

Coverage of Development News in Media

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Abstract

Media plays an important role in creating awareness among the members of the society in which it operates. Development communication is the integration of strategic communication in development projects. Today, press or media is widely considered as an important tool for development. How are newspapers giving information about development programmes is the familiar question that is always relevant and needs to be investigated. Keeping in view the research queries, the present study is a small attempt in this direction. The study endorses the premise that media has neglected development news in its columns. The study feels that there is lack of consistency in reporting news related to development issues. Inclusivity is the missing link in the coverage of development news. The absence of participation by the stakeholders in development stories indicates that print media has not changed its negative attitude towards development stories.

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INTRODUCTION

We live in a knowledge era. Information is essential for people to successfully face the opportunities and challenges of social, economic and technological changes taking place all over the world. In order to be useful, knowledge and information must be effectively communicated to people. The media plays an important role in creating awareness among the members of the society in which it operates. The media affects us in many possible ways: as a major socializing influence, a carrier of culture, a source of information, education, entertainment, a key player in political communication and participatory democracy and a communicator of ideological values, norms, attributes and beliefs. The indispensability of the media is irrefutable going by the plethora of responsibilities placed on the media by the constitutions of various democratic societies. Press, as the fourth estate, saddles with responsibility of upholding and advancing democratic ideals. It is the defender of public interests, and acts as a watchdog on the workings of government. Since then, journalism is seen as truly an estate more articulate and more powerful than other estates (Franklin, Hammer, Henna, Kinsley & Richardson (2005).

If the press is allowed to perform its function in an unhindered way, free of censorship, the press will obviously perform maximally in informing the public on issues considered critical and relevant to societal development; articulate public opinion objectively, and act as a check on government and individual. The slogan- the media as the fourth estate of the realm is what links the press to the society through an “ideological resonance’ Franklin et al, (2005).

Development communication is a very familiar term in academics as well as practical field of journalism and mass communication. Newspapers are required to provide information on local, state, provincial, national, and world issues. They are among the most widely read periodicals that are available and accessible to the vast majority of people of all ages and walks of life in India. Every category of reader can find some important, current, and interesting information in newspapers. Today’s newspapers use design elements that make information easily visible to the reader. Important stories get special typographical treatment and are therefore set in large bold headlines, while rich graphics accompany the stories to enhance its readability.

The most current analysis and criticism of politics, economics, health, sports, music, theatre, media, fine arts, and even comics find space in newspapers. They are useful for education, recreation, entertainment, and relaxation. News is written as a way of disseminating information to a large group of people. Reporters and editors are usually conscious of the language they use in news reportage to attract popular readership. The history of modern times is the history of development. Development is a whole and integral, value loaded cultural process that encompasses the natural environment, social relations, education, production, consumption, and well-being.

It involves a process of transformation of a traditional society to a modern society. The most important feature of development is growth. From a social point of view, development refers to the change in the social structures or in the functions performed by different groups and units within it. Today, press or media is widely considered as an important tool for development. It is mainly because the modern day development is highly communication oriented. There is a very close relationship between the press and national development of a country. Press has an impact on society not only through the content of the message but also through the process.

It plays a crucial role in creating awareness among people as well as in changing public opinions. It is the press that is always helpful in highlighting public grievances thus helping governments to prepare remedial measures. Press brings out many unknown things to the notice of a common man and the government. By press, only the public comes to know about the development policies of the government. Thus, it helps to understand each other. For better functioning of democracy, press should be out of government control and the communicator should investigate, analyze and interpret the development plans of government and should not depend wholly on government organizations for information. Press should not try to make propaganda of the government proposals and plans. Development is a complex phenomenon and development communication is the systematic use of communication for national development.

The term "Development Communication" was first coined in 1972 by Nora C. Quebral, who defines the field as- "the art and science of human communication linked to a society's planned transformation from a state of poverty to one of dynamic socio-economic growth that makes for greater equity and the larger unfolding of individual potential." Development communication is the integration of strategic communication in development projects. Strategic communication is a powerful tool that can improve the chances of success of development projects. It can also be defined as organized efforts to use communication processes and media to bring social and economic improvements, generally in developing countries.

