

Politicians as News Consumers: A Survey of Mass Media Usage Habits of Politicians of Karnataka

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Abstract

Media shape the political process and is responsible for seeking public participation in political process. Media power in politics is not a myth but a reality as media continues to have impact on political activities and in influencing public opinion. Media are central to the political functioning but do politicians consider media as dependable sources they turn to and trust and do they cite media reports in their discussions, presentations and political conversations? Studies about what are the politician's news habits and what are their media and news preferences and how they connect with media provide insight into influences of media on politician's news habits. Do politicians express more credibility of media is a point worth pondering as media has proved to be double edged sword. This study is based on a survey conducted with politicians belonging to the State of Karnataka. The findings reveal that all the respondent politicians (100%) were reading the newspaper, the traditional media. They attached a lot of importance to reading the newspaper. All the respondents irrespective of the nature of membership and their education level, were found reading newspaper daily. However, they have rated the credibility of newspaper as moderate. Nevertheless, Newspaper still continues to be one of the main sources of news for politicians.

Keywords : Mediatization of Politics, Political Reality, Media Motivation, Political Engagement, Mass Media, Newspaper, Magazine, Radio, Television, Media Credibility

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INTRODUCTION

‘Mass media were perceived to have immense power because the impact would not be constrained by other competing social and psychological influences on individuals’ (Melkote & Steeves 2001). Enormous power was attributed to mass media propelling them to be the ‘New Power Centre’ in the society in the whole of 19th and 20th century. The political power of mass media was bolstered by Hitler’s media strategy to use radio and cinema as agents of propaganda in 1930s reinforcing the belief in the power of mass media. Political influence on mass media and the desire to control media changed the dynamics of political communication. The history has witnessed the media power in politics.

Political communication is absolutely necessary to establish democracy as it provides adequate information, consolidating community and generating legitimacy (Habermas, 2006). Throughout the history, mass media have grown as agents of political communication influencing political and cultural beliefs. Media were established with an agenda to participate and challenge the political regimes in public interest in most of the cultures throughout the history. ‘The core position of mass media is said to create media power, a kind of power that can be influenced by but is not reducible to social, political and economic power’ (Habermas, 2006). The emergence of Newspapers, radio, cinema and TV as agents of mass communication caused significant changes in the society establishing media as one of the important social institutions. The enormous influence wielded by mass media compelled intolerant political regimes to control media in the guise of ethics, culture, communal harmony, security and war. History is replete with instances of political regimes who believed in government control of mass media as media was presumed to be the new power centre in the society. The unprecedented

expansion of mass media raised the issue of public discourse in media and the presence of public perspective in news and views.

Media shape the political process and is responsible for seeking public participation in political process. Media power in politics is not a myth but a reality as media continues to have impact on political activities and in influencing public opinion. From reporting facts, 'media has become an integral part of the political process by becoming a definer and constructor of political reality' (Gurevitch, Coleman & Blumler 2009). Politics is the staple diet of media and media cover elections, political events and politicians with increasing priority in front pages and top headlines in TV news. The coverage has shaped the public appetite for political news in broadcast to print to digital occupying the prime space and time of media.

'Modern politics is mediated politics' (Bennett and Entman, 2001) where media has assumed the role of shaping political process. 'Mediatization' of politics meaning 'increasing intrusion of the media in the political process' (Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999) has pushed society, government and other institutions to be media driven. 'However, close inspection of the evidence reveals that political institutions in many nations have retained their functions in the face of expanded media power. The best description of the current situation is "mediatization," where political institutions increasingly are dependent on and shaped by mass media but nevertheless remain in control of political processes and functions (Mazzoleni and Schulz, 1999). Media is calling shots in TV debates where politicians are selected for their specific stance on an issue for framing news in the way it is desired by the media. Getting 30 to 60 minutes time during prime time in television debates on a topic of public importance is rewarding for any politician in influencing public opinion. Politicians aspire to be friendly with journalists and win their trust by becoming source of political news.

Media are central to the political functioning but do politicians consider media as dependable sources they turn to and trust and do they cite media reports in their discussions, presentations and political conversations? Media power has always overwhelmed politicians to the extent of owning media houses in India. Over 60 percent of media are owned by politicians in India

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illustrating the efforts to control and manipulate the flow of information in media. ‘Politicians are no longer interested in buying media space but they much prefer ownership’ (Indian paid media documentary). In the state of Tamil Nadu, former Chief Minister and leader of DMK party, Karunanidhi and his family owns *Kaliagnar* ; Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu and leader of AIDMK party Jayalalita owns Jaya TV; Film actor turned politician and leader of DMDK party Vijayakanth runs Captain TV; Congress leaders in Tamil Nadu runs Mega TV and *Vasanth* TV; PMK leader runs *Makkal* TV; Kalanithi Maran, the political family of Tamil Nadu and former Union Minister owns Sun TV; In the state of Andhra Pradesh, *Saakshi* TV and *Saakshi* newspaper belongs to Y.S.Jaganmohan Reddy leader of YSR Congress; Chief Minister and leader of Telugu Desam Chandrababu Naidu’s son is CEO of Studio N; *Telangana Rashtra Samiti* has TNews; In Karnataka former Chief Minister Kumaraswamy owns Kasturi TV and former ministers and politicians Janardhana Reddy brothers own *Janshri* TV; In Kerala, CPI (M) backed Malayalam Communications runs three TV news channels including *Kairali*; Congress in Kerala runs *Jai HindTV*; M.K. Muneer has India Business TV; In West Bengal CPI(M) controls TV-24 *Ghanta*; Trinamool Congress has Kolkata TV; in Punjab Sukhbir Singh Badal of Akali Dal political party and Deputy Chief Minister of Punjab owns PTC group of Channels; from States of Nagaland to Odisha politicians and ruling parties own newspapers and TV channels; Suvarna TV of the Asianet group is owned by Indian MP Rajeev Chandrashekhar,. There are many instances of media having political affiliations. Politicians and political parties in India have their mouthpieces to control dissemination of news. Therefore, politicians overwhelmingly prefer mass media to be in public limelight and to get political news round the clock illustrating bonding between mass media and politicians.

