A Study on the Coverage of Africa in Indian Print Media

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Introduction

According to the Agenda-setting Theory (McCombs and Shaw, 1972), the media plays a crucial role in the dissemination of information which consequently leads to determining what issues are important. Through this process, opinions are formed on almost everything, ranging from individuals to countries.Through the media, a unique picture is painted on the minds of people about countries. Thus, we have come to know that the West is a hub of enlightenment', Pakistan a war-ravaged country', Africa a primitive and deprived continent, etc.Over the years, the Western media have had to take the blame for this disproportionate coverage and its repercussions. The so-called Third World/developing countries have accused the dominant Western media of stereotypical representation. According to the media in the West, these countries in Latin America, Asia and Africa are dens of primitive practices, incompetence, violence, political instability, famine, corruption, etc. (MacBride Commission, 1980; Switzer, 1993:123-125).

Coined during the Cold War to refer to countries which were neither aligned to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and its capitalist ideologies nor to the Soviet Union and its communism, the term Third World is still in use even after the fall of the Soviet Union. It has taken on a rather problematic definition. Third World is now used to refer to countries in Africa, Latin America, Oceania and Asia. Its current usage, often interchanged with the term 'developing countries', denotes a world with a high rate of illiteracy and crime, poor healthcare, sanitation and infrastructure, wars, conflicts, corruption and a host of other social, economic and political challenges. This term clubs these countries together and does not take into account their cultural, political, economic and social strides, diversities and differences, as well as even the peculiar challenges that confront each country.

Riding on the back of these images and stories broadcast about Third World countries, developmental, non-governmental and donor agencies have cashed in on the situation to further reinforce these images through financial aids and so-called relief programmes to help the vulnerable in these Third World countries. Explaining further, Alam, for instance, argues that these donor agencies go to these countries and continents because the media portray the bleakness and destitution citizens of those places have to grapple with; consequently reinforcing the images propagated by the media (Alam, 2007:59-65).

This representation has continued for centuries, and nothing (or not much) is heard of the efforts of these countries at science and technological advancements, improvements in their educational systems, peace and nation building, environmental and ecological sustainability and transformation, investments in health and economic stability, among others.

There have been organised and common calls from these continents on the Western media to readjust its coverage of them, and desist from presenting the single story which invariably becomes the only story' (Adichie, 2009:3). As postulated by the MacBride Commission (1980), a democratisation of communication to make room for balanced representation is necessary to curb the situation in which the West's angle on issues becomes the accepted angle.

On the other hand, how have the Third World countries portrayed each other in their respective media? Is the coverage in the media of these developing countries about each other any different from what the West has been accused of? This research attempts to investigate news coverage in the media of the so-called developing countries, making India and Africa a case study. It seeks to examine the coverage Africa has received in the Indian print media over two years. How different is the Indian media in its coverage of Africa from the media in the West? Has the Indian media been balanced in terms of its choice of stories and geopolitical jurisdictions on the African continent? This study also attempts to take a look at the news values and practices of the Indian print media while covering Africa.

Random preliminary searches of both online and printed versions of newspapers reveal that not much coverage is given to African countries, and most part of the coverage is dedicated to all the negative things Africa has become synonymous with. This research hopes to investigate whether or not these stereotypes have any links with what appears in the Western media. Is it a case that the African continent has always been presented like that, and that heritage has been passed down from one generation of media to another?

The researchers propose to do a content analysis of stories published by two leading English newspapers in India. Since one of the foci of the study is to investigate the impact of the 2015 India-Africa Summit on media coverage of Africa in the Indian print media, a two-year period - August 2014 to August 2016 - forms the time frame. The researchers hope to examine the focus of the International News' pages of the newspapers, any other pages with Africa-related stories, news or events, the types of stories published on Africa, the space and pages allocated to the publications and how often Africa is covered by these newspapers during these two years.

Significance of the study

Some of the hypotheses on which the study is based are- Africa is painted as a country' of primitive practices, wars and political instability, famine, diseases, poverty and deprivation, corruption, incompetence, etc. in the Indian print media. The Indian media has not been balanced in their coverage of Africa.The West is the focus of the Indian print media in its International news' pages. The news values of the Indian media are no different from that of the West.From the African continent, South Africa is the Indian print media's favourite' due to India's association with the African country through BRICS, an association of five major emerging national economies. The West is still the source of news on Africa.The Indian newspapers usually

have no correspondents in Africa.The India-Africa Summit in October 2015 did result in a significant increase in the number of stories about Africa. The study gains importance as we want to check whether these hypotheses are true or they negate themselves.

