



WWJMRD 2018; 4(3): 190-194
www.wwjmr.com
International Journal
Peer Reviewed Journal
Refereed Journal
Indexed Journal
UGC Approved Journal
Impact Factor MJIF: 4.25
E-ISSN: 2454-6615

R. Venkatesh Aravindh
Doctoral Research Scholar,
Department of Journalism and
Mass Communication, Periyar
University, Salem, Tamil
Nadu, India

Correspondence:

R. Venkatesh Aravindh
Doctoral Research Scholar,
Department of Journalism and
Mass Communication, Periyar
University, Salem, Tamil
Nadu, India

Sensationalism of News by Dailies in Tamil Nadu

R. Venkatesh Aravindh

Abstract

Newspapers happen to be one of the oldest forms of medium of communication on the world. As far as India is concerned, it is to be noted that newspapers happens to be one of the traditional forms of media after radio. It is to be noted that newspapers revolutionized various aspects in the country and have had a say through the colonial period and especially in the freedom struggle movement where it played a massive role in reaching the masses. Newspapers also had more power in getting across various aspects to the people for serving as an information resource, spreading awareness and informing them of other aspects including policies and schemes made for the people by both the State and the Central governments. It is also to be noted that newspapers slowly and steadily made progress to reach a status of being a very reliable form of media among people cutting across age, ethnics, caste, religion etc. However, it is to be seen that they were not achieved without challenges and that is why they have a formidable say in the history and culture of our country. The advent of internet and new media has made the traditional media outlets especially newspapers to adopt newer means and avenues to get their content across to the masses. The current research study looks at the aspect of how newspapers are indulging in unhealthy practices by giving more coverage to news items of very less importance wherein there lie abundant news items that need more attention and coverage among six major dailies in the state of Tamil Nadu.

Keywords: Newspapers, Print media, Coverage, Importance, Sensationalism,

1. Introduction

1.1 Role and function of Media

Habermas (1974) concept of the 'public sphere' gives credence to this notion of the media. He supports the expectation that the mass media should facilitate pluralist debate and the free formation of public opinion. Therefore, a liberal pluralist theory of the media will support a free and independent press, which operates in the role of the public watchdog, while also playing the consumer representation role. With the media operating in the marketplace, it is assumed to thereby reflect popular concerns and finally performing an informational role. This amplifies the media's role in a democratic setting. Gentikow, B. (2007) in their article focussed on how media could function in terms of contributing to the development of new literacies and new cultural techniques.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Newspapers and Social Impact

the early 1920s saw the newspaper industry peak with a household penetration (average daily circulation measured as a percent of households) of 130% (Meyer, 2004) and started to show a steady decline ever since. Another landmark decline in circulation is experienced in the early 1950s when household penetration first went under 100% (Wolff, 2007). Carey & Kreiling (1974) support that there's a basic cultural disposition to seek symbolic experience that is "once immediately pleasing and conceptually plausible" (p. 242). Lucena (2010) quotes Postman & Paglia (2007) that literacy poses a challenge for readers, making them dwell in a realm that is "unnaturally silent" and leading to a less physically active life and less developed senses.

3. Objective of The Study

- ✓ To identify the events and issues' which were given less importance by newspapers in Tamil Nadu?

reportage given to news articles issues. The period of study is two months January and February 2018 among six newspapers viz. The Hindu, Times of India, Indian Express, Dinathanthi, Dinakaran and Dinamalar.

4. Methodology

The research study adopts Qualitative Content Analysis method to examine the kind of coverage and

5. Analysis

Table 1: Total No. of Articles

Category/ Newspapers	The Hindu	Times of India	Indian Express	Dinathanthi	Dinakaran	Dinamalar	Total
No. of articles	101	102	80	96	97	70	546