‘Much of what politicians do is driven by their belief in the power of media, which motivates their desire to be featured in news coverage’ (Cohen, Tsfati, Sheaffer, 2008). Studies about what are the politician’s news habits and what are their media and news preferences and how they connect with

media provide insight into influences of media on politician's news habits. Do politicians express more credibility of media is a point worth pondering as media has proved to be double edged sword. What type of mass media, print or electronic or new media that are considered as sources for political news is vital that one needs to find out to understand the perception of politician as news consumer. Media like newspapers and TV channels have been inviting politicians to serve as Guest Editors to get more TRPs and public attention. Politicians are regular panelists in TV debates increasing their visibility in mass media. Many politicians are columnists in newspapers and news magazines garnering more media space to connect with the public. However, media is conventionally given news through press releases or press meets by the politicians to promote their interests. Studies on what prompts media to cover politicians reveal that 'politicians' media motivation is positively related to the extent of their media coverage' (Sheafer and Wolfsfeld 2004). Politicians differ between themselves in media motivation but adopt all strategies to prevent negative portrayal in the media with an eye on elections and their survival in politics. Though the belief that media can make or mar a political career is a myth in present times, politicians are wary about negative coverage in the media and indulge in media motivation. British MPs have even observed that voters do not believe they work for the constituency's interest unless they have a prominent media profile (Ross and Sreberny, 2000). Public's perception of the politicians is influenced by the coverage in the media determining their visibility.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In a study on US Presidential elections of 2012 the media habits of presidential candidates showed that Barack Obama used 'digital direct messaging to engage in a new level of conversations with the voters, transforming campaigning into something more dynamic, more of a dialogue'. It points out that Obama had a substantial lead over challenger Mitt Romney 'in the use of digital tools to talk directly with voters - bypassing the filter of traditional media'. (PEW Research Center, 2012). The study shows that

Presidential candidates preferred web and social media over traditional media in US elections establishing the arrival of social media intervention in high profile presidential elections dislodging the prime place given to TV in US elections. Campaigns posted perhaps more content on social media platforms than on traditional media announcing the arrival of social media as the major source of political news. Traditionally American elections used to fight over Television as presidential debates on Television were regarded as a major global spectacle. Studies reveal that digital technology has replaced the traditional media with political candidate's media use habits has changed.

The use of communication media varies between politicians illustrating their attitudes towards traditional and new media. In a study on an analysis of Twitter use amongst the British Conservative party (Bulman et.al, 2009) politicians who are most personable in their Tweets are liked by the followers than those who Tweets only formal issues. Politicians who discuss about their daily engagements, meetings and reveal more about public issues are liked by the Tweeter followers than those who just express their opinions on public issues. The study illustrates the Twitter use habits of politicians and their influence on their followers. How politicians relate to digital information technology and new media forms the focus of many studies. Most of these researches endorse the popularly held hypothesis that despite having contradictory political identity politicians are 'consistent with digital discourse and are populist due to their pro-technological character' (Nilsson and Carlsson, 2014).

Media and politicians is a broad area under which one comes across voluminous studies on media and election campaigns. 'Over the last 20 years, a successful election campaign has come to depend in large part on successful use of the broadcast media. As a result, media experts are part of most politicians' teams, and their strategies help determine the results of the election. Usually, themes or "images" are more important than issues' (Nimmo, 1970).

Politicians believe in the power of media and a study on the influence of presumed media influence in politics endorses the premise, 'politicians'

belief in the power of media increases their motivation and effort to appear in media coverage, which in turn is related both to greater media prominence and to more parliamentary activity ‘ (Cohen, Tsfati, Sheaffer, 2008). Many studies have revealed politicians’ interest in getting positive portrayal in the media to influence their electorate and promote political agenda (Mutz 1989; Becker and Kosicki 1995).

Politicians and invasion of privacy has received attention by the researchers giving insight into what politicians think of journalists who delve into their personal lives. The study reveals politician’s perspective on protecting their private lives from the media glare. ‘The media should pry into politicians’ private lives but only if there was a legitimate public interest’ (Phillipps, 2002) concludes the study.

In a research on gender discrimination in relationship of politicians with media it was found that ‘male MPs have personal contact with journalists more frequently than do female MPs in Sweden. However, it’s common in most of the countries for politicians to have personal friends among journalists. Studies have also revealed that politicians seek advice from journalists during political crisis. Many new politicians who are not aware of media logic learn to adapt to deal with media and journalists. Research also reveals that politicians leak vital information to the media to gain media trust and to get positive coverage. (Aalberg and Stromback, 2011)

Political communication is a well researched area reflecting upon relationship between politics and media in general and television in particular. Research endorses the oft repeated premise that television – politics relationship that emerged in 1960s still prevails to some extent in the digital era but faces new pressures that weaken the primacy of the broadcast-centered model of political communication. (Gurevitch and Blumler, 2009)

Mass media have become dominant tools of political communication influencing political institutions. The political role of television shows that television moved into the center of the political stage opines many studies. Politicians and media differ from one another in their interests and share a sense of mistrust between them. Mass media especially television portrays

political image and the 'political reality' is what shapes people's perception of politicians. One of the researches argues that mass media can hinder political transparency through media manipulation. 'Given the limited time available for broadcast and the limited attention of audiences, stories about political strategy, political infighting, political scandal and the private lives of politicians tend to crowd out less entertaining stories about substantive policy questions. Political life begins to conform increasingly to the image of politics portrayed on television' (Balkin, 1999).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study focuses on the usage of mass media by politicians of Karnataka for their personal and public utility. It focuses mainly on traditional media consisting of newspapers, magazines, radio and television.

- To study what are the politician's news habits and what are their traditional media preferences in the age of new media;
- To examine news preferences of politicians and how they connect with traditional media;
- To analyze the influences of media on politician's news habits.
- To study politicians' perception of traditional media and media credibility;
- To examine the media preferences , print or electronic, of politicians that are considered as sources for political news ;
- To analyze the perception of politician as news consumer;

METHODOLOGY

The study is an exploration of the usage of mass media by politicians of Karnataka. The intention is to study how politicians of Karnataka are using mass media for their personal communication, daily work and for public good in the era of information technology. Survey method of research was used in the current study to understand the profile of politician as a news consumer and media intervention in politicians' media engagement. A well designed questionnaire was administered.

The Karnataka State Legislature has a total of 225 members and the

Legislative Council has 75 members. There are 28 Lok Sabha members from Karnataka. The sample size consists of politicians representing various elected bodies and a section of the seasoned politicians which included former elected representatives, former ministers and party presidents. In all, the total respondents were 125 from across Karnataka. The sampling technique adopted was stratified and simple random selection of the MLAs, MLCs and MPs. Conscious efforts were made to give representation to every district. The sample consists of 39 Members of the Legislative Assembly, and representation has been given to all the 30 districts while selecting the respondents. Similarly, 10 Members of Lok Sabha represent an equal number of constituencies of different districts. As many as 26 Members of the Legislative Council and 25 Corporators were selected.

