deal with power, technology, and legitimacy.

This is a key reason why a process-based qualitative case study would be suitable, especially in this Indian context, where multilingualism, platform dependency, and political polarisation meet. Such a study can connect the gap between theory and practice of governance; by the disaggregation of workflows, decision logics and institutional constraints, fragmented research can be translated into practice.

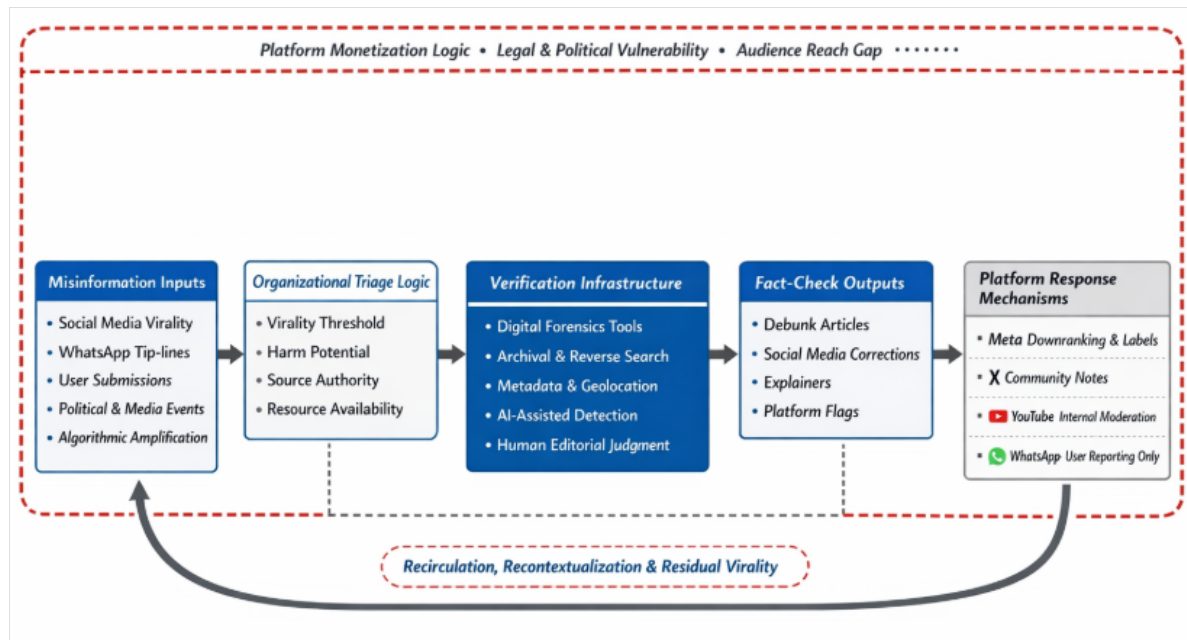


Figure 1.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Institutional Fact-Checking Operations within Platform-Dependent Information Ecosystems

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

In this study, the qualitative case study design is adopted in order to analyse the operational procedures in BOOM Live as part of the Indian fact-checking ecosystem. The qualitative case study fits well in the knowledge of complex institutional dynamics, as it enables researchers to study social phenomena in real-life scenarios, examine how decisions are made and how organisations are run, and come up with rich and context-sensitive knowledge that is not and cannot be attained using quantitative methods. Qualitative case studies can be of significance when phenomena and context are not necessarily delimited, e.g., when dealing with fact-checking organisations that exist in multi-layered digital ecosystems with platforms, audiences, and political pressures (Thelwall & Nevill, 2021).

The main reason why this approach was chosen is that the practices in BOOM Live are not amenable to any numerical measure of impact, but rather one has to go deeper into the method of decision making, the tools and the heuristics, and the influence of institutional constraints on the resulting decision. In contrast to survey research, a qualitative case study focuses on local processes and lived experiences of participants, which are quite suitable in the context of researching professional organisations and their work processes (Xu et al., 2025).

BOOM Live was selected as the focal case since it is among the most long-established fact-checking organisations in India; it is independent in its editorial activity, is multilingual, and is institutionally integrated with more general governance platforms. Being one of the earliest Indian fact-checking organisations and an accredited member of the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN), the operational profile of BOOM provides a promising platform where

organisational operations and platform requirements can be analysed in a global scope (BOOM, 2019).

