



NEWS VALUES AND NEWS SENSE –A STUDY OF TELEVISION NEWS PRODUCTION

Satish Kumar* N. Sushil K. Singh**

*Research Scholar, Department of Communication Management & Technology
Guru Jambheshwar University of Science & Technology, Hisar.

**Associate Professor, Department of Communication Management & Technology
Guru Jambheshwar University of Science & Technology, Hisar.

Abstract

Professionalism in news packaging and production, and the commercialization of airtime for branding on air promotion have resulted and brought to the audiences a highly shrunk news space on television channels. At the same time news cast across television channels are revolting, it seems to bring a new order in the social news paradigm. this study was conducted to find out the professionalism in news packaging to gauge the changing form of news wherein 'guest' are called on during bulletins and introduced new dimensions like debates, discussion and special program thereby reducing considerably the space of anchors, reporters etc. at the backdrop of technicalities like graphics, flash texts, 'voice over' etc. news bulletins of four news channels viz., Aaj Tak, Zee News, Times Now, and CNN-IBN were recorded during the month of November 2014 for sixteen days to collect the data and subjected to analysis. While guests were seen 18 times in channels, Aaj Tak still holds the fort san guests. Correspondingly use of VO and graphics were found incessantly in all the channels. Overall, the present study establishes that news is the sum of 'news values' and 'news sense' given by channels. The news values was derived from the social paradigms becomes a product called 'news' after putting news sense in the form of human and technical elements of news presentation.

Key words: Professionalism, Commercialism, Newscasts, Editorializing, News Values, News Sense.

Introduction

At a time when information technology brought social and new media have redefined the contemporary social paradigms the format and content of the (mass) media are also evolving. This is more visible in the case of television, the agenda setting media. When the intertextuality of almost all the television genres are transformed or crossed-over from one to another a criss-cross of many new formats are also seen especially in the entertainment formats of soap operas and comedy programs. Not to be left behind is the 'news'. News presentations of various television channels had incorporated or started with new formats like Debate, Discussions and Special Programs stuffed with multitudes of technical paraphernalia like tic-tac, sting etc. In such programs, guests who are not part of the news stories, are called in and let debated or discussed on the concerned story- a format which was not seen in the recent past.

The media content reflect the social and political status of a country (John Elridge, Ed. Glasgow media Group Reader, 1995). When the news content (read information) of mass media are considered to be powerful and reached the global arena of news business (read global news flow) the hegemony of news practice across the globe are associated with views and opinions of both persons in the news stories and the newsmen (Sushil K. Singh & Brij Kishore kuthiala, 2009).

A detour of the newscasts would reveal that the old paradigm of news practice wherein news was presented through anchors or newsreaders and took to and fro to the site of the news events with or without reporters or correspondents is seen diminishing, instead amateur 'guests' are now becoming part



of the news stories stuffed with various technical skills of video editing. The present day news format is transcending to new formats like Debate, and or Discussions, and Special Programs (Satish Kumar and N. Sushil K. Singh, 2016).

Is there a change in the editorializing of the news stories? What are the parameters of selection of the news stories that are telecasted or the criteria for the selection of the guests to be called in news stories? These and similar posers are required to be addressed for future reference and social governance of news. Alongside the above posers other things are also cropped up while designing the present study. By making changes in the presentation of news are the channels trying to establish new information and communication order post web portals, blogs and citizen journalism? Is there a need to change to enter the competitive global news market? Or the rat race for TRP has forced the change? Yet still, are the channels adopting the model of demand and supply of the social or political needs? After all, the most striking question was ‘does the change in news packaging mean there was a change in the social and political status of the society?’ because television news is considered a cultural artifact which sequences consists of socially manufactured messages, which carry many of the culturally dominant assumptions of the society (John Elridge, Ed, Glasgow Media Group Reader, 1995).

The study was approached with a broad objective of analyzing the contents of news telecasts with respect to the relative presence of ‘guests’, the reporters or correspondents on the spot, the newsreader or anchor, the ‘voiceover’, and graphics. However, the study excluded other technical paraphernalia of tic-tac, flash text, sting etc.