A structured questionnaire was developed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. The questionnaire was pre-tested and finally had a total of 70 questions classified to collect relevant information pertaining to Socio demographic and Economic Profile, Political Party Affiliations, mass media usage habits, participation in media debates and writings and politicians' attitude towards media credibility. There were six open ended and 64 closed ended questions, providing relevant options to choose appropriate responses.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Karnataka's total population in 2015 is estimated at 65 million. The 2011 census report says that the male population is over 31 million, while female 30 million. Gender ratio shows that there are 968 females per 1,000 males. Despite this ratio which indicates that women population is lesser than men, there are no conscious efforts by political parties to bring women into politics in good numbers or at least in proportion to their population. Among the 125 respondents, 114 (91.2%) were male and the rest 11 (8.8%) were female. As the representation to women is marginal, in accordance the representation is given.

The age of the respondents was classified ranging from 25 to 65 years and above. The highest numbers of respondents were 46 -55 years (31.2%) while the least were of 25-35 years (4.8%). As much as 28% of the

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respondents were 55-65 years, whereas 18.4% were above 65 years and above, and 17.6% were 36-45 years. Majority of the politicians in the State are middle aged. Both youth and senior citizens are not in large numbers. It is generally believed that in India, it takes not less than 40 to 45 years to settle down in politics and even the middle-aged persons are considered as young in politics. Further as per the convention men find more representation than women in politics. While women get branded as aged if they cross middle-age, the same is not said about men. Hence political parties, in general, do not make any special efforts to accommodate women unless there are compelling reasons.

Education qualification of the respondents show that majority of them were graduates 56.8%. Next to them were post-graduates 20.8% followed by SSLC 14.4% , diploma holders 4.8%, and school dropouts and degree dropouts were equal in number in terms of percentage 1.6%. The results point to the fact that educated youngsters are entering politics and the days of semi-literates and illiterates are significantly declining. The literacy rate itself has increased in Karnataka. The census report of 2011 has indicated that Karnataka's literacy rate has increased to 75.36% from 66.64% in 2001. Majority of the respondents were Hindus 93.6%, followed by Muslims 4.8% and religious minorities, Christians and Jains 0.8%. The results show that Hindus continues to be the major players in politics, while minorities whether religious or linguistic are minuscule in numbers. Some of the major political parties do make conscious efforts to field minorities as candidates to catch vote bank. As much as 60.8% of the respondents belonged to general category followed by the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) 24.8%, the scheduled castes 9.6% and the scheduled tribes 4.8%. Caste plays a major factor in politics and plurality is a hard fact. Those who fall under the bracket of general category, meaning advanced socially, educationally and economically, are dominating politics. There is reservation in seats while contesting various bodies for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes and this has helped to a certain extent in facilitating them to enter politics.

Now, regarding the profession of the respondents, it is observed that the highest number of respondents 40.8% was found to be engaged both in

politics and agriculture. The second highest 34.4% were found doing both politics and business. The third highest 8.8% were only politicians. Next to it, were those who were politicians cum lawyers 4%, followed by politicians who were doctors and politicians and those who were in politics and other profession 4.8% each.

Income was categorized broadly under four categories. The least was Rs 25,000 a month and the highest was Rs 3,00,000 and above. The highest number of respondents were seen having income of more than Rs 3,00,000 a month ,47.2%, followed by 24% in the scale of Rs 76,00,000 – 1,50,000, 22.4% in the bracket of Rs 1,50,001- Rs 3,00,000 and 6.4% in the group of Rs 25,000-75,000. The monthly salary and emoluments for legislators are revised from time to time through legislation. The last revision was in March, 2015. As per law, the legislators, 300 in all, are entitled for a fixed salary of Rs 25,000. Other allowances they can claim are, telephone charges Rs 20,000; constituency allowance Rs 40,000; postal charges Rs 5,000; salary of personal assistant Rs 10,000; constituency travelling allowance Rs 40,000. In all it comes to nearly Rs 1, 40,000.

Almost all legislators are on one or the other legislature committee. For attending the meetings of the committees, usually held either in Vidhana Soudha, Bengaluru or Suvarna Vidhana Soudha, Belagavi, the daily allowance per day within Karnataka is Rs 2,000 and Rs 2,500 per day outside Karnataka. Travel allowance is sanctioned at Rs 25 a km irrespective of the mode of journey or a fixed allowance of Rs 1,500 for each meeting. They are also entitled to go on all-expenses paid tour, which is billed as study tour, twice anywhere in India or one foreign trip during their term which is five years in case of an MLA and six years in case of an MLC. Legislators' and their family members' medical bills including the dental care is met by the government. Members of Parliament get a salary of Rs 50,000 a month and with various allowances it touches Rs 1.4 lakh. A Bengaluru Corporator gets around Rs 8,000 honorarium a month, while a mayor gets nearly Rs 20,000. Being a politician with membership to an elected body is quite remunerative¹.

The respondents' mother tongue was checked under eight categories. While 80.8% were found to be Kannada speaking, those with Telugu as mother tongue were 5.6%. Those speaking Tulu and Urdu were equal in percentage (4.8%) followed by Kodava (1.6%). The rest having mother-tongue like Tamil, Konkani, Marathi were just 0.8%. Karnataka politics continues to be a strong forte of the Kannada speaking people. As much as 92% of the respondents were married, and unmarried comprised 4.8% followed by widower 1.6% and widow 0.8%.

Media Habits of Politicians - Newspaper

All the respondents irrespective of the nature of membership and their education level, were found reading newspaper daily. Answering to the query of the duration or the time spent for reading newspaper, it emerged that the maximum respondents (58.4%) said that they read newspaper for an hour in a day. The next was 27.2% saying that they devoted less than 30 minutes reading newspaper, while 14.4% said they spent two to three hours a day reading the dailies. The results showed that the respondents have newspaper reading habit. More than half of the respondents were found spending an hour reading the dailies. And, a good number of the respondents were glancing through the papers as they were spending an hour. And, those who were devoting a couple of hours for doing serious reading of newspaper were the least.

For the question, which language newspaper did they read for news purpose it was found that as much as 56% of the respondents read both Kannada and English dailies. The next highest was 20% who were reading only Kannada papers followed by those who were reading all Kannada and local dailies published in local languages in districts (14.4%), followed by 9.6% who said they read Kannada, English and local dailies published in district in different languages. There is huge difference in the percentage of readers of only Kannada reading and those who read both Kannada and English dailies.

For the question to rate the credibility of newspaper for news purpose,

78.4% said that the credibility was moderate. And, the next highest percentage of the respondents (13.6%) said that they view newspaper credibility as high, followed by 7.2% saying it was low and 0.8% did not reply. The inferences were that though cent per cent of the respondents did read newspaper and consider it as a major source of news; they consider the credibility of news as moderate. However, the respondents saying the credibility was low were far lesser than those who said moderate and those who attached high credibility to news published in newspaper.

