

MEDIA TODAY - PUBLIC PERCEPTION

(With special reference to News Channels)

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ABSTRACT

Media is one of the most effective pillars of democracy. It is obliged to engage in ethical reporting as well. Thus, the biggest challenge for the reporters is to diligently follow the principles of journalism in the true sense of them. The news media is a powerful tool because it provides the public with crucial information, but more importantly the manner in which news pieces are presented can determine how viewers form their opinions about different public issues. The news channels must act in public interest and should not be guided by the whimsicals of raising the TRP and circulation of their newspapers. Trends of engaging in irresponsible & intrusive reporting should be curbed at any cost. The purpose of the study was to investigate the news-media credibility perception with respect to news coverage by various news channels. To fulfill the purpose a specifically designed questionnaire was administered upon a purposively selected sample of 30 professionals.

The growing popularity of media as a communication medium has resulted in the media sector undergoing a rapid transformation. The Zee channel that started in October 1992 catalyzed the industry into a high growth spiral. Zee's success tempted several other private players to enter the business, resulting in overcrowding. Apart from all the Zee channels, other major satellite channels avidly watched by viewers are Star TV, Sony TV, Ten sports, ESPN. The primary source of income for media operators is advertisements. This revenue is directly co-related with the reach and viewership of a channel. Any channel's popularity depends on good quality programs, which is the software content. The business requires enormous initial investment in programs and revenues follow only with a time lag after the channel receives a minimum viewer acceptance. At present Doordarshan continues to get majority share as far as advertisement revenues are concerned because of its reach in rural as well as urban India.

In general, "media" refers to various means of communication. Mass media denotes a section of the media specifically designed to reach a large audience. The term was coined in the 1920s with the advent of nationwide radio networks, mass-circulation newspapers and magazines.

Over the decades, television has been one of the most effective and powerful tool of information, education and entertainment. TV news Channels have always seen a major source of information-cum-entertainment. However with changing times there has been a radical shift in the pattern of infotainment format. People in India prefer to watch those news channels which are able to inform and entertain at a same time. News channels educate readers on current events. People who listens the news are well aware of global and local issues.

As a source of news, the news channel is almost indispensable to those whose thirst for knowledge is insatiable. They contain news on events in distant corners of the earth.

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News channels play a very important role in modern society. They supply us the latest news and keeps us informed about the changing events of the world. They tell us not only about our own country but also about the whole world. They discuss social economic, political, and literary and scientific topics. They keep on increasing our knowledge regarding every walk of life. The especial editions include articles about politics, culture and science. These articles helps the readers keep their information up to date.

The objective of news is to inform the audience. It's the job of all the news media to tell people what's going on in their community - locally, nationally or globally. In this sense, the news media provide a valuable public service. It provides different type of news which includes general news, political news, business news, regional news, entrainment news, niche-oriented news (health, science, and technology), crime reporting, and sensationalism.

But the media are also businesses - and like all businesses they have to make money to keep going. Audiences today can get news and information from many different sources. This increased competition is putting pressure on media outlets to attract advertising dollars to keep them running. This is especially true for privately owned media, but it's also a concern for publicly owned media (such as CBC) that need to attract audiences and ad revenues to survive.

Media outlets have to cater to their audiences, and they compete with one another to provide what they think their "customers" want. This can certainly mean honest and factual news reporting. But it can also mean shorter, more exciting stories; flashy, sexy, or shocking images; crime, death, disaster, tragedy; confrontation, violence, controversy; or anything else that might attract viewers or readers. When taken to extremes (as in the "tabloid" newspapers or television shows), "news" can become just another type of sensational entertainment.

Research Methodology

In the present study, an attempt has been made to study the need of media and find out the viewer's perception about the quality of news provided by the various news channels.

Research Layout

Target Group: Professionally qualified majors specially Chartered Accountants, MBAs, Doctors, Professors/ Lecturers & Engineers.

Target Area/Geographical Coverage: Jaipur (Rajasthan)

Sampling Procedure: Judgement Sampling

Sample Size: 30 respondents

Research Approach: Survey Method

Research Instrument: Structured Questionnaire

Data Analysis Tools: Chi Square test, t- test, Weighted Average Method, Pie Chart, Bar graphs

Objectives of the Study

- To study the need of media in recent times.
- To study that media is working more for TRP rather than reality.
- To know the types of news, language and news channel preference of the viewer.
- To see that brand image of news channels and its effect on the TRP of other news channels.

Research Hypothesis

A hypothesis is a tentative generalization about the subject of enquiry, the validity of which is to be tested by undertaking research. The following are the main hypothesis of the proposed research.

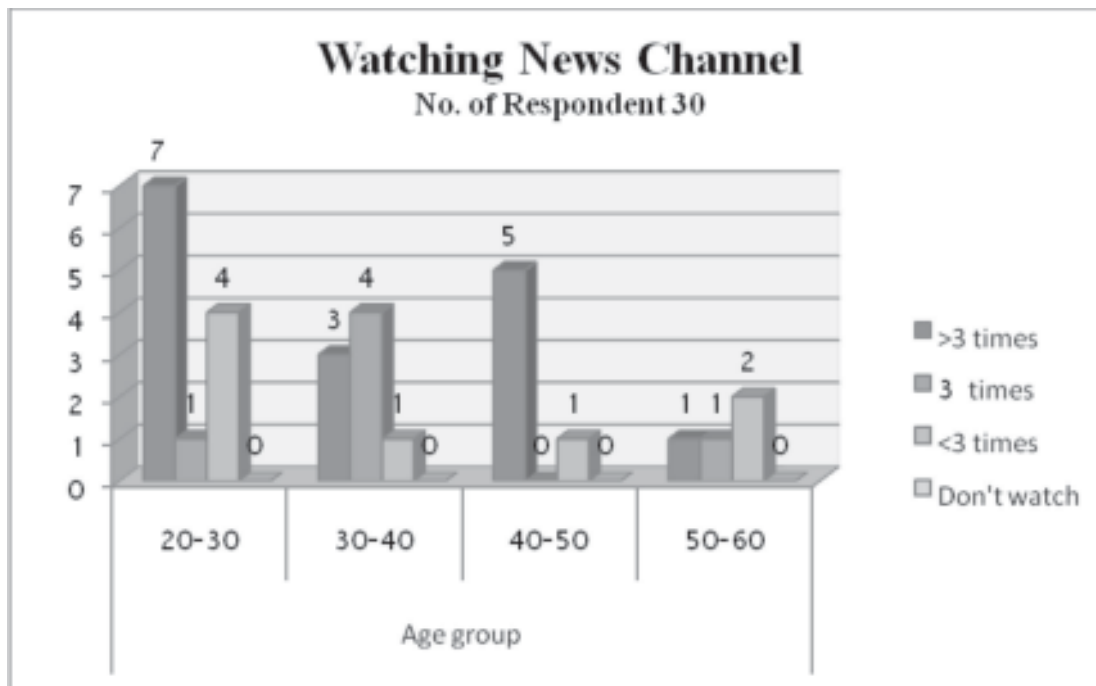
- Viewer preference towards news channels is independent of services provided by them.
- News channels are not reliable sources of news.
- Frequency of watching news channel is independent of age.

Data Analysis & Interpretation

The collected primary data was completely tabulated with the help of tables and percentages. From the table, information was analyzed and relevant inferences were drawn and wherever necessary graphical representation of data has been done. Chi-Square Test (at 5% significant level) is used in examining the relationship between two or more variables. In the present study this test has been used for the analysis of the survey conducted and for measuring the association of attributes.

Frequency of watching news channels in a day

Age	Option				Total
Group	>3 times	3 times	<3 times	Don't watch at all	
20-30	7	1	4	0	12
30-40	3	4	1	0	8
40-50	5	0	1	0	6
50-60	1	1	2	0	4
Total	16	6	8	0	30
Response in favour (%)	53.33%	20%	26.67%	0	



The table above shows that people prefer to watch news channels frequently. Maximum number of respondents watches news three or more than three times daily. This shows TV news Channels are a major source of information-cum-entertainment for the people of all age groups.

Null Hypothesis (Ho): Frequency of watching news channel is independent of age.

