

Media professionals' perspective on today's media

ANJALI PAHAD AND VARSHA B. PARIKH

ABSTRACT

Media for a long has acted as a method of controlling people and their leisure. In the current *i.e.* twenty first century, it is seen that the media blitz change and transform human kind totally out of shape if one compares their present status with their earlier status. This indicates an active role that the media can play in development of human interests in international, national or regional spheres. In the contemporary times, the media is central to the information nucleus of a society. Increase in literacy, expansion of media reach, rapid growth of different forms of the media, all these arouse hunger and interest in propert to learn more about contemporary issues. In this context, correct reporting in media has much value in democracy for which media person / journalist play key role in it. Since newspapers happen to be the largest medium to convey to general mass a media person has to use them aptly and discreetly to serve the purpose. A media person has authority to enter any where and meet any person but he has to use this authority with faith and commitment in values of democracy. They should never undermine their accountability to democracy and its people. This shows that, it is necessary to understand how much newspapers and the television can hold the pulse of the citizens to affect their growth. Thus, it is imperative to know that in a democratic system, media professionals use maximum freedom of expression and communication of objective and interpreted information in order to ensure rational choices, opinions for equality of opportunities to keep alive interest of larger mass of the society. Thus, present study highlights perceptions of media professionals regarding the contemporary role of the newspapers in democracy.

KEY WORDS : Media, Media professional

Pahad, Anjali and Parikh , Varsha B. (2010). Media professionals' perspective on today's media, *Adv. Res. J. Soc. Sci.*, 1 (2) : 83-88.

INTRODUCTION

Media plays a significant role in today's society. It is being considered to be very important in our day to day lives. It has its eyes, nose and mind open all the time to attract information and express their views. Without media people would be isolated not only from the rest of the world but from the government, law-makers and neighbouring towns and cities. Media for a long has acted as a method of controlling people and their leisure. Media is expected to inform, educate and entertain its mass audience. It has contributed to the development of the society through the flow of information. As media provides basic six areas of information: who, what, where, when, why, how, which is one needed to know to expand on a topic. Besides awareness generation, media also plays an important role in the spreading of education. Additionally endow with healthy educational programmes to the youngsters, who benefit out of it. But what media education

can do is to provide people the tools to respond thought fully and critically to media content. But at the same time, it is a fact that violence and vulgarity has made people think of the world as a meanier and scarier place than it really is. This is because of the truth that in most of the cases media plays a crucial role in exaggerating things which leads to the above said consequences. It is also reality that media enjoys a wide spectrum of freedom. For instance, with the freedom of press, the contradicting views of the society are being articulated which opens the floor to debate and discussion which results in the true functioning of the democratic society. But media in the race to become popular and to make money they have broken all the limits that a media should follow. One of the most powerful strengths that a media has in the society is the ability to effect change, both on social and governmental level. But as media is made of both good and bad, it requires balancing between the both for the benefit of the society. Media has got a immense role in the molding up

Correspondence to:

VARSHA B. PARIKH, Department of Extension Education, College of Home Scienc, Marathwada Agricultural University, PARBHANI (M.S.) INDIA

Authors' affiliations:

ANJALI PAHAD, Department of Extension Education, College of Home Scienc, Marathwada Agricultural University, PARBHANI (M.S.) INDIA

of minds of the next generation. Sharma (2002) in web article 'Media and Governance' (Source :<http://www.india-seminar.com/2002/514.htm>) says that in a democratic society, the role of the media assumes seminal importance. The democracy implies participative governance, participation is allowed through free flow of information. It is the media that coordinates people participation in to various problems of society. To strengthen democratization of communication in democratic country like India, the media has to be operated within the value framework of a democratic society. Some of the conditions which help media to fulfill its democratic obligation towards the society are cited by Sawant (2001). They are as follows:

- The media outlet has to be operated to serve the society.
- Media should be free and independent.
- There should be no monopoly over the sources of information either by a private owner or individuals and institutions or by the government. There should always be a plurality of the sources of information. It also means that more than one media outlets may be owned by one individual or individuals, but the authority would be different, the nature of ownership of sources has also to be different, to avoid monopoly.
- The respectability of a media organization depends neither upon the size of its circulation nor upon the size of its profits. It rests upon its credibility which in turn depends upon its accuracy, fairness, impartiality and objectivity, the range and the depth of its coverage, and upon its sensitivity and promptitude in reporting the matters of public interests. In such cases the media is expected to play various roles in the democratic society of India.

Changing scenario of media in 21st Century:

In the current twenty first century, it is seen that the media blitz change and transform human kind totally out of shape if one compares their present status with their earlier status. This indicates an active role that the media can play in development of human interests in international, national or regional spheres. The observation shows that the media inputs have developed human upbringing, human nature and human personality in number of ways. It has contributed tremendously in changing nations and societies. In the country like India in spite of inequalities in the society, revolutionary changes are affected in the field of Indian agriculture, health, women's empowerment and so on. It must however, be recognised that the media is a tremendous force in today's world. International and national issues are affected, influenced and shaped by the media outputs. Any nation or organization ignores the media power, it does so at its own peril. The more is the media

inputs, greater would be the media consumption by masses. It will enhance the welfare status of a nation and happiness to the people.

