A Study of Geographic Bias in Indian States' News

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Introduction

Media plays an instrumental role in uniting the society through forming and shaping the public opinion. Theoretically, the media is expected to address as well as reach every region of the society on an equitable basis (Chakraborty, 2018). However, this utopian definition of media is not truly reflected in the society wherein on ground there are islands created by media giving preferential treatment to certain regions. Such bias adopted by media has been a source of numerous studies across the globe. The unique features of India such as its vast size and democratic structure make it an intriguing platform for mass-communication scholars to analyze the geographical bias of Indian news media while covering all the Indian states.

Before this paper navigates through the details of the dynamics of news media, it is important to understand that media does not function in a vacuum. There are numerous associated factors which provide matrix to news media to operate such as geography, population, literacy, political structure and technological developments in the field of news media.

The geography of any country provides the basic stage on which the media enacts. India is the seventh largest country in the world with a total area of 32,87,263 square kilometer (India, 2015). As per the census of 2001, the density of population in India was 324 persons square kilometer wherein the highest density is recorded in West Bengal with 904 persons per square kilometer and lowest in Arunachal Pradesh with only 13 persons per square kilometer. In terms of population, India ranks second in the world. As per the latest United Nations (UN) estimates Indian population is approximately 1.3 billion which is 17.74 percent of the total world population. As per the reports of 2011 Census, the literacy rate of India stands at 74.04 percent. It is interesting to note the gap between the most literate and least literate state in India which are filled by Kerala and Bihar with 93.91 percent and 63.82 percent of literacy respectively (India 2018 A Reference Annual, 2018).

Political structure of a country plays an important role in determining an overall environment in which media operates. India is the largest democracy in the world and it is a union of states with a parliamentary system of Government . There are 29 states and seven union territories in India(ibid). The country is

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governed as per the Constitution of India which provides Fundamental Rights and Fundamental Duties to the Indian citizens. The freedom of press is inferred from the Fundamental Right of freedom of speech and expression enumerated in Article 19 (1) (a) of the Indian Constitution. Indian parliament consists of President and two houses, which are known as Council of States (Rajya Sabha) and House of People (Lok Sabha). In Rajya Sabha, there are 238 representatives of state, who all are elected by the elected members of Legislative Assemblies of the respective states. The Lok Sabha house comprises of 552 representatives who are directly elected by the citizen on the basis of adult suffrage. Media plays a significant role in founding as well as sustaining the democracy in a country. News media acts as a link between government and citizens and facilitates the dissemination of government policies to the every section of society (Roy, 2015).

Indian media has undergone a sea change from the fledgling stage of newspaper and radio to present era of digital media. The www and web 2.0 has brought revolution in the field of digital media of our country (Statista, 2008). Along with the already existing traditional formats of media, the new media platforms provide a diversified media industry to the country. There are 481 million internet users in India and the trend is growing at faster pace which has seen an increase of 11.34 percent from December 2016 to December 2017 (Agarwal, 2018). While keeping pace the increasing digital footprint in India, the majority of the news media houses have jumped in the bandwagon of online newspapers.

Now, having a broad understanding of the various factors and the environment in which media operates, this paper will examine the gaps in the representation of states in the three online newspapers (The Times of India, The Hindu and Hindustan Times) published from January 2006 to December 2015.While assessing the geographical imbalance in news coverage in the context of area and population, this paper has employed the theory of agenda setting and the statistics will also be subjected to the conceptual framework of Attention Index. The research approach adopted in this paper is quantitative content analysis wherein pertinent data is gathered and analyzed to derive the results.

