

# THE BEACON

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## AI changes media, not values

Aakanksha Singh

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming the media industry, making work easier and faster for journalists, marketers, and public relations professionals. Yet, during a panel discussion held at St Joseph's University on January 23 & 24, experts agreed that despite these technological changes, the core purpose of media remains unchanged.

Senior digital editor of The Hindu, Subhash Rai captured this idea when he said, "The platform has changed. The format has changed. The fundamentals have not changed." His statement reflected how media has shifted from newspapers and television to mobile phones and social media, while still serving its essential role of communication.

Independent journalist and media educator Ammu Joseph urged caution against over-reliance on technology. She reminded the audience, "AI cannot predict human behaviour," particularly when it comes to trust, ethics, and responsibility in journalism.

According to her, machines may process data efficiently, but they cannot truly understand human emotions or social values in the way people can.

Highlighting the importance of creativity and storytelling, Pranav MB stressed that human imagination remains central to media work. He stated, "It is still an idea which comes from the human mind." While AI can assist in refining and enhancing content, the spark of originality must always come from humans.

Overall, the discussion concluded that while AI plays a supportive role in the media industry, human judgment, and ethics are integral.

## MediaCon sparks conversation about populism

Riya Vivek and Ashutosh

Filmmaker Dibakar Banerjee addressed populism's modern transformation from a mere political abstract to something that impacts everyday decision making, in his address at the inauguration ceremony of the 10th edition of MediaCon, an international conference, organised by the School of Communication and Media Studies (SCMS), at St Joseph's University, Bengaluru.

The director emphasised that the students need to be more intellectual in recognising populism and authoritarianism in films and on social media platforms, urging them to prepare themselves for the 'big bad world'. Banerjee said, "practising your dreams, flexing your brains, figuring out what you want to do and what you don't want to do," would ensure better understanding of



Dibakar Banerjee honoured at MediaCon

Reporter Karnataka

the mechanisms of social and political complexities. Moreover, he stressed on populism's impact in the students' careers, stating, "The issues of populism... dictatorship, the issue of big powers, big tech, big corporations actually trying to carve up the earth in terms of profit centers... while we (get) enslave(d)." Dean of the SCMS, Fr (Dr) Melwyn Pinto in his address stated, "We live in the world of populism

today. Populism is seen in all aspects of life, and sadly democracy has been turned into a drama enacted by populist leaders in many countries today." The ceremony's dignitaries, Vice Chancellor Dr Victor Lobo, Registrar Dr Sayed Wajeed, Dean Fr (Dr) Melwyn Pinto, Head of Department Dr Marudhu Pandiyan and the coordinators further discussed the media's power in populist times.

Dr Pinto also highlighted the situation of Trump invading Venezuela as a fitting example of populism. He also drew parallels between the U.S and India regarding the reduction in funding for higher education as a consequence of populist leaders. He explained that populism shuns public intellectuals and attempts to replace them with new elite intellectuals who are rooted in national culture

## MediaCon valedictory highlights creative risk

Karan Siddharth G

Director Ramenahalli Jagannatha encouraged aspiring media professionals to prioritise conviction and consistency over immediate success during his address at the valedictory ceremony of MediaCon, an international media conference at St Joseph's University.

Speaking to a gathered audience of students and faculty from the School of Communication and Media Studies, Jagannatha shared his unconventional path from a Production Engineer to a celebrated Director, emphasising that



Ramenahalli Jagannatha speaking at MediaCon

Angel Hannah George

creative fulfilment often requires difficult choices. His address marked the conclusion of the two-day event celebrating students' talent in journalism, film, and digital arts. "If you decide something, you need

to have conviction," Jagannatha said, reflecting on his decision to quit a stable engineering career multiple times to pursue filmmaking. "You know very well about technical aspects and storytelling, but you can't trust anyone to do

it for you. You have to do it consistently," he added.

The director also discussed the release of his debut film, Hondisi Bareyiri (2023), which struggled theatrically before finding a massive audience on YouTube, amassing over 100 million views. He cited this experience as a new lesson in adapting to new media when traditional paths falter. "We didn't get an audience in theatres initially, but on YouTube, it became the one of the highest-streamed film that year," he noted.

## AI cannot replace human creativity, say experts

Jencilin Elisabeth J

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is changing the way media and communication work, but it cannot replace human creativity, insight or storytelling, said panellists during a discussion at St Joseph's University. The speakers repeatedly stressed that the real problem is not AI, but the lack of understanding and adaptation around it.

The panel discussion titled "Create, Communicate, Co-exist with AI", was organised by the School of Communication and Media Studies as part of MediaCon 2026. Industry professionals from advertising, public relations and media shared their perspectives on how AI is reshaping creative work.

Seema D'Das, Media and Marketing Consultant, pointed out that while AI can help average creators improve, standing out still depends on original thinking. "AI can assist, but it cannot bring lived experiences or emotional depth," she said.

PR professional Sangeeta Gopinath said that AI can speed up work, but human thinking is needed to shape meaningful stories. Panellists encouraged students to view AI as a tool rather than a replacement and to build strong skills in understanding culture, audiences and storytelling to stay relevant.

## Films, freedom, and discourse

Ann Rose George

Filmmaker Dibakar Banerjee on Friday narrated how freedom of speech is slowly getting diminished in India at the Rushes National Film Festival 2026 conducted by Rushes Film Society focused on themes like populism and consumerism. The two-day film festival conducted in St Joseph's university, celebrated new techniques and aspects of the film industry, creativity and critical discourse, bringing together filmmakers, cinema enthusiasts and participants across the country. On day one, saw film



Cinema in conversation screening followed by the discussion with chief guest, Dibakar Banerjee.

Jenil K George

He mainly highlighted the ongoing censorship issues in the country and critics that freedom of speech is being restricted among film makers. On day two they had screening of the film Lsd. The association also showcased films submitted

by their participants from various regions to analyse different perspectives, diverse narratives and styles.

This time Rushes Film Festival focused on more about film screening, to understand a wide knowledge about film as a whole concept and also to ensure a good conversation with Banerjee.

## MediaCon discusses digital populism

Rochelle Mary Marshall

Paper presentations on digital media at MediaCon 2026, an international conference, highlighted its expanding role in shaping Indian politics, consumer behaviour, and culture, with scholars emphasising that digital dominance has become central to public life.

The centre of the event focused on the rise of "digital populism". Papers presented defined it as a communication style in different domains of society. Papers highlighted the strategic use of digital media by political leaders, associated populist and independent digital media, and also featured studies on Instagram

advertising and impulsive buying among urban youth, YouTube comment cultures' influence on populist news, Instagram's role in constructing celebrity stardom among cricketers, and social media's effect on teenage fashion and identity.

"Digital platforms now function beyond content-sharing spaces, emerging as arenas where social, political, and cultural meanings are negotiated," said Kulashree Devi, a presenter at the event, emphasising the impact of digital media on a global scale.

The event concluded with calls for deeper research into digital media's social and political impact in India.