

Changing face of News Anchoring in India: A study

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Introduction

News Anchor is the person who presents news during the broadcasting of a news program on a news channel. News anchor or a news presenter is the most important aspect for effective delivery of media messages. News anchors act as a link between the audience and the news channel. They also play a vital role for bridging the gaps between different news stories during a news bulletin. They act as a moderator during a news debate, discussion or a talk show. There is a lot of effort put in by a lot of journalists to make one news package ready to be on air and read by the anchor. As assignment desk assigns story to the reporter. Reporter then brings the shots and sots needed for the story. Producer will edit the script and the editor will combine the shots in one sequence, adding the necessary and deleting the unwanted. After all this effort, the anchor will finally read the anchor link and relish the appreciation. Just as actors in a film remain at the front foot delivering the story to the audience, a news anchor too enjoys the advantage of being familiar and recognized by the audience. Classically a news anchor was merely a reader reading the scripts one by one given on the teleprompter. Ever since the 24X7 news culture emerged and the trend of breaking news popularized, the role of an anchor evolved herewith. News anchors nowadays perform for an hour without any script on the teleprompter. In the race of breaking the news first, script is too much to ask for. Single line information by the panel producer into the earpiece and the anchor is expected to manage the rest. It's an extempore filled with action packed reactions flowing in the form of a phone-in and senior journalists joining from the newsroom with deeper insights on the latest news. This has made the job of an anchor quite challenging. Although this is not the only thing that 24X7 news culture has brought in with itself. Aggressive and argumentative debate shows have also emerged over the time. These shows tend to improve the TRPs but discard the social responsibility of the electronic media. Studio journalism, mostly comprising of talk shows, debates and discussions, have panelists to discuss over some ongoing hot issue. Anchors are seen getting hot headed while these discussion programs. The most recent example is Anchor Rahul Kanwal's fight with Nagendra Singh Tomar, Head, Hindu Yuva Vahini on India tv, one of India's leading English news channel. The channel uploaded the video of this fight on their youtube channel with the title saying "Exclusive: Rahul Kanwal & hindu yuva vahini chief fierce fight over moral policing" on 17 april, 2017. The anchor Rahul Kanwal literally asks the guest to get out of the show. He says

“mike utaariye aur jaiye”. Anchor are facing much criticism for shouting at the panelists. Similar criticism is faced by another popular Indian English News Anchor named Arnab Goswami currently the managing editor of Republic Tv. He became popular for being aggressive in his shows “Frankly Speaking” and “The News Hour” on Times now news channel. He resigned on 1 november, 2016. His style of news anchoring is widely criticized. He has been called as the ‘man who killed TV News’ in the cover story by the outlook magazine and ‘Arnab Goswami-style journalism is killing the essence of debates’ posted by the Firstpost on may 28, 2016. The anchor is often seen shouting and not letting the panelists bring their point of view in front portraying only the dominance of the anchor and snubbing the views of the panelists. Media is considered as the fourth estate of the democracy and journalists as the watchdogs hence fair journalism becomes essential. Not only English but many hindi news anchors too are facing a disapproval because of their aggression. Aaj tak, india’s leading hindi news channel anchor Anjana Om kashyap is also known for her aggression on screen. Her fight with AAP spokesperson Ashish khetan was condemned. The video of the debate program is available on aaj tak’s youtube channel with the title “Dilli ke dil mein kya hai: which political party can deliver promises in Delhi? (pt-2) uploaded on 31 jan, 2015. The anchor Anjana Om kashyap said “aap ki aukaat nahi hai ki iss channel ki dehleez par khadhe ho sakien”, “aap ki kya aukaat hai”. Which raises a question on the panelists these debate programs invite. Guests are arbitrarily invited and most of the times a controversial personality is invited for better TRPs and fights on tv. Another popular example is of a panelist slapping another panelist. Hindi news channel news 24 invites Baba Om, self-styled Godman as a panelist where he is slapped by an astrologer lady, Deepa Sharma. The video is uploaded on the official youtube channel of news 24 on sept 14, 2015 with title “studio mein ‘Adharam Yudh’: Deepa Sharma slaps Baba Om on live news”. The TRP game can better be understood by these titles as they only enhance the violence in the shows to attract more eyeballs. Most of these fights are uploaded with the violence being as the headline everywhere forgetting the actual topic of the debate for which these panelists were called for. The news channels highlight these fights as they bring TRPs. This raises a question over the quality of journalism being produced in the country. Some prominent news channels have strongly stood against violent debates. NDTV uploaded a promo for their channel calling itself as “India’s only non-tabloid news network”. This obviously accuses the other news channels being tabloid. Term tabloid needs to be understood here. It is widely attached to yellow journalism. This type of approach in journalism is considered away from objectivity and close to sensationalism, creating news for the purpose of attracting audience only. Aggressive talk shows exclude media’s purpose of contributing positively towards building up a better society.

Significance of the study

The study provides a deeper insight in the emerging trend of studio journalism and its effects on the essence of fair journalism. The study will also elaborate the contribution of news anchors in building the credibility of a news channel. The researcher tried to bring out the effects of domineering news content of talk shows on the viewers. How the viewer’s behavior is affected by such augmentative news programs. The study will analyze the relevance

of studio journalism by finding its cause. The emergence of 24X7 news culture and the challenges lead by it. How a news reader became an anchor is studied.