Theoretical Framework of Communication and Media Coverage

The issue of representation of the Third World countries in the global media has always been a point of contention among communication scholars across the globe. During the 1950s and 1960s, after the countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America came out of the clutches of the western colonial nations, they had a challenge of raising their voices on the global platforms owing to the dearth of communication infrastructure as a consequence of lack of development and illiteracy. Taking into account this growing gap between the developed and the Third World nations in terms of communication, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) constituted a committee headed by the Irish diplomat, Sean MacBride, to analyse communication problems in modern societies, particularly related to news flow. The commission identified issues like concentration of media, commercialisation, unequal access to information etc (MacBride, 1980:137-164).

In the absence of their own powerful media-houses with global reach and clout, the portrayal of the Third World nations has been highly negative in the Western media. Consequently, as McCombs and Shaw (1968) opine, the media have fashioned what the public sees as important, as well as how it perceives issues, events, places and people (pp. 176- 185). The countries in Latin America, Asia and Africa are thus projected and have become known as spaces with illiteracy, famine, diseases, despotism and poverty. This is in spite of the fact that the prosperity of the developed countries came through the exploitation of resources available in abundance in the so-called third world countries, citing colonialism as a system of under-developing Africa, as well as slave trade as slave trade as a basic factor in African under-development (Walter Rodney, 1972:115-449). According to Sandra Ball Rokeach and Melvin Defleur, proponents of the Media Dependency Theory which emerged in 1976, the availability of media and the extent to which they are easily accessible, as well as the unstable and transformational nature of society, leads to a greater level of dependence on the media among audience (pp. 256-302).

Research Objectives-

1.To describe the type of stories published about Africa in the Indian print media.

2. To assess how balanced the Indian media is as regards its coverage of Africa.

3. To examine the source of stories on Africa in the Indian print media.

4. To assess whether or not the third India-Africa Summit resulted in any increase in the number of stories published about Africa, or anything related to the continent.

5. To do a comparative study of The Hindu and The Times of India to ascertain which one gives more coverage to Africa.

Research Methodology

Population Issues of The Hindu and The Times of India published over a two-year period is the researchers' subject of analysis. Its period spans from August 2014 to August 2016. The choice of period is to help the researchers analyse the impact of the third edition of the India-Africa Summit 2015 on coverage given to Africa in the print media in India. We categorised the various issues and content covered by the papers, measured the space allotted to the various issues, the photos that come along with the stories, pages on which the stories were published, as well as how many stories were published within the period as compared to other related stories covered about other continents or countries.

The researchers' choice of newspapers was based on the following factors:

1. The Hindu and The Times of India have high circulation numbers (1,458,398 and 2,731,334, respectively, Audit Bureau of Circulations, January - June, 2016).

2. The newspapers have a page or two dedicated to international news in almost every edition.

3. Archives of the two selected newspapers - August 2014 to August 2016 – provided for a better analysis, unlike the other newspapers which had a large part of past publications within the time frame of the study unavailable in the library.

Profile of Selected Newspapers

The Times of India (TOI) is the largest selling English language newspaper of India. It is owned and published by Bennett, Coleman & Co. Ltd. In terms of circulation it is the fourth largest newspaper in India. Also, it is one of the oldest English-language newspapers in India still in circulation, with its first edition published in 1838.

The Hindu is one of the largest selling English daily newspapers in India. It enjoys a high level of credibility in the society. It has its headquarters in Chennai. It was started in the year 1878. It is read and followed more in southern India in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, Telangana, Karnataka. In 1995, it became the first Indian newspaper to start its online edition. Currently it is published from 18 locations across nine states.

Data Collection Point

State Central Library (SCL) is not merely a library but a historic monument in itself. This public library was constructed in 1891 by Nawab Imad-ul-Mulk. It was earlier known as the Asafia Library. The building was granted heritage status in 1998 by INTACH, Hyderabad. It is located at Afzal Gunj on the bank of the River Musi. It is one of the best libraries of the state, with more than 500,000 books and magazines. The library is currently digitising various rare books and manuscripts to give them a longer shelf life.

