

Development coverage by media
(A comparative study between Times of India and Mail Today)

by

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Abstract

Development has become a topic of great discussion and debate in recent times. Economically and/or otherwise, India's development scene is an important factor in determining her progress. The International Encyclopedia defines the term development as 'purposive changes undertaken in a society to achieve what may be regarded generally as a different (improved) state of social and economic affairs.' In simple words, development is a social change that seeks to improve the quality of life. It is a multi-faceted concept that can be seen and understood through the political, social, economic, physical and intellectual lens.

Keeping this in view, development then, befits an important aspect of a nation and therefore, of journalism. Owing to its position as the fourth estate of a country, media carries on its shoulders the great responsibility of actively pursuing this role by unveiling issues that need immediate heed. It is the media's duty, especially the largely-used newspapers' in India, to create awareness and mobilize people towards national development. While globally this drift can be seen in the dissemination of news, in India, it is still trying to struggle its way out through illiteracy and lack of resources. However due to fast diffusion of 'glocalization' into the rural as well as urban areas, India is catching up with the times. Newspapers that were available only in printed form earlier, now have online editions and news that was once circulated through conventional forms, can now be read on one's mobile phone itself. News sharing is becoming more and more personal now.

Indian newspapers have stood as a metaphor for the saying - 'pen is mightier than the sword' since the time of independence. Many a great changes were brought due to the sincerity, courage and conscientious manner displayed by what Mahatma Gandhi once termed as 'viewpapers'. In This research tries to focus on the coverage of development stories. Times Of India and Mail Today are the newspapers selected for the study with the aim of assessing the role of print media in

creating awareness about developmental issues.

Introduction:

Media has long been christened the backbone of any flourishing democracy. As the fourth estate of a country, media serves as a propellant to public awakening. It participates as the gatekeeper and watchdog in a democracy- thus undertaking the exalted role of the nation builder.

A democratic society depends largely on an aware populace that participates in policy making decisions, either directly or indirectly. An uninformed citizenry debilitates the country's progress. In order to prevent this, media holds the position of being the informer of issues that affect development and require immediate attention of the authorities as well as the public. It mirrors that reality which concerns all of us.

The public has to know what is going on, the reason behind it and then weigh its pros and cons. In today's 'glocalized' world, people are vigilant and therefore question. It is imperative for people to know what is happening around them, what are the loopholes in the system, how something affects them and what steps can be taken to mend problems. These issues have a bearing on them directly or indirectly. Such awareness helps in formulating opinions and actions which thus, contribute in improvement.

In large heterogeneous societies such as ours, media plays a crucial role in influencing public attitude so much so that it can make or break a person/ organization/ system. The Jessica Lal murder case best exemplifies the power that media can practice where it is essential. The media did not punish the guilty but the message got spread just as fire swells in a forest. The media, thus, functions as a platform to bring forth the issues of the common man.

Among the many values that news is expected to possess, impact is very significant. In an era of electronic and new media, impact of newspapers still demands attention and has the potential to stimulate

public opinion. Through its emphasis on truth, media can make the system more accountable and help in development.

In developing countries such as India, the influx of western influences and the deep-rooted belief system have caused a chaotic situation. While some believe that electronic and new media are the future, others still consider newspapers to be a reliable source of information. Keeping this in mind, newspapers in India have a central role to play in her development. However many think that the Indian press hasn't lived up to its expectations and has left rural and remote areas as victims of development-abandon.

Due to the perception of development stories being 'dry' and 'boring', very few organizations endorse it. It is essential for Indian press to highlight problems that challenge and concern people at the grass-root level. It should underline their problems and help bridge the gap between the urban and rural; the policymakers and its beneficiaries. This not only promotes good governance but also contributes in the overall development of such regions.

What is development?

Development has been rightly defined by Bourgault as "promoting grassroots, non-violent, socially democratic, dialogical and humanistic forms of communication." In other words development is an all-encompassing movement from a lower to a higher level that leads to better quality of life with the help of proper and effective communication.