Methodology and Procedure

The data for the study were collected from the prime time telecasts of four news channels operating in India namely: 1. Aaj Tak, 2. Zee News, 3. Times Now, and 4. CNN-IBN. The news bulletins of the four channels were recorded simultaneously during prime time (7.00pm to 11.00pm) in a span of 16 days in the month of November, 2014.

Among the four news channels taken for the study, the first two i.e. Aaj Tak and Zee News telecast their news stories in Hindi whereas the news stories of the latter two, i.e. Times Now and CNN-IBN came in English. The news stories of all the four channels were recorded simultaneously as and when they were telecasted. The plan to record the news contents and collect the necessary data for the study systematic coding of the data was planned based on code book prepared for the purpose.

Content Analysis, a highly flexible method of data collection and analysis, was adopted for the study, which is particularly useful for the study of media contents. This method is also largely employed in other fields of studies like social psychology and communication. Content analysis is considered as a scientific process of investigating both quantitative and qualitative information within a context in view of intended and perceived meanings (Sushil K. Singh & Kuthiala,2009). The present study was designed to study the content of news telecasts with respect to elements like ‘voice over’, ‘guest’, ‘anchor’ or news readers’, ‘reporters on the spot’ and ‘graphics’.

In the process of data collection for the present study, only the following items were given emphasis in spite of recording the whole bulletins:

1. ‘Guests’
2. ‘Anchor’
3. ‘Reporter on Spot’



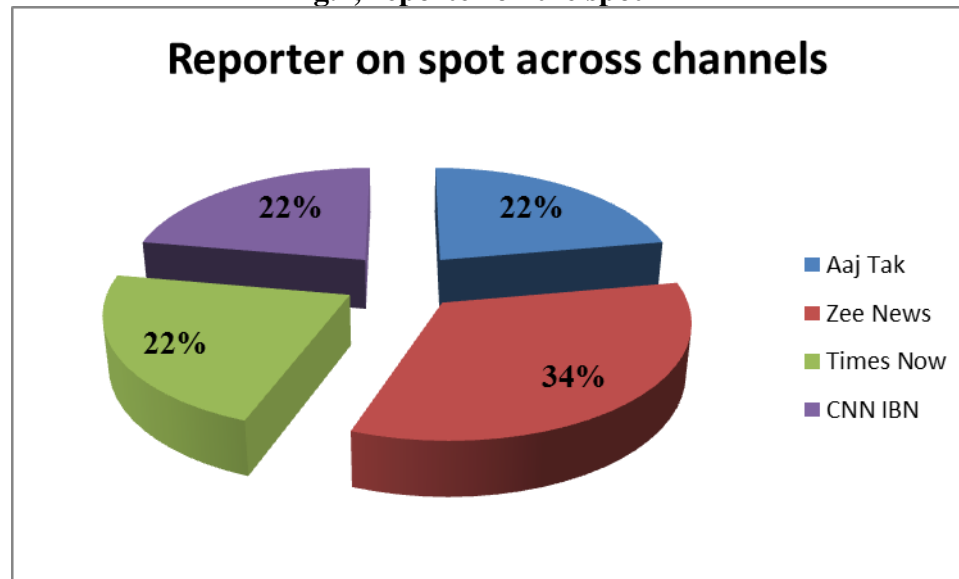
4. 'Voice over'
5. 'Graphic'/'Still'

Although the items like 'Tic-tac', 'Flash Texts', 'Anchor GFX' etc. are also associated in television news bulletins; they were kept out of the purview of the present study.

The data thus collected are tabulated and analyzed for the study. The detail is discussed with respective figures or representations.