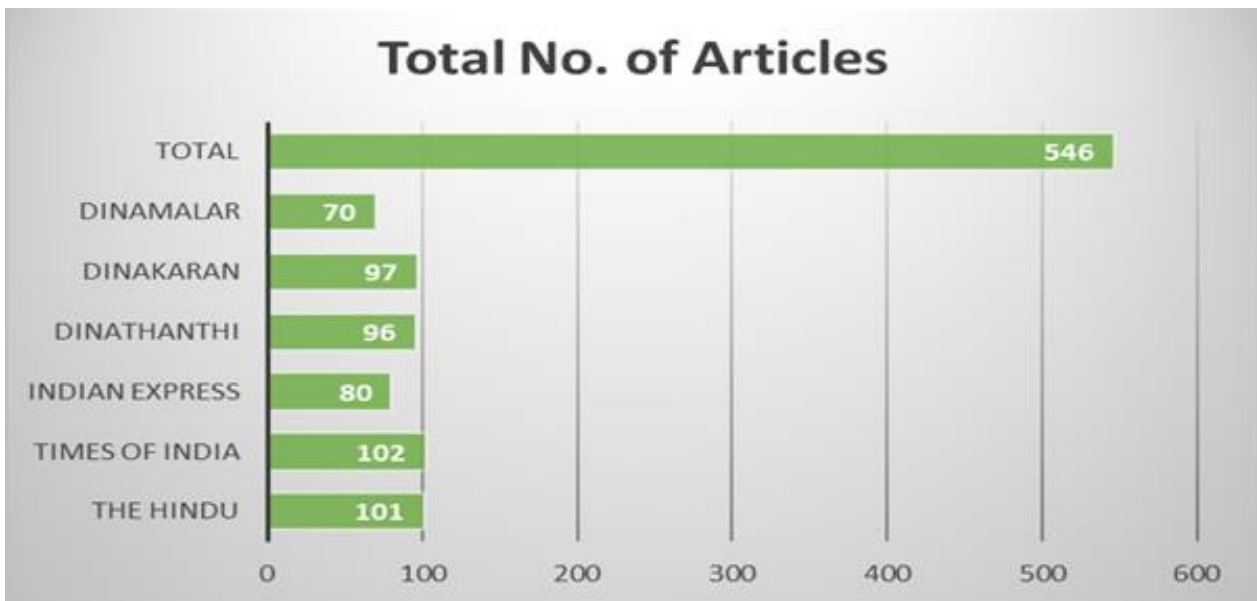


Fig.1:

Table 2: Articles by Story Type

Newspapers	The Hindu	Times of India	Indian Express	Dinathanthi	Dinakaran	Dina Malar	Total
News	30	24	18	38	30	28	168
Features	22	16	18	18	22	20	166
Letter to the Editor	20	24	16	24	22	20	126
Editorial	17	11	15	13	16	14	86

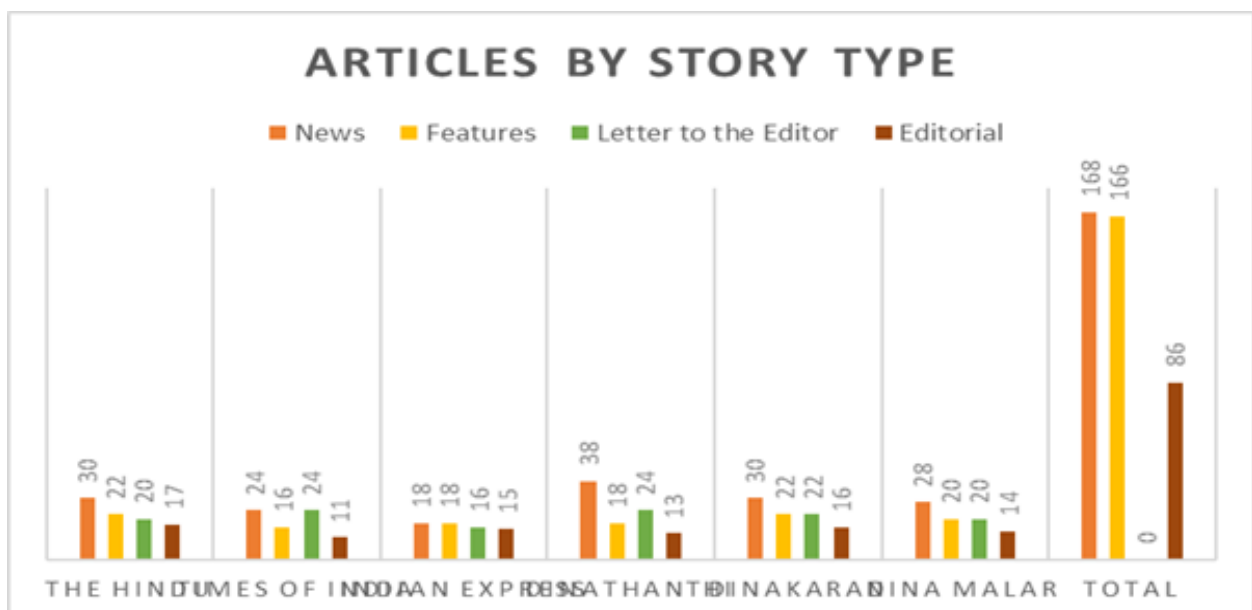


Fig.2:

Table 3: Articles by Length

Newspapers	The Hindu	Times of India	Indian Express	Dinathanthi	Dinakaran	Dina Malar	Total
Number of Words	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
>800	20	6	6	12	10	8	62
400-799	24	9	7	8	12	10	70
150-399	24	16	13	34	40	12	139
100-149	20	24	17	14	36	30	141
<100	21	22	11	30	26	24	134

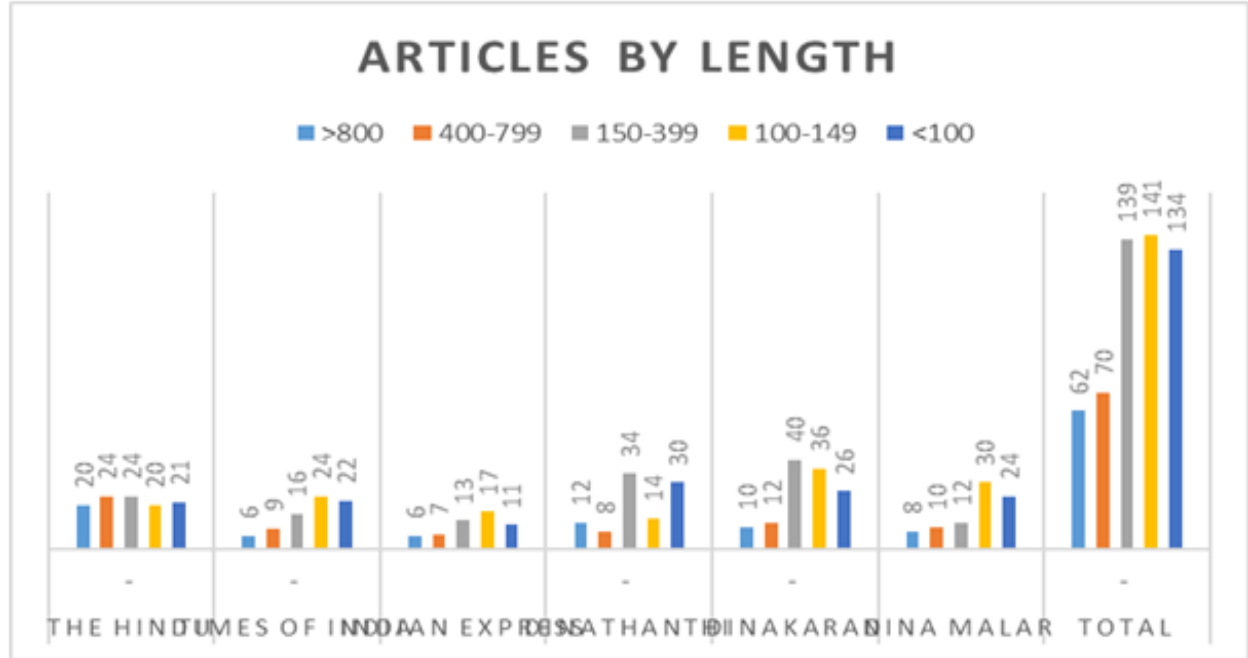


Fig.3:

Table 4: Tone of the Headline

Tone of News Headline	The Hindu	Times of India	Indian Express	Dinathanthi	Dinakaran	Dinamalar	Total
Sensational	19	20	14	25	30	15	123
Titillation	16	21	15	27	24	12	115
Trivialization	22	20	12	33	28	5	122
Exaggeration	46	39	30	47	38	33	186

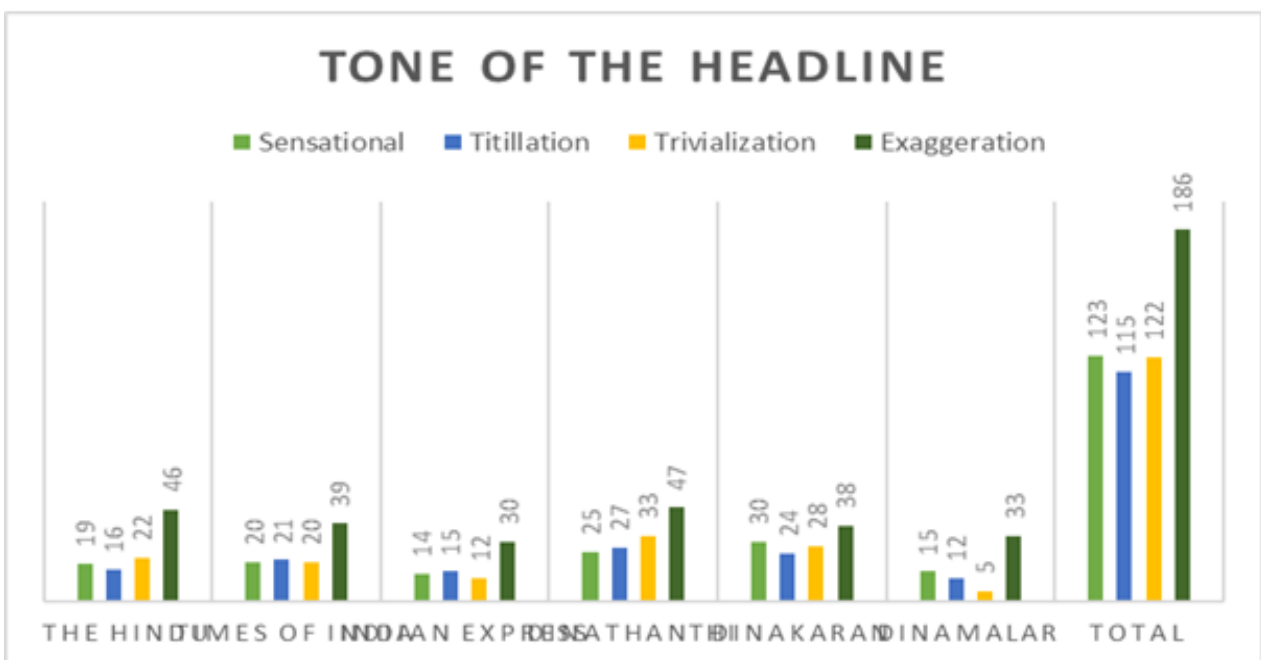


Fig. 4:
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Table 5: Tone of the Lead

Tone of Lead	The Hindu	Times of India	Indian Express	Dinathanthi	Dinakaran	Dinamalar	Total
Sensational	20	22	27	16	24	21	130
Titillation	9	8	22	7	8	25	79
Trivialization	6	8	23	13	17	20	87
Victimization	12	22	24	4	4	25	91
Exaggeration	12	20	24	6	6	14	72
Neutral	13	18	22	9	10	13	87