The term 'growth' has often been wrongly used as a synonym for development. There is a difference between the two concepts. While the former connotes only an augmentation to the gross national development, the latter relates to not just quantitative but qualitative changes as well. This means that growth is measured with the backdrop of economic changes and development is measured as a whole, that is, through economic, social, political, spiritual and human aspects. Therefore it wouldn't be incorrect to say that growth is only a part of a larger concept that is development.

However it is difficult to articulate development of a country in precise terms. A decent standard of living including education, health facilities, proper

infrastructure and the like comprise the development parameters of a nation. In the times that we live in, geographical boundaries have been strictly named as the first and third world- developed and developing/ underdeveloped. While developed nations fulfill all paradigms of development, it is the underdeveloped countries that need to walk their way up the ladder of development.

While developed economies are in a position to provide better food and clothing, comfortable infrastructure and numerous other luxuries, developing nations are deprived of even basic needs, owing to their non-industrial and colonial backgrounds. The main characteristics of underdeveloped countries include:-

- Poverty
- Low per capita income
- Poor infrastructure
- High population
- Unemployment
- Environmental pollution and degradation

Thus nations such as India are underdeveloped due to the high prevalence of all the above in different measures.

What is development communication?

Communication plays a central role in development. The notion of development is basic to development communication. The term 'development' refers to the channel through which overall quality of life of people moves from a lower to a higher state and the term 'communication' means to share information. Development communication then, means sharing information about progress. This can include general achievements as well as issues that hamper development.

By this meaning development journalism becomes very important in underdeveloped countries such as India. This type of journalism keeps reminding one of what one needs to do in order to encourage development. It does not make its public forget the reality that is underdevelopment. Therefore news about development is a prerequisite to fuel more development.

In Africa, for instance, as Om Gupta notes in his book 'Encyclopedia of Journalism and Mass Communication (2006), media acts as a substitute to formal education when there is a shortage of books and/or teachers. In

developed countries media is not called upon to do so. This shows how crucial and effective media is and can be in the development of nations where it is needed the most.

In the Indian context, media, especially newspapers, have proved to be a great tool of development communication since the time of independence. Development journalism is not only to advocate externally set aims but fulfill the function of analyzing whether the development measures are successful or not.

However with increasing competition and the constant public interest vs. private profit war, newspapers in India are almost fizzling out in the development communication aspect. The first task of a development journalist in India is to bring to light issues such as poor infrastructure, poverty, corruption, malpractices such as female foeticide and the like. This, she/he must do in the simplest possible manner; using technical jargons judiciously; communicating accurate facts and making the reader understand it easily.

With raising levels of awareness among her citizens, India's development issues require the support of its newspapers and other media to sustain in public memory, so that immediate, consistent and useful action is taken to become a country free of (at least) underdevelopment problems.

In this study, a development story has been selected on the basis of a few considerations. It includes stories that report about:-

- Poor infrastructure
- Educational facilities
- Poverty
- Health and hygiene
- Social inequality
- Environmental concerns
- Agricultural developments

However it is important to differentiate between an actual report and/or analysis that are done by the newspaper itself and a report that just states facts from a research carried out by organizations such as the United Nations or some university. Local and national stories were considered instead of global development ones.

This study only chooses stories that can be credited to the newspaper's own effort, that is, reporting (investigative stories included) done by its staff reporters. It does not take into considerations subtle marketing campaigns such as Amanki Asha and Teach India that are done by newspapers. It does not comprise business reports about various companies either.

About Times of India

The Times of India (TOI) is an Indian English-language daily newspaper. It enjoys the largest circulation among all English-language newspapers in the world, across all formats (broadsheet, tabloid, compact, berliner and online) according to Audit Bureau of Circulations. Owned and published by Bennett, Coleman & Co. Ltd., was founded on 3 November 1838.

It was ranked the 8th largest selling newspaper in any language in the world in 2008 by ABC (India). The Indian Readership Survey (IRS) 2011 reported that the Times of India is the most widely read English newspaper in India with a readership of 74.71 lakh (7.471 million).

About Mail Today:

Mail Today is a tabloid that was established in November 2007. It is published by the India Today Group in a joint venture with popular British newspaper Daily Mail (which is part of the Associated Newspapers Group). Associated Newspapers holds 26% stake which it bought at Rs. 18 crore.

Currently there is one edition of the paper published from Delhi which consists of 48 pages. Its estimated readership in 2010 was 0.5 million. Mail Today is a fairly new newspaper in the Indian media industry. It follows the pattern of the much-read British tabloid, Daily Mail. Due to the tabloid format's late entry into the Indian market, Mail Today is gradually penetrating into the media scene.

Aims of the study:

Broadly speaking, this research is aimed at comparing and analyzing the coverage of development stories by Times of India and Mail Today. It adopts a quantitative as well as qualitative model of content analysis.

More specifically, this study has the following aims and objectives:

- To find the total coverage, in terms of number of stories by Times of India and Mail Today and to see which newspaper has more coverage

- Compare the number of stories published on the front page of the sampled newspapers
- To study qualitatively and comparatively, the presentation of news related to local/national development by the two newspapers with regard to language, style, treatment and emphasis

Hypothesis:

Tabloids are equal to broadsheet newspapers in publishing development news

Review of literature:

Deborah Eade defines development as being 'about women and men becoming empowered to bring about positive changes in their lives; about personal growth together with public action; about both the process and the outcome of challenging poverty, oppression, and discrimination; and about the realization of human potential through social and economic justice. Above all, it is about the process of transforming lives, and transforming.' This definition perhaps best describes what development is and why it is needed.

It is in this regard that many researches have been carried out in the realm of development. Media researches, however, in development as a genre are lesser as compared to studies relating to specific issues such as environmental concerns, poor infrastructure, etc. A significant research analyzing the role of Bangladeshi newspapers in development is by professors S.M. Shameen Reza and Ashfara Haque. It is titled 'Campaigns on Local Environmental Issues in Bangladesh Newspapers' and was published in 2011.

Online issues of the Prothom Alo (Bangla) and The Daily Star (English) were content analyzed. Reza and Haque stressed on media's importance in orchestrating positive changes and being a contributor in nation-building: "Media are a central, possibly the central, forum through which we, as audiences and publics, make sense of our environment, society and politics." They go on to discuss it in the environmental context and suggest that "News media is the principle source for general people to derive information about the environment and environmental changes. They also provide platforms for policymakers to explain their positions and civil society members to influence policy decisions."

Despite alternative media such as television and new media, the newspaper still remains a major source of information not just in Bangladesh but in India as well. The newspaper is still relied upon more than new forms of media which are seen as a threat to its survival. The final conclusion of the study was that Bangladeshi newspapers rely on agenda setting and use of innovative approaches towards media advocacy to communicate with readers as well as decision-makers. One of the major focuses was on local environmental issues caused due to global warming. Both newspapers published news stories, investigative reports, opinion articles and photographs on local environment. The aim of the coverage was to create awareness about environmental problems and appeal to the public and authorities to take appropriate measures.

Similarly in the Indian context, from among the many research studies conducted, an analysis carried out by Saad Ullahkhan and published in 2009, entitled 'Coverage of Copenhagen Summit: A Comparative Analysis of the Two National Dailies- The Times of India and The Hindu' is helpful in unveiling the country's development communication picture with the climate change summit as its background. It begins with deliberating on the onus that lies on media's shoulders to question and analyze issues concerning citizens in a democracy. Ullahkhan further suggests that "democracy without media is like a vehicle without wheels." The aims of the research consist of finding the total coverage of the summit and qualitatively comparing and analyzing those stories.

The results showed that science and technology news was a big component in both newspapers but Times of India had more number of stories. In both newspapers, a few stories were placed on the first page while some were published on the inside pages. The total space covered by Times of India was 5410.96 cm square and The Hindu covered 1957.3 cm square. This was done by the use of quantitative content analysis.

A Newspaper Content Analysis completed by Professor Ravi Dixit from Mudra Institute of Communications (Ahmedabad) in 2005 reveals how 8%, 7.5% and 5% stories were related to infrastructure and education in The Telegraph (Kolkata), The Hindu (Chennai) and the Times of India (Ahmedabad) editions respectively. In case of photographs, TOI and The Telegraph carried more pictures as compared to The Hindu. The southern

newspaper put more weight on text rather than images. In TOI and The Telegraph 51% stories were accompanied by photographs and in The Hindu, close to 80% stories did not take support of images.

‘A comparative study on environmental awareness and environmentally beneficial behavior in India’ conducted by Hanna Hoerisch in 2002 for Centre of Media Studies is another research focused upon coverage of environmental issues in Indian newspapers. It uses the methods of content analysis and interview to carry out research on popular newspapers such as Times of India, Hindustan Times and Indian Express. Its findings indicate that none of India’s daily newspapers has a regular space reserved for environmental news and they’re only addressed as government, ministry and legal news as well as in contexts of science or health. The spotlight is mainly on local and national issues such as air, water and noise pollution as well as deforestation. The researcher attributes this low coverage to two reasons. First environmental journalism is a fairly new field in India that began only after the Bhopal catastrophe and second, the topic of environment is competing with all the other issues covered in a newspaper whereby the most intense selection criterion is the news worthiness of an issue. The interest of the reader on environment news was concerned still fairly low by editors who were interviewed.

This study further goes on to suggest that there should be a motivational and educational perspective in reporting of environmental issues. ‘Only if consequences of environmental pollution are showed very clearly and connected to the individual’s behaviour, the information on environment provided by the media will be able to motivate people to behave in a more environmentally friendly way.’

It tries to end on a positive note by presenting a graph (formulated through the use of survey) that shows the percentage of how the common man gets her/his daily information. The highest level is for media followed by own experiences, at school and personal discussions – thus supporting the fact that media is an effective tool when it comes to creating awareness.

Research methodology

The method of content analysis was used in carrying out this research.

Content analysis is a research tool which is used in social sciences for studying the contents of communication. Researchers quantify and analyze the presence, meanings and relationships of such words and concepts, then make inferences about the messages within the texts, the writer(s), the audience, and even the culture and time of which these are a part.

Texts can be broadly defined as books, book chapters, essays, interviews, discussions, newspaper headlines and articles, historical documents, speeches, conversations, advertising, theater, informal conversation, or really any occurrence of communicative language. To conduct a content analysis on any such text, the text is coded, or broken down, into manageable categories on a variety of levels--word, word sense, phrase, sentence, or theme.

This method can perhaps best be defined by Kimberely in 2002 – “Content analysis is a summarizing, quantitative analysis of messages that relies on a specific method and is not limited as to types of variables that may be measured or the context in which the messages are created or presented.” In simple words, it is done in a systematic, objective and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables. Perfect objectivity is however, seldom achieved in content analysis. This research method is of two types:

- 1) Quantitative
- 2) Qualitative

Quantitative analysis in this study covers the following points:

- Number of stories
- Pages on which they appeared
- Source of the stories
- Number of photographs accompanying each story
- Number of articles published in connection with development issues

Qualitative analysis in this study covers the following points:

- News stories were analyzed keeping in mind every aspect of analysis. Headlines and lead paragraphs as well as the general body structure of the reports/articles were carefully examined to evaluate the treatment of the story. The language and sentence structure used were also checked. The study sought to analyze the general attitude and emphasis of a popular English daily newspaper and a fast emerging English tabloid regarding coverage of development stories.

Area of Study:

Popular broadsheet and tabloid newspapers from Delhi were each analyzed for this research study

Sample:

The sample includes 58 newspaper issues (29 each from Times of India and Mail Today) dating from 1st February to 29th February, 2012. The comparative, qualitative approach would involve use of photographs, cartoons and reports used by the two newspapers.

Comparative Analysis

Table 1

News materials published in the Times of India and Mail Today on development During 1-29 February, 2012

Type of news material	TOI	Mail Today
News story	22	13
Photos	24	28
Cartoons	0	1
Articles	10	8

During 1-29 February, 2012

From the above table, it can be noted that Times of India published as much as 22 news stories as compared to Mail Today which published 13 stories. The number of photographs in Times of India is 24 while those in Mail Today are 28. There were no cartoons published in TOI that were related to development while 1 cartoon was published in Mail Today. Likewise, there are 10 articles published in TOI as opposed to 3 in Mail Today

Table 2

News materials published on the front page of Times of India and Mail Today on development during 1-29 February, 2012

Type of news material	TOI	Mail Today
News story	1	2
Photos	1	2
Cartoons	0	0
Articles	0	0

From the above table, it can be observed that Times of India published 1 news story on its front page during February 2012 as compared to Mail Today which published 2 news stories. The number of photographs in Times of India is 1 while that in Mail Today is nil. There were no cartoons and articles published on the front page in both newspapers.

In terms of packaging and presentation, both newspapers are similar in use of number of photographs, especially coloured ones. However Mail Today used bigger and more illustrative pictures that attract the reader towards reading development stories. Times of India that published 26 photographs, utilizes them generously but the images are not as eyeball-grabbing as those of Mail Today.

Qualitative comparison:

By analyzing the news content qualitatively, the present research study tried to focus on the treatment of news in both newspapers, through the language, the framing, the issues highlighted and the follow up coverage.

The qualitative analysis revealed that development news was a part of the coverage of news stories in both newspapers, although the Times of India contains more number of stories. However, there are differences in the way development stories were presented.

In both newspapers, very few stories found place on the front page while the remaining stories were published in the inside pages. The headlines used were catchy and self-explanatory, and had the power to induce readers to read the story. However, Mail Today preferred more linguistically attractive and bold headlines (due to its tabloid format).

As far as the language of both newspapers is concerned, Mail Today was found to be using catchier language to attract its readers for stories that would ordinarily have seemed mundane. It uses both its headlines and its photographs as a strategic device to drag readers into reading and thus, maintain their interest. Jargon laden language is largely avoided in both newspapers. The language used is simple, easy-to-understand in TOI and more lofty vocabulary in Mail Today with technical words used very judiciously.

The language of Times of India is more conversational while that of Mail Today is inclined towards dramatic use. The lead paragraph of TOI has a more subtle, emotional appeal and that of Mail Today has the 'shock effect' as its major aspect in most stories. As far as coverage area is concerned, both newspapers focus on national as well as local coverage.

However TOI covers more national issues than local ones while Mail Today reports about local problems

more. National developmental concerns in TOI include regional as well. This includes education, infrastructure, etc. Local issues in Mail Today involve issues involving subjects such as health, hygiene and environment in areas of Delhi. With regard to follow ups, Mail Today has been consistent during the period in which the content analysis was done. There is no specific regular or weekly column dedicated to development stories in any of the two newspapers.

The use of photographs is done extensively by both newspapers. TOI is known for its use of colourful, glossy photographs. Owing to its tabloid format, Mail Today uses photographs generously and therefore, it is close in competition with TOI, with 28 being published in it as compared to the latter's 24. The photographs in TOI seem cluttered in one report but those in Mail Today are big, clear and more realistic instead of glossy. Thus the approach taken by a popular Delhi broadsheet newspaper, Times of India, and a tabloid, Mail Today, came to the fore – quantitatively as well as qualitatively. It reflects the difference in priorities of both the newspapers.

Conclusion :

The hypothesis formulated earlier – ‘Tabloids are equal to broadsheet newspapers in publishing development news’ – stands non-directional now. Keeping in mind the findings of the content analysis (quantitative as well as qualitative), it can be said that despite the blurring of distinctive features between broadsheets and tabloids due to increased competition, broadsheet newspapers such as TOI still publish more development stories than tabloids like Mail Today.

1) Times of India published as many as 22 stories relating to development as compared to Mail Today which published 13 reports.

2) The number of photographs accompanying the news stories is 24 in TOI and 28 in Mail Today.

3) The number of cartoons used to convey development stories is 0 in TOI while it is 1 in Mail Today.

4) The articles in TOI are seven more than the three published in Mail Today.

5) The number of stories published on the front page of TOI is 1 and 2 in Mail Today.

6) The number of photographs on the front page of TOI is 1 and that of Mail Today is 0.

7) There were no cartoons and articles published on the front pages of both newspapers.

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