Objectives of the study

- To examine the contribution of a news anchor in a news channel.
- To study the effect of aggressive anchoring on the fundamental nature of journalism.
- To analyze the content of debate and talk shows.
- To study the effect of argumentative talk show on the audience.

Hypotheses

- News anchors are the face of the news channel and have a major role in establishing the credibility of the news channel.
- Aggressive anchoring is killing the essence of fair journalism.
- Debate discussions have become more about personal attacks between the guests and the anchor rather than coming down to a conclusion.
- Quarrelsome debates are making the society more argumentative and lesser constructive.

Research Methodology

Researcher studied the changing face of anchoring in India by content analysis of top Hindi and English news channels of the country. Special reference was given to the studio journalism comprising talk shows and debates with panelists.

Open-focused interviews will be conducted with the top anchors. Researcher conducted survey based study analyzing the impact of aggressive talk shows on the viewers. How such shows impact the audiences.

Review of Literature

The news culture got extremely changed after Ted Turner's Cable News Network (CNN) decided to double its new cycle in 1980, by adopting a policy to broadcast immediate and important news content in the late evening hours, every day. CNN's decision gave media houses a new concept of 24-hour news culture, meaning the investigation, reporting and broadcasting of news content for 24-hours of the day.

The concept got further boost in 2000 when the CNN network started broadcasting live and updated coverage of the Iraq war, letting people tune in the channels during nights to get updated information.

Since then, the news outlets are flooding viewers with a constant flow of information, and people, who once had to wait 24 hours for reading the news and views in the published newspapers, had started getting breaking information and scoops, as early as the happenings.

During that time, India too was witnessing a profound change in news culture with private channels replacing the country's oldest news broadcaster—Doordarshan. The public service broadcaster was famous for running prime-time news bulletin twice a day but with private channels, people soon started liking to view news at every minute of the day.

Initially when the private news channels had started emerging in India, their prime motive was keep the keep informed and updated with true, accurate, fact-based and investigative stories. The news reporters and editors used to prefer ground-based reporting, with investigation of facts and first-hand experiences of eyewitnesses and officials. However, the scenario completely changed when the news organizations starting focusing on TRPs rather than the quality journalism. The 24-hour news cycle, whose literal meaning was to investigate, report, and broadcast quality news content for the entire day and night, further promoted the studio journalism.

The ground-reporting turned to studio-based reporting with even the experienced journalists, editors and news readers preferring recorded news programs. The studio journalism compromises the true objectives and ethics of journalism. Not only this, the news anchors or news readers, who were well versed and effective orators, also lost their importance and were replaced by the young-looking girls. The news channels, with glamorous-looking news anchors, also changed the news content of the channels.

Indian journalism changed completely after the concept of 24-hour news culture came into existence. With the emergence of private TV channels and their focus on increasing the profits through TTRPs, the news content of the channels changed from simple and effective news bulletins to 'fast, aggressive and dramatic' news bulletins. To keep the content running for around the clock, the channels also shifted their focus from live ground reporting to recorded TV shows, talk shows, debate shows, documentaries and a lot more advertisements and promotion content.

The content of the TV channel depends on various aspects, including editorial policies, financial status, TRPs, demand of advertisers and audience and others. With eyes on profits, the focus of the channel owners remains on increasing viewership and cutting the programming cost.

Since most of the news shows are now recorded or broadcasted from studios, the importance of news anchors has increased manifold. To attract more audience, the anchors are adopting creative and attractive style of news presenting. Due to changed content, the news anchors are now using aggressive tone. The news is now being sensationalized while anchors believe that their loud and aggressive talk shows will attract more audience. However, the quality of the news content has significantly hampered because of the news presentation style.

Many researches revealed that most of the Hindi TV channels preferred young female news anchors. The beauty of the anchors is judged more than their speaking skills, experience and knowledge in the field of journalism.

However, in the prime time news shows, especially the news bulletins, the shows are dominated by male anchors with dominating speaking skills, it was learnt.

The English channels, however, focused more on presentation skills of the anchors and also preferred to hire male anchors for the prime time shows. The researchers also concluded that the anchors of English TV channels have better presentation skills, command over their language, physical appearance, knowledge of the subject and their objectivity, when compared to anchors of the Hindi channels. It was also concluded that the Hindi TV Channels compromise the ethics and accuracy of journalism due to their profit-making ideologies, and on the other hand, the news content was far better presented in the English channels.

Conclusion

News Anchors are one the most important face of a News Channel. They help in establishing a recognizable image for the News channel. There is a significant change in the news presentation style of the contemporary news anchors. There is strong image of the news anchors that is more popular in the current times. The recent change has been observed where we see anchors being dominant and raise the tone of their voices especially during the debate shows. The content analysis of the news channels done by the researcher signifies that news anchors get aggressive during talk shows. There is a significant difference between how anchors delivered news in the yester years and how they deliver news now. The talk shows have a large number of guests invited who participate in this aggressive showcase of expression and voice. The new anchors' over dramatic, aggressive and sarcastic way of delivering the information is also obstructing the natural flow of the information, which is based on spontaneity and originality of the opinions. Even if the audience and other news anchors applause the dramatic and aggressive anchoring style, experts feel that this concept will further result in degradation of journalism ethics.

Experts also believe that when news anchors interrupt the speakers in the debate or talk shows, a tense and quarrelsome situation occurs, not only for the speakers but also for the viewers.

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