Literature review

There is an abundance of literature in the field of unequal reporting by news media. A content analysis of network television news from 1973 to 1975 (Dominick, 1977) revealed that certain places are indeed news-privileged. Dominick developed a framework and named it “Attention Index” to measure the difference between populations and how much they have been given time in national news. In fact, he came up with a term known as “eclipse” effect to highlight when one or two states in a region monopolize most of the time while many others were generally ignored. Whitney et al (1989) took Dominick’s study of geographic bias a step further and included source bias in their analysis which discovered and stated that media was strongly biased in reporting news from the areas that are in proximity of news center and those in power and there is biasness towards male sources. Subsequently, study undertaken by Whitney was replicated by Jones (2008)

and found that there is big gap in under covered and over covered states of the US. Similarly, Arya (2008) developed the Economic Attention Index and added another dimension to the existing conceptual framework of Dominic "Attention Index" to assess the coverage of the Indian states and union territories' news in Indian English dailies and discovered that a co-relational statistics existed between the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the states and UTs and therefore the share of their news coverage.

Research Problem

The media are known to be a powerful tool of development and magic multipliers that promote thinking patterns of readers. Ideally, the media should serve as source of egoless fair egalitarianism and modesty and strive to create a "rational" national discourse, but vested interests of the shareholders in media houses lead entice them to pick the issues and contents selectively to support their profit making. This leads to disproportionate representation of few state's events and issues related to them more as compared to others which creates a certain gap in the society and silently vitiates the harmony and democratic setup. Thus, the current study emphasizes on representation of states in the news of national online newspaper and the newspaper's agenda-setting role. This study has been carried out to quantify the representation of all Indian states in English language online newspapers to identify the geographic imbalance practiced by English news media in India.

Limitations

The reference period for this study has been selected for past 10 years. In the selected span for the said study, there have been certain occurrences and developments of few specific events like elections and major sports event, which might have adversely affected the quality of samples.

Objectives

The broad objective of the paper is to find out the representation of states' news in national online newspapers and geographic imbalance in news coverage on the basis of area and population (by applying Dominick's Attention Index).

- Developing the various attention indices like PAI (Population Attention Index), AAI (Area Attention Index), LAI (Literacy Attention Index), VAI (Voter's Attention Index), PAI (Population Attention Index) and analyzing the representation of states' news coverage in national online newspapers.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this study is based on the agenda setting theory (Shaw & McCombs, 1977) and the conceptual framework is based on Attention Index (Dominic, 1977). The agenda setting theory propounded by Maxell McCombs and Donald Shaw (1977) states that the mass news media

have a large influence on the audience by their choice of what stories to be considered newsworthy and how much prominence and space be allocated to them.

Methodology

A quantitative content analysis has been carried out for the present study. Quantitative content analysis operates a range of tools and techniques to study media content. “it is a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (Berelson,1952)

Statistical Methods

The conceptual framework is based on the Attention Index (Dominic, 1977). The Attention Index was developed by Dominic (1977) to measure TV news coverage allocation to the different states in the US. Each state’s relative news time was compared to its population and an ‘attention index’ was created by subtracting the ratio of each state’s population to the national population from its percentage of news coverage. The researcher has attempted to employ the same concept to develop PAI (Population Attention Index), AAI (Attention Index), VAI (Voters Attention) and LAI (Literacy Attention Index). PAI has been developed by subtracting the percent news coverage from the percent population of the state. The Area Attention Index has been arrived at by the total percentage of state’s area, subtracted by the percentage of news coverage. Literacy Attention Index (LAI) has been measured by total percentage of literacy of a state, subtracted from the percentage of news coverage. The Voters Attention Index has been prepared by subtracting the share (in percentage) of a state in parliament seats from the percentage of state’s coverage.

Statistical tool

For hypothesis testing, chi-square test has been applied to find the relationships between the variables i.e. (states news coverage and various attention indices).

Newspaper Selection

The three highest circulated and read English dailies namely, The Times of India (TOI), The Hindu and Hindustan Times (HT), were selected for the study. TOI has a circulation of 11,02,521 and readership of 7.4 million, The Hindu has a 11,68,042 circulation and 4.05 million readerships, HT has a circulation of 11,03,644 and a readership of 3.85 million (RNI). These are the three largest nationally circulated and read English newspapers.

Reference Period

The selected reference period for the study is for 10 years (from 1st Jan 2006 to 31st Dec 2015).