The need of development and development communication will remain as long as the existence of this society. Communication is an integral part of development process. Keeping in view to this fact, the importance of communication was recognized in our society years before. Several organizations are working in this area at national and international level. New books are discussing various aspects of development communication. The coverage of government programmes certainly increases the public awareness about them. The earlier literature suggests that development communication has been one very important area of study in mass media. Daniel Lerner, Everett Rogers, Wilbur Schramm and Pye Lucian have done remarkable work in this field. The article by writer has given a detail description about the role of mass media in development, in the article "Science, technology and media; some relevations", published in Indian Journal of Science Communication in Vol 13, (Jan-June 2014). Today, there is an increasing dependency on mass media, including new information

technology than ever before. Similarly, the number and area of development programme has significantly increased. In this way, the success of any programme depends on the strategic use of mass media. Are mass media playing their role in an effective manner? Are mass media informing people about various schemes going on for them? How are newspapers giving information about those development programmes which are conducted in different areas? These are some such questions which are always relevant and need to be analyzed. Keeping in view the above facts, the present study is a small attempt in this direction.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Relevant literature was reviewed with a view to know what scholars have done with regard to newspaper coverage on development and to identify the vacuum in literature, which the present study intends to fill. It has been observed that there is scanty literature on the study of content analysis of development in Indian media. The review of literature related to development communication suggests that there is not any remarkable study about the coverage of development programmes in recent years. Most of the studies describe unsatisfactory coverage by print media. At the same time, it is also a fact that some small newspapers have done remarkable jobs in the field of development communication.

Gaon Connection is an online newspaper that focuses on rural development news. *Khabar Lahariya* is a weekly rural newspaper written, edited, illustrated, produced and marketed by a group of around 20 women - most of them from marginalised Dalit, Kol and Muslim communities - in Chitrakoot and Banda districts of Uttar Pradesh. It has played a very important role in the coverage of development news. Nevertheless, development issues in the media, which needs to be addressed, is not enough (Vilanilam, J.V.2009) .

After reviewing recent concepts on poverty measurement and the MDGs set forth by global scholars such as Jagdish Bhagwati, Amartya Sen and Joseph Stiglitz, one has to acknowledge the importance of information technology, literacy and education in the process of development. One can conclude from all above review that the empirical studies in the field of development communication is not enough.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research approach adopted in this study involved content analysis. Two newspapers *Hindustan* and *Dainik Bhaskar* (Hindi daily newspapers) and two english dailies Times of India and *Hindustan Times* were selected for the study along with Gaon

Connection- an online rural newspaper. The content analysis, which has been done mainly in a qualitative manner through observation method. Sample of these newspapers from August 2016 to September 2016 have were randomly selected for the study. All pages except sports, business and economics have been taken for the study purpose. All the stories of the selected issues have been analyzed to know the content of the material. The aim was to see the coverage of development news in the area of health, education and literacy, agriculture and rural development, environment, women empowerment, sports, science and technology. The study has been done in a qualitative manner to get a more clear idea about the exact nature of the coverage of development programmes.

OBJECTIVES

- The main objective of present study is to find the trend of coverage of development programmes initiated by government in newspapers in certain areas such as health, environment, rural development, agriculture, women empowerment, science and technology, sports etc.
- To analyse which areas of development get more coverage as compared to others areas.
- To analyse how development news is given priority on the front page of newspaper.

This study has taken the coverage of only those programmes, which are directly related with development programmes conducted by state or central government. This study is based on the coverage of only those development stories and keeping in view the fact that there is not much coverage of development stories the number of stories collected were very few, which posed a challenge to the researcher.

Research Questions

The following questions shall guide the researcher in this study:

- RQ 1 What are the development themes covered or reported in newspapers?
- RQ 2 How did newspapers report development issues? Kind of story being reported whether it is news, editorials, features, news analysis, Opinions or column.
- RQ 3 What is the position or placement of the news item in the newspaper?