Table 1: News that interests the respondents most

Media V/S Type of news	Newspaper			TV			Radio		
	Response		% of responden ts (N=125)	Responses		% of respond- ents	Responses		% of respond- ents
	f	%		f	%		f	%	
Politics	125	47.7	100.0	116	50.7	92.8	11	19.0	8.8
Sports	22	8.4	17.6	19	8.3	15.2	0	0.0	0
Crime	8	3.1	6.4	3	1.3	2.4	0	0.0	0
Business	12	4.6	9.6	3	1.3	2.4	0	0.0	0
Entertainment	25	9.5	20.0	53	23.1	42.4	44	75.9	35.2
Development	39	14.9	31.2	14	6.1	11.2	2	3.4	1.6
Culture	24	9.2	19.2	18	7.9	14.1	1	1.7	0.8
Science	7	2.7	5.6	3	1.3	2.4	0	0.0	
Total	262			229			58		

f – No. of responses

What type of news in Newspaper interests politicians query revealed that Politics (47.7%) takes top priority followed by Development (14.9%), Entertainment (9.5%), Culture (9.2%), Sports (8.4%), Business (4.6 %), Crime (3.1%), and Science (2.7%).

As far as electronic media were concerned the priority changed except in Political news (50.7%) and (19%) in television and radio respectively. Preference for other type of news on TV showed Entertainment (23.1%), Sports (8.3%), Culture (7.9%), Development (6.1%), Business (1.3 %), Crime (1.3%), and Science (1.3%).

Preference for other type of news on Radio showed, Entertainment (75.9%) overtaking even Political news (19%) followed by negligible interest in Development (3.4%) and Culture (1.7%) and no interest in Sports (0%), Business (0%), Crime (0%), and Science (0%).

The inference was very clear that all the respondents were reading political news in a newspaper. Newspaper still continues to be one of the main sources of news for politicians. Newspaper was no more a strong attraction for sports news. With the invasion of television and dedicated sports channels being operational, hardly anyone spare time to read sports related news unless readers have special liking for newspaper and sports columnists, according to a cross-section of the respondents. Surprisingly none of the respondents were interested in sports news in radio. Crime stories or reports did not interest the respondents, though a minority of them had said they did read crime news. During informal interactions with the respondents it was gathered that there were many reasons for not taking routine crime news seriously. Newspapers tend to give too much importance for crime stories. TV channels usually glorify major crime related news and thus kill the curiosity of people to read again the same in newspaper. Crime news unless involve high profile people or written interestingly, fail to make busy people like politicians pay attention to it. However, none of the respondents said crime news interested them in radio. AIR (All India Radio) being an autonomous body of the government, do not attach much importance to crime news.

The respondents have amply made it clear that they were not keen on reading business news in newspaper. It is not that none of the politicians were into business. But when it comes to reading business news as such they were not interested. This could be because they were not getting news pertaining to the business in which they were involved. Also, reading business news may not interest them because usually English dailies carry national and international level business news, while Kannada or local dailies do not pay much attention for business news. However, none of the respondents said they liked business news in radio.

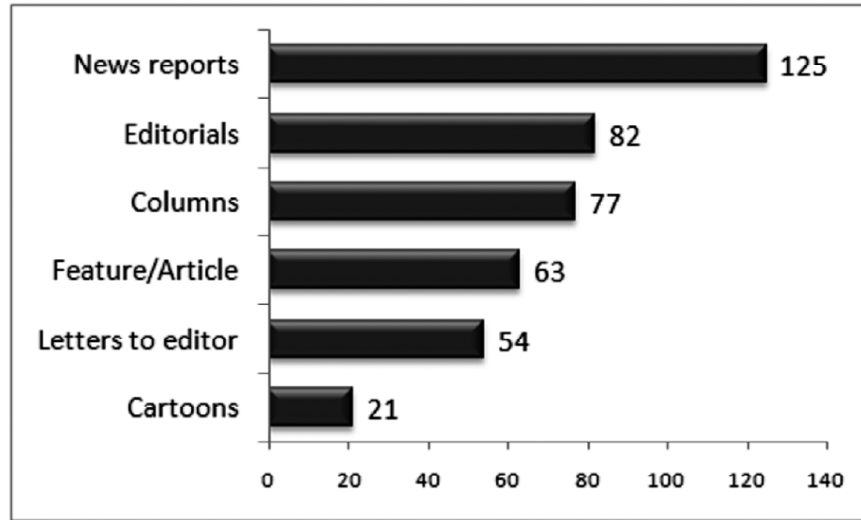
Entertainment news data indicated that the majority of the respondents were not interested in reading entertainment news. This is obviously due to invasion of television which is a powerful visual infotainment media. In addition, even the Internet based media are serving as infotainment platforms. Basically, like sports, entertainment is action based and hence, print is no more attractive. Little less than three-fourth of the respondents were found to be not interested in reading development news. This reflects a lot on the respondents, majority of whom are law makers and some of them, in their capacity as ministers, are policy and decisions makers too. Unlike newspapers, television and Internet based communication forums are not devoting space for developmental issues. It is clear that the respondents were not paying much attention to development related reports, comments, opinion pieces etc. Like sports and entertainment, even culture related programmes have become visually appealing in television. Unlike the print, television does not offer in-depth write ups on culture. The approach of print and visual media towards culture related issues are different. It appears that science was not an appealing subject for the politicians. Unless one has curiosity or interest in science related issues, they will not devote time to read. However, it was not that none of them were reading science related reports. But they were few and negligible.

Newspaper content is a mix of news and views in the form of news reports, editorials, columns by columnists, feature stories and letters to the editor. The survey shows that news reports are read regularly by 100% of the respondents whereas Editorials (65.6%), Columns (61.6%), Feature stories (50.4%) and Letters to the Editor (43.2%) do not sustain the interest of the politicians. Interestingly Cartoons (16.8%) which usually poke fun of politicians do not draw much attention along with brainy Crosswords/ Sudoku section attracting only 2.4% of politicians.

The data indicated that there was good response to columns in a newspaper because the respondents who were reading columns far exceed those who did not. Usually columns are written by subject experts or people having a good standing in society. And, for politicians it serves as food for

thought. Usually current issues, which matters or interests public, become the subject for columns. It also helps readers to form opinion.

Figure 1 : Politicians Regularly Read in Newspaper



Like columns, even editorials have readership among politicians. For editorials, there is more number of readers than for columns. Editorials help in forming opinion as they go beyond news. Sometimes it helps policy and lawmakers to understand a subject from a different perspective or to feel the pulse of the people. This could be one of the reasons for reading editorials.