Sampling Technique

Systematic random sampling was used to assemble the sample size for this study. Holding constant August 1, 2014, the researchers analysed the fifth issue of the two newspapers (August 1, 2014 is the first date of the study's sampling period). Every single edition from October 20 to November 1, 2015 was also

added to the sample size to examine whether or not the summit (October 26 – 30, 2015) had any impact on the space allotted to Africa, as well as the types of stories published about Africa in the Indian print media. In total, the researchers analysed 348 issues (174 each) for the two newspapers. For the purpose of a comparative analysis to arrive at which country or continent is given more coverage in the Indian print media, a sub-sampling size of 6 months was done for the two newspapers.

The sub-sampled size comprised July 2015 to January 2016. This sub-sampled size also prioritised the period of the India-Africa Summit (third edition), October 26 – 30, 2015. For this sub-sampling also, every issue from October 20 to November 1, 2015 was analysed. This is to highlight and further reinforce the country/continent which is prominently covered in the Indian print media (The researchers consider the India-Africa Summit an initiative which must result in an increase in the coverage given to Africa). The issues for the sub-sampled size added up to 110 issues (55 for each newspaper). The researchers settled for the systematic random sampling because of the chances that each issue of the two newspapers will be evenly sampled. For the chances that some issues relevant to the study will be missed out, the researchers are using the one week prior and after the Indian-Africa Summit to cater for that.

Data Collection Procedure The study uses the content analysis method, and the researchers collected the issues of The Hindu and that of The Times of India from August 2014 to August 2016. Their quantification system to get a sense of the amount and type of coverage Africa gets in India is based on actual content, space allocated to the stories, number of stories published, pages on which the stories were published and photos used in comparison with other international-based stories.

Research Design

The researchers attempted both qualitative and quantitative analyses of the content (August 2014 - August 2016) of the two newspapers. This is to afford them the opportunity to get a better understanding of the phenomenon under investigation and corroborate the results from both analyses.

Quantitative Analysis The quantitative analysis places emphasis on space allocated in column inches, headline size, page on which the stories were published in the two newspapers over the two-year period in comparison with the overall number of stories which were published in the International news' pages, as well as other pages dedicated to other countries or continents apart from India. The measurement is done in column inches with a standard scale.

Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative content analysis has been defined as —a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005:1278-1288). According to Mayring (2000), qualitative content analysis is —an approach of empirical, methodological controlled analysis of texts within their context of communication, following content analytic rules and step by step models, without rash quantification (pp. 2).Thus, this study focuses on headlines and adjectives used in stringing the stories/opinions to identify core

consistencies, themes and patterns to get a sense of the types of stories published about the continent. It also looks at the meanings which are evoked through the images that accompanied the story.

Unit of Analysis

The researchers studied, as their unit of analysis, editorials, opinions, feature articles, cartoons, special supplements and news items published on the International news' pages, as well as other pages of the two newspapers. For this study, the researchers did not examine book reviews, supplements and reports published by the two newspapers on Africa.

Subject Categories

Going by the objectives of the study, as well as the units of analysis of this study, the researchers looked at the study in relation to stories published on Africa in the India print media in five broad categories. The categories are as follows: 1. Social issues: This category is dedicated to published materials in the two newspapers which bother on social issues that affect Africans on the continent. This will range from unemployment, disease outbreaks, poverty, health issues, accidents, racism and natural disasters 2. Science and Technology: Science and technology focuses on science-related research, the environment and inventions which have made news in the two newspapers in Africa. 3. Politics: The politics category deals with all the items published on political activities on the Continent – corruption, elections, coup d'états and political-based violence. 4. Economics: Trade, inflation, gross domestic product, investments, loans, grants and general economic activities is looked at under this category. 5. India-Africa Summit: This includes anything that was published in relation to the October 2015 India-Africa Summit. 6. Culture: The traditions, customs and social behaviours of a group of people.

Analytical Categories

To get a better sense of the coverage of the two newspapers under study, the researchers decided to analyse the sub-categories that were covered between the two-year period (in the case of the African Continent) and the 6 months sub-sampled analysis for other countries'.

The sub-categories, as well as the category under which they fall are presented below.

1. Social issues Human interest, Violence, Accident, Migration, Environment, Disaster, Health, Honours, Education, Employment, Death, Diseases, Travels, Crime,

2. Politics

 Politics, Terrorism, Diplomacy, Defence, Law, Legislation, Elections, Protests, Discrimination, Anniversary, Coup d'état, Economy, Business, Religion

3. Science & Technology

4. India-Africa Summit

5. Culture

      In all, 31 sub-categories were analysed in the study. To strengthen a particular analytic category, the study uses the typical and extreme/deviant case analysis procedure to substantiate evidence derived from the data collection and analysis phase. While the typical case analysis would cite findings and story examples

which confirm the hypotheses of the study, the extreme/deviant case analysis would include stories that fundamentally negate the hypotheses.

