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Teenagers and Mainstream Media: Examining the Parameters of Reportage of Teenagers by English Newspapers in Chennai

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Abstract

Teenagers are one of the most important pockets of the population as they are the ones who will become the youth of the country. Print media is one of the traditional media that has tremendous impact across age groups and mass media. Print media plays a vital role in shaping the imageries of teenagers across the masses in the country. Print media outlets have wider reach to the larger strata of the country. Print media outlets often report on variety of issues and challenges that are faced in the country. There is however a notion that there is under reportage of issues or misrepresentation of issues in print media. Also, the portrayal of teenagers is of utmost importance at a larger perspective. In such important phase, it is really necessary to undergo a research study to understand the significance of how media is portraying teenagers in the newspapers which is being circulated to the wide readers of the nation. This research study is effectively intended to understand, the parameters of reportage given to teenagers in the print media in Chennai, by analysing various Regional Newspapers using suitable variables and parameters.

Keywords: Print media, reportage, teenagers, portrayal

1. Introduction

1.1 Role and function of Media

In 1948, the United Nations Conference on Freedom of Information declared access to information an essential freedom—one that underpins all others. In this sense access to information can be understood as an end in itself. Yet a 1962 UNESCO survey found that over 70% of the world lacked access to adequate information. In response the UN called for all countries to include a media development strategy within their economic development plans. In addition to securing this fundamental right, they said, “information media have an important role to play in education, social, and economic progress.” More recently, the UN recognized the important role of independent media in bringing about good governance — something increasingly demanded by citizens across the globe. People want “their voices to be heard and they want institutions that are transparent, responsive, capable and accountable.”

1.2 Media & Teenagers

From an international perspective, Ruthanne Kurth-Schai usefully identifies three distinct images of teenagers in contemporary theorizing. On the one end of the spectrum, children/teenagers are seen as victims of adult society and in need of protection (1988: 114). On the other end, they are viewed as dangerous and in need of guidance or as a threat to adult society (see also Finn and Checkoway, 1998: 335). In between these two perspectives, teenagers are seen as incomplete, incompetent and in need of guidance - as “learners of adult society” (Kurth-Schai, 1988: 115). As a result, teenagers are confronted with “confusing and contradictory patterns of protection and pressure, with conflicting perceptions of their abilities and inadequacies, rendering their social presence inconsequential and their social power invisible” (Kurth-Schai, 1988: 116) Kurth-Schai suggests that cultures in which children and teenagers undertake socially useful tasks

Produce “heightened self-esteem enhanced moral development, increased political activism, and the ability to create and maintain complex social relationships” (1988: 117). The recognition that children can perform important tasks such as nurturing (even of smaller siblings) is key to their capacity for “social insight and environment-shaping competence” (Kurth-Schai, 1988: 116)

2. Literature Review

2.1 Newspaper & Society

Sharma (2013) in his article pointed out that contemporary society exhibits deep dependency on mass media and is dominated by media in all aspects of life. It is a well-known fact that media has an immense power to shape the attitudes of people in reconstruction of reality. People develop shared construction of reality through mass media. The media-provided interpretations of certain issues have a deep and far reaching impact on the masses. The media has the power to push various issues into the public domain. It is the need of the hour that sustainable development is given priority by the media. Mass media has an important role to play since along with legislation, formation of attitude towards sustainable development is required on a large scale which can only be accomplished through media. The media has a social responsibility and active contribution of mass media is essential for promoting sustainable development and motivating People to use alternative sources of energy so that we can make this world a better place to live.

2.2 Print Media and Teenagers

Print media is still a strong medium for information and communication. It is one of the “indispensable” tools of society that helps every individual to communicate and correspond to each other. It is primarily used as a tool for getting news and information, advertising, marketing campaigns, entertainment, expression and criticism, art and talents,

and other forms of human interaction. But aside from the benefits, it can still be a significant contributor of false and misleading information and data. We might not notice it, but a lot of our behavior and perception are influenced by the images we see print media. Nonetheless, we all possess the responsibility of filtering the information we get from it.