3.2 CASE SELECTION RATIONALE

The rationale behind the choice of BOOM Live as a case study has an analytic nature: that is, the capacity to shed light on more general theoretical issues regarding the nature of institution fact-checking, platform governance, and organisational decision-making.

Multilingual Operation:

The fact-checks published by BOOM Live are in English, Hindi, and Bengali, which allows it to interact with a wide range of language groups in the highly pluralistic information space of India. The analytic significance of such multilingual functionality is that misinformation circulation and verbal logic verification depend differentially on the language groups; the study of a multilingual newsroom offers a perspective into the process of adaptation of work of organisations to various epistemic market frameworks and audience demands (BOOM, 2019).

INSTITUTIONAL LONGEVITY:

BOOM Live is a relatively old project, having experienced several years of development, and has become an institutional force in Indian digital journalism. It is long-lived, and hence an organisation has improved processes that are replicable and a lot of experience in handling the technological, political and legal contingencies, thereby making it a very strong argument when it comes to the exploration of the organisational routines instead of ad hoc reactions.

PLATFORM PARTNERSHIPS AND CERTIFICATION:

BOOM Live has been certified by the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN) and has established partnerships with online services and collaborative efforts (such as MediaWise's Teen Fact-Checking Network in India), which also puts it at the crossroads of platform governance and independent verification practice (BOOM, 2019). These institutional connections render BOOM Live an ideal case study into how professional fact-checking organisations relate to bigger digital systems, coordinate their expectations with other parties, and deal with the limitations on their performance built in by platform algorithms and policies.

Combined, all these qualities make BOOM Live not a marginal case but a highly informative one, the research of which can provide transferable knowledge applicable to other fact-checking organisations and governance contexts.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION

PRIMARY DATA - IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

The data used in this study were gathered mainly using two semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted with the personnel dealing with fact-checking activities in BOOM Live. Qualitative research is an in-depth interview methodology, a technique that facilitates the researcher to study the opinion of the participants, discern practices in situational circumstances, and discover tacit knowledge that cannot easily be seen through observation or some records placed in the public domain (Xu et al., 2025).

It is selected due to the fact that it facilitates the analysis of procedural logics and epistemic heuristics which guide organisational decisions (such as how fact-checkers reach priority claims, what tools they make use of in the verification process, and how to avoid platform limitations and constraints). Interview procedures were designed in such a way that they enabled a discussion to be open, so that the interviewee can be able to express his or her experience, yet the researcher can be open to explore underlying reasons behind organisational decisions.

The interviews addressed operational procedures, such as the triage, verification structures, decision criteria, the utilisation of the tools and the reflection on the institutional constraints. Notably, emphasis was not made on assessing the veracity of certain fact-checks or content output; different emphasis was on getting knowledge on the inner and outer processes that drive the practice of fact-checking.

ANONYMIZATION AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Anonymity was guaranteed to all the participants of the interview process in order to ensure that they were not hesitant to be completely candid, given that the interview is anonymous. This anonymisation strategy is supported by the ethics of qualitative research, where confidentiality prevents the risk of deductive report and protects the rights of privacy of participants (Saunders et al., 2015). Research ethics literature evidence points out that anonymity is not merely a technicality but rather a fundamental element of ethical responsibility, particularly when one is

working with organisational insiders whose comments could have career or reputational consequences were they discovered.

Informed consent was obtained prior to the commencement of interviews, and the participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the scope of the study, the intended use of data and that they had a right to withdraw at any time without any penalty. Such measures adhere to generally accepted ethical standards, according to which a great emphasis is put on the respect of participants and harm reduction, confidentiality, and voluntary participation are the key principles of qualitative text inquiry (Mirza et al., 2023).

INTERVIEW FOCUS

In line with the objectives of the case study, the interviews were meant to be constructive to elicit processual knowledge, how decisions are made, how workflow could be organised, and how organisational values and constraints were realised in practice, other than extracting an evaluative content regarding particular fact-checks. This position reflects more general qualitative research norms where contextual interpretation and the importance of meaning-making are emphasised more than quantification or content-classification (Xu et al., 2025).

The transcripts of interviews are the major empirical material on which to be analysed. The coding was done in themes in order to determine themes in verification logic, organisational routines and institutional constraints. The analysis of data was an iterative process that consisted of comparing the data between the interviews and the correlation with theoretical

constructs based on the literature on institutional fact-checking and platform governance.

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS STRATEGY

The research methodology on which the present study is based is the widely known thematic analysis, which is a qualitative research method that was adopted to find, analyse, and interpret sets of meaning patterns in all interview results (themes) (Jowsey et al., 2021). Thematic analysis assists the researcher to decode the complex and contextualised qualitative data into comprehensible categories to indicate the experiences of the participants and the organisational operations, in contrast to that conducted by content analysis, which relies on the number of references or quantification of data. Thematic analysis, unlike content analysis, is about the meaning of words, the relationship and organisation of themes in the data, and it is especially applicable in the context of an institutional case study aimed to make sense of how and why the actors in an organisation make decisions and how organisational processes are perceived.

The thematic analysis is done through a series of iterative steps: familiarisation with the data, coding, theme development, reexamination and definition of themes, and final interpretation and reporting (Ahmed et al., 2025). This study examined the transcripts of two semi-structured interviews initially to get into the minds of participants. They then created preliminary codes that capture significant aspects of the data that answer the research questions. The reviewed codes were categorised into candidate themes that summarise

organisational logic of triage, verification infrastructure, restrictions on fact-checking practices and platform interactions.

One of the significant features of thematic analysis is that it may be applied both inductively to allow the emergence of the themes out of the data and deductively to use theory-based codes. In conducting this study, a combined method was adopted by balancing an inductive openness to the in-house institutional knowledge and a deductive correlation with the conceptual structure that was worked out. This makes the analysis sensitive to the experiential descriptions of the participants whilst being able to relate the results to the larger discussions on institutional fact-checking and platform governance.

Notably, thematic analysis is different to and was intentionally selected instead of content analysis to study the topic in this research. Although the content analysis could simplify the qualitative data by reducing them to a number of counts and categories with respect to whether topics have been present or not, thematic analysis maintains the interpretative richness needed to comprehend processual routines and organisational reasoning. The thematic analysis is explicitly selected in accordance with the norms of qualitative research and is suitable when focusing on a case study that does not emphasise the frequencies so much but focuses on the sense-making processes (Jowsey et al., 2021).

In order to achieve the consistency and reliability of the themes across cases, each of the transcripts was first coded by the researcher and then cross-coded until theme definitions and boundaries were tightened. The decisions made on coding, memos, as well as decisions made on the

interpretation of themes were recorded in a methodical way so that the analysis procedure would be transparent and open to audit.

Lastly, the analysis plan was through constant comparison of codes and the new themes among the interviews. Such a reflexive process allows keeping thematic categories grounded to the data, as well as being analytically sound, allowing affordable interpretation of organisational facts around the strategies and tools, constraints, and institutional responses at BOOM Live.

3.5 TRUSTWORTHINESS & RIGOUR

In qualitative paradigms, quantitative research is not based on statistical validity and reliability measures. Otherwise, the qualitative scholars assess research in terms of trustworthiness that includes credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and other practices to guarantee the quality and integrity of the findings (Ahmed, 2024).

CREDIBILITY

Credibility is used to describe the degree of trust that is placed on the results describing the views of the participants and the phenomena under consideration. In order to improve credibility, this research utilised the use of lengthy interaction with the transcripts of the interviews, in-depth coding memos and repetitive study of themes in the analysis of data. Continuous reflexivity was also exercised by the researcher, who constantly considered the possibility of how personal preconceptions and choices of conducting the analysis affected the coding and interpretation. In this regard, reflexivity entails keeping an eye on personal disciplinary position, values and

subjectivity in influencing analytic choices and development of themes (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023).

And peer debriefing - informal discussions with other qualified individuals in qualitative methods to test assumptions and seek different interpretations, increased credibility. Such practices are in line with the accepted guidelines of qualitative rigor in which the point is not to conquer subjectivity but to be transparent in dealing with it.

REFLEXIVITY

One of the fundamental processes of assurance of trustworthiness in qualitative studies is reflexivity. It involves the continuous critical self-evaluation of the role and position of positionality, aspirations and interaction with data by the researcher on the outcomes of analysis. Reflexive practice recognises the roles of researchers as tools of interpretation, and instead of being hidden, such influences need to be revealed (Olmos-Vega et al., 2022). As an illustration, one can clarify their personal theoretical commitments/ institutional expectations in advance and place analytic decisions within their own context and exhibit interpretive responsibility.

Reflexively, in practice, was upheld by the use of analytic memos, which the researcher wrote to herself immediately after every interview and in the process of coding, in which the researcher wrote notes on how certain language, previous assumptions, or conceptual accounts influenced the codes and themes that developed. Keeping reflexive journals was an ongoing attempt to keep open to the influences of subjectivity during the process of analysis.

TRANSPARENCY

Qualitative research has the concept of transparency, whereby the analytic processes and decision points are well documented in a way that readers and reviewers can conceive how the data were acquired to produce results. This involves explaining the methods of coding, the criteria in developing the themes and how data snippets were chosen to make analytic claims. Transparency also brings confidence in the research and allows other scholars to critically evaluate the suitability of methods and conclusions.

To generate an audit trail, which would be used to trace the transformation of raw data into thematic categories, analytic protocols, codebooks, and theme definitions were captured via recording and archiving to

paper in the study. Open communication of procedures and reasons, along with reflective recording, makes the findings more credible as they serve to open up the research process and hold it responsible.

4. ANALYSIS / FINDINGS

The current section summarises the empirical data of two in-depth interviews conducted with the fact-checking specialists employed at BOOM Live. The examination looks at the institutional processes, logic of verification, as well as structural restraints that structure professional fact-checking in India. This section reviews the operations of fact-checking as an institutional process that is initiated by a platform-dependent information ecosystem, instead of assessing individual outputs of fact-checkers.

Table 1: Thematic Framework Derived from Interview Analysis

Table 1.

Theme	Key Sub-Themes	Indicative Evidence
Institutional Emergence	Post-2016 trigger; Platform compliance	Fact-checking, described as a post-2016 response shaped by platform pressure and delegated responsibility.
Triage & Selection	Virality; Harm; Authority	Claims prioritised based on spread, potential harm, and involvement of high-authority actors.
Verification Practices	Human–AI hybridity; Contextual judgment	Verification framed as forensic labour combining tools with human interpretation; AI seen as assistive.
Platform Engagement	Asymmetric enforcement	Meta enables downranking; YouTube lacks integration; WhatsApp remains opaque due to encryption.
Structural Challenges	Reach gap; Legal ambiguity; AI scale	Corrections underperform misinformation; legal safeguards limited; AI accelerates misinformation volume.

4.1 INSTITUTIONAL EMERGENCE OF FACT-CHECKING

Both interviewees repeatedly dated the process of institutionalisation of the pillar of fact-checking in India to the global crisis of misinformation that took place after the U.S. Presidential Election in 2016. The low-level fact checker specifically explained 2016 as the watershed moment that made the digital platforms realise that they had political agency instead of acting as neutral intermediaries only. It is consistent with the international academic community accepting 2016 as the catalyst moment when a lack of information caused by fake news became a governance issue, not a journalism one (Graves & Amazeen, 2019).

Notably, the rise of Indian fact-checking companies was not depicted as a nationally motivated process. Rather, it was attributed to a ripple effect of the regulatory and reputational pressure on Silicon Valley platforms. According to one of the interviewees, the so-called Third-Party Fact-Checking Program became one of the compliance strategies according to which platforms might prove their responsibility without being liable for the editorial duty. This supports already analysed studies on platform governance, realising fact-checkers as outsourced epistemic labour that acts under delegated authority (Caplan, 2023).

From an institutional perspective, BOOM Live's emergence thus reflects platform-induced institutionalisation, where fact-checking organisations act as intermediaries between platforms, publics, and political actors. Instead of substituting journalistic verification, such an institutionalised role de-escalates into the social environment governed by platform regulation.

4.2 TRIAGE AND SELECTION MECHANISMS

One of the empirical outcomes that is of core interest is the triage rationale of identifying what claims are confirmed. Both interviewees stressed that full-scale debunking cannot take place because misinformation is so great. We cannot bail the ocean with a spoon, as the junior fact checker said. In its turn, BOOM Live uses a multi-layered system of selection, which relies on virality, potential harm, and source authority.

The first filter is the virality threshold. Limited circulation content is also prone to disregard so as not to draw more emphasis by correction that would give it wider attention, a phenomenon widely known in the science of misinformation as the Streisand Effect (Tambuscio et al., 2015). The two interviewees characterised tracking of WhatsApp tipline and frequent user attributes as signs of virality spread.

The second layer is that of harm prioritisation. The messages that have the possibility of causing communal violence, harming national security, or endangering the health of the population are classified as red-flag content and are processed instantly. It is consistent with the studies that show the importance of misinformation not in its falsity but in its contextual damage (Sehat et al., 2024).

The third layer is the authority-based escalation. Misinformation by politicians, celebrities, or mainstream media is given priority irrespective of the virality rates. Interviewees called this epistemic authority, having repeatedly highlighted the fact that institutional voices exponentially intensify lies. The discovery underlines the essence of

scholarship as framing fact-checkers as a final gate control, having to step in to assist after the incumbent authority officials have approved the falsehood (Roy et al., 2025).

Collectively, these three triage mechanisms depict that fact-checking is not the apolitical content correction that occurs through the lens of institutional risk assessment but a strategic intervention.

4.3 VERIFICATION AS FORENSIC EPISTEMIC LABOUR

Verification was always characterised as forensic, multi-applied epistemic labour involving both the employment of technology and human expertise. Neither of the interviewees accepted the concept of automated fact-checking as a single solution but stressed a hybrid human-machine-workflow. It starts with preserving the evidence, and to safeguard content to be deleted, the archival tools Archive.org or Archive. These are used to ensure the content has been saved. Such a measure is a legal and evidentiary issue that has attracted growing attention regarding misinformation research (Nakov et al., 2021).

It is followed by visual decomposition with the help of the InVid Verification Plugin that allows extracting keyframes from videos and making a reverse image search on Google Images, Yandex, and Bing. Spatial claims are then counterfeited by geolocation methods such as landmark analysis, reading a sign, and comparing satellite images.

Although the Hive Moderation and the Deepfake-o-meter are AI-based detection tools that have been recognised as helpful, both interviewees have highlighted their shortcomings. One fact checker simply said that the most advanced device will be the human eye, and that details like

discrepancies in lip-sync and unnatural facial expressions are the determining factors. This is in line with the studies that indicate that the existing AI detection tools have a hard time with contextual and multimodal lying, especially when encountered in non-Western contexts (Nakov et al., 2021).

In this way, we find verification as epistemic artisanship and not algorithmic confidence.

4.4 PLATFORM ENGAGEMENT & ASYMMETRY

One key analysis theme is related to asymmetric annals of platforms. Both interviewees outlined the relationships in platforms as unequal, disjointed and structurally restrictive.

Meta (Facebook/Instagram) has been described as having a formalised model of partnership. BOOM Live provides claims verification with the use of the Third-Party Fact-Checking program, and Meta implements downranking, making the content less visible but not completely removed. Interviewees, though, emphasised the hypocrisy of the fact that, on the one hand, Meta makes a fortune by placing ads, and, on the other hand, effectively sells misinformation and provides a remedy to it.

X (previously Twitter) was presented as a more chaotic company after new ownership. The substitution of checkmarks with paid Blue Ticks and Community Notes was faulted as less professional, and anyone could manipulate the system politically. This corresponds to theoretical criticisms of the models of crowd-sourced moderation as being weak in polarised settings (Vinhas & Bastos, 2023).

The most resistant one found was YouTube, which did not include any direct fact-checking partnership. According to the interviewees, dozens of AI-powered sources of misinformation were inquired without the coordination of the platforms. WhatsApp, thanks to end-to-end encryption, has been characterised as an

encrypted black box, meaning that users must entirely depend on the content provided by the user themselves, but not on proactive encryption. These results show that the effectiveness of fact-checking is limited by the platform, but not by the process of verification.

Table 2: Platform Response Mechanisms to Fact-Checking Interventions

Table 2.

Platform	Partnership Model	Action Taken	Key Limitations
Meta (Facebook / Instagram)	Formal Third-Party Fact-Checking Program	Content downranking and warning labels	Content remains accessible; monetisation of misinformation continues through ads.
X (formerly Twitter)	No formal partnership; Community Notes system	Crowd-sourced contextual annotations	Inconsistent quality; vulnerable to political polarisation and coordination.
YouTube	No structured fact-checking collaboration	Internal moderation based on platform policies	Lack of transparency; absence of external fact-checker integration limits corrective impact.
WhatsApp	None (end-to-end encrypted)	User reporting and limited forwarding restrictions	No traceability or systemic intervention; fact-checking depends entirely on user submissions.

4.5 STRUCTURAL CHALLENGES

The last analytical theme is that of limits in systems that affect the effects of fact-checking.