Alternative Hypothesis (Ha): Frequency of watching news channel is dependent of age.

$$\chi^2 = \frac{\sum (O-E)^2}{E} = 9.54497$$

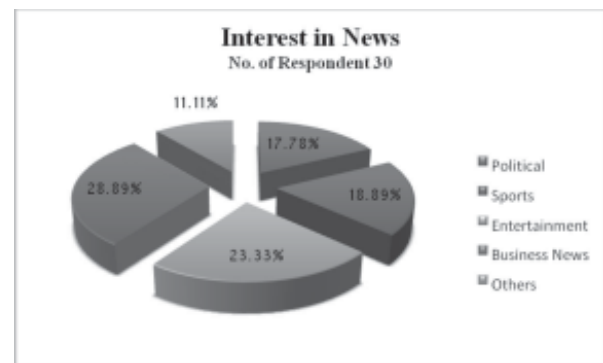
Degree of freedom= 9

For degree of freedom 9, $\chi^2_{0.05} = 16.9$ which is greater than calculated value. Since the calculated value is less than tabulated value, the null hypothesis is accepted and alternative hypothesis is rejected. Hence by the application of chi square test we draw the inference that frequency of watching news channel is independent of age. People irrespective of their age like to watch news channels and make themselves aware of global and local issues.

Types of news preferred

The news is more than a category of information or a form of entertainment; it is an awareness of the happening of our society creating security. The different types of news include general news, political news, business news, regional news, entertainment news, niche-oriented news (health, science, and technology), crime reporting, and sensationalism. Weighted average method has been applied to analyze the responses of viewers. The table above shows that business news remains a popular type of news as business affects our lives and our livelihoods. There is a huge demand for entertainment news also while political news occupies a small place in the garden of news.

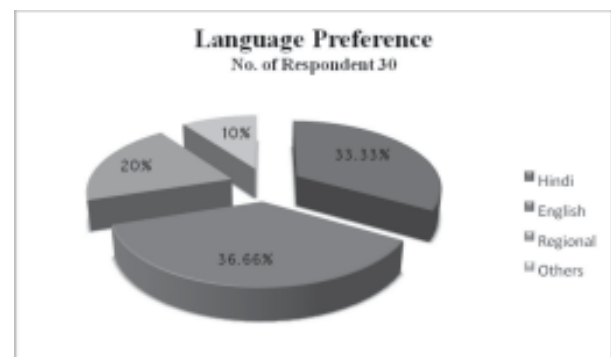
Options	Total	Rank
Political	17.78%	4 th
Sports	18.89%	3 rd
Entertainment	23.33%	2 nd
Business News	28.89%	1 st
Others	11.11%	5 th



Language preference:

News channels are available in a range of languages, representing the diversity and linguistic complexity of a continental-size nation state. Language plays a vital role in news consumption. Weighted average method was applied to analyze the language preference of viewers and it was found that English language news channels are preferred to be watched more as these are perceived to be the providers of superior and standard news coverage and don't indulge in sensationalism. Hindi news channel attracts good number of viewers while few prefer to watch news in their regional languages.

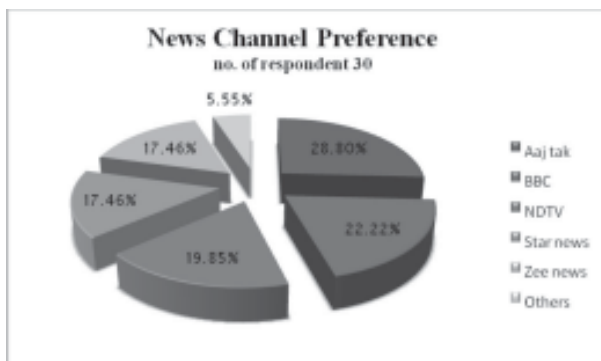
Options	Total	Rank
Hindi	33.33%	2 nd
English	36.66%	1 st
Regional	20%	3 rd
Others	10%	4 th



News Channel Preference

People in India prefer to watch those news channels which are able to inform and entertain at a same time. Aaj Tak was ranked first among all the news channels. The reason could be as it discusses social, business, economic, political, literary and scientific topics. 22.2% watch BBC and 19.85% prefer NDTV as the channels presents a mix of rolling entertainment bulletins and specialized shows covering topics from crime to cricket. While Star News & Zee News channels are preferred slightly less as compared to other news channels because of the monotonous nature.

