

IMPACT OF GLOBALISATION ON INDIAN MEDIA: A STUDY OF 'CREDIBILITY' OF INDIAN NEWS CHANNELS

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ABSTRACT

The Indian Media and Entertainment industry is on an impressive growth. According to the report by FICCI-KPMG2016, the revenue is expected to grow at a CAGR of 13 per cent and will exceed US\$ 12.29 billion in 2019 from US\$ 6.24 billion in 2014. The mentioned statistics proves that media in India has become a huge platform for business. Until 1991, The Indian audiences received a controlled telecast and most-times development based programs or the news channel acted as a mouth piece of the ruling party in the country. Television media has proved to have immense social, cultural and economic impact on its viewers. Globalisation has transformed Indian news rooms for the better and the worse, by making it technically advanced and simultaneously impacting the content negatively. News media seems to be part of an 'evident' race of Television Rating Points (TRP), where in the channels side-line ethics and social responsibilities towards society to weave the fastest news content. This in turn has lead to lobbying, Sensationalism, creating public opinion, corporate bias and so on just to be on the uno radar. There is immense dearth to maintain diversity and plurality of opinions in news media as a result 'Credibility' of news channels seems to be on the decline. Credibility, being one of the most important aspects of a news organisation, is defined as an attributed source quality. Hence, the study looks into analysing factors of credibility of news media which in turn is an outcome of the larger factor called 'globalisation'.

Keywords: News, Credibility, Globalisation, Indian Media, Social Responsibility

INTRODUCTION

Marshall McLuhan was one of the first scholars to address the shrinking of the world as a consequence of electronic communication (McLuhan, 1960). McLuhan foresaw the effect of globalization and coined the term 'Global Village'. Dennis Mcquail (1998), a communication theorist, equated "globalisation" to "Westernization" in general. Many scholars argue that globalization has stimulated local economies and has been instrumental in pushing national cultural content to the forefront. Modern globalization theorists use the term "globalization" to refer to the convergence of the global and local communication, wherein individuals, groups and institutions are seeking global advice and solutions for their local problems (Chaudhary, 2004).

Globalization has revolutionized news-printing, editing, reportage and assisted in creating networking among journalists; more importantly is acting as a catalyst to enhance news circulation. Dissemination of information and printing process has become hassle free and less time consuming, Globalization has bridged the distance and time gap between countries. Everything seems to be a click away. News and features that were previously suppressed

became worldwide knowledge as the cost of communication has decreased and made affordable.

Media in India

Entertainment industry in India has registered an explosive growth in last two decades making it one of the fastest growing industries in India. From a single state owned channel, Doordarshan in the 1990's to more than 400 active channels in the country today. The rising rate of investments, by the private sector and foreign media have improved India's entertainment infrastructure to a great extent. As per the recent report, Newspaper industry in the west seems to be slowing down, due to digitalization but the newspaper industry in India is growing with great progress. PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), survey reports that Indians are likely to spend more on entertainment in the coming years. Online and Social media seems to be catching up with viewers across India. There is immense information available through different mediums that, accountability becomes an issue.

Media in India, is recognised as the fourth pillar of democracy along with Judiciary, executive, and legislature. Media plays an important role in informing the public and creating public opinion on important issues. It serves as a link between the government and public. Indian democracy would be poorer without an active media. It provides a platform for the voiceless to put forth their grievances. Thus Media is an active watch-dog of the society.

History of Television in India

Television (TV) came to India by accident, when the multinational company 'Philips' after an exhibition in Delhi gifted television equipment to the government. All India Radio, put together the first broadcast in September 1959, it was run by radio professionals who were experimenting with the new equipment and initially two one-hour transmissions a week took place. UNESCO chipped in with a gift of 50 TV sets and the Ford foundation helped to fund the first formal educational telecasts for 250 schools around Delhi on selected days of the week. It took another six years for regular daily one hour service to appear. This began in 1965 with help from the West German government who helped in the transmission that consisted of news bulletins in Hindi and agricultural programmes for farmers. Regular news bulletins in English were introduced in 1971. The first Indian Television factory opened in 1969 in Kanpur. TV had been restricted to the Delhi area until as late as 1972, later a transmitter was set up in Bombay and cities of Amritsar and Srinagar in 1973. New stations were set up in Madras and Calcutta in 1975.

Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (*SITE*) in 1975-77 with which India became the first country in the world to use a direct broadcast satellite to reach remote villages directly. Under *SITE*, an American satellite was used to transmit four hours of education programming a day to 2338 villages spread across six Indian states. During Emergency in 1976 television was separated from All India Radio and put under a new entity called Doordarshan (DD), though it remained under the control of the ministry of Information and broadcasting. The Asian Games in 1982 was the turning point for TV. The Asian Games were a stage for the government to showcase a shining India to itself and to the world. TV was to be used as 'The Tool'; this required a unified national service along with enhanced level of technology to felicitate it. The games also saw the introduction of colour TV. In 1982, the launch of INSAT-IA and later INSAT-IB satellite system allowed massive expansion of TV. In 1983 the Cricket World Cup was watched widely as Indian team played the finals and won, this added to the popularity of TV. The DD programmers focused on education and socio-economic development. Entertainment programmes were few. And when soaps like Hum Log in 1984 and mythological dramas such as Ramayan (1987) and Mahabharat (1990) were

televised, it had become a religious ritual to stay glued to their sets. DD with hesitance gave permission to Pronoy Roy (of NDTV) to run the show 'The World This Week' in 1988 which aired up to April 1996 and went on to become one of the most successful programmes.

Freedom of Press in India

The Indian Constitution, while not mentioning the word "press", provides for "*the right to freedom of speech and expression*" (Article 19(1) a). However this right is subject to restrictions under sub clause (2), whereby this freedom can be restricted for reasons of "sovereignty and integrity of India, the security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, preserving decency, preserving morality, in relation to contempt, court, defamation or incitement to an offense and respecting the laws such as the Official Secrets Act.

Globalization and its effects on Indian Television Media

In the early nineties, Indian television scenario underwent a sea change, when government of India got the new economic policy which encouraged privatization, dismantling state controls and liberalizing media regulation, paving the way for the entry of global media conglomerates. The Indian metropolitan elite, were already exposed to Western commercial television through the live coverage of the 1991 Gulf crisis by the Cable News Network (CNN), Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation owned Hong Kong based STAR (Satellite Television Asian Region) TV, was the first to exploit this demand of an alternative TV channel. In 1991 it started beaming satellite service with five channels. The satellite channels became an instant hit because of their entertainment and Western programming which Doordarshan was lacking. In 1992, Subhash Chandra Goel launched Zee TV, India's first private Hindi-language and most successful satellite channel. It built new heights in domestically-produced entertainment. (Sadianasr,2012)

Rising advertising revenues and increasing numbers of viewers provided the drive for many regional media houses like Sun TV, Asianet and ETV to move into other States. For example, Sun TV, the first private owned channel from south India made its debut in Chennai 1992. Today Sun TV Network has 20 channels in four languages Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Bengali.

Cable Revolution

Star TV became popular in India because of the mushrooming of satellite dishes that could download the signals. Here came the cable operators who becomes the link between the broadcasters and Indian viewers as the law of the land then did not permit any up-linking of signals to satellite on Indian soil. The cable business was not that new to India as in the 1980's the video revolution (cassette video parlours) had grown and had created a networking of households to play the videos for a subscription fee.

24/7 News

Satellite television came to India as an agent of Global capitalism. The growth of satellite television is still in its infancy, but the networks have expanded to an unimaginable growth. NDTV were looking at newer options to collaborate; they got a prime-time slot for a daily half hour news bulletin on two star channels. Next stage of development came in 1998, when Star and NDTV joined hands to start India's first 24 hour news channel '*Star News*'. 5 years later NDTV started their own 24/7 news channel. *Zee TV* had started their news affair in 1999 followed by '*Aaj Tak*' from the *India Today Group*. It got in a profound change in news gathering methods. In the last two decades India has experienced the rise of more than 78, 24-hour satellite news channels.