The reach gap was brought up over and over again. Both interviewees confirmed that misinformation always gets the most users compared to correction especially in rural and low-media-literate situations.

There is also a legal grey area, which limits operations. Interviewees complained that there was no specific law on fake news, so they had to substitute it with broad-based laws, including the Indian Penal Code. Although this will prevent the overreach of the state, it will also expose fact-checkers as the subject of harassment and even litigation. Last but not least, the most urgently needed challenge in the future was found to be AI acceleration. Interviewees

talked about a change in misunderstood content to entirely synthetic media, such as voice-cloned politicians and AI-generated news anchors. This is in line with the international cautions that generative AI will speed up institutional verification ability without structural platform modifications (Nakov et al., 2021).

SYNTHESIS

All these facts prove that BOOM Live is an effective epistemic institution that is an actor in platform ecosystems that follow structural constraints. Its usefulness is influenced not so much by the accuracy in verifications as it is by platform enforcement asymmetries and legal ambiguity, and the ever-rising rate of misinformation produced by AI.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 INTERPRETING FINDINGS THROUGH THEORY

The results favour the opinion that professional fact-checking exists under a platform governance regime in which platforms and third-party institutions are unevenly distributed with regard to controlling information. The literature published on the topic of platform governance describes this regime as a delegated accountability regime where the platforms delegate the epistemic work to third parties but maintain infrastructural and economic authority (Caplan, 2023). This delegation could be seen in the relationship between BOOM Live and Meta, as in the scenario where the verification work of content by Meta does not result in an outright removal, but the down-ranking

action instead shows how platforms do not take up ownership but instead push responsibility out.

Institutionally, BOOM Live's coming into existence is in line with the fact-checking conceptualisation, a public, post-hoc accountability action, but not a newsroom culture (Graves & Amazeen, 2019). The results indicate that this institutional role is not a self-constructed but platform-constructed, moulded by compliance logics that occurred following global criticism of platform harm due to the developments of 2016.

These processes can be further put in perspective by media power asymmetry. The factor that one platform and the other have is the control over audience reach, algorithmic visibility, and monetisation infrastructure, whereas the other has the epistemic authority but a lack of enforcement. Such an asymmetry makes the use of corrective responses different between platforms, which supports the theoretical arguments that the digital media-industrial complex has concentrated power at an infrastructural level and not at an editorial level (Vinhas & Bastos, 2023).

5.2 FACT-CHECKING AS REACTIVE GOVERNANCE

One of the implications of the findings is that fact-checking is reactive governance. BOOM Live interferes in situations where misinformation has gone viral, which is consistent with the previous studies that have called fact-checkers' statuses retroactive gatekeepers, as opposed to proactive controllers (Roy et al., 2025). It is not an institutional failure but an implication

of the way platforms are structured, in which they are highly reactive while verifiable only afterwards.

Institutional verification inherently comes with limitations, such as a structural delay problem, where the misinformation spreads even faster than the institutional verification. The studies on information disorder underline that corrections are often inappropriate in magnitude and speed of erroneous content simply because sites favour interaction over. The BOOM Live case exemplifies how claim management and control of this delay can occur through triage mechanisms that give precedence to high-harm and high-authority claims, yet the mechanisms have no ability to completely defeat temporal asymmetry.

Therefore, fact-checking cannot be seen as a remedial undertaking but as a risk-reduction measure as part of the platform timelines. This fact is reflected in the feedback mechanism that has been established in Figure 1: the misinformation, even after the intervention is often repeated and re-adapted, and it requires repetitive reactive processes.

5.3 THE PLATFORM DEPENDENCY PARADOX

The results also support the platform dependency paradox in which the fact-checking organisations depend on the platforms to be funded, reach and enforced, but at the same time seek to counter the damage created by the same platforms. As it is emphasised in the research of platform governance, this dependency limits the independence of institutions and forms the priorities of business (Caplan, 2023; Vinhas and Bastos, 2023).

Money versus operation is one of the main conflicts. Even though platform partnerships formalise fact-checkers and render them financially viable, they lack implication of meaningful enforcement. Monetisation of misinformation in the form of advertising exists alongside downranking policies at Meta, which is why this is an incentive structure paradox due to the coexistence of both policies. OECD visualisations of platform responsibility also assert that voluntary moderation regimes are not in general tough due to the absence of economic incentives that cause changes (Matasick et al., 2020).