Features/articles, which are usually meant for leisure reading, did interest politicians but not as much as editorials and columns. The data indicated that compared to features, editorials and columns had more readers among the respondents.

Letters to the Editor section in a paper usually reflects the people's sentiment and opinion on current topics. It also highlights problems faced by them in getting work done from government and public utilities. While English dailies usually publish letters which are related to national issues, regional/local dailies specifically focus more on local issues. More than half of the respondents were found to be not reading. If a politician is sensitive to

developments around him/her, he/she must care for what people say about government, policies and developments. For this Letters to the Editor column serves as a feedback channel. But the data revealed that the politicians were not paying attention to this crucial section.

Cartoons in newspaper are mostly political satire. With least words it comments a lot on current issues. It usually takes a dig at politicians, utterances by politicians, unscientific and populist decisions by government. Cartoons can also be on non-political subjects. Almost all papers have pocket cartoons. There are some papers which have devoted space on its editorial page for cartoons. It was obvious that the respondents were not responsive or interested in cartoons. One needs to have sense of humour to understand cartoons. May be the respondents did not understand the significance of cartoons and also lacked sense of humour. And, they also may get annoyed with cartoons because cartoonists usually take a ring side view of men in power and government.

From the data yielded it was very clear that there were not many politicians who were interested in crossword/Sudoku. Crossword is a word puzzle, while Sudoku is a number-placement puzzle. While crossword helps in enriching language power, Sudoku, meaning single number in Japanese language, is both number and alphabet puzzle. Both help mind to relax and be focused on the task on hand. One can enjoy crossword provided he/she has a good command over language or at least be interested in improving language ability by learning new words. It also serves as a stress buster and brain teaser. One needs aptitude as well as time to get engrossed in these columns. May be the respondents did not have both. In newspaper, crossword/Sudoku had the least readership among the respondents. The data thrown up clearly showed that the respondents, being in politics, were highly inclined towards reading news reports. There was no exception for this among the respondents.

Opinions are expressed in editorials and columns. For these two categories also there were readers. It must be helping politicians to form opinion and hence they may be reading editorials and columns regularly.

Features and articles were also popular but they were below news reports, editorials and columns. Despite being lawmakers and in public life, the respondents were found not keen on reading the Letters to the Editor section, which is a very important part of a newspaper. While at least there was some percentage of readership/viewing for cartoons, there were hardly any takers for crossword and Sudoku. The poor response to cartoons showed that the respondents were either did not have a mindset to enjoy them or they did not want to spare time for them. Crosswords and Sudoku have niche readership. Language ability matters a lot if one has to get hooked on to these columns. But hardly the respondents were showing any interest in these.

Magazine and Radio

Continuing on the subject of media habits, it was intended to know the frequency of listening to radio and reading magazine and accordingly under the question five categories were given to indicate the frequency of listening to radio and reading magazines. An additional option for indicating not liking both radio and magazine were also provided. Firstly, among the 125 respondents, 62 respondents (49.6%) disclosed that they never read magazines and likewise 76 respondents (60.8%) of respondents stated that they never listened to radio at all.

Among the MLAs, 66.7% of them did not read magazine at all among the MLCs, 50% did not read the magazines, among the Corporators (56%), among the Seasoned Politicians (25.0%) and among the MP-LS 22.2% of them did not read magazines at all. Going by the educational status of the respondents, it was observed that among the graduates, nearly half (47.9%) of the respondents did not read magazines at all whereas post-graduates (23.1%), SSLC passed (83.3%) and Diploma holders (50%) did not read magazines at all. Reputed magazines usually give in-depth analysis of current issues. Sometimes the write-ups could be better than those published in newspapers. Well researched articles are published in magazines. Also, many investigative reports of national interest are also published. There are

magazines which are exclusively meant for entertainment, politics, sports, science and fashion. But the respondents were found to be not interested in reading magazines.

Now, with respect to the respondents reading magazines, it emerged that the highest percentage (29.6%) read on a weekly basis, followed by those who were reading occasionally (16%), and the percentage of reading magazine frequently was low with 4%. Only one per cent of the respondents were reading magazine daily. The data also reflected the diminishing interest and market for magazines/periodicals. With the advent of television and social media, the reading habit, especially magazines has declined. Observing the same results by educational status, post-graduates (46.2%), Diploma holders (33.3%), graduates (29.6%) and SSLC passed (11.1%) politicians read magazines once in a week.

With respect to radio, among the MLAs, 59.0% and 61.5% MLCs did not listen to radio at all. Corporators (68%), Seasoned Politicians (50%) and MPs –LS (55.6%) did not listen to radio at all. Going by the educational status of the respondents, it was observed that graduates (66.2%), post-graduates (34.6%), SSLC passed (66.7%) and Diploma holders (66.7%) did not listen to radio at all.

The inferences were that a large number of respondents neither were interested in magazine nor radio. Between magazine and radio, magazine was found to be more appealing when it comes to news.

On the question of quantum of time spent on reading magazines, the respondents were given five categories to express their option. They were less than 30 minutes, 1 hour, 2-3 hour, 3 hours & above and Not Reading categories. Accordingly, 74.6% said they spent less than 30 minutes while 22.2% spent an hour in a day for reading magazines. The rest 1.6% each said they spent 2 to 3 hours and 3 hours and above respectively.

The inferences were that the respondents were not fond of reading magazines. Nearly half of them were not reading magazines at all. There are many magazines which do in-depth research on current topics. They go beyond news sometime. But the respondents were found to be not making it

a point to read magazines. This could be because of invasion of TV and the Internet also. Unlike some decades ago, now sources of information are more. Also, there are Internet editions of magazines. Even this might have also lead to diminishing interest in reading print copies of magazines.

In continuation on time spent on media habits, the respondents were asked to indicate their reply to any of the categories- less than 30 minutes, 1 hour, not specific- to indicate how much time they spent listening to radio and also whether they were not listening to radio. Accordingly 75.5% said they spent less than 30 minutes for radio listening, while only 2% saying they spent an hour in a day. The rest 22.4% said they cannot specify the duration of listening to radio in a day. The data revealed that more than half of the respondents did not listen to radio at all. And, those who were listening for less than half-an-hour in a day were the highest category among the respondents. And, some of the respondents said they did listen but they were not paying attention to as to how much time they were spending listening to radio. It was clear that radio was not a major attraction to people, especially those who lead a busy public life. In a way it is also reflected on the diminishing attraction of radio with the advent of various other sources of news and entertainment. For the question to which radio channel they tune to listen to news purpose alone, the cent percent (100%) listen to AIR news bulletins. The results showed that even for news, the respondents were not much dependent on radio. And those who were listening to radio news, the option were the FM radio news channel of AIR. All India Radio FM station airs 18 news bulletins every day for a short duration of two minutes per hour. Private radio stations are not giving exclusive news bulletins though at times they do flash news highlights. But they do not air major decisions of government in the form of hard news or as announcement. Private players are not allowed by the Central government to air news bulletins.