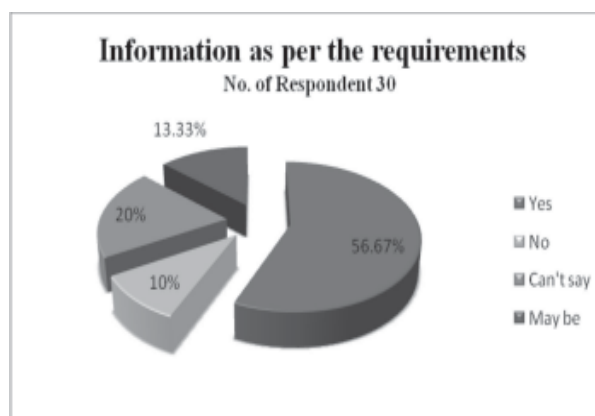
Options	Total	Rank
Aaj tak	28.80%	1 st
BBC	22.22%	2 nd
NDTV	19.85%	3 rd
Star news	17.46%	4 th
Zee news	17.46%	4 th
Others	5.55%	5 th



Information given by news channels is sufficient:

People prefer to watch those news channels which are able to inform and entertain at the same time. From the responses received it is clear that almost 57% of the people feel that the information provided by news channels is sufficient and answer most of their questions which start with why, where, who, What When etc. 13% of the respondents are not so sure about the adequacy of information while 10% believe that the news channels still have to work hard to improve the quality and accuracy of information.

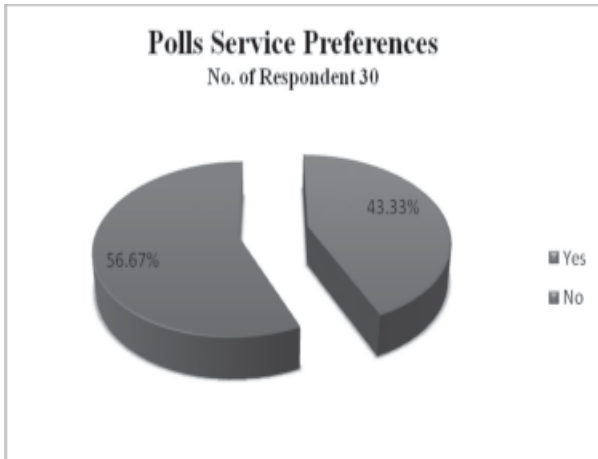
Options	Preferences	Preference %
Yes	17	56.67 %
No	3	10 %
Can't say	6	20 %
May be	4	13.33 %
Total	30	100 %



Poll services conducted by news channels:

An opinion poll is a survey of public opinion from a particular sample. Opinion polls are usually designed to represent the opinions of a population by conducting a series of questions and then extrapolating generalities in ratio or within confidence intervals but 57% of the respondents do not prefer the poll services conducted by the news channels. Viewers showed a lack of interest in this service.

Options	Preferences	Preference %
Yes	13	43.33 %
No	17	56.67 %
Total	30	100 %



Sting operation correctness

The word “sting” is a synonym for the expression “set a trap to catch a crook”. A Sting Operation is designed to catch a person committing a crime by means of deception. A complicated confidence game is planned and executed with great care. Sting Operation is an information-gathering exercise which looks for facts that are not easy to obtain by simple requests and searches, or those that are actively being concealed, suppressed or distorted. The survey result shows that 70% of the viewers find it correct doing sting operation as it is a nice way of uncovering information.

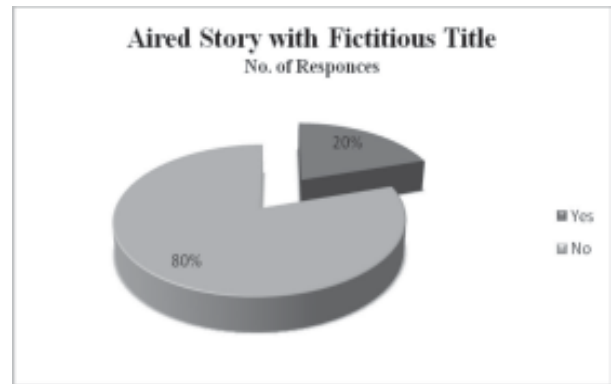
Options	Preferences	Preference %
Yes	21	70 %
No	9	30 %
Total	30	100 %



Aired Stories with fictitious titles correctness

The response received from viewers shows that 80% of them do not appreciate the telecast of aired stories with fictitious titles by news channels. They find it fake and a way to create sensationalism.