This paradox can justify the reason why the system of fact-checking is not an adequate solution. As witnessed in the BOOM Live case, structural incentive on rewarding virality over veracity cannot be compensated with the most professional-level of verification. The results thus validate the claims that the platform-level design and policy interventions can only be complementary to third-party fact-checking.

5.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE MEDIA ECOSYSTEM

In the case of journalism, the results indicate that the professional roles are to be reconfigured. Fact-checkers have ceased to be peripheral verifiers by becoming institutional intermediaries operating under the legal risk, the politics of the platform, and technological transformation. This has moved journalistic work away from content production to epistemic adjudication, which has questioned the question of sustainability and professional identity (Graves & Amazeen, 2019).

In policy, the research highlights the weakness of self-regulation. This indicates that without explicit legal rights for fact-checkers and inconsistency in platform enforcement, regulatory frameworks, reporting platform incentives, and not maintained entirely on third-party correction, need to exist (Matasick et al., 2020). A policy to enforce transparency in the moderation practices or have the correction proportional visibility would potentially decrease the structural delay that is detected in this research.

In the case of technology design, the results warn of excessive automation. Although AI tools are useful in the verification, they do not substitute human judgment of the situation, particularly in an environment characterised by multilinguality and political democracy (Nakov et al., 2021). Changes in the platform-level design, such as friction to recycle unverified material or automatic contextual validation of the recycled media, could be more effective in increasing AI-based detection alone.

All in all, this discussion illustrates that fact-checking as an institutionally constrained, platform-specific governance is exemplified by the BOOM Live. Referencing Figure 1 and Tables 1-2, the research study demonstrates that version accuracy lowers efficiency more than platform power, economic incentive, and time asymmetry. These observations prompt the fact that it is time to start abandoning content-based appraisals and move to processes and institutional assessment of fact-checking in modern media ecologies.

6. CONCLUSION

This paper aimed to look at both professional fact-checking (not) as a content-oriented correctional activity, but rather as an institutional process, two-fold, entrenched in platform-specific information ecosystems, with the case study being BOOM Live. With the basis of in-depth interviews and a process-oriented analytical model, the results show that fact-checking in India has an established form of reactive epistemic governance which is not necessarily influenced by cultural journalism ideals solely, but rather platform structures, economic motives and regulatory uncertainties.

The discussion indicates that institutional production of BOOM Live is tightly linked to the online post-2016 accounting of misinformation, whereby online platforms, through external pressure (by both the government and society), became epistemically accused of outsourcing fact-checking to third parties. Such a delegated responsibility scheme has enabled platforms to indicate being responsive but retaining infrastructural and economic authority of information flows. This immerses fact-checking organisations in the realm of having verification authority without much enforcement power, as it strengthens the agentic asymmetry between epistemic power and platform dominance.

The empirical analysis of the study indicates that the idea of fact-checking is conducted based on triage, not on full-scale correction. Virality channels, harm potentiality and authority of sources inform judgments and the judgments are oriented concerning the risk management principle of fact-checking as opposed to auditing of neutral content.

Checking itself comes about as a form of forensic epistemic work, as the combination of digital tools and human judgment, the role of automation is a fully supplementary one, especially with respect to multilingual and politically unstable environments like India.

The results also point out structural limitations that interfere with impact. Engagement on platforms is not even, as a formal partnership allows downranking on certain platforms, and other platforms provide slight or transparent collaboration. This sidedness adds to the gap in reach, where the misinformation always has better visibility than corrections. These are complicated by legal ambiguity and the fact that the spread of misinformation by AI-produced content is rapidly accelerating, placing fact-checkers in a state of perpetual reactive mode.

Combined, the research points out that fact-checking is not the solution to the misinformation crisis all by itself. Although

organisations such as BOOM Live are crucial in reducing the damage and preserving the epistemic integrity, their capabilities are limited structurally by the platform's motivation, which privileges engagement and monetisation over accuracy. The research hence advances the study by diverting the focus on content deliverables towards organisational operations, providing a habit to perceive fact-checking as institutionally predetermined governance.

This process-based approach should be extended by future research to multi-case studies and comparatively across various contexts of national geography and platform, and with platform-side viewpoints. To policymakers and platform designers, the results suggest that structural interventions such as increased availability of transparency in enforcement, a proportional presence of corrections, and friction through design against unverified material would be necessary to transition fact-checking out of reactive reduction and create some positive change to the system.

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