Data analysis

Fig.1,Reporter on the spot

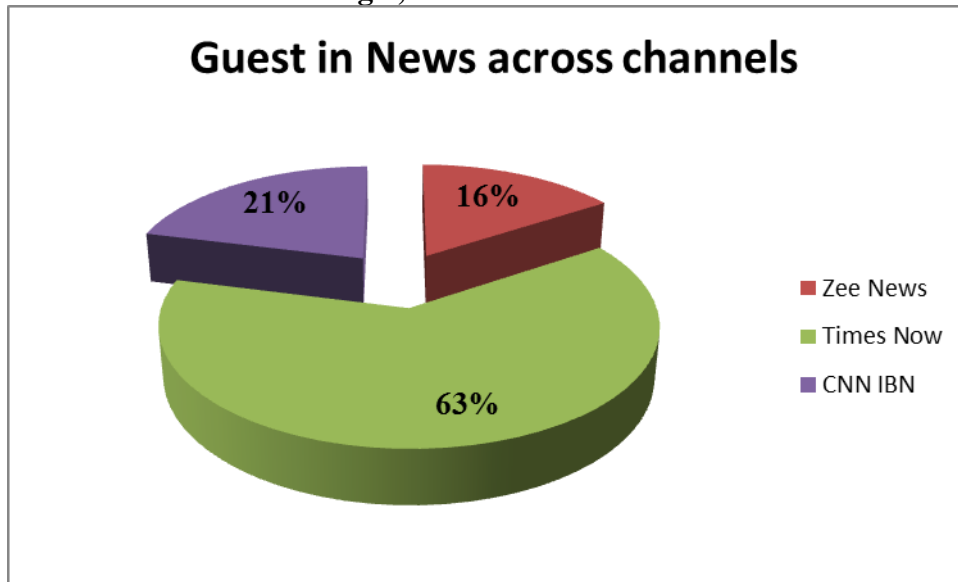


The figure above (Fig.1) tabulates the number of times a reporter was appeared on the spot in the news stories of television channels. During the course of data collection for the purpose of the study, a total of 18 cases were found in all the four news channels where reporters are seen on the spot. News stories, in the age of live telecasts, are embedded with correspondents or reporters reporting from the place of event or occurrence. But the transformation that has taken recently in presentations wherein guests are invited in between the news stories or as part of news bulletins as in debates in discussions, has drastically reduced the reporters or correspondents as source of television news. A change has taken place in the television news presentation heralded by new forms of presentation like Debate and Special Programs (Satish Kumar & N. Sushil K. Singh, March 2016).

In the given table above which tabulates the number of appearance of the reporter on the spot, maximum cases were found in the case of Zee News by 34 % of the total number appearances of all the channels taken together. The distribution of the rest three channels had an equal share of 22 percent each out of a total of 1165 cases. This may be compared with the number of guest appeared during the bulletins as tabulated in fig.2.

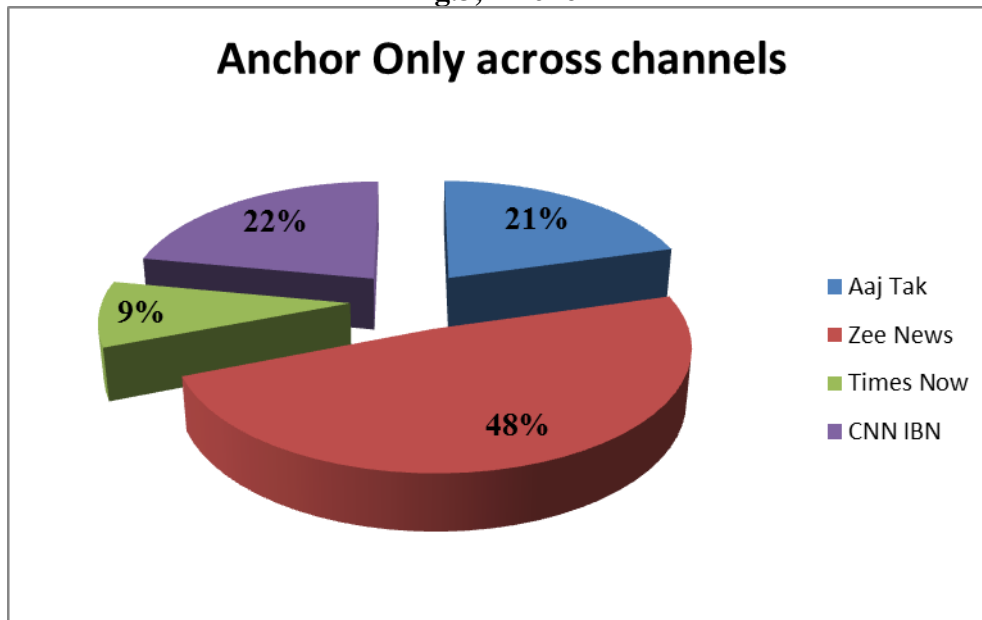


Fig.2, Guest in news



As tabulated, in all the channels there were 18 cases of news stories of all the channels taken together during the data collection. Times Now, which have turned to new formats of news presentation like debates/ Discussions and Special programs, had more number of guests in their news bulletins, leading other channels by 63 percent. CNN-IBN came with a distant second (21.0%), a little ahead of Zee News (16.0%). This may be compared with the presence of Anchor in news stories in fig.3.

Fig.3, Anchor



When reporter on the spot and the guests in the news stories formed an essential part of the news story, the news stories are delivered via the anchors. Anchors are especially engaged to deliver the news story. Sometimes news anchors also became the moderators in the new format of news delivery like debate and discussions etc.

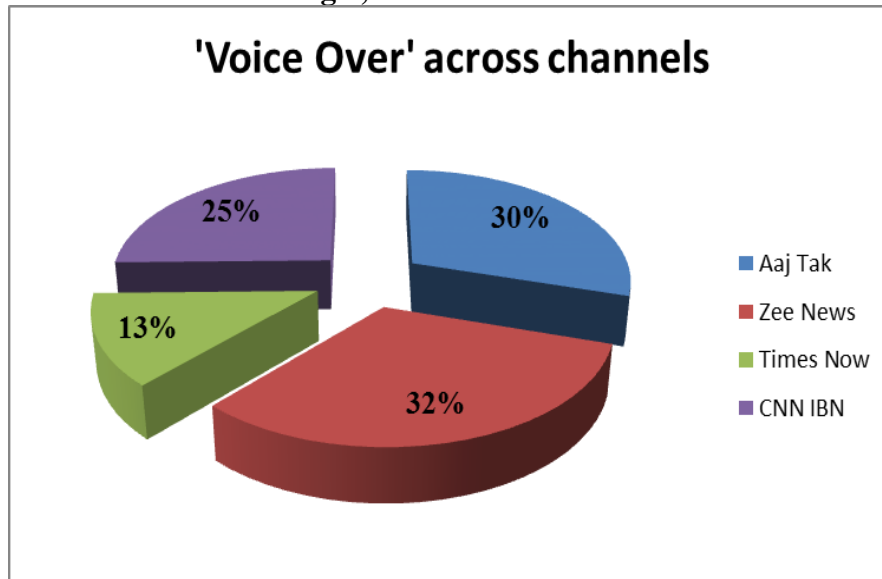


News anchors presence was also tabulated during the data collection (Fig.3).

The data collected in this regard revealed that of the 291 cases of presence of news anchors, Zee News alone had 141 cases (48.0%) while one-tenth only was shown by Times Now. Aaj Tak and CNN-IBN had almost an equal share of one-fifth each.

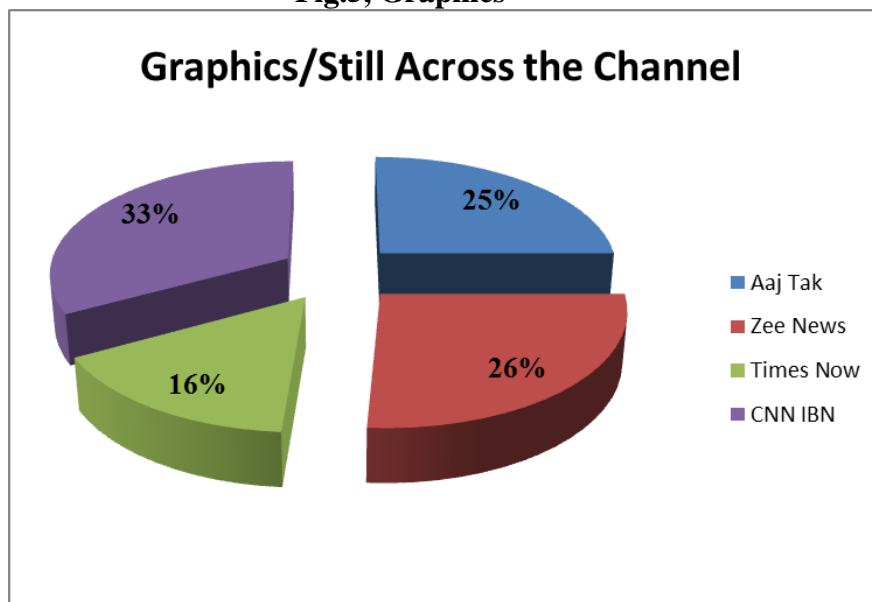
In addition to study the human elements of news packaging, the study also included the technical components like ‘voice over’ and ‘graphics representations’. The following tables/figures include the analysis.