Units of Analysis-The method adopted to select the unit for analysis is the news item in which the name of the respective State appears in the newspaper headlines. This was found by applying Google power searching commands for example; (www.site:thehindu.comintitle:haryana)

Data Collection

The data for this study is retrieved from the online database of above mentioned newspaper's online portal; Indiatimes.com, Hindustantimes.com and thehindu.com with the use of Google power searching tool. News Item (unit of analysis) is taken in which the name of the respective State appears in the headlines.

Sample Selection

Sample size is collected through random sampling of all the total news with 95% confidence level and 5% error margin of the entire news stories of a particular state published in online newspapers in past 10 years which is from 1st Jan 2006 to 31st Dec 2015 available on internet. The collected data have been classified as per pre-defined categories. So, the data is fed in the codebook, which is designed as per the objectives of research, and the required relevant classification and tabulation of the data. The frequency of states news has been measured in terms of their occurrence. The types of news have been grouped under 17 categories.

Hypotheses –

H_1- News coverage of states in online news media is not dependent on population of the state.

H_2- States' news coverage in online news media is not dependent on geographic area of the states.

H_3- Literacy rate of a states don't put any impact on online news media to cover its news more.

H_4 - The states with more parliament seats don't get any extra attention in news coverage by online news media.

Findings and Discussions

This section covers the findings which are presented in a quantitative method (tabulated format). As covered in the introduction, the tables will show the data in the format of PAI (Population Attention Index), AAI (Attention Index), VAI (Voters Attention) and LAI (Literacy Attention Index). After each table, the analysis will be presented regarding data covered in the respective table.

States	Coverage % (1)	Population(%) (2)	Population Attention Index (PAI)(%) (1-2)

Andhra Pradesh	12.29	7.00	5.29
Arunachal Pradesh	0.46	0.11	0.35
Assam	1.29	2.58	-1.29
Bihar	1.81	8.58	-6.77
Chhattisgarh	1.26	2.11	-0.85
Delhi	9.78	1.38	8.40
Goa	8.84	0.12	8.72
Gujarat	2.20	4.99	-2.79
Haryana	1.32	2.09	-0.77
Himachal Pradesh	0.74	0.57	0.18
Jammu and Kashmir	1.79	1.04	0.75
Jharkhand	0.57	2.72	-2.15
Karnataka	7.55	5.05	2.50
Kerala	6.20	2.76	3.44
Madhya Pradesh	1.01	6.00	-4.99
Maharashtra	7.23	9.29	-2.05
Manipur	3.67	0.22	3.44
Meghalaya	0.09	0.24	-0.16
Mizoram	0.13	0.09	0.04
Nagaland	0.52	0.16	0.36
Orissa	0.57	3.47	-2.90
Punjab	7.45	2.29	5.17
Rajasthan	1.74	5.67	-3.93
Sikkim	0.34	0.05	0.29
Telangana	4.65	2.91	1.74
Tamil Nadu	1.38	5.96	-4.58
Tripura	1.84	0.30	1.54
Uttar Pradesh	7.22	2.14	5.08
Uttarakhand	4.67	0.49	4.18
West Bengal	1.40	2.81	-1.41

Population Attention Index (PAI)

The idea of population Attention Index has been adopted from the Attention Index of Dominic (1977), wherein he proposed that news is geographically biased because the news are mostly generated from a few

areas from an entire country rather than equally covering whole nation. This phenomenon indicates the geographical bias in news media. So, in this study we have applied the Dominic's attention Index (Coverage–Population) which offered significant results wherein the percentage of each state's population was subtracted from the total news coverage percentage granted to each state individually. As table shows some state suffered major loss in news coverage even with enormous population. For instance, Bihar which has highest young population (58%) in compared to any other Indian state suffered massive coverage loss with (6.77%) closely followed by Madhya Pradesh (-4.99%),Tamil Nadu (-4.58%) and Rajasthan (3.93%) ,Orissa (-2.90%) , Gujarat (-2.79%),Jharkhand (-2.15%) and Maharashtra (-2.05%) are small losers in downhill hierarchy. Whereas, Goa enjoys the maximum coverage in online news media with (8.40%)PAI, followed by Delhi (8.40%),Andhra Pradesh (5.29%), Punjab (5.17%),UP (5.68%), Uttarakhand (4.18%), Manipur (3.44%) and Karnataka (2.50%), while all other states have moderate value of Population Attention Index which indicates the average news coverage of the states according to the population they obtain.

H_1-According to the hypothesis, there is no relationship between news coverage of states in online news media and the population of the states. But, the chi-square results shows that the P_value .241 is below the established significance level of 5% and we fail to find enough evidences to accept the null hypothesis. So, we accept the alternate hypothesis that there is a association between news coverage of state and population of the states. And according to Contingency Coefficient value .983, the relationship between these two variables is very strong.

States	**Coverage % (1)**	**Area (sq. kms.) (2)**	**Area Attention Index (AAI)(%) (1-2)**
Andhra Pradesh	12.29	8.37	3.92
Arunachal Pradesh	0.46	2.55	-2.08
Assam	1.29	2.39	-1.10
Bihar	1.81	2.86	-1.06
Chhattisgarh	1.26	4.11	-2.85
Delhi	9.78	0.05	9.74
Goa	8.84	0.11	8.72
Gujarat	2.20	5.96	-3.76
Haryana	1.32	1.34	-0.02
Himachal Pradesh	0.74	1.69	-0.95
Jammu and Kashmir	1.79	6.76	-4.97
Jharkhand	0.57	2.42	-1.85
Karnataka	7.55	5.83	1.72

Kerala	6.20	1.18	5.01
Madhya Pradesh	1.01	9.38	-8.37
Maharashtra	7.23	9.36	-2.13
Manipur	3.67	0.68	2.99
Meghalaya	0.09	0.68	-0.59
Mizoram	0.13	0.64	-0.52
Nagaland	0.52	0.50	0.02
Orissa	0.57	4.74	-4.17
Punjab	7.45	1.53	5.92
Rajasthan	1.74	10.41	-8.67
Sikkim	0.34	0.22	0.12
Telangana	4.65	1.32	3.34
Tamil Nadu	1.38	3.96	-2.58
Tripura	1.84	0.32	1.52
Uttar Pradesh	7.22	7.33	-0.11
Uttarakhand	4.67	1.63	3.04
West Bengal	1.40	2.70	-1.30

Area Attention Index (AAI)

Dominic's attention index has been modified by the researcher to arrive at the representation of the states in online news media on the basis of geographical area of each state.It has been measured by the total percentage of state's area, subtracted by the percentage of news coverage. The table shows that states with maximum percentage of total area like Rajasthan (-8.67%) and Madhya Pradesh (-8.37%) suffered a great coverage loss, followed by Jammu & Kashmir (-4.97%), Orissa (-4.17%),Gujarat (-3.76%), Chattisgarh (-2.85%),Tamil Nadu (-2.58%),Maharashtra (-2.13%), Arunachal Pradesh (-2.08%). Although, Assam, Bihar, West Bengal, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Jharkhand and Himachal Pradesh are smallest losers in the list because their news coverage share are almost close to their area percentage. However, the biggest achievers of news coverage according to geographic area are Delhi (9.74%) and Goa (8.72%). These two privileged states AAI value are closely followed by Punjab (5.92%),Kerala (5.01%),Telangana (3.34%),Andhra Pradesh (3.04%),Manipur (2.99%), Karnataka (1.72%), Tripura (1.52%)and Arunachal Pradesh.

H_2- The hypothesis states that the **s**tates' news coverage in online news media is not dependent on geographic area of the states. But, the chi-square test result is statistically significant as the chi-square test results shows that as the P_value .237 is below the established 5% so we can see that there is a significant

relationship between both variables i.e. news coverage of state and population of the states.. So, we can conclude that states' news coverage in online news media and geographic area of the states are not independent of each other. Also, the degree of strength of association is high with Contingency Coefficient value .983.

