

MEDIA ADVOCACY AND YOUTH**Ms. Kanika Basal, SubEditor, Day After****Introduction**

Media Advocacy is defined as the systematic and strategic use of mass media like newspapers, radio, television, web publications and blogs in order to put pressure on policymakers by mobilizing community groups. It largely depends on news coverage by media, that how the different groups of the society makes their opinion for certain Government or Non- Government activities and the social issues. The main activities of media advocates are publicizing the events, writing letters to the editors, releasing data to the news media but in more focused and strategic way energy, enthusiasm, morality, and diligence. No doubt we have progressed a lot in the last 62 years but the development pace would have been completely different had some young torchbearers led this process of development.

Significance of Youths

At the time of independence, Gandhi called upon the youth to participate actively in the freedom movement. Young leaders likes Nehru came to his reckoning and led the movement. But this is not the case now. Nowadays we have only a handful of young leaders like Rahul Gandhi, Sachin Pilot, Varun Gandhi etc, but they are in the political scenario because they belong to influential political families. The youth of modern India are aware of the problems facing our country and the world at large. Given a chance they would be ready to change the political condition of the country for better.

Strategies Adopted By Media Advocates

There are number of strategies which are adopted by media advocates. They are:

1. Elevating the Issue or communicating the problem

For influencing the public as well as policy makers and making changes in the society, the first step is to popularizing the issue and communicating it to the masses as well as policy makers by the means of different types of media.

2. Holding Policy makers accountable

It is important for a media advocate, to take the policy makers in the their circle, then only their efforts will get any fruits as ultimately the decision has to be taken by policy makers.

3. Bytes from the popular people

Popular people like celebrities, economists, entrepreneur, political leaders etc. influence the people to a great extent. So, most of the time, media advocates take the assistance of such people to forward or implicit any opinion in the society. For eg, during the Nirbhaya case of Dec2012, many celebs gave their bytes like actors, cricketers, singers and so on... So, such strategies make a huge impact on public.

4. Framing the issue on basic human values

The best way to connect the public is to link the issue with human values as this directly influence them and make the realization of the importance of the issue.

5. Paint the picture of solutions

By just pointing over the problems and current issues in the system and the society, does not create much space in the minds of the policy makers as well as people, so giving and suggesting good practical solutions for the problems is necessary for further proceedings.

6. Identify the actions

Good identification and observation of the situation and the decision making power is essential for taking right steps.

7. Use clear and Simple language of common people

To use the local language of the local people creates a connection between the advocates and common people and it becomes easy for them to understand the message.

8. Work on real issues and not just statistics

For taking the favor of policy makers as well as public, it is important to be practical and not theoretical as people only understand and trust those things which are visible in front of their eyes.

9. Attracts the most vibrant section of society, 'THE YOUTHS'

One of the significant strategy of the media advocates is to influence the most vibrant and active section of the society, that is youths. They very well know that by keeping the youths on their side, the chances of any reform gets double.

10. Paid media advertising is occasionally a part of this process

The main motive of the media advocates is to influence the media for policy change, as media is an integral pillar of the constitution. Whether it's a paid media or unpaid, but support of the media is essential.

Objective

To make the media advocates and youths to realize their responsibilities in order to fulfill the requirement of the social structure and its policies.

Responsibilities of Media and Youth

First of all, the very first priority of the media is to deliver the correct information to the public. It should work as per the need of the people or I can say it is the huge responsibility of media to handle the public very carefully by not exaggerating the insignificant issues rather acknowledge the common people with the true facts and in-depth knowledge which is difficult for them to acquire.

On the other hand, it is the responsibility of the youths to use their strength in the right direction and with the right ways. As they are the most active class of the society, they should be smart enough for looking and understanding the real objective and sense after every news and not just follow it with the crowd.

I would be using newspapers, Research reports and internet for reviewing this issue, considering the major happenings where media and youth have played an important role in the society in order to pressurize the Government or making and setting up an opinion for the whole society.

Tools of Media Advocates

News releases, News Events, Editorial board meetings, op-eds, letters to the editors, ongoing relationships with members of the news media

Methodology

My Research Methodology is based on the qualitative research method with my own observation.

The major issues like Lokpal Bill, Delhi Gang Rape case, Munia rape case, Jessica Lal murder case etc. Are observed where media has played an important role and attracted most of the youths for active participation. Its analysis and interpretation, effects on the Government, effects on the society etc is an important part.

Collection of Data

1. Jessica Lal Murder Case

Jessica Lal murder case was the first ever case when the youths of the country came on the streets to protest against the right jurisdiction. The whole country specially the youths participated for giving justice to Jessica who was murdered by the son of a politician in a bar. Media gave this issue a overwhelming support. The following media reports shows the activism and consequences of this case. The reaction to the verdict was one of outcry.

(i) There were numerous protest campaigns, including ones involving SMS and email, seeking to obtain redress for the perceived miscarriage of justice. Rallies and marches took place, as well as candlelit vigils.

(ii) On 9 September 2006, a sting operation by the news magazine *Tehelka* was shown on the TV channel STAR News. This appeared to show that witnesses had been bribed and coerced into retracting their initial testimony. Vinod Sharma was named in the exposé as one who had paid money to some of the witnesses. Facing pressure from the central Congress leaders, Vinod Sharma resigned from the Haryana cabinet.

(iii) There is a protest gathering at India Gate next Saturday, March 4 at 5.30pm. Be there. Help keep up the pressure. Demand justice.” The question on the magazine board’s mind was whether Delhi’s “infamously apathetic and insular middle class... would take its outrage on the street.” And lo and behold, word spread. On March 4, about 2500 people, many of them young students, gathered spontaneously at India Gate. Jessica Lal’s sister (right; left side of the picture) addressed the gathering, and then the mike was opened to the public.

(iv) The civic engagement event that received the most media attention was a fascinating case of life imitating art, and also the inspiration for this case study. An Indian weekly magazine famous for running exposes, claims to have sent an anonymous text message: “If the Jessica case has upset you, show you care”

(v) Influence of Bollywood

- Rang De Basanti was a patriotism and social change-themed Bollywood film that was released in India, the US and the UK (and other foreign markets on later dates) on January 26, 2006, India’s Republic Day. Rang De Basanti might be remembered for the most is being among the first Bollywood films to catalyze civic mobilization among urban Indian youth in order to secure justice in a high-profile murder case. The final act of the movie shows the repercussions when that peaceful rally . but through their martyrdom strike a chord among youth across the country who come to believe that they must become the conduit for deep, system-wide change. Thus, on February 21 2006 (four weeks after the release of RDB), the Delhi High Court acquitted Manu Sharma and his friends due to 'lack of evidence'.
- “Several people who took the mike that day referred to Rang De Basanti: at times it seemed more than the injustice itself, the film was their inspiration. It had not just intuited a latent public mood; in a curious twist, it had become the mood itself.”
- No One Killed Jessica is a 2011 Indian political crime thriller film starring Rani Mukerji and Vidya Balan, produced by UTV Spot boy and directed by Rajkumar Gupta. The film, set in New Delhi, is based on the media coverage of the controversial Jessica Lal murder case. The director clarified that the title and the script are actually inspired by a 2006 headline when the accused in the infamous murder case were acquitted by a trial court, leading to nationwide protests, the appeal and re-opening of the case and subsequent sentencing of the accused, and not the case per se.

2. Lokpal Bill Protest By Anna Hazare And Youths

This was the second big event where media and youths played an important role. Young members of the India against Corruption (IAC) gathered to join in the IAC protests elsewhere against the Lokpal Bill in its form presented by the government. The initial protest held at Ramlila Ground at Old Delhi. Then afterwards,

it was followed by tearing up of copies of the proposed Lokpal bill, a candlelight march and prabhat pheris. Evidences where media and youths participated are:

(i) Jan Lokpal Bill: Youth power fuels protests in Anna Hazare's home district

A bandh being observed in the home district of the anti-graft crusader Anna Hazare entered second day today with thousands of youth participating in the peaceful protests for strong Lokpal. Responding to a clarion call given by Hazare who hails from Ralegan Siddhi village, the educational institutions and commercial establishments across the district remained closed for the second consecutive day in the wake of the spontaneous shutdown.

(ii) "In less than 48 hours, more than 200 people have registered for the fast and we are expecting a total of 1,000 people to gather there. From December 30, we would start the 'jail bharo' andolan where people would court arrest and this form of protest has seen tremendous response especially from the youth," Deepak Bharadia, volunteer of IAC, Pune said. He said that 2,300 people, mostly youth, had registered for 'jail bharo' so far.

(iii) The protests were led by youth members of the IAC, Gitesh Devhane and Bhavesh Bhati. Devhane said, "We have a large number of activities lined up from August 7-15. But this evening we got instructions to hold peaceful protests and burn copies of the bill and by way of text messages and facebook we gathered a handful of youngsters and staged the protest."

3. Nirbhaya Case Of Dec,2012 In New Delhi

The third major and national event was that of Delhi Gang rape case, where not only youths but every age group protested against the increasing number of rape cases in capital. Numbers of PILs were filed, Justice Verma Committee was formed for the recommendations, protests at Rashtrapati Bhavan, India Gate, University campus, rallies etc were taking place. Every source of media was used like print media, news channels, pamphlets, SMS, social media etc were used and though media played a huge role. After such awakening, On March 8, Michelle Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry honored Nirbhaya with an International Woman of Courage Award and Indian Finance Minister P. Chidambaram announced a 10 billion-rupee (about \$200 million) Nirbhaya Fund to empower and promote safety for women. Briefly the Indian Parliament considered dedicating a new criminal-law bill to her name.

(i) About 300 students marched in Hyderabad and later formed a human chain seeking stronger rules for safety of women in the city and also pay homage to Nirbhaya, who was brutally gang raped in a moving bus in Delhi last month.

(ii) "Until December 16, Nirbhaya was just one among millions of faceless young people in India trying to break through the stifling fixity of their lives."

4. Rape Of 5 Years Old Girl

Recently, in New Delhi, in a rape case of 5 years old girl again outraged the whole nation and protests against this mishappening was followed by youths and media coverage.

(i) Karamjeet Kaur's anger could be judged from her post. Still a student, she wrote, "After the gang rape of a girl on December 16, 2012, all d boys gave excuse that girl's dressing sense was responsible for this (incident). BUT NOW after the gang rape of 5-yr-old girl in Delhi, what is the next excuse boys?" [12]

Data Analysis

After studying the above data which marked the role of media in national consciousness and participation of youths, we come to know that how media advocates can take the charge in encouraging or discouraging the society for particular issues. Such issues were not new in our country, earlier also, there were rape cases, corruption cases and protests but with the strategic use of media by the media advocated, these cases got turned into the national movements.

Findings of Facts

These are the facts which are observed in the research about media or media advocates.

1. Negative media can usher in more punitive laws and policies.
2. Positive media can pave the way for better legislation and practices.
3. Don't react but play strategically.
4. Be accountable, but not defensive.
5. Go through the legal implications.
6. Improves the capacity within the organizations to attain organizational goals.
7. Improves the success of campaigns, events, programmes and services.
8. Attract greater number of young people
9. Brings element of creativity and innovation
10. Offers new and different solutions to issues

Suggestions and Recommendations

If media and youth follow the right strategy legally as well as practically, the change is must! So, both need to act intelligently and plays their role accordingly. For eg, Media should be adopt a policy of fairness and accountability and youths need to observe the right perspective and do the proper research of the problem and then come up with the united opinion and solution.

Conclusion

Media advocacy really controls the public opinion and not only influence the policy makers but common people. It acts as a connection between the whole nation. Though, it's the responsibility of the media advocates to give the right advice and information to the media and public.

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