Furthermore, positive, newsworthy stories which were published about Africa in print media, other than that of India, are referred to as evidence to strengthen the claim that the Indian print media focuses largely on negative events and phenomena in Africa.

Table 1—Positive and negative sub-categories

Positive	Negative
Health	Violence
Honours	Accident
Education	Migration
Environment	Disaster
Employment	
Death	Diseases
Travels	Protests
Religion	Terrorism
Politics	Coup d'état
Diplomacy	Discrimination
Defence	Crime
Law	Anniversary
Legislation	
Human interest	
Elections	
Economy	
Business	
Science & Technology	
Culture	

The stories with the positive outlook portrayed respective countries' efforts at curbing crime, improving security, development and capacity-building. These stories also included financial, business and other transactions between countries. Death, for instance, is put as a positive category because it reported the demise of public and important figures in a particular country. On the other hand, the negative ones highlighted the problems and challenges confronting a particular country or continent. It portrayed the vulnerability of citizens of those countries and how their governments are unable to arrive at a solution on their own, but have to resort to aid and assistance from their big brothers in the West.

Limitation of the Study

A major challenge faced by the researchers was the unavailability of a couple of editions of the two newspapers chosen for the study. For example the August 30, 2014 edition of The Times of India and March 15, 2016 of The Hindu were unavailable in the State Central Library, Afzal Gunj. Another significant limitation of this study is that the researchers did not do an in-depth qualitative/textual analysis of the stories published in the two newspapers. They only looked at the headlines and the opening and closing paragraphs of the published items.

Findings and Analysis

Although Asia is extensively covered in terms of the total space, as well as the individual countries on the continent, the United States of America, referred to as the US in this study, received the highest coverage more than any single country after the continent of Asia. Not even the neighbouring countries of India received that much coverage and prominence in the two papers' entire reportage. The US, for instance, had the highest number of human interest stories which reflected the lifestyle, entertainment, man bites dog' type of stories, among others.

One of the reasons Africa continues to receive negative representation in the Indian print media is because they have no correspondents on the continent, as seen by the data on sources of news on Other countries' and Africa, as well as the type of stories published about those countries and Africa. All the stories and items which were analysed from August 2014 - August 2016, with the exception of opinions and editorials which were written by either staff of the two newspapers or columnists based in India, were taken from Western sources - AFP, AP, The Independent, Bloomberg, New York Times News Service, etc. The researchers are of the opinion that having correspondents in Africa will lead to the publishing of a more balanced story on Africa, since beyond the wars, violence, diseases and terrorism, there are a people with celebration, victories, successes and development. The absence of a correspondent (or correspondents), in the estimation of the researchers, also led to the less coverage of the continent. In the Times of India, there was not a single story on June 5, 10, 15, 20, 2016 etc. and in The Hindu on March 5, 10, 20, 25, 2016. This claim is further corroborated by the example of the US in the data collected within the six months frame. The US received the highest coverage in the Times of India because the newspaper has a correspondent there. Additionally, it had the highest number of human interest stories; one of the reasons being the presence of a correspondent there. If Africa is to have a different narrative in the Indian print media, there's the need for correspondents, whether of Indian or African origin. This will contribute to having first-hand access to positive newsworthy stories, other than the negative ones reinforced by republishing what has been published by the West.

Beyond that a greater number of the selected stories are those that highlight Africa in a negative light - terrorism, diseases, crime, migration (people fleeing parts of the continent due to conflicts, violence and wars), as was the case of the two most covered African countries Nigeria (in the Times of India) and Egypt (in The Hindu). Human interest stories which include the positive experiences, emotions and other social and

cultural aspects of the life of Africans are sidelined in the general reportage. Even for those stories (human interest, education, health, etc.) that rarely made it into the newspapers they occupied a very small space under the headline 'Around the world' in the case of the Times of India. The photos that accompanied the stories were relevant: they related to the crux of the story.

An example is the story of the abducted girls in Nigeria; the story came along with a photograph of the girl who had been abducted by Boko Haram. Another aspect of reporting that was lacking in the two newspapers analysed with the time frame of this studies is development stories. There were not many development story of how the continent was rebuilding itself and making efforts towards combating crime and terrorism, diseases and deaths, illiteracy and poverty, science and technology, among others. The few which were published came around the summit period, contained mostly in the editorial and opinion sections and focusing on India's bilateral relations with the continent. The bleak picture presented and reinforced in the newspapers is only reflective of the general narrative and representation the West has propagated over the years. Further, the data collected and analysed revealed that news values of the Indian print media is no different from that of their Western counterparts.