It is common knowledge that most magazine and newspaper advertisements show photos and images of people are who physically and socially “perfect“. A model for beauty soap will have very dewy and fair skin, a facial cream endorser will have a blemish-free face, a food and diet supplement actor will possess the most attractive body that one could hope for, or perhaps a treadmill model will have six-pack abs.

3. Objectives of The Study

- To understand the significance provides by regional print media towards teenagers and teenagers related issues in Tamil Nadu.
- To study and analyze, how teenagers has been portrayed by regional newspapers in Chennai.

4. Methodology

The methodology adopted for this study is Quantitative content analysis. The Analysis is done over two English dailies, Indian Express and Times of India and their coverage on teenagers related news in Chennai for a period of two months July & August 2017

5. Analysis

Table 1: Teenagers related News Appeared in the Newspaper

| Newspapers | Number of articles | Total Percentage % |
|----------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Indian Express | 45 | 39.1 |
| Times of India | 70 | 60.8 |
| Total | 115 | 100 |

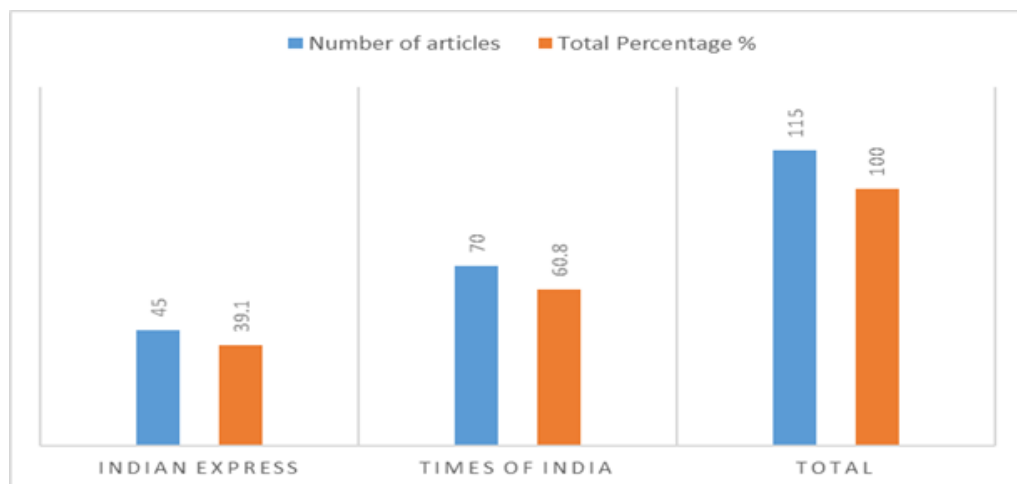


Fig.1:

Table 2: Teenagers based News covered in the First page Newspaper

| Newspapers | Number of articles | Total Percentage % |
|----------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Indian Express | 3 | 75 |
| Times of India | 1 | 25 |
| Total | 4 | 100 |

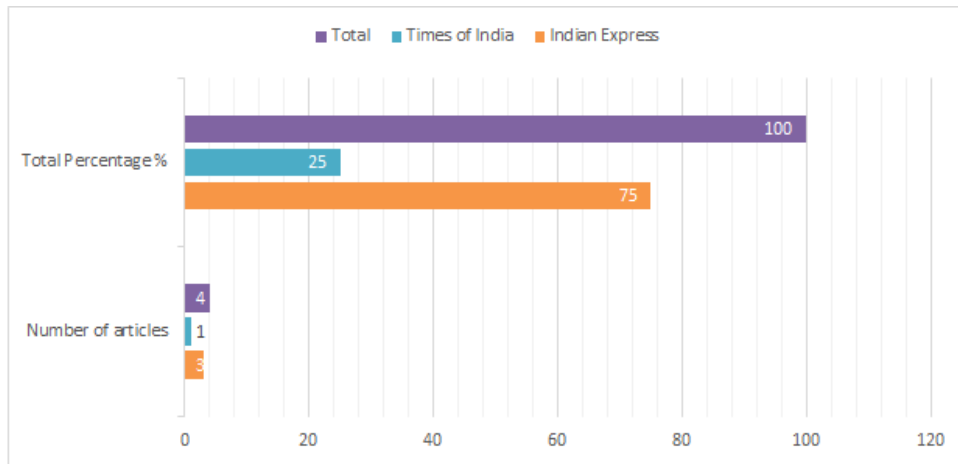


Fig.2:

Table 3: Teenagers News in the reader friendly page (Odd Page)

| Newspapers | Number of articles | Total Percentage % |
|----------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Indian Express | 36 | 47.3 |
| Times of India | 40 | 52.6 |
| Total | 76 | 100 |

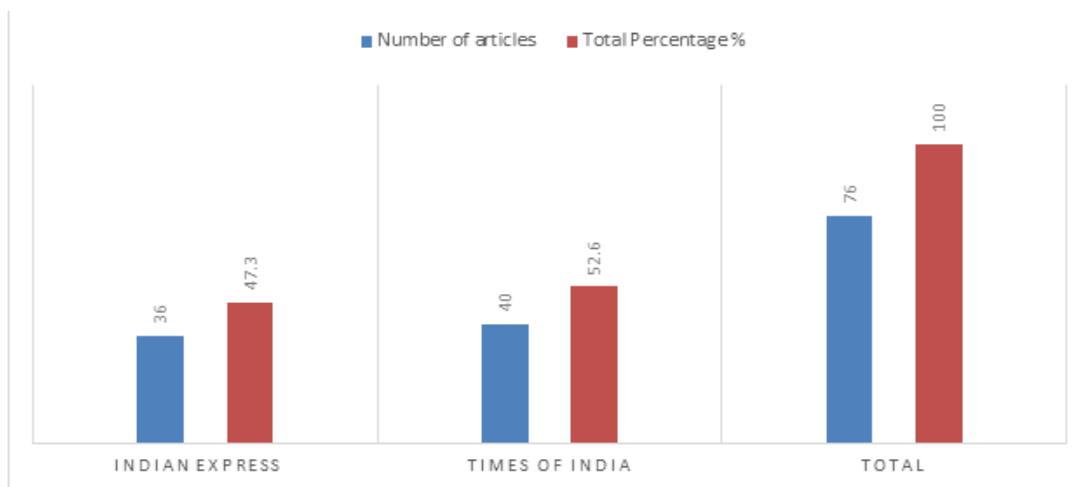


Fig.3:

Table 4: Categories of teenagers related Articles

| Newspapers | Indian Express | Times of India | Total | Percentage % |
|----------------------|----------------|----------------|------------|--------------|
| Health & Fitness | 4 | 8 | 12 | 13.8 |
| Education | 12 | 23 | 35 | 40.25 |
| Crime/violence | 4 | 3 | 7 | 8.05 |
| Fashion | 2 | 10 | 12 | 13.8 |
| Business/ Employment | 2 | - | 2 | 2.3 |
| Social Service | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3.45 |
| Lifestyle | 7 | 2 | 9 | 10.35 |
| Beauty | 2 | 2 | 4 | 6.9 |
| Accomplishments | 10 | 5 | 15 | 14.95 |
| Total | 54 | 61 | 115 | 100 |

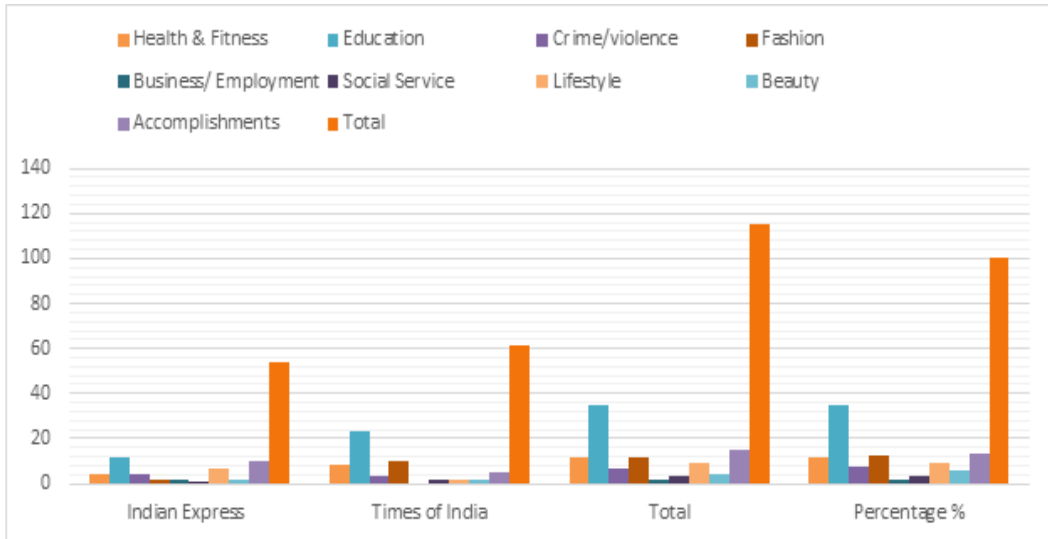


Fig.4:

Table 5: No of Articles by Story Type

| Newspapers | Indian Express | Times of India | Total | Percentage % |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------|-------|--------------|
| News | 28 | 52 | 74 | 77.08 |
| Feature | 8 | 2 | 8 | 8.3 |
| Comment | 5 | 1 | 6 | 6.2 |
| Interviews | 4 | 1 | 5 | 5.2 |
| Editorial | - | - | - | - |
| Aspire/ Indulge | 5 | - | - | - |
| Supplementary | 4 | - | 1 | 1.04 |
| Variety | 5 | - | 2 | 2.08 |
| Total | 59 | 56 | 115 | 100 |

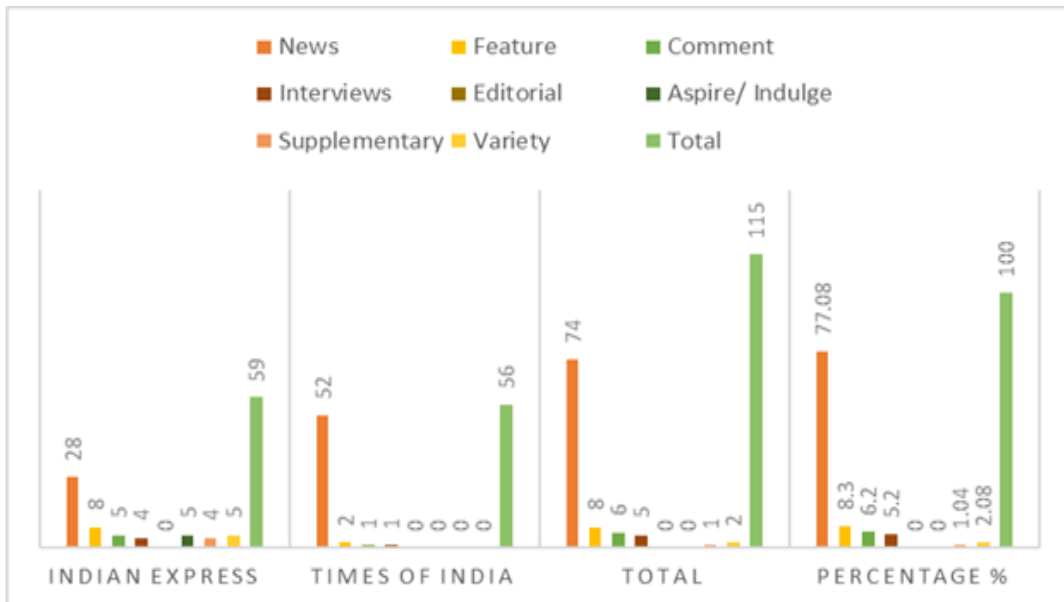


Fig.5:

Table 6: No of Articles by Length

| Number of words | Indian Express | Times of India | Total | Percentage % |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------|-------|--------------|
| >800 | - | - | - | - |
| 400-799 | 12 | 10 | 12 | 12.5 |
| 150-399 | 10 | 15 | 21 | 21.8 |
| 100-149 | 13 | 19 | 32 | 33.3 |
| <100 | 14 | 22 | 31 | 32.2 |