The results of data analysis were coded in spreadsheet format and in addition, the researcher's observations and notes were recorded in a word document.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The observation of contents of newspapers gives a very dismal and gloomy picture of the coverage of development issues and topics in the newspapers. Crime, sex, violence,

accidents, fraud, sports and politics occupy the maximum space in the print medium. The news of grievances against various government offices and agencies has also been given in detail. Even the problems of various sections of the society at individual level have been highlighted in a very comprehensive manner. However, the information about various Government schemes and development programme is very rare. The quantitative data gives us precise figures on the attention that the developing world received during the two-month sample period as follows:

RQ 1 What are the development themes covered or reported in newspapers?

In total there were 32 entries on the list. Four stories were on health and 4 stories were on agriculture. Science and technology had 5 stories. Social and economic development had 5 stories in all. While some areas received greater levels of newspaper attention than others, some areas such as dairy development, water management received negligible space in newspapers. Table 1 illustrates the areas getting most coverage across different newspaper types. Development stories get little or no attention from newspaper editorials, a major finding that suggests that a low value is attached to coverage of these stories by newspapers in general. Coverage most frequently appears in the news section of papers, but sports, features and business present significant areas for more nuanced analysis, with some notable attention given in the areas of arts and culture. Generally, a newspaper gives coverage to those development stories that have a controversial backdrop. There is hardly any story about development programme on the front page of the newspaper. There is no question on giving follow up of any development programme.

Subject based Analysis of Newspaper Coverage of Development News;

Article length - The 'genre' also dictates the average length of a relevant article to a certain extent (within the confines of the newspaper format and the kind of topics being covered), and it is notable to assess some trends here: The average size of a report story range between 201 and 500 words. The Sunday papers tend to have longer articles than daily newspaper articles, indicating that they are perhaps more likely to analyse issues and explore detailed background material.

Health: Health is one very important area of development issue where a large number of programmes are being conducted both in rural and urban areas for different groups of society. Health communication encompasses the study and use of communication strategies to inform

and influence individual and community decisions that enhance health. If we see the list in detail, there are several initiatives and programmes for almost all sections of society. However, the report of such programmes in news form is rare. There is a weekly page on health related issue. It is given on Wednesdays with the editorial page. But it does not inform anything about those development programmes which are being conducted in the health area by state or central government. On 14th August in Hindustan Times there was news published on Page 5 on government's initiative to stop abuse of prescription medicines as they are addictive and pose a serious threat to health of the people.

Education: Education is the only area where regular coverage is given on the city page of the newspaper. It reflects that education has become a very important dimension of news reporting . But news has the content of routine activities of universities and colleges which are normally related with admission and other such subjects which happen during the month of July and August. The news of several educational programme for various groups of the society could not get any place in the newspaper .

On 3rd August news published in the Times of India on page 7, talks about the government's approval of the Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA) to bolster the creation of high quality infrastructure at premier educational institutions. This would benefit in developing labs and infrastructure at IITs/IIMs/NITs and other such institutions.

The news published on 6th September throws light on the problem of global warming as the headline says clearly that the rise in temperatures in the oceans has lead to the frequent occurrences of cyclones and typhoons. This raises concern over the global problem of climate change. All other news stories selected for the study have carried nothing about the programme going on in the field of education. The sample taken for the study suggests that the development programme in the area of education is totally neglected by the newspaper.

Agriculture and Rural development: Much happening in agriculture sector as it is a priority for both state and central government with agro economy is the lifeline of Indian economy. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme is one of the very big programs of the country to promote rural development. The news about this program is often related with various corruption and irregularities in its implementation. On 15th September there is a news published in Gaon Connection regarding the lowering of prices of DAP which goes to Rs 55/- less per packet. Another news published on 20th September throws light on the dairy and the need for indigenous varieties. The

headline of the news says, “ *Rashtriya Gokul* Mission aims to conserve indigenous breeds’ with respect to cattle breeding.

The speed of Internet is low in India due to several technical reasons. Keeping in view the problem, Google has come up with a version of YouTube that can even run on slow speed of Internet. The news depicts development in the area of social media and was published on 27th September in Gaon Connection. This is a remarkable step as it would enable more people to use YouTube. News raises concern on the part of our country that does not have even one mobile. According to the Union Telecommunications Ministry report many villages do not have mobile connections. This is the state of affairs in some areas. We are living in an era of technological advancement, and mobile communication is an important impediment towards development. The news published in Gaon Connection on 28th August raises this concern. Narendra Modi government aims to provide mobile phone connections. The news published on 11th September in Gaon Connection portrays the Health services and related new Startups in the country.

On 15th September news published in Gaon Connection, headline says that for the patients of Chikengunia and dengue, the Delhi government has started a helpline. The season has witnessed an upsurge in the cases of these diseases and due to this; hospitals are unable to accommodate large number of patients. The news published in Gaon Connection with a photograph on the 18th September shows a remarkable achievement in the field of agriculture. It is an invention of a new variety of lentil that matures in just 50 to 55 days and after that wheat can be grown.

Empowerment of Women: The news article published on 28th August in Gaon Connection depicts the equal rights of Muslim women pertaining to entry in worship places. Both men and women should have equal rights to worship, failing which will be considered as the violation of Indian constitutional right - Freedom of religion. The news published on 16th September also says that a common girl left her house chores and made the 400 other women talented. This is a remarkable step in women empowerment.

Women are ahead in all fields. Be it sports or any other field. The news of women accomplishing accolades will motivate other women to excel and break free from the barriers enforced in traditional societies. The news published on 19th August in Hindustan Times on front page is a testimony to the fact that Indian women have tremendous potential. The news about badminton Olympian medallists PV Sindhu and wrestler Sakshi Malik bagged got coverage on front page.

Another news published on 4th September on Page 2 in *Dainik Bhaskar* talks about the reservation of 33% to women in police force. Women play a major role in all sectors and can do a lot in maintaining law and order. On page 2, another news published on same day focuses on the Save the

Girl child Campaign by the government. In an endeavour to meet this aim the Sarvodaya hospital in Faridabad along with the Central Ministry started this campaign and described the campaign in detail.

On 10th September, news published on page 2 of *Dainik Bhaskar* on women empowerment reported about five women driven PCR vans. The women personnel attended three months training in driving, firing and combating skills. In another news in Hindustan Times efforts by the women *sarpanch* have brought about a significant change in sanitation as people have started using toilets. Though this is a local news of Faridabad, the news gave visibility to efforts by rural women in promoting sanitation in villages.

Science and Technology: The news published on 9th September describes the launch of GSLV using indigenous cryogenic engine. It is a great achievement in the field of science and technology, and for India as it has become self-reliant. However, there was no news about rural development. Similarly, the letters to the editor column did not have a single letter from the reader on development issues. According to news published on 26th August in *Dainik Bhaskar* Smartphone has become payment bank and this is a great step in e-banking. The customers can carry out transactions while sitting at home, said the report. The news published on 12th August in Hindi in *Dainik Bhaskar* on Page 11 describes about the budget allocated by the government for repair of roads. The article also gives a picture of the roads and their pathetic condition during rainy season in the time when we are talking about smart cities.

The news published on 19th August in *Dainik Bhaskar* on Page 20 in Hindi also states that the Municipal Corporation Chief assures to resolve all problems of the local inhabitants such as drainage, sanitation, street lights etc. The news published on 25th August on page 11 focuses on the budget of Rs.24000 crore allocated by the government for railway tracks. In the process, nine projects were sanctioned which would help in facilitating travel by easing the travel bottlenecks and also help the upcoming industries in the region. Another news published on 8th September speaks about UP police using twitter for providing its services. This is a remarkable example of social media in development.

The news published on 15th September in the Times of India on page 11 reveals the success story by an interesting headline “Indian techie does with radio what Marconi couldn’t”. The story is about Dinesh Bharadia from Kohlapur. He turned radio communication into a two way process, a problem that had stumped scientists since 150 years. It is a big achievement for our country and also highlights the contribution made by Indian born scientist who has brought accolades for the country.

Environment news: Conservation and Protection of environment is an essential part of development. It has various dimensions. Government has launched several programmes in the area of environment. But even in these areas, the newspaper has adopted the same approach. On 12th August in Hindustan

Times on Page 9, there was a news titled, "Biodiversity law crippled at Grassroots". The news states that about fourteen years ago, India enacted a law to preserve bio-diversity, but a basic requirement for its enforcement is yet to be initiated. India holds a prominent position among the 17 mega biodiversity countries with 7.8% of the recorded species of the world.

The news report published on 6th September in Gaon Connection describes that the top most surface of the oceans have been prone to the heat and due to the melting of the ice and increase in typhoons and storms the world is at great risk. As compared to the reports of 1995, the present condition is not good and preventive measures needs to be taken in this regard. On 21st September, news published on Page 9 in TOI describes about the waste water treatment plant to be installed with a capacity of 318 million litres. The estimated cost of the project is Rs.515 crores and is expected to take 30 months time. It would be Asia's biggest and cheapest sewage treatment plant. The news reflects a positive development in the field of water and environment.

There is a very little coverage on environment topics. There is some occasional news related to small tree plantation programme. It was organized by some social group. But there is not any report about the tree plantation which are a major part of government programme .With this exception, there is no news about the environment programme. The news published on 25th August focuses on the Government's release of Rs 25000 crores for rail track laying project. The news published in the Times of India is a vital step in the field of development. Railways are an important area as many people use trains for transport and an important impediment in development as goods are sent through trains. The newspapers of other dates give nothing about any activities of government development programme in the field of environment. The editorial page had no worthy write up on the environment programme. Similarly, in the letter column, there were no letters on environment issues.

Urban development: The ministry of urban development has launched several programme for urban development. The city pages contain news about activities including crime, accidents and other problems. However, the news of development activities of urban areas have not been published. The news of corruption in development is a common trend. One such news has been published on 2nd page of *Dainik Bhaskar* newspaper. The news focuses on Adarsh Gram scheme initiative and serious concern expressed by the Prime Minister on the audit report of the scheme conducted by *Dainik Bhaskar*. There is a news related to the government's initiative with reference to a new research that could tell - when a person can die by studying his/her RNA in heart and brain. It was published on 24th August. This research is remarkable in the field of medicine and forensic science as it would be possible to declare the time of death with more accuracy.

There is news in *Dainik Bhaskar* on the improvement in the condition of roads. The government initiative in releasing the budget of Rs.3.8 Crores for improving roads is a remarkable step in this regard and gets coverage in news published on 12th August. Otherwise urban development

programme gets very little coverage in the issues taken for study. It is very difficult to know through newspaper about the beginnings and progress of any urban development programme. There is no discussion or follow up story in the newspaper. The city page is full with the news of crime, accidents and various kinds of problems. The editorial page has not given any article about the urban development programme. Similarly, there is no feedback of readers about these programmes. However, they have given news about several other important issues. If there is no news about urban development programme, it doesn't mean that all other news are worthless. However, the importance of information can never be denied. There is not a single story related to development activities in urban areas.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The newspaper is required to cover news in public interest underlining the importance of development stories. However, the study reveals that maximum number of stories are about crime, accidents, politics, agitation, education, film art and culture. News about sports and business subjects are published on separate pages in the newspaper. The problems related to road, electricity, health are widely covered. Similarly, news of strikes, processions has also been extensively covered. However, the news about development programme conducted by different agencies and organization of the government hardly gets prime space in the newspaper. The coverage of development programme is very low. It is almost negligible in the newspaper. Sadly, news is not informative about development programmes. There is no regular column regarding reviewing the progress, success and failure of development programmes. There is no coordination among development agencies and media for successful implementation of the programme. The second most common topic for Sunday and regional papers is 'Art and Culture' indicating more 'soft news' stories in the coverage than might have been anticipated.

The editorial page of the newspapers also does not carry any articles about development programme. There is no news of development in the front page of the newspaper. The opinion of the audience or grassroot public for whom such development programmes are being conducted is hardly given. The letter column of newspaper does not contain any content about feedback from readers on development news. The development issues are given coverage whenever there is any specific day related to it or whenever there is any official inauguration of such programme. Even on such occasions, there is no detailed information about any development programme.

Study failed to find any reader interested in expressing their thoughts on development issues. There is no trend in the newspaper to have a development beat reporter who can keep track of the activities of various development programmes for reporting. The development activity is not considered news unless there is any big corruption issue or any other kind of anomalies. People's

opinion about the benefit of development activities is not at all published. One does not get to see the perspective of development stakeholders in news stories. Media has failed miserably to create awareness of development issues and has always relegated to the background. The study findings endorse the premise that development is not a priority of media. The newspaper does not consider news value of those development programmes which are going on in various areas in a routine way. The role of mass media to motivate and mobilize people in the process of development is merely an imagination. Similarly, mass media is also not playing the participatory role in reference to development programmes.

The dissemination of information about development programme is even today considered a part of government advertisement. It has resulted in poor knowledge of development programme among the masses. Large number of people remain unaware of such type of programme and officers and non-deserving people take benefits of their ignorance. Even various development agencies try to downplay their programs. In Gaon Connection, there is no development news published in the month of August. The month of September was better in terms of development as 10 news stories in total were published on various development issues such as agriculture, science and technology and mobile technology. This clearly reflects that the purpose of Gaon Connection is not fulfilled as it is expected to publish development news more than print media does. Hindustan Times an English daily also had only 4 news reports in the month of August. On 12th August, there were two news and on the 19th August also two news were published. The month of September had only two development news published on the 6th and 7th of September. The Hindi newspaper *Dainik Bhaskar* had only three news in the month of August published on the 19th, 24th and 26th. September also had a few news stories that were published on the 4th September.

Table 1 : Coverage of Development News in Newspapers

Sl.no	Development News	Newspaper	Date
1.	Health	Hindustan Times Gaon Connection <i>Dainik Jaagan</i>	19 th August 26 th August 6 September 11 th September 15 September
2.	Science & Technology	Times of India Gaon Connection <i>Dainik Bhaskar</i>	9 th September 16 th September 8 th September 27 th August 26 th August
3.	Water Management	Gaon Connection	18 th August
4.	Agriculture	Times of India Gaon Connection	20 th August 6 th September 15 - 18 September
5.	Education	Hindustan Times Times of India	12 th August 3 rd August
6.	Sports	Hindustan Times	19 th August

7.	Government Initiatives	<i>Dainik Bhaskar</i>	12 th August
8.	Rural development	<i>Dainik Bhaskar</i> Gaon Connection	4 th September 28 th August
9.	Dairy development	Gaon Connection	20 th September
10.	Environment	Hindustan Times Gaon Connection	12 th August 6 th September
11.	Social and economic development	Hindustan Times Gaon Connection Times of India	7 th September 28 th September 25 th August 21 st September
12.	Solar	Gaon Connection	17 th September
13.	Women empowerment	Gaon Connection <i>Dainik Bhaskar</i> <i>Dainik Bhaskar</i>	16 th September 28 th September 10 th September 4 th September

There must be some consistency in reporting news related to development issues. Inclusivity is the missing link in the coverage of development news. The absence of participation by the stakeholders in development stories indicates that print media has not changed its negative attitude towards development stories. The development stories appear to get little attention from editorial desk so is not considered an issue of policy importance. On the other hand, the consistent attention given to Sports and Features indicate that newspapers despite having potential to give better coverage to development stories fail to do for market driven approach.

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