For the question to indicate the credibility rate of magazines for news, four options were given – high, moderate, low and no response. The highest percentage (79.7%) said they attached moderate value, while 10.9% said the credibility was high and 9.4% said it was low. The data revealed that the

respondents were not fond of reading magazines for news purpose. It is no more considered as one of the sources of news because those who did not respond to any of the options to indicate their view topped the table. But those who said the credibility was moderate were far higher than those who said it was low and high.

For the question as to how much credibility the respondents attached to news, four options were given – high, moderate, low and no response. The highest response (45%) who chose to ignore the question. Among those who responded, 43% said they were of the view that news bulletins by radio (AIR) enjoyed high credibility, while 12% said it was moderate. None chose to say that credibility was low. The data showed that radio was no more seen as a source of news and hence the question as to how much credibility was attached to news received highest response as no. However between the high and moderate category, the higher response was for high credibility and the moderate was much lower than that. But a point to be noted was that none, even among the poor percentage of response, said credibility was low for radio news. It meant that radio news was not facing paucity of credibility but the percentage of listeners was very low. Another reason could be that AIR announces only decisions taken by government without offering comments or analysis. It becomes just an announcement. Hence, the distortion could be least and thus gets credibility touch.

Table 2: Listening to Different Types of Content in Radio

Radio programs	f	%
Entertainment	35	71.4
Politics	11	22.4
Development	2	4.1
Culture	1	2.0
Science	0	0
Business	0	0
Crime	0	0
Sports	0	0
Total	49	100

N=49 [Note: The respondents saying “not at all” are not considered]

Answering to the query on what interested the respondents most in radio, eight sub choices were given. They were – entertainment, politics, development, culture, science, business, crime and sports. The highest response 71.4% was for entertainment. And, next came 22.4%, for politics. For the rest of the programmes, the percentages were as follows; Development 4.1%, culture 2% and other four programmes namely science, business, crime and sports were not the choices at all.

It was evident from the data that unlike in newspaper, in radio, entertainment was the first choice. Radio is serving more like film music vending machine. All private radio channels have become a source of entertainment – meaning for music. Furthermore, when asked on whether science news interest them, 100% did not respond which indicated that they were not at all interested. This yet again proved that there were no takers when it came to science related programmes or news. This was more obvious in case of radio. Even AIR FM station dedicates a lot of time in a day for airing music. Radio is no more a source of news but a source for entertainment or to be precise film music. It is only AIR which is allowed to air news bulletins. But even that does not serve as a source of news, thanks to the advent of TV and the Internet based forums.

Under the question to what extent the respondents were listening to news in radio, four categories were given as choice. They were - Listen to a Great Extent, Listen to Some Extent, Do not listen at all and cannot specify. Accordingly, 65% of the respondents said they listened to news to some extent while 10% said they listen to news on radio to a greater extent. On the other, one-fourth (25%) of the respondents said that they were not specific to what extent they were listening to news. Once again it became clear from the data that news bulletins hold no attraction to the respondents in radio. The maximum number of the respondents was not listening to news bulletins and the habit of listening to radio for news seems to be diminished over the years.

The question to what extent music on radio was being listened by the respondents; three categories were given – Listen to some extent, Do not

listen at all and Cannot say. Among the listeners which constitute 40% of respondents nearly 83.7% of them listened only to some extent, while 16.4% said they cannot specify illustrating no consistent listeners for radio. The data was an indicative that the respondents were not keen on listening to music on radio as the maximum number of respondents said they did not lend their ears to music. Radio FM channels serves like a companion while travelling owing to high degree of mobility. But seems to be not so in case of the politicians because they are usually conversing on mobile phone while travelling or would be talking to their assistant co-passengers. This could be one of the reasons. And, they may not be interested in music also. It was not that there were no listeners to radio music among the respondents. But their percentage was half of those who did not listen at all.

Television

For the question whether the respondents were watching television, five categories were given to indicate their reply. As much as 86.4% said that they were watching TV on a daily basis. And, the rest were not very significant though those who watched TV frequently (about 4 to 5 days a week), 6.4%, occasionally (2-3 days/week) 4%, followed by 2.4% who do not watch TV at all and 0.8% saying they watch TV once a week.

The results speak a lot on how watching television has become an integral part of daily life of the respondent politicians. A whopping percentage (86.4%) said that they watched television every day. Observing the pattern of watching television daily by the types of members of democratic institutions, among the MLAs (79.5%), MLCs (88.5%), Corporators (96%), MP-LS (100%) and Seasoned Politicians (80.0%) were watching television daily. Interestingly the next highest percentage (6.4%) of the total respondents was those who were watching frequently (4 to 5 days a week) but not daily. Surprisingly, as many as three respondents (2.4%) of the total respondents stated that they did not watch television at all.

It is obvious that television has become a major source of news, information and entertainment. Still it does not match newspaper reading

habit among the respondents as every respondent has said that he/she reads newspaper every day. Mobility has come to radio, music system and television. A smartphone with the Internet facility can function as tape recorder, television, radio and music system among other things. Still, the respondents were not found to be using their mobile phone as a multipurpose gadget.

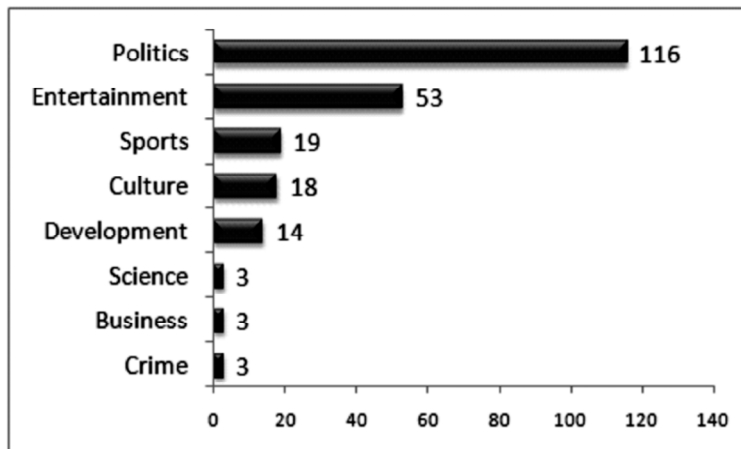
On the question of devoting time for watching television by the respondents, four categories were given to the respondents– Less than 30 minutes, 1 hour, 2 -3 hours and Not watching television at all in a day. As much as 75.4% said that they watched it for less than 30 minutes in a day. The next highest response was 22.1% who watched for an hour, and those spending 2 – 3 hours were found to be 2.5%. The data analysis showed that the maximum respondents were watching television for less than half-an-hour. This also meant that either they surf channels rather than keenly watching or spent some time to watch the highlights or part of a programme in a casual manner. Those who spent an hour watching television were less than half of those who spent less than 30 minutes. The percentage of the respondents who had ample time to take television seriously and watch it in a day for a couple of hours was very less. But those who were not at all watching television were marginal. Watching television has become a habit or part of daily life.