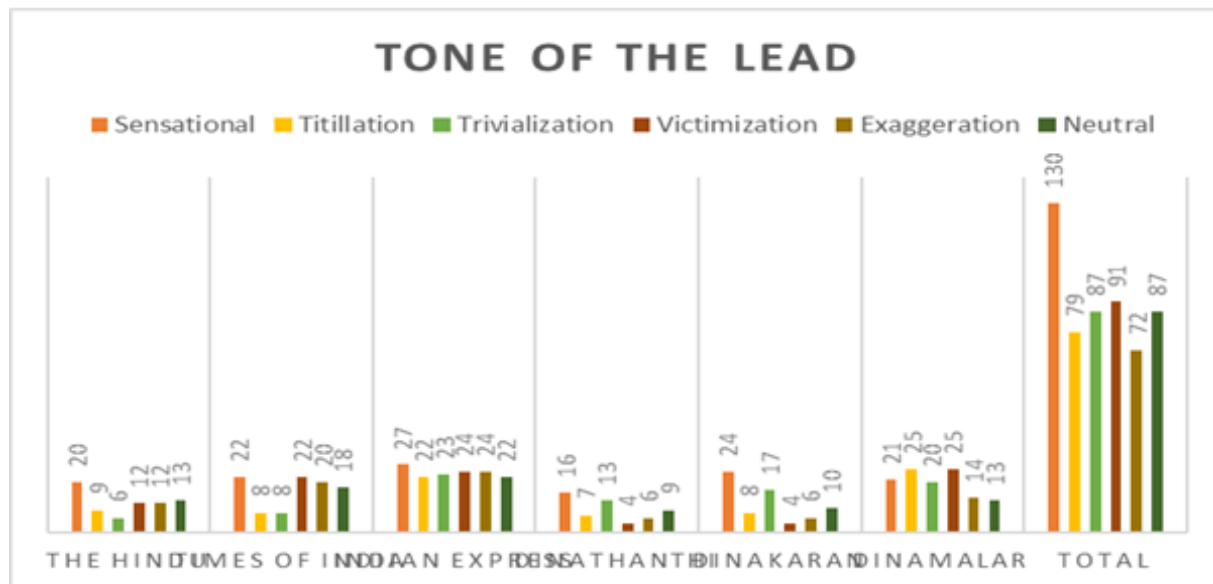


Fig.5:

Findings

- There were a total of 546 articles across the six dailies. The Hindu had 101 articles, Times of India had the highest with 102 articles and Indian Express had 82 articles. Dinathanthi had 96 articles, Dinakaran had 97 articles and Dinamalar was the least with 70 articles.
- When enquired about the type of news story, there were a total of 30, 24 and 18 news articles in The Hindu, Times of India and Indian Express and 38, 30 and 28 news articles in Dinathanthi, Dinakaran and Dinamalar respectively. There were a total of 22, 16 and 18 features in The Hindu, Times of India and Indian Express and 18, 22 and 20 features in Dinathanthi, Dinakaran and Dinamalar respectively. There were a total of 168 news articles, 166 features, 126 letters to the editor and 86 editorials across six dailies.
- As regards to the length of the articles, there were a total of 20, 6 and 6 articles which were more than 800 words in length in The Hindu, Times of India and Indian Express and 12, 10 and 8 news articles in Dinathanthi, Dinakaran and Dinamalar respectively. There were a total of 62 articles which were more than 800 words in length across the six dailies. 70 articles were between 400-799 words in length across the six dailies. 139 articles were 150-399 words in length across the six dailies. 141 news articles were between 100-149 as the highest across the six dailies. 134 news articles were below 100 words across the six dailies.
- With regards to the tone of the headline, there were 19,

20 and 14 headlines in The Hindu, Times of India and Indian Express and 25, 30 and 15 headlines in Dinathanthi, Dinakaran and Dinamalar respectively totalling to 123 across the six dailies. There were 46, 39 and 30 headlines which were eggarerrative in The Hindu, Times of India and Indian Express and 47, 38 and 33 headline sin Dinathanthi, Dinakaran and Dinamalar respectively totalling to 186 across the six dailies.

- Concerning the tone of the lead, there were 20, 22, and 27 leads which were sensational in The Hindu, Times of India and Indian Express and 16, 24 and 21 leads in Dinathanthi, Dinakaran and Dinamalar respectively totalling to 130 across the six dailies. There were 12, 22 and 24 leads which were victimizing in The Hindu, Times of India and Indian Express and 4, 4, and 25 leads in Dinathanthi, Dinakaran and Dinamalar totalling to 91 across the six dailies.

Conclusion

Information happens to be one of the important things in most people’s everyday lives for various reasons. Information being a necessity is sought and obtained in various forms by the people. Media is the major outlet where people cater turn up for information on various issues, knowing current affairs, awareness etc. In a country like India, media outlets are supposed to be socially responsible in information dissemination and various other aspects. It is also the duty of the media outlets to ensure truthful, fair and unbiased coverage of news and also

engage greatly in shaping and creating people's opinions on various issues, events, policies etc. Newspapers happen to be one of the traditional media outlet in especially in a culturally and traditionally strong country like India. Similar to all other media outlets it is their duty to report fairly, accurately and unbiasedly. For quite some time, the media outlets have had been engaging in unhealthy practices in giving importance to certain issues and events. This research study was undertaken to find out the various news issues which were given unnecessary coverage despite the presence of other news items and issues that were much important. The current research study was envisaged to identify the news issues which needed more coverage and issues which were given undue attention and coverage by the dailies. At a time when more importance were to be given for the Sterling Biotech case, Triple Talaq verdict etc., the newspapers engaged in giving more importance to Rajinikanth's political party launch of Makkal Mandram and Kamal Hassan's Naalai Namathey. There were also undue hype created for the release and screening of Sanjay Leela Bansali's movie Padmavati which was later renamed as Padmavat. There were also too much coverage given to the death of Bollywood actress Sridevi who died during late February.

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