The majority of stories published in the newspapers, especially about Africa, is negative or has a negative tone. Diseases, violence, terrorism, scandals, crime, etc. make up a greater number of the published stories. The claim that bad news sells is very much prevalent in the publications of the two newspapers studied. Out of a total of 185 stories for both the Times of India and The Hindu, based on the sub-categories analysed in this study, 103 of them were negative and only 62 were positive. Although the third edition of the India-Africa Summit 2015 did result in an increase in the number of stories published in Africa, as well as the space accorded these stories, Africa was still not the focus of the two newspapers during the period. The US dominated in the coverage given other countries. Similarly, the summit introduced a change in the type of stories published about Africa. These stories had a positive tone though they still highlighted Africa as a recipient of goodies' from the new big brother, India. They focused on the India-Africa relationship, business negotiations and deals, etc. such as NaMo's Theme: It's time for Africa, Reimagine Africa, India must learn from African experiences to optimise, Engaging Africa: India must go beyond capacity building on the continent, PM reaches out to Africa to push for UN reforms, Engaging with an inspirational Africa, Airtel completes sale of 8300 towers in Africa, Reaching out to Africa. The period also recorded a number of editorials and opinions about Africa. Also, during the summit period a few stories about Africa made their way to the front and 'business' pages of the two newspapers, otherwise stories about Africa were usually on the international news pages. Another thing that stood out in the data collected is that the importance attached to stories from Africa, even the negative ones, is much lower than that accorded other countries. When Paris, for instance, was hit by terrorists in November 2015 and January 2016, the Times of India dedicated more than two pages to the story. The coverage was very extensive, to a large extent. The November 14, 2015 edition of the Times of India flagged the Paris attacks on its front page and pages 14 and 15 of the January 25, 2016 edition of the same newspaper was dedicated to similar terrorist attacks on Paris.

That was not the case for Africa. The kidnappings of schoolgirls by Boko Haram in Nigeria and its aftermath, as well as the outbreak of Ebola in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, etc. was not given much space in the two newspapers. These stories were published on the international news pages in a small space.

In consonance with one of the study's hypotheses, The Hindu gives more coverage to Africa (15041.5, as measured in column inches) than the Times of India (9324.5, also measured in column inches) does, although the Times of India gave more coverage to Africa during the India-Africa Summit (4955 as measured in column inches for the six months sub-sampled frame) than The Hindu (4154). One of the reasons the researchers have assigned to this (based on an unsystematic analysis of the paper) is the Times of India's focus and commitment to covering event-based stories; consequently their extensive coverage of the summit which resulted in the comparatively high percentage of coverage given Africa in the paper during the summit.

To conclude, the researchers would like to state that our hypotheses that the Indian print media, just like the one in the West, doesn't frequently cover Africa, Africa is painted as a country' of primitive practices, wars and political instability, famine, diseases, poverty and deprivation, corruption, incompetence, etc. in the Indian print media, the India-Africa Summit in October 2015 did result in a significant increase in the number of stories about Africa, the news values of the Indian media are no different from that of the West, the West is the source of news on Africa; the two newspapers under study have no correspondents in Africa and The Hindu dedicates more of its coverage space to Africa than The Times of India does were confirmed by this research project.

Conclusion

Overall, this study aimed at investigating how the African continent is represented in the Indian print media. It also hopes to add to the call against stereotypical representation of certain parts of the world in the media, which goes to form the basis of subjective and prejudiced opinions and concepts about these nations. The researchers think that for the India-Africa partnership to stand the test of time and not fade out like other similar partnerships, the role of the media cannot be downplayed. The media have to reassess and readjust their coverage of Africa, being balanced and accurate to a large extent.

Recommendations

The researchers think it is necessary for further studies to be conducted on this topic focusing on Hindi newspapers, since Hindi is the most spoken language in India. It is very crucial to identify any similarities or differences between the coverage of Africa in indigenous newspapers and English language newspapers. For further studies also, an impact assessment of the coverage can be made to establish any link or otherwise between racially-induced attacks on or discrimination of African living in India, for example. It is also very necessary, in further research, for an in-depth qualitative/textual analysis of stories published on Africa. Questions such as the extent to which a story is negative or positive must be further explored to get a better understanding of the representation of Africa in the Indian print media.

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