Under the question which television channel or channels the respondents regularly watch for only news purpose, five categories were given. They were asked to answer one of these – Only Kannada, Kannada and English, Kannada, English and Others (meaning Hindi, Tulu and Telugu) and Do not watch TV at all. The maximum 54.9% said that they watched both Kannada and English TV channels for news purpose. The next highest was 34.4 %, those who watched only Kannada channels, followed by Kannada, English and others, which included Hindi, Tulu, Telugu (10.7%) and the rest each 2.4% not watching TV at all. It was clear that the maximum number of respondents were comfortable in watching both Kannada and English TV channels for news purpose. The next highest was found to be those who were depending on Kannada channels for news purpose. There were who

made a combination of Kannada, English and other languages which could be regional channels or Hindi. But they were not significant in numbers. And, those who were not watching TV were marginal.

Answering question on rating the credibility of television news, again four categories were given as option – high, moderate, low and did not reply. The highest response was 59% saying that the credibility was low. And, the next highest was 38% saying it was moderate and 3% did not reply. No one opted for high. The data was indicative of poor trust enjoyed by viewers when it comes to TV news. Because, the highest respondents said that they considered credibility of news as low, while the next highest percentage said it was moderate. The interesting point to be noted was that none said the credibility was high. There may be many TV channels which give news bulletins 24/7 an on hourly basis. Despite having dedicated channels for news, the quality of news is far below the expectation of viewers. Also, news content and scenes of actions are repeated for hours and sometime for the whole day. Sometimes information is tweaked either to suit the policy of the channel or to get higher Television Rating Point (TRP). It is common to see half truths being presented as exclusive news or breaking news. These factors and more must have made the respondents not to attach high credibility to TV news. More than half said the credibility is low.

Figure 2 : Type of news that respondents most interested in television



Note: The above figures are number of responses. N=122

Under the question what interest most the respondents in television, eight sub choices were given. Those were politics, entertainment, sports, culture, development, crime, business and science. Accordingly 116 responses (50.6%) [Representing 95.1% of total respondents] (Figure 2) said they liked to watch/listen to political news. The next highest viewership was found to be for entertainment 53 responses (23.1%) [Representing 43.4% of total respondents] followed by sports 19 responses (8.3%) [Representing 15.6% of total respondents], culture 18 responses (7.9%) [representing 14.8% of total respondents], development 14 responses (6.1%) representing 11.5% of total respondents], Science, Business and Crime each 3 responses (1.3%) [Representing 2.5% of the total respondents].

The data revealed that for the respondents, political news, developments programmes attracted more. Usually those in public life lead a busy life. Still, whenever they spare time to watch TV, they devote time to watch political news. For the younger generation, TV is one of the major sources of entertainment. In case of the respondents, it was a choice next to news. Sports, culture and development occupied the next place of choices in order. TV channels, especially language ones, glorify crime incidents. However, it was found to be not a choice of priority among the respondents. So also business and science related programmes.

Finally, when asked their opinion on how responsible television channels in covering news, 43.4% said that television channels *were irresponsible* in covering news. Among the MLAs (39.5%), MLCs (46.2%), Corporators (45.8%), MPs – LS (66.7%), and Prominent Politicians (42.1%) were of the opinion that television channels were *irresponsible* in covering news. On educational front graduates (47.8%) and 32% post graduates said that television channels were irresponsible in news broadcast.

Only 36.1% said that television channels were *responsible to some extent*, followed by 12% saying *highly irresponsible* whereas 4.8% rated *responsible* and 3.2% preferred not to express their mind. Among the MLAs, 13.2% of them were of the opinion that television channels were *responsible and* another 31.6% said that the channels were *responsible to a certain extent*. Among the MLCs, only 3.8% of them were of the

opinion that the channels were *responsible* and another 34.6% of them were stating that the channels were *responsible to a certain extent*. Among the Corporators, none of them were of the opinion that television channels were *responsible* and another 37.5% said that television channels were *responsible to a certain extent*. On educational front, graduates (47.8%) and post graduates (32%) rated *irresponsible* whereas graduates (32.9%) and post-graduates (40%) rated *responsible to a certain extent*.

The main observation was that TV news coverage faced trust deficit with little less than half of the respondents saying they were not happy with the content. Interestingly, those who rated TV channels as *responsible* and those who say *they cannot say anything* were almost same in terms of percentage. The reasons for expressing disenchantment with news coverage could be many including biased news, irresponsible/wrong inferences, targeting individuals with ulterior motive or due to unprofessional approach.

Participation of Respondent Politicians in Media

The primary question in this section pertained to the participation of politicians in media related activities like serving as guest editors, writing articles or columns for newspapers. Interestingly cent per cent of the respondents said they had not been guest editors. Inviting politicians, VIPs, celebrities and famous writers as guest editors has become a trend in newspaper offices to increase readership. While English dailies invite mostly important politicians such as chief minister or minister, sometimes regional dailies invite film personalities, litterateurs and religious leaders in addition to men in power.

Table 3 : Contribution of the Respondents to Newspaper

Contributing to Newspapers	f / %
Politicians as guest editors in newspaper	0 (0.0)
Contributing articles / features for newspapers	8 (6.4)
Contributing to a newspaper as columnist	0 (0.0)
Contributing to Letters to the Editor Section	2(1.6)

Note: Percentages in parenthesis

This exercise could be for various reasons including to show the clout of dailies among political class, to get exclusive stories and also to give a variety touch. Whoever functions as guest editor would be helped by newspaper staffers to select stories. But a guest editor also should have his/her opinion and must be aware of current issues. None of the respondents had said they had functioned as guest editor.