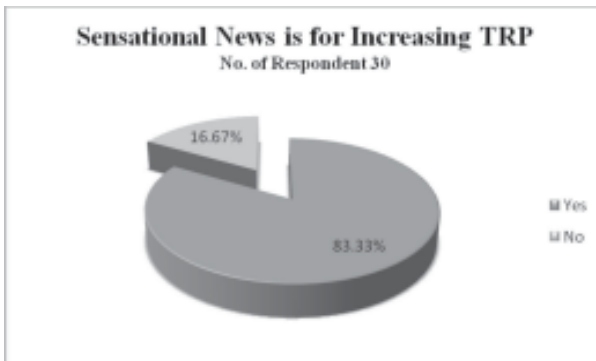
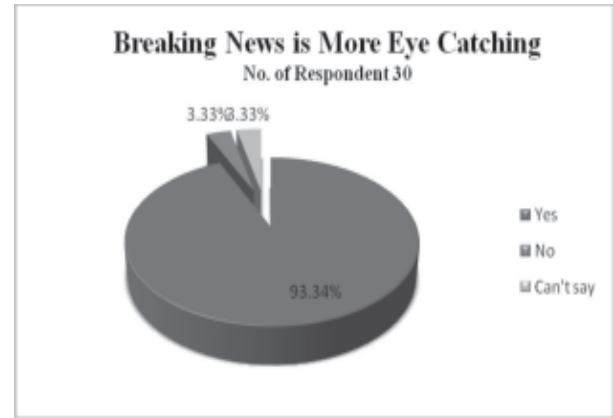
Options	Preferences	Preference %
Yes	6	20 %
No	24	80 %
Total	30	100 %



Sensational news for increasing TRP:

A Target Rating Point (TRP) is a measure of the purchased television rating points representing an estimate of the component of the target audience within the gross audience. TRP is TV viewership rating points given every Friday to the channels by TV Audience Measurement (TAM) media research. Such points are based on the actual channel viewing by the TV viewers and are recorded through the 5500 People/Metre instruments mounted on cable-TV homes across more than 75 cabled-towns in India. That means the instrument is able to digitally record as to which particular channel is being viewed at a particular point of time and for how long in such TV homes. But nowadays news channels are creating news to increase TRP. The 83% viewers strongly feel that that news channels create sensational news for increasing TRP. They play with ethics, morals and principles. The competition amongst channels is so fierce across the globe that what eventually matters is laying your hands on any story that attracts eyeballs and which, in turn, translates into ratings.

Options	Preferences	Preference %
Yes	25	83.33 %
No	5	16.67 %
Total	30	100 %



Breaking news is more eye-catching than regular news :

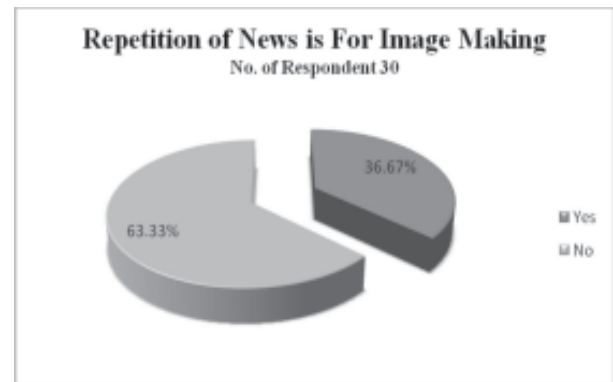
All the news channels in India had one common phrase plastered across their graphics: Breaking News. Breaking news or special report is a current event that broadcasters feel warrants the interruption of scheduled programming in order to report its details. Breaking news is more eye-catching than regular news, this statement is supported by 93% viewers.

Options	Preferences	Preference %
Yes	28	93.34 %
No	1	3.33 %
Can't say	1	3.33 %
Total	30	100 %

Repetition of news is good for image making :

Maximum number of respondents feels that repetition of news is not good as it creates boredom. Viewers do not like to watch the same news again and again.

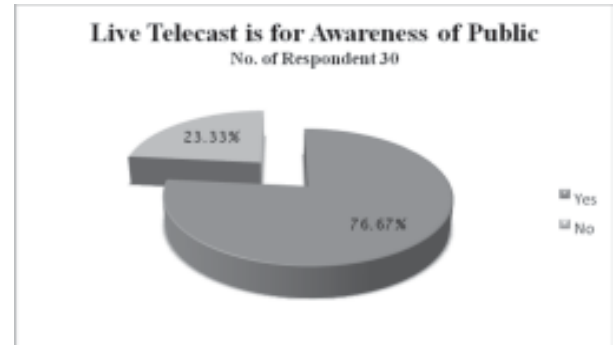
Options	Preferences	Preference %
Yes	11	36.67 %
No	19	63.33 %
Total	30	100 %



Live telecast of terrorist operation is for awareness of public :

Maximum number of respondents appreciates the live telecast of terrorist operations. They find it an appropriate process to educate the public about terrorists and their fight going on with police.

Options	Preferences	Preference %
Yes	23	76.67 %
No	7	23.33 %
Total	30	100 %



Viewer's opinion about the overall services provided by the news channels :

News Channels	μ (Assumed Mean)	X(Mean)	σ (Std. Deviation)	t(calculated)	T(tabular) 5% level of significance
Aaj Tak	3	4.13	0.72	8.59	1.699
BBC	3	3.96	0.93	5.65	1.699
NDTV	3	3.8	1.04	4.21	1.699
Star News	3	3.53	0.98	2.962	1.699
Zee News	3	3.6	1.01	3.253	1.699

On the basis of 'formulated research hypothesis', in all five null/alternate hypothesis were created for the five news channels and tested using t-test(at 5% level of significance) for the purpose of analysis and discussion. The null hypothesis for all the news channels were rejected since the calculated value of "t" was greater than tabulated value(1.699). The competition among news channels is fierce across the globe. The Likert Scale rating also showed that Aaj Tak is considered to be the best news channel by public in terms of the overall services provided by it. People prefer Aaj Tak, BBC and NDTV for the news proximity and timeliness.

Viewer's opinion about the reliability of services of various news channels:

News Channels	μ (Assumed Mean)	X(Mean)	σ (Std. Deviation)	t(calculated)	T(tabular) 5% level of significance
Aaj Tak	3	3.73	0.96	4.16	1.699
BBC	3	4.2	0.83	7.91	1.699
NDTV	3	3.73	0.99	4.038	1.699
Star News	3	3.5	0.88	3.11	1.699
Zee News	3	3.6	0.91	3.61	1.699

The t values reflected that BBC, NDTV, Aaj Tak are the most reliable sources of news in public opinion. In all five null/alternate hypothesis were created for the five news channels and tested using t-test (at 5% level of significance) for the purpose of analysis and discussion. The null hypothesis for all the news channels were rejected since the calculated value of “t” was greater than tabulated value(1.699). Rejection of null hypothesis for all the news channels shows that public have faith in news channels & they still believe that media cares about the responsibility that it has towards the public. They consider that media is ‘with’ and ‘for’ the people and serve them.

Summing Up

Indian media has played a critical role for stirring up the conscience of the people, and bringing forth evil in the society. Media has achieved greater heights with the latest technology and it has become a cardinal part in the lives of everyone. Today the absence of media in our lives is something next to impossible. The presence of media in our society assures us of justice in every way. The objective of news is to inform the audience & we have only few news channels which give us meaningful information but that is not enough. We have so many channels which run 24*7; still we don’t get all the information which is related to the society or which can contribute in the growth of the society. News channels concentrate mainly on TRP. At any cost they want to be no.1, so that they get more money. Journalist doesn’t want to come out from their comfort zone and take pain of getting meaningful and productive news. English language news channels are generally preferred. Media should avoid sensationalism at any cost. It should realize that investigation journalism involves more than just sting operations or aired stories. The quality of impartial reporting must be enhanced. They should promote meaningful and productive things. The media needs to restructure itself the way it was because it has come on a wrong track. The news channel should take the whole sole charge of eliminating corruption and regaining the trust of a common man in its working and effectiveness. And our duty lies in enforcing the independence of media in every possible way and to support media even in times of adversity.

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