Fig.4, Voice Over



When it comes to ‘voice over,’ Aaj Tak and Zee News, both Hindi language channels, occupied almost equally with slight difference in percentage. The tally was lead by Zee News with 57 cases out of a total of 178 observations occupying 32.0 percent. Aaj Tak came a close second with 53 cases (30.0%).Times Now occupied the lowest in the tally with 13.0 percent (23 cases) below 45 cases (25.0%) of CNN-IBN.

Fig.5, Graphics





Graphics, which was resorted to add credibility and or authenticity or precision in reporting was used by all the channels under study.

As stated in the given table, in this case the tally was lead by CNN-IBN with 29 cases (33.0%) over all other channels. It may be noted that this channel was lying low in all other categories under consideration of the study. Here it has marked its leadership with 33 cases. Times Now did little with graphics in presenting their news stories with only 14 cases (16.0%) of a total of 88 cases. Aaj Tak and Zee News, both the domestic channels, here too, came very close to each other with 22 cases (25.0%) and 23 cases (26.0%) respectively.

Discussion

Media is a social function. It works in three planes simultaneously: the society, the government, and the media itself. In the democratic set ups, it is considered the Fourth Estate, after the legislature, the judiciary and the executive. It acts as a carrier of information flow: within the society as well as to the whole of the globe. Therefore, any change, it can be deduced, in the media packaging or programs is visible and impacted on the society, though delayed.

However, since (mass) media functions in the society, if any change occurs, the change is mutual, paradigmatic, and relative. It is more visible in the case of news.

When news is predominantly defined by news values the overall packaging by the newscasters- adding 'news sense', gave final output to 'news' as a 'product'. In a way it can be established that 'news' as we understood is the sum of 'News values' and 'News Sense'.

When 'news values', the origin and nature of the news stories was derived from the socio-economic and political culture of a society, the news sense is confined to the skill and policy of the news producers.

What is being transcended with the audiences as news has undergone the stages: First, cultural happenings- social, economical and political must qualify and eligible to become a product (called news) in the social domain via the selection process of gatekeeping. Second, the previous process must be adhered to the norms and policies (news sense) of the 'producer'.

The researchers of this study are trying to establish herewith that the news sense comprised of the presentation and the style of delivery of news, in accordance with the format adopted by the news producers, i.e. the media houses or newscasters, which in turn, consists of human and technological elements.

Guest: When it comes to guests, people who are neither in the news stories nor practice journalism, altogether 18 cases were found. Of the four channels taken for study, Aaj Tak did not mark any presence of guests in its news stories. There were guests in 12 news stories of Times Now newscasts and three each in the news stories of CNN-IBN and Zee News.

Anchor

News readers or 'Anchors' are the mainstay of news delivery or presentation of the stories in television newscasts. A total of 291 cases were found in all the news channels taken together wherein stories were narrated by anchors. Zee News led the tally with 141 cases out of 291. CNN-IBN and Aaj Tak had 64 and 60 stories respectively. Times Now had only 26 such cases.



Reporters on the spot

They are considered the soul of the news stories on television. They also add credibility and origination of the news sources. A whopping 1165 cases were recorded during the data collection process of which Zee News came up with the highest occurrence of 342 cases. CNN-IBN came second with 297 stories while Aaj Tak scored 278. Times Now struck the last in this category with 248 cases.

Voice Over

A sum of 178 voices over was found in all the news stories taken under study. Of them, Zee News scored highest with 57 cases. Also found were 53 cases of voice over in Aaj Tak, 45 in CNN-IBN and lastly, 23 in the Times Now news stories.

Graphic/Still

Use of graphics/still was also rampant across all the four news channels. The tally of 88 graphic/still stories was led by CNN-IBN with 29 cases. Zee News and Aaj Tak had 26 and 25 cases respectively when TNN again came out with the least of 14 cases only.

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