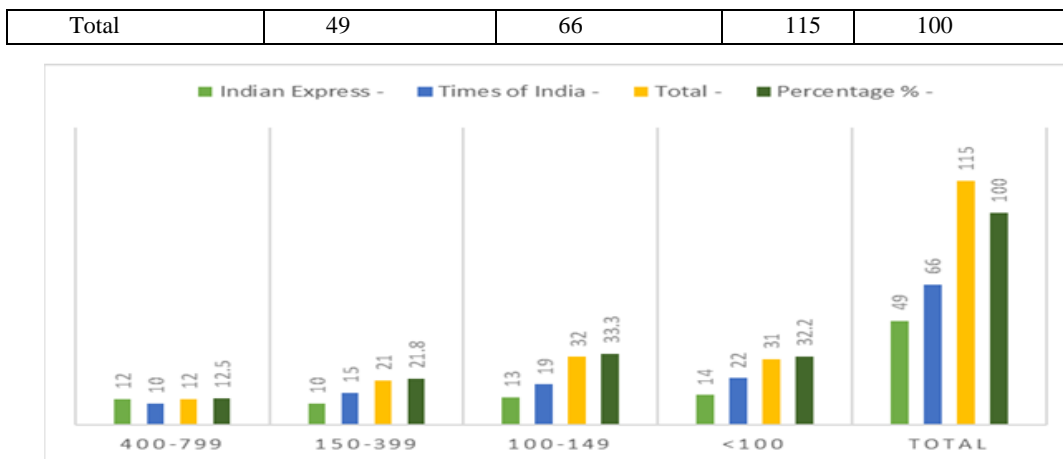


Fig.6:

Findings

- The Times of India gave more importance to teenagers by providing a maximum coverage of teenagers related news with 60.8% and Indian Express gave less importance on teenagers comparatively with a coverage of about 39.1%.
- Even though Times of India provides maximum news coverage on teenagers, Indian Express gives more importance for teenagers in the first page with 75%, in comparison to Times of India.
- 35% of the articles by Times of India and Indian Express are based on the education aspect of teenagers and of which 23% is by Times of India which shows that Times of India is giving more significance on educational aspect of teenagers and also portraying them to be more academic oriented, regarding variety of news both newspapers provides just 2.08%.
- In both the newspapers, the total number of news articles were 115, 77.08% were completely of news type meaning maximum number of coverage were given just as news, which shows these print media didn't attempt to provide more information regarding teenagers than usual news.
- Indian Express has attempts to give detailed coverage on teenagers with about 12 articles with words (400-799), providing more information regarding teenagers and maximum number of articles in Times of India were less in words, 19 articles (100-149), 22 articles (<100), seems to allot less column for teenagers in media coverage (Table 6 & Figure 6)
- The satisfactory factor in coverage of both the newspapers is, the portrayal of teenagers in these print media were less negative 13.65 % and even if there are negative news of teenagers like (crime, violence, antisocial, etc), those news were not hyped much as if teenagers were involving in all such activities or criticizing teenagers, they were just covered as general news, with reference to (table 4), so the portrayal of teenagers in Regional print media is relatively positive with 86.4 %.

Conclusion

Teenagers are an essential part of building the nation as they are the precursors to the youngsters and over a period of time become the youth of the country. Media outlets play a vital role in constructing the images of teenagers across age groups and amongst the masses. The importance given to teenagers in the print outlets are crucial. According to the study, the English Daily Times of India gave more importance for teenagers in its

newspaper by providing more number of news related to teenagers in various aspects, making people frequently informed about the activities of teenagers. English daily Indian Express has less number of news but coverage was descriptive in nature. Times of India gives more significance to the educational aspects of teenagers, by covering more educational news, thus by portraying teenagers are to be more academic oriented, Where Times of India attempts to promote wide variety of parameters like education, health, fitness, beauty, lifestyle, there by portraying teenagers involvement in all different aspects of social life. Both the newspaper Indian Express and Times of India failed to provide importance on Business aspects of teenagers, the news coverage of teenagers in relation to business /employment seems very less. So, print media could show more involvement in such aspects.

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