States	Coverage % (1)	Literacy Rate (%) (2)	Literacy Attention Index (LAI)(%) (1-2)
Andhra Pradesh	12.29	4.73	7.55
Arunachal Pradesh	0.46	0.08	0.39
Assam	1.29	1.88	-0.60
Bihar	1.81	5.47	-3.67
Chhattisgarh	1.26	1.50	-0.24
Delhi	9.78	1.20	8.59
Goa	8.84	0.11	8.73
Gujarat	2.20	3.96	-1.75
Haryana	1.32	1.61	-0.28
Himachal Pradesh	0.74	0.47	0.27
Jammu and Kashmir	1.79	0.71	1.08
Jharkhand	0.57	1.84	-1.27
Karnataka	7.55	3.82	3.73
Kerala	6.20	2.59	3.61
Madhya Pradesh	1.01	4.24	-3.23
Maharashtra	7.23	7.70	-0.46
Manipur	3.67	0.18	3.49
Meghalaya	0.09	0.18	-0.10
Mizoram	0.13	0.08	0.04
Nagaland	0.52	0.13	0.39
Orissa	0.57	2.55	-1.98
Punjab	7.45	1.76	5.70
Rajasthan	1.74	3.80	-2.06
Sikkim	0.34	0.04	0.30
Telangana	4.65	1.93	2.72
Tamil Nadu	1.38	4.79	-3.41
Tripura	1.84	0.27	1.57

Uttar Pradesh	7.22	1.49	5.73
Uttarakhand	4.67	0.39	4.28
West Bengal	1.40	2.17	-0.76

Literacy Attention Index (LAI)

India's total literacy rate is 74.04% according to census 2011, in which few states have high literacy rate and some are performing dismal in terms of literacy. In this study, we have attempted to calculate and identify the attitude of online news media towards the states in terms of their literacy rate. In the below table, we can see that there is similarity in news coverage percentage of state's news in population wise and literacy wise, same as (PAI), Goa, Delhi and Andhra Pradesh are accorded with maximum news coverage with the LAI of (8.7%), (8.5%)and (7.55%) respectively. These three states have been followed closely by Uttar Pradesh (5.73%),Punjab (5.70%),Uttarakhand (4.28%), Karnataka (3.73%) ,Kerala (3.61%), Manipur (3.49%). Whereas, there are many states which have suffered very negative treatment by online news media even after having a rich literacy rate. That includes Bihar (-3.67%), Tamil Nadu (-3.41%), Madhya Pradesh (-3.23%), Rajasthan (-2.06%),Orissa (-1.98%),Gujarat (1.75%) and Jharkhand (-1.27%). However, rests of the states are getting reasonable LAI value according to their literacy rate.

H3- It was hypothesized that literacy rate of the states don't put any impact on online news media to cover its news more. The chi-square test results shows that the P_value .241 is below the established 5% so there is a significant relationship between both variables i.e. literacy rate and greater coverage by online news media. So, we reject the null hypothesis and state that the two variables are dependent on one another strongly.And according to Contingency Coefficient value .983, the relationship between these two variables is very strong.

States	**Coverage % (1)**	**Shares of Parliament Seats (%) (2)**	**Voter's Attention Index (VAI)(%) (1-2)**
Andhra Pradesh	12.29	4.52	7.77
Arunachal Pradesh	0.46	0.38	0.09
Assam	1.29	2.63	-1.35
Bihar	1.81	7.03	-5.22
Chhattisgarh	1.26	2.01	-0.75
Delhi	9.78	1.25	8.53

Goa	8.84	0.38	8.46
Gujarat	2.20	4.64	-2.44
Haryana	1.32	1.88	-0.56
Himachal Pradesh	0.74	0.88	-0.13
Jammu and Kashmir	1.79	1.25	0.53
Jharkhand	0.57	2.51	-1.94
Karnataka	7.55	5.02	2.53
Kerala	6.20	3.64	2.56
Madhya Pradesh	1.01	5.02	-4.01
Maharashtra	7.23	8.41	-1.17
Manipur	3.67	0.38	3.29
Meghalaya	0.09	0.38	-0.29
Mizoram	0.13	0.25	-0.13
Nagaland	0.52	0.25	0.27
Orissa	0.57	3.89	-3.32
Punjab	7.45	2.51	4.95
Rajasthan	1.74	4.39	-2.65
Sikkim	0.34	0.25	0.09
Telangana	4.65	3.01	1.64
Tamil Nadu	1.38	7.15	-5.78
Tripura	1.84	0.38	1.46
Uttar Pradesh	7.22	13.93	-6.70
Uttarakhand	4.67	1.00	3.66
West Bengal	1.40	7.28	-5.87

