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Sensationalism in Telugu news channels : A Content analysis

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Abstract

As the competition is intense and expensive to produce content for the 24-hour news channels, They are using different types of sensational elements in the news and news based stories attract viewers. Telugu channels are not exception for this. This paper trying to analyse the content of four leading news channels of Telugu language and their presentation and editing techniques to impress the viewers with easily accessible news.

Keywords. Telugu news channels, sensational elements, editing techniques, presentation

Introduction

Everyone at some point in their life has experienced a crime either as a victim or known to a victim or seen news related to such sensational crime and violent incidents. Various academic studies continue to discuss these sensational stories of crime and violence in television news. Over the last few decades its scope has expanded from sensationalism to the characteristics of its content and how it is portrayed.

In the 19th century, the term sensationalism was used as a derogatory to condemn literary or journalistic works aimed at evoking strong emotional reactions in the public. The main objective of sensationalism is to focus on people's senses and to provoke physical and psychological reactions in them. (Vettehen, 2004:1378)

Advertisements are the main source of revenue for television news channels. More people watch the news on their channel, more advertisements they get, and the more advertisements, the more revenue. Hence market-driven journalism works for news that captures the attention of viewers.

McManus (1994) believes that increasing competition among channels to attract viewers, they need to telecast news that attracts the audiences rather than serving them. For that reason, news that attract to viewers with less information is preferred over news that provides more useful information.

Grabe et al (2003) used a limited capacity model of mediated message processing to argue that it is not only the content but the message itself engage viewers and evoke arousal in them. Audio visual features such as close up camera shots and angles, editing style, background music and sound effects, facial expressions are also define sensationalism.

Uribe and Gunter (2007) described sensationalism as the packaging of news in a way that evokes an effect on the human sensory system.

Drawing from previous literature, Sensationalism is the replacement of socially relevant stories by "tabloid" news items and the employment of showy production methods that dominate factual information. Sensational news is attention-grabbing content that provides entertainment and amusement, leading to increased viewership and higher ratings (Nuijten et al., 2007).

There are around 18 news channels working 24/7 in Telugu states including big and small. They broadcast different types of news and news based programs to attract the audience. As the competition is intense and expensive to produce the 24-hour news, They are using different types of presentation and editing techniques to impress the viewers with easily accessible news.

This paper trying find out the sensation content and sensational elements in Telugu news channels of India.

Objective

The objective of this paper is to ascertain the presence or absence of sensational elements in the news stories.

Design of the study

With the intention of effectively examining the objectives, this study utilized the Content Analysis methodology. Content analysis of four selected Telugu television channels' news bulletins was conducted to examine the crime and violence content in news and news-based programmes.

The channels included TV9, NTV, TV5 and V6 based on ratings given by TAM (Television Audience Measurement). The time frame for the study was six months. The unit of measurement for the study was seconds. The unit of analysis was a news story. Total number of hours/seconds were 810.85 hours/2919065 seconds and total number of stories were 11478 excluding advertisements and other promotional programmes.

The researcher recorded all four channels data for six months on alternative days from 7 pm to 10.30 pm. In all 3.30 hours of daily data from each channel was stored in four different devices. Over all it came to total 14 hours per day.

After completion of recording, the researcher has played the recorded video of each channel, noted data. the researcher analyse these stories conveniently and discard the rest.

In that crime and violence stories, then the researcher identified the speaker of the story whose version of the story was telecast, the actors in that story, the sensational elements used, the gender of the victim and offender and the relationship between the victim and offender, and how channels portrayed the police, courts, correctional system and finally the outcome of the case.

Data interpretation

To ascertain the presence or absence of sensational elements in the news stories

Table. 1 **Day-wise sensational elements in the stories**

Sensational elements		Day							Total	
		Mon	**Tue**	**Wed**	**Th..**	**Fri**	**Sat**	**Sun**	**Count**	**%**
Sensation	Images/Facial expressions	83	73	64	69	32	51	24	396	17.9
	Sound/vocal inflections	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	3	.1
	Emotions of People (EP)	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	3	.1
	Graphical exaggeration	0	0	12	3	0	6	0	21	.9
	Background score/music	0	0	0	0	21	36	0	57	2.6
	Combination of IFE, SVI, GE & BGM	238	290	180	208	351	344	124	1735	78.4
	Total (%)	321	363	256	280	410	437	148	2215	100

Data in Table 1 shows 2215 stories out of 3101 crime and violence stories had sensational elements. Images/facial expressions account for 17.9 % (396) of total 2215 stories. Stories having combination of two or more than two sensational elements such as images/facial expression, sound/vocal inflection, emotions of

people, graphical exaggeration and background music were 364, image/facial expressions, sound/vocal inflections & emotions of people were 351. There were 15 combinations of four sensational elements.

Day wise distribution of crime and violence stories having sensational elements as follows: Saturday 437 (19.7), Friday 410 (18.5), Tuesday 363 (16.4) and least stories having sensational elements were telecast on Sunday with 148 (6.7).

Chi-Square Test			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1186.370[a]	138	.000

The following hypotheses were framed for the above aspect of the study.

Null Hypothesis H_0: There is no statistically significant relationship between coverage on weekdays and sensational elements in the story.

Alternative Hypothesis H_1: There is a statistically significant relationship between coverage on weekdays and sensational elements in the story.

The value of the Chi square test is as follows:

At 138 degrees of freedom the chi square value is 1186.370 and probability value is 0.000. Since the p-value is less than 0.5 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Table No. 2 Channel-wise distribution of sensational elements in stories

		Channels				**Total**
		TV9	NTV	TV5	V6	
Sensational elements	Images/Facial	41	305	25	25	**396**
	Sound/vocal inflections (SVI)	0	0	3	0	**3**
	Emotions of People (EP)	0	3	0	0	**3**
	Graphical exaggeration (GE)	12	0	9	0	**21**
	Background source/music (BGM)	0	57	0	0	**57**
	Combination of all	393	828	364	150	**1735**
Total		**446**	**1193**	**401**	**175**	**2215**

Data in Table No.2 shows that NTV has sensational element/ image/facial expression (IFE) 305 times out of total 396 in all channels across all weekdays This was Followed by combination two more sensational elements like image/facial expressions (IFE), Sound/vocal inflections, and emotions of people (EP) were used in stories telecast in NTV (239) out of 365 elements in all channels. TV9 used all the sensational elements in 124 stories, followed by NTV (120), TV5 (97) out of 364.

Chi-Square Test			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	743.486[a]	69	.000

The following hypotheses were framed for the above aspect of the study.

Null Hypothesis H_0: There is no statistically significant relationship between channel and sensational elements in the story.

Alternative Hypothesis H_1: There is a statistically significant relationship between channel and sensational elements in the story.

The value of the Chi square test is as follows:

At 69 degrees of freedom the chi square value is 743.486 and probability value is 0.000. Since the p-value is less than 0.5 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Table No. 3 Bulletin-wise sensational elements in the stories.

		Sensational elements						**Total**
		IFE	SVI	EP	GE	BGM	Combination of all	
Bulletin	7 pm to 7.30 pm	141	0	0	3	54	364	**562**
	7.30 pm to 8 pm	3	0	0	3	0	74	**80**
	8 pm to 8.30 pm	60	0	0	0	3	244	**307**
	8.30 pm to 9 pm	93	0	0	0	0	465	**558**
	9 pm to 9.30 pm	32	0	3	6	0	204	**245**

	9.30 pm to 10 pm	4	0	0	0	0	58	**62**
	10 pm to 10.30	63	3	0	9	0	326	**401**
Total	**Count**	**396**	**3**	**3**	**21**	**57**	**1735**	**2215**
	%	**17.9%**	**.1%**	**.1%**	**.9%**	**2.6%**	**78.2%**	**100.0%**

Data in Table No. 3 shows that across all channels on all weekdays, more images and close facial expressions were found in stories telecast in 7-7.30 pm, 8.30-9 pm and 10-10.30 pm bulletins. Combination of images and close facial expressions, sound/vocal inflections, emotions of people, graphical exaggerations and background music were found more (465) in 8.30-9 pm bulletin, followed by 7-7.30 pm (364), 10-10.30 pm (326) bulletins and the least were found in 9.30-10 pm (58) bulletin.

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1023.676[a]	138	.000

The following hypotheses were framed for the above aspect of the study.

Null Hypothesis H_0: There is no statistically significant relationship between news bulletin and sensational elements in the story.

Alternative Hypothesis H_1: There is a statistically significant relationship between news bulletin and sensational elements in the story.

The value of the Chi square test is as follows:

At 138 degrees of freedom the chi square value is 1023.676 and probability value is 0.000. Since the p-value is less than 0.5 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Table No. 4 Presentation of program-wise sensational elements

		Sensational elements						
		IFE	SVI	EP	GE	BGM	Combination of all	Total
Nature of program	News bulletin	305	3	3	15	57	1119	1502
	News based discussions	0	0	0	6	0	33	39
	Special programs	91	0	0	0	0	583	674
Total		396	3	3	15	57	1735	2215

IFE - Images/Facial expressions, SVI - Sound/Vocal Inflections, EP - Emotions of People, GE - Graphical Exaggeration, BGM - Background score/music.

Data in Table No. 4 shows across all channels on all weekdays that sensational elements/ images/facial expressions along with other sensational elements like sound/vocal inflections, emotions of people, graphical embellishment and background score/music were 1502 (68%) out of 2215 in news bulletin. 674 (30%) were in special programs and the least were found in news-based discussions.

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	563.96	46	.000

The following hypotheses were framed for the above aspect of the study.

Null Hypothesis H_0: There is no statistically significant relationship between nature of news bulletin and sensational elements in the story.

Alternative Hypothesis H_1: There is a statistically significant relationship between nature of news bulletin and sensational elements in the story.

The value of the Chi square test is as follows:

At 46 degrees of freedom the chi square value is 563.968 and probability value is 0.000. Since the p-value is less than 0.5 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Major Findings

To ascertain the presence or absence of sensational elements in the news stories.

Data analyzed to identify the presence or absence of sensational elements such as images/facial expressions, sound/vocal inflections, emotions of people, graphical exaggeration and background music revealed that 70% of the crime and violent stories contained one or two or combination of more than two sensational elements.

It has been revealed that NTV had a greater number of sensational elements in the story equated to other channels. In almost all the stories telecast in the various bulletins certain number of sensational elements were present. Many sensational elements such as images/facial expressions along with other sensational elements like sound/vocal inflections, emotions of people, graphical exaggeration and background score/music were present in news bulletin. Special programs also had a few sensational elements were present in news-based discussions.

Conclusion

First, all news reports presented crime as an essential topic, but differ in the way they consider the crime. Second, in consistent with the earlier research, this study found that a great percentage of crime news stories concentrated on interpersonal violence.

Crime news is event-driven and unstable. Interpersonal violent crime is covered most, than self-directed violent crime. Controversial topics occupy more space during prime time. Most of the time, crime is enclosed in a human-interest frame, especially when it relates to violent crime. A large number of crime stories contain sensational elements.

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