Media professionals – key actor of media profession:

In the contemporary times, the media is central to the Information nucleus of a society. Increase in literacy, expansion of media reach, rapid growth of different forms of the media, all these arouse in people hunger and interest to learn more about contemporary issues. Because, the media lies in the hands of trained professionals called journalists. Training in journalism enables an individual to 'see' beyond the seeming reality and to 'read' between lines of what is spoken. Reporting is envisaged a sacred profession bridge common mass with current occurrences and developments. A reporter is trained of approaching, reading, perceiving, analyzing and presenting his reading with a 'neutral eye'. In a crude compassion he can be terms as a 'seer', like our ancient sages. Sages saw spiritual reality and these modern 'sages' see current affairs with a critical eye. Their exercise reporting gives them capability to present to common people correct picture of current happening so that it generates in them awareness about the present.

So, on one hand, a journalist is endowed with powerful weapons like 'information' and 'pen'. If he uses both keeping their sanctity intact he can generate wonderful results in democracy like Gandhiji did first in South Africa and then India during India's struggle for Independence. A reporter earns value and respect from all corners of society provided he upkeeps values and operates in responsible way. Correct reporting has much value in democracy. It generates awareness among people and inspire them for higher interests and aspirations. It is guidance on current affairs that a media person imparts to people through his news and reports that affect slow but subtle revolution on the situation for improvement, growth, progress and higher living. Such a role implies responsibility and commitment to general cause that a media person has to assume. He has to know that it is a sacred profession that can never be undermined in the present context. The reason behind is that today, people's expectations from the media go high with their increasing hunger of information. This helps them to understand more and more about several democratic issues and to improve overall quality of public life and to shape their commitment towards specific policy decision of the Indian democracy.

Since newspapers happen to be the largest medium to convey to general mass a media person has to use them aptly and discreetly to serve the purpose. A media person has authority to enter any where and meet any person he

has to use this authority with faith and commitment in values of democracy. They should never undermine their accountability to democracy and its people. This shows that, it is necessary to understand how much newspapers and the television can hold the pulse of the citizens to affect their growth. Thus, it is imperative to know that in a democratic system, media professionals use maximum freedom of expression and communication of objective and interpreted information in order to ensure rational choices, opinions for equality of opportunities to keep alive interest of larger mass of the society on which present study proposes to throw a light. To seek answers to these questions, investigators took up a study on the perceptions of media professionals regarding the contemporary role of the newspapers in democracy.

Objectives of the study:

- To study the overall perceptions of media professionals regarding the contemporary role of newspapers in the democracy.
- To study the perceptions of media professionals regarding the contemporary role of newspapers in relation to the following aspects of the democracy:
 - Justice
 - Liberty
 - Equality
 - Fraternity
- To study the difference in overall perceptions of media professionals regarding the contemporary role of newspapers in the democracy, in relation to the selected variables :
 - Age
 - Sex
 - Educational qualification
 - Knowledge regarding democracy
 - Work experience
 - Media accountability
- To study the difference in perceptions of media professionals regarding the contemporary role of the newspapers in the democracy with respect to the each of the selected aspects of the democracy viz., (a) Justice (b) Liberty (c) Equality (d) Fraternity in relation to the selected variables,
 - Age
 - Sex
 - Educational qualification
 - Knowledge regarding democracy
 - Work experience
 - Media accountability
- To seek the suggestions of media professionals regarding the contributions of following groups for

strengthening the contemporary role of the above media in the democracy,:

- Citizens of the society
- Media professionals and
- Media policy makers.

Null hypotheses of the study:

- There will be no significant differences in overall perceptions of media professionals regarding the contemporary role of newspapers in the democracy in relation to the selected variables:
 - Age
 - Sex
 - Educational qualification
 - Knowledge regarding democracy
 - Work experience
 - Media accountability
- There will be no significant differences in perceptions of media professionals regarding the contemporary role of newspapers in democracy with respect to each of the selected aspects of the democracy viz., (a) Justice (b) Liberty (c) Equality (d) Fraternity in relation to the selected variables:
 - age
 - sex
 - educational qualification
 - knowledge regarding democracy
 - work experience
 - media accountability

METHODOLOGY

Population of the study:

For good governance of democratic society, the media plays an important role by discharging its duties. In its communication process, the main key players are media professionals who design the messages and professionals other than the media who are end users of those messages. Hence, the population of the study comprised two segments of the people. Firstly, media professionals working for newspapers or the television organizations, who are directly or indirectly involved in framing media messages and form a part of the population for the present study.

Sampling unit:

Sampling unit refers to the geographical area from where the samples are drawn. In the present study, samples of media professionals were drawn from the cities of Vadodara and Ahmedabad in Gujarat. As the population of media professionals is relatively smaller in the Vadodara city, it was required for the researcher to extend the

sampling to Ahmedabad, a nearby city of Gujarat.

Sampling frame:

The media professionals that comprised the sampling frame for the present study were working for newspaper organizations and television channels. Media professionals were identified as those who were working with local, regional and national dailies and with television channels.

Sample size:

The sampling of the study contained one hundred and twenty three of media professionals working for newspaper organizations and the television channels.

Sampling technique:

A purposive sampling method was used to draw sample for media professional groups. Media professionals were identified for the study from the professional diaries of various newspaper organizations and television channels. They were selected from their active functioning with the newspaper organizations and television channels during the time of the study. Some five regional and national dailies and five local, regional and national television channels were identified for the purpose. From majority identified newspaper organizations and television channels, almost five media professionals were selected as samples for the study. As organizