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## SOCIAL MEDIA TRIALS VS COURT TRIALS: WHO DELIVERS JUSTICE?

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### ABSTRACT

The emergence of social media has significantly changed the way information is shared and discussed in society. Online platforms allow instant public discussion about criminal cases and legal controversies. This has led to the phenomenon known as a “social media trial,” where public opinion is formed even before courts reach a final decision. While social media can raise awareness and highlight injustice, it may also influence perceptions of guilt and undermine the fairness of legal proceedings. This research paper examines the differences between social media trials and court trials and analyzes their impact on the justice delivery system. The study concludes that although social media can create awareness and accountability, courts remain the most legitimate and reliable institutions for delivering justice because they follow legal procedures, evaluate evidence, and protect the rights of the accused.

### Introduction

The digital age has transformed the way people communicate and consume information. Social networking platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram allow users to instantly share opinions and information regarding current events. When a criminal case becomes widely discussed online, people often form conclusions about the guilt or innocence of the accused even before the legal process has been completed. This situation is commonly referred to as a social media trial or trial by media. In contrast, court trials are conducted within a structured legal framework designed to ensure fairness and justice. Courts follow established procedures such as the presentation of evidence, examination of witnesses, and legal arguments from both sides. The purpose of this research paper is to examine the differences between these two forms of judgment and determine which system is better suited to deliver justice.

### Objectives of the Study

1. To understand the concept of social media trials.
2. To examine the functioning of court trials in the judicial system.
3. To analyze the impact of social media trials on the justice delivery system.
4. To compare social media trials with court trials in terms of fairness and reliability.

### Research

This research is based on doctrinal and analytical research methods. Secondary sources such as books, journal articles, legal commentaries, and judicial decisions have been used for the study. The research focuses on analyzing legal principles relating to fair trial rights and the influence of media coverage on judicial proceedings.

### Methodology

### Court Trials and Principles of Justice

A court trial is a formal process through which

disputes and criminal cases are decided within the judicial system. Courts follow the principle of presumption of innocence, which means that every accused person is considered innocent until proven guilty. The prosecution must prove the guilt of the accused beyond a reasonable doubt. Courts also ensure procedural safeguards such as legal representation, examination and cross-examination of witnesses, and reasoned judgments based on evidence.

### **Social Media Trials**

Social media trials occur when the public forms opinions about a legal case through online discussions and media coverage. Viral posts, trending hashtags, and public commentary can quickly influence public perception about a case. While social media may help highlight injustice and bring attention to important issues, it often spreads incomplete or unverified information that may damage reputations or influence ongoing investigations.

### **Findings**

The research indicates that although social media can play a role in raising awareness and demanding accountability, it lacks the legal safeguards necessary for delivering justice. Court trials are based on evidence, legal reasoning, and procedural fairness, whereas social media trials are often influenced by emotions and public opinion.

### **Conclusion**

The rise of social media has significantly influenced public discussion about criminal cases and legal controversies. However, social media trials cannot replace the structured and legally regulated system of court trials. Courts remain the most reliable institutions for delivering justice because they ensure fairness, protect the rights of the accused, and rely on evidence and legal reasoning. Public opinion may encourage accountability, but the final determination of guilt or innocence must remain within the judicial process.

### **Footnotes / References**

1. Sahara India Real Estate Corp. Ltd. v. SEBI, (2012) 10 SCC 603.
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3. M.P. Jain, Indian Constitutional Law (LexisNexis, Latest Edition).
4. Law Commission of India Reports on Fair Trial and Media Influence.