Voter's Attention Index (VAI)

This voter's attention index is computed by subtracting the percentage of parliament seats of each state from the percentage of news coverage of respective state in online newspapers. Similar to Population Attention Index (PAI),Area Attention Index (AAI) and Literacy Attention Index (LAI), Delhi,Goa and Andhra Pradesh are gaining top coverage in national news media with (8.53%), (8.46%) and (7.77%) respectively. However those states which have been following moderately in getting positive news coverage are Punjab (4.95%), Uttarakhand (3.66%),Manipur (3.29%),Kerala (2.56%),Karnataka (2.53%), Telangana & Tripura with (1.46%). While, the worst performing states are Uttar Pradesh (-6.70%), West Bengal (-5.87%),Tamil Nadu (-5.76%) closely followed by Bihar (-5.22%),Madhya Pradesh (-4.01%),Orissa (-3.32%),Rajasthan (-2.65%),Gujarat (-2.44%),Jharkhand (-1.94%), Assam (-1.35%), Maharashtra (-1.17%), while other states

are receiving moderate news coverage according to their share of parliament seats. While looking at the numbers it can be inferred that all those states having maximum share in parliament i.e. (Uttar Pradesh (13.93%), West Bengal (7.28%),Tamil Nadu (7.75%) were unable to get respectable treatment in news media even after having a greater share of seats in parliament.

H_4- Hypothesis says that the states with more parliament seats don't get any extra attention in new coverage by online news media. We find enough evidences to reject the null hypothesis as the p- value is below the established significance level of 5 %. So, we can say that there is a strong association between states with more parliament seats and attention in news coverage by online news media.

Conclusion

Having employed the said research methodology and different statistical procedures, this study has discovered that certain specific regions predominantly figure in the news media whereas certain regions are subjected to step motherly treatment. For instance, there is a dichotomy observed in the coverage of news media in terms of Population Attention Index (PAI), wherein bigger states such as Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Bihar figure quite low in news media coverage in comparison to Goa, Delhi and Andhra Pradesh. Similarly, in the context of Area Attention Index (AAI), Delhi and Goa remain in limelight by occupying greater space in news media and on the other hand Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh which are otherwise larger states in terms of area are lagging far behind in gaining space in news media. While Literacy Attention Index (LAI) suggested that same as (PAI), Goa, Delhi and Andhra Pradesh are accorded with maximum news coverage with the LAI of (8.7%), (8.5%)and (7.55%) respectively. Whereas, Bihar (-3.67%), Tamil Nadu (-3.41%), Madhya Pradesh (-3.23%), Rajasthan (-2.06%) suffered very negative treatment by online news media even after having a rich literacy rate. Voter's Attention Index (VAI) shows that similar to Population Attention Index (PAI), Area Attention Index (AAI) and Literacy Attention Index (LAI) , Delhi , Goa and Andhra Pradesh are gaining top coverage in national news media. While worst performer states are Utter Pradesh, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. While looking at the numbers it can be inferred that all those states having maximum share in parliament i.e. (Uttar Pradesh (13.93%), West Bengal (7.28%), Tamil Nadu (7.75%) were unable to get respectable treatment in news media even after having a great share of seats in parliament. Thus, it is discovered and accordingly brought out in this study that the news is mostly generated from a few areas in the entire country rather than equally covering whole nation. This general practice adopted by Indian news media indicates the geographical bias in news media. On other hand if we see the chi-square results we found that there is very significantly strong relationship in the states' news coverage and their population, area, literacy and parliament seats.

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