The question asked was whether the respondents contributed features or articles for newspaper. As much as 6.4% said they did not contribute articles/features for newspaper. Writing features/articles gives freedom to express views. Such writing does not demand much of writing skill. Any subject can be chosen to be written as feature/article. One needs to be a good observer, collect information and present the same in an acceptable form of writing. Here the respondents have showed that they did not have an inclination to write. May be they lack skill, interest and time to spare.

For the question whether they write a column for a newspaper as a columnist, 100% of the respondents said they did not. None of the respondents were columnist. Either none of them were capable or they were not interested in writing a column. Also, it could be newspaper houses were not interested in giving politicians a forum to write because it would be difficult for politicians to raise above party politics and write objectively. A column by a politician becomes a plus point for a newspaper provided the writer has some significant standing in politics as well as in society. And, also he/she should be bold enough to articulate thoughts without prejudice. Otherwise, columns do not make any appeal to readers.

The question was that whether they were contributing to the Letters to the Editor Section in newspaper evoked negative response with 98.4% never wrote a letter to the newspaper expressing their opinion or highlighted public grievances. Letters to the Editor column in any newspaper reflects the pulse of the readers/people. Current topics are discussed here. It is published at least 6 days in a week. Making accusations/comments/compliments to policy makers, law makers and government is the striking feature here. In addition, a problem faced by readers which needs government attention is also

reflected. But the data collected clearly established that the respondents were not bothered about this section of a newspaper and they were also not responding. No paper can afford to ignore an elected representative's views if it is presented logically. Still, this section of newspaper gets hardly any response from politicians.

Table 4: Participation of the respondents in TV programmes

TV Programmes participation	Regularly	Rarely	Not at all	Total
Participation in TV programmes /Panel discussions	34 (27.2)	32 (25.6)	59 (47.2)	125 (100)
Interviews in TV channels	28 (22.4)	55 (44.0)	42 (33.6)	125 (100)
Giving sound bites for TV news bulletins	62 (49.6)	46 (36.8)	17 (13.6)	125 (100)

[Percentages in parenthesis]

Under the question whether they participated in TV debates or discussions or interviews, three categories were given, *Regularly*, *Rarely* and *Not At All*. The highest per cent of the respondents 47.2% said they *Did Not Participate*, while the second highest was 27.2% who said they *Regularly* Participate and the rest 25.6% said that they *Rarely* Participated.

Almost all news channels invite politicians for interviews, debates and discussions on current issues. It serves as a platform for politicians to reach out to the masses instantly. From the statistics it was clear that little less than 50% of the respondents were Not Participating, while those who were participating *Regularly* were more than those who were participating *Rarely*. Usually spokespersons of a political party repeatedly participate in TV programmes because they were supposed to put out the views of their party. And, those who are residing in the capital city– are often invited by TV channels for programmes. It is not that those who do not participate are incapable of airing their views. But there are advantage residing in the capital because they often get publicity. Also, some consciously keep off from the

media to avoid controversies. And, very senior politicians who have established themselves well in the field usually do not like to participate in routine panel discussions. They prefer addressing a press conference rather than sharing a forum with junior politicians. These were some of the reasons given by the respondents during informal interactions for the present study.

The question whether they gave interviews to TVs had three categories—Regularly, Rarely and Not At All. The highest response – 44% - was for Rarely. 33.6% (Table 4) said they Did Not Give interviews, while the rest 22.4% said they Regularly gave interviews. The data showed that among the respondents, the highest number chose to say that they Rarely giving interviews. And, the next highest was those who were Not giving interviews. The third highest number of respondent politicians said they had Never given interviews. For participating in panel discussions/debates one need to be articulate and spontaneous to counter other panellists if they differ in views. In case of interviews, one needs to answer questions. The data showed that the respondents were found to prefer giving interviews Rarely than participating in panel discussions.

The question whether they gave sound bites had three categories namely, *Regularly*, *Rarely* and *Not At All*. As much as 49.6% said that they were giving sound bites to TV channels. And the next highest response was 36.8% stating that they were *rarely* giving and 13.6% said they *did not give* sound bites at all . TV channel reporters struggle hard to get a sound bite from politicians. This is to make their programmes more trust worthy and to enhance visual impact. Getting a politician to speak can be a challenge for TV channels sometimes. The data showed that nearly 50% of the respondents were *Regularly* giving sound bites. And, there were considerable number of them giving sound bites *Rarely*. And, those who were totally kept off from even reacting to question by TV channels were very less. Sound bites last for a few second or minutes. In a way not much time has to be spent by politicians to react or respond to a question. But still they get to be noticed. At times, it serves as a best opportunity to express their views on crucial developments and reach the masses within no time.

For the question whether they own a newspaper, as high as 98.4% said

they did not own a newspaper. However, 1.6% turned out to be newspaper owners. It was clear that the respondent politicians did not own newspaper houses in significant numbers. The reasons could be many. It is not a very lucrative business anymore unless print is integrated with other types of media like TV, web editions etc. Therefore may be politicians are not keen on investing in this business. Investing time and money in knowledge field may not be an interesting profession for them. And, they may have the fear that their paper getting branded with one particular party and then losing market. If a politician runs his/her own paper, the rival papers usually downplay coverage to him/her. For politicians coverage in all papers and TV channels is essential to reach out to maximum people.

For the question whether the respondents owned magazine, as high as 99.2% said they were not publishing any magazine. The rest hardly 0.8% said he/she owned a magazine. The data clearly indicated that the politicians have not invested their money and time in owning and publishing magazines. Like newspapers, even running a magazine is not attractive in terms of revenue earnings. It is also not a big plus point for them to get political mileage as magazines have limited readership.

The question whether they owned FM radio channel yielded the data which indicated that 100% of them not owning a channel. The data showed that the respondents were not at all interested in FM radio business. It could be that it is not their cup of choice. Financially and politically owning a radio channel may not be of any significance to them.

Under the question do you own a TV channel, three sub choices were given – Yes, No and Holding stakes. The maximum 96% said they did not own a TV channel. The highest was 2.4% stated they held stakes, while the rest 1.6% owned a TV channel. Politicians require as well as love to get publicity. But the data showed that they did not like to invest in television business. The majority said they did not own a TV channel. And, those meagre percentages of politicians who have invested, they held only stakes. TV industry is a cost intensive one. Usually mega companies or a group of people invest. A couple of politicians were found having stakes, while lesser than number of the respondents found owning a TV channel.

FOOTNOTE

¹As per the Karnataka Legislative Assembly Secretariat, an MLA is entitled for a maximum telephone charge of Rs 15,000 a month. Bills for the telephones installed in the Legislators' Home where the MLAs get accommodation free, is paid by the members directly to BSNL. One telephone is installed at the place of members' choice at government cost in the name of secretary. Only rent of the telephone is reimbursed.

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