Media Imperialism

Television was regarded as a cultural instrument. Its technological capabilities have been adapted so fast that media and cultural impact have struggled to keep up with the innovation pace. According to an anthropologist, Arjun Appadurai(1990), globalization of Western culture may be producing “heterogeneous disjuncture’s” instead of creating a homogenized culture which has developed a new hybrid culture (hegemony culture) with complexes. *Marshall McLuhan* argued that the medium itself was a ‘revolutionizing agent’- ‘medium is the message’. Scholars have argued that media imperialism follows logically from cultural imperialism.

The received view about the globalization of culture is one where the entire world has been moulded in the image of Western, mainly American culture. It saw strong influence of mass media as the middle class were dreaming to embrace the Western lifestyle, Nike shoes, Coca-Cola, Baywatch, MTV, rock or jazz music, slangs, Burger, Mc Donald’s, KFC, body language etc. Kraidy, Marwan M (2002) feels globalization imputed rich, industrialized, and Western nation-states with intentions and actions by which they export their cultural products and impose their socio-cultural values on poorer and weaker nations in the developing world. This argument was supported by a number of studies demonstrating that the flow of news and entertainment was biased in favour of industrialized countries. This bias was clear as most media flows were exported by Western countries and imported by developing nations, and in terms of quality, because developing nations received scant and prejudicial coverage in Western media. The "Magic Bullet" or "Hypodermic Needle Theory" was based on early observations that mass media had powerful effects over its audiences.

Theoretical Foundations: Role of Television

George Gerbner (1977) has developed cultivation analysis theory which asserts that television has displaced traditional sources of socialization such as: the family, the church and the school. The scholar observed that the dominant communication agencies produce the message systems that cultivate the dominant image patterns. They structure the public agenda of existence, priorities, values and relationships. They have perceived that mass communication changed the production and distribution of knowledge. According to Gerbner, Gross, Morgan and Signorielli (1986), television has become the primary common source of socialization and everyday information (mostly in the form of entertainment) of an otherwise heterogeneous population. Gerbner further noted that mass media produced images from the mainstream of a common symbolic environment.

Another scholar Noelle-Neumann contributed a spiral of silence theory which proposed that people are more likely to publicly express their opinions when they perceive that others share their views. The spiral of silence effect refers to individuals choosing to be silent when faced with the potential of criticism by others. Head, Spann and McGregor (2001) examined the effects of media and noted that media institutions performed the role of gate keeping and agenda setting. They observed that mass media organizations are seeking new sources of media content for global distribution.

Pavlik and McIntosh (2005) contributed a theory of media globalization called ‘Interactive Global Media Theory’ which pointed out that feedback in the converged world of digital communication is instantaneous in comparison with traditional analogue mass communication. The study further revealed that television has become an increasingly interactive medium of communication which is accessible to millions of viewers all over the world.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The phenomenon of globalization has changed the idea of how media is consumed in India. The growth of satellite TV and its 24x7 nature has revolutionized the news room. There is a constant relay of news and information that redefined the outlook and perception of the viewers. From the regular political, social, sports related fare the television news media have redesigned the concept of news with better technology and following a practised theory of the west. More precisely it is infotainment on a roll. Critically, the trend could be assumed as plain sensationalism fuelling stories and TRPs. Thus this study will help in understanding the change in news pattern in Indian TV space by:

1. Analysing the content change of 24/7 news channel.
2. To assess the credibility factors of 24/7 news channel.

METHODOLOGY

A twofold method of analysis is used for this particular study:

1. The Content Analysis Method (content of 24/7 news channels),
Where in the content, presentation methods of news channels will be analyzed.

2. The 'Case Study' Method.

Here we study a few relevant cases that have questioned the credibility of media:

Effects of Globalization and Changes in Newsroom

The concept of 24X7 news channels was inculcated from the west. News time on TV in 24 hours could be about 4 hours, with constant breaking news popping up. The rest of the hours on news channels are filled with Infotainment, packaged in colourful themes or constant debate on issues which seems to be the most important matter as media projects. The urge to increase their Television Rating Points (TRP) ratings lead to sensationalism. Focus is now more on politics and celebrity trivia while the real issues bothering the nation are being put on backburner. Often little or no research is done on news item before being telecasted. There is widespread manipulation, distortion of facts. Despite the commendable work done by media in exposing the scams and making governments accountable, there are problems that exist within the media which threaten the legitimacy that they enjoy in Indian society.

There are many hindrances in news reporting. Often, the media behaves unethically. It has become a commercial enterprise with sole purpose to make profits (*media ownership, corporate bias and advertising favouritism*). Industrial houses create monopolies that control the media and through it public opinion, political parties and the government. Big corporate houses like Reliance, Viacom 18 also own media organisations.

Earlier media discussed the problems involving the country and its development. The opinions and thoughts were built after discussions. But today these mediums are used to reach the public with various agenda's to create or make *public opinion*. *Paid news* or paid content are those articles in newspapers, magazines and the electronic media, which indicate favourable conditions for the institution that has paid for it. The news is like an advertisement but without the ad tag. *Investigative journalism* is reconstructed as sting operation has opened a new chapter in the history of the Press. If used correctly it could help unmask a lot of hidden secrets, but many reporters misuse this to settle score or blackmail individuals in big positions. Media, like other institutions has also succumbed to the vice of malpractices and corruption.

Agenda setting, Spin: a form of propaganda, manufacturing consent or paid news is a process wherein the media focus attention on an issue. A normal reader does not see this in the papers and does not believe that there could be an agenda set with pre administered reactions. As

Joseph Pulitzer emphasized that the three important points to remember regarding reporting of news is ‘accuracy, accuracy, accuracy’.

Comments or Analysis of 24/7 News Channels

Today news has become a packaged programme with lot of views, thoughts, graphics, images etc. Channels tend to digress from the main issue by over discussing or getting into newer controversies. These over analysis, at times can cross the code of ethics which can make a mountain out of a molehill which in turn could be dangerous for our society. Privacy should be observed in sensitive matters. Sensationalism is somewhere making people voyeur in wanting to know the integrities about others life.

Making opinions as breaking news has become a common sight and calling these protagonists to the studio and creating an intense scripted drama could be confusing to people’s thoughts. The channel should call responsible panel of experts who have the experience and calibre to speak on the topic, as these discussion give rise to public opinion. Dramatization of news is getting to be a common factor. There are Fewer follow up on important issues are seen on the 24/7 news channels. Going ‘Live’ and having exclusive news has a higher percentage of error; with instant news at times there is no time to check for accuracy or facts. Headlines are made in seconds; content goes ‘live’ within minutes.

The Anchor should be a moderator to the panel of experts. He should not be prejudiced or force his opinion on people. 24/7 news channel gives diverse news and is an interactive medium, giving voice to common mans issues and problems. Citizen Journalism has to helped to win the trust of people.

Globalization and its effects on news channels have questioned the credibility or believability of news shown on various 24/7 news channels.

Concept of Credibility

Conception of source credibility was advanced by Aristotle over 2300 years ago. In his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle explained the importance of credibility in persuasion. He argued that one is more likely to be persuaded by a credible speaker who is considered as competent, knowledgeable and trustworthy than by a speaker lacking such qualities. As Gaziano (1988) points out “Credibility of the media is studied as an important issue because public reluctance to believe the news media will severely hampers a nation’s ability to inform the public and to monitor the leaders.” Bracken (2006) points out, source credibility is the amount of believability attributed to a source of information by the receivers. Source credibility refers to the judgment made by an audience about the expertise and trustworthiness of a communicator (O’Keefe, 1990; Kioussis, 2001; Self, 1996); medium credibility is the relative credibility of media channels that sources use in sending messages (Metzger, Flanagin, Eyal, Lemus & 5 McCann, 2003; Westley & Severin, 1964); while media channel credibility, refers to the believability of a specific media outlet (Bucy, 2003).

Researchers have also defined credibility in terms of its components or factors. Bakshi, Madhupa and Dr. P Mishra(2011) has quoted Hovland and his associates who defined source credibility in terms of trustworthiness and expertise (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953; Hovland & Weiss, 1951). Gaziano and McGrath’s (1986) identified as many as 12 components in their study of media credibility in the USA as: is fair or unfair; is biased or unbiased; tells the whole story or doesn't tell the whole story; is accurate or inaccurate; invades or respects people's privacy; does or does not watch after readers'/viewers' interests; is or is not concerned about the community well-being; does or does not separate fact and opinion; can or cannot be trusted; is concerned about the public interest or is concerned about making profits; is factual or opinionated; has well-trained or poorly trained reporters. The

other four were: cares or does not care what audience thinks; sensationalizes or does not sensationalize; is moral or immoral; is patriotic or unpatriotic. Gaziano-McGrath followed a Bipolar scale to measure the positive and negative factors. Rimmer and Weaver (1987) used a subset of the Gaziano-McGrath 12 component to relate media use to media credibility. Meyer (1988) categorised 12 components of Gaziano-McGrath credibility scale into two separate dimensions. The credibility components identified by Meyer (1988) included accuracy, fairness, trustworthiness, bias and completeness.

By combining the various factors that were studied and analysed the following factors seem appropriate to suit the Indian scenario to analyse credibility: Objectivity /Biased; Trustworthy/Not Trustworthy; Authentic/Not Authentic; Consistent/ Inconsistent; Factual/ Not factual; Fair/Unfair; Good Coverage/Bad Coverage; Scientific reporting/ Unscientific reporting; Upholding moral values/ Not Upholding moral values; Topical/ Not Topical

Hence here are a few **case studies** to analyse the credibility issues that Indian News channels have seen:

Case Study 1: Prince

This story occupied two days of non-stop coverage on Indian News channels in July 2006. It began when **Prince**, the five year old son of a farmer fell into a narrow 55-foot pit, that was dug for water bore well 150 kms north of Delhi. Many incidences of such happen every other day in various states of India, but they don't seem to catch the attention of the press. In the case of Prince, the media producers felt the story had 'emotional value', good story and ratings. A number of channels scrapped their regular program to cover the rescue operations for two days.

Here the credibility factors that were observed are Unscientific reporting, bias and being unfair by only concentrating on this issue two whole days and news of farmers committing suicide were side lined and concentrated on interviewing people related to Prince, Government officials, asking people to send their prayers and opinions as SMS to add emotional value.

Case Study 2: Fishermen and Sri Lanka

Times Now, faced a lot of criticism as Arnab Goswami does not allow any of his guest to speak or put their point forward. He seems like the Indian version of Billy O'Reilly, the all-American hero newscaster of *Fox News*. Arnab is avidly hyper with a one sided views and tilts the conversation to make his point. The issue here is about the death penalty ordered to the 5 Indian fishermen on October 30. The channel had a lot of debate and discussions conducted, Arnab was very critical and pinpointed a lot of unwanted issues and the panel members from AIADMK and DMK (political parties) were only praising their leader and government and blaming Sri Lanka. Arnab also blamed Sri Lankan Government. Indian P.M Modi had to intervene and then Sri Lankan President Rajapaksha agreed to release the fishermen. And that day Arnab's show carried the headline, 'has Sri Lanka succumbed to India's pressure?'

In this incident the credibility factors that were seen are Biased, Not Authentic, Not factual, Bad Coverage and Unscientific reporting. They should not forget that such comments or discussions can cause harm to relations between countries. How can he ask to release 5 fishermen who were caught on Sri Lankan waters, in drug peddling be released. They might be innocent but there may be ways to present facts and also respect the law of the land.

Case Study 3: Journalist vs Arnab Goswami

Asad Ashraf in his blog has mentioned that *Times Now's* show 'The Newshour', editor-in-chief Arnab Goswami referred to journalist Asad Ashraf of *Tehelka*, sympathiser of the Islamic State and a cover for the Indian Mujahideen just because he pondered over certain loopholes in the police version of the Batla House encounter. Asad opines that if someone agrees with Arnab is a nationalist, while others are anti-national. In the name of debate, Arnab is actually running media trials.

Media cannot make floating statements in air; they need to back their statements with authentic facts and accuracy as these statements can create public opinion.

Case Study 4: Aarushi Talwar

The Noida double murder case refers to the murder of 14-year-old Aarushi Talwar and 45-year-old Hemraj Banjade, a domestic worker, employed by her family in Noida, India. The two were killed at Aarushi's home. The case aroused public interest and received heavy media coverage. The sensational media coverage, which included salacious allegations against Aarushi and the suspects, was criticized by many as a trial by media. Later on the police considered Aarushi's parents Dr. Rajesh Talwar and Nupur Talwar as the prime suspects. This story got in a lot of baseless debates like how secure is a daughter with her father? Every day the media told a new story about the murder case which had the whole nation gripped, but soon the media moved on to a fresh story with no media follow-up or to break the myth with the truth as media had enough time to check facts.

In this incident media seemed Not Trustworthy, Inconsistent, methods of unscientific reporting and also Not Upholding moral values.

Case Study 5: Gudia

The story of Gudia aired by Zee News, whose first husband, whom she assumed dead and remarried, returned after being released as a prisoner of war. The village panchayat of Muslim clerics ruled that Gudia, then 8 months pregnant, must go back to her first husband. The story was telecast live on the channel where Gudia sat through the Media Trial as an accused and the panel debating and discussing her future.

This got in a lot of flak from the public. The story was sensationalized with no concern to moral values or ethics.

Case Study 6: Umar Khalid (JNU student)

A speech by Umar Khalid, a Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) student, has gone viral on social media and has been reported widely in mainstream media. What make his speech interesting are his comments on the media and the way sections of the media covered the JNU 'crackdown'. The Delhi Police have issued a lookout notice against Khalid and four other students. These five students are facing charges of sedition for allegedly raising anti-national slogans in the university campus. The police arrested a student leader, Kanhaiya Kumar, on what now appears to be doctored footage 'evidence' was shown by some media outlets who did not care to check the veracity of the video, or worse, did not mind distorting facts in their line of duty.

This created a lot of tension among various different student groups as the media had no proof of authentic evidence, but went ahead with discussions and makings opinions without checking facts. This story lead to a string of events with disturbed the peace of the University.

Case Study 7: Zee News

Zee News reported that some of the students from Democratic Students' Union (DSU) raised slogans such as "*Bharat Ki Barbadi*" ("Destruction of India") and "*Pakistan Zindabad*" ("long live Pakistan") In a letter Vishwa Deepak, who later resigned from the channel after expressing reservations over its 'biased coverage' alleged that "Our biases made us hear *Bhartiya Court Zindabad as Pakistan Zindabad.*" ("long live Indian courts" as "long live Pakistan.").

The channel is accused for allegedly extorting 100 crores from the Jindal Group and two senior journalists have been arrested. Naveen Jindal accused *Zee News* of trying to extort 100 crores from him for not airing stories against his company in Coal Scam. *Zee News* refuted the charges and made counter charges of Jindal offering them 25 crores to halt their investigations against Jindal Steel in the coal scam. Thus the issue seemed Not Trustworthy and Unauthentic.

Case Study 8: Mumbai Attack

Barkha Dutt of *NDTV* was criticised for her coverage of Mumbai attacks, during which she reported from Taj Mahal Hotel and Oberoi Trident. She was blamed for sensationalising the events, putting lives at risk and causing deaths by identifying on live television where the hotel guests might be located. Reporting of the siege event, lead to giving clues to the terrorist, indirectly helping them. Writing for the *New York Times*, Lydia Polgreen wrote that critics viewed Dutt and some other reporters as extremely "theatrical and melodramatic" in their coverage of the attacks. Objectivity, Fairness in reporting, Trustworthiness and upholding moral values are the need of the hour with much corruption around.

CONCLUSION

24/7 news channel is an interactive medium, it bridges the gap between politics and people; it gives diverse opinions and provides a platform for citizen journalist. The Indian Media and Entertainment industry is on an impressive growth path. According to the 2016 report by FICCI-KPMG the revenue is expected to grow at a CAGR of 13 per cent and will exceed US\$ 12.29 billion in 2019 from US\$ 6.24 billion in 2014. More than 25, 24/7 News channels are expected to flourish in the next few years. This leads to tough competition; where in commodification of news is very evident which in-turn questions the News values, newsworthiness and credibility of the medium. Common man does not understand the gimmicks or the hidden motive of media, public accepts what media delivers and many are influenced by their content which leads to public opinion. Media is the fourth estate and watch dog of the society. In the race for TRP the media should not forget its social responsibility and adhere to the causes in the truthful manner. Though people agree that the credibility and ethical issue are at stake, they are addicted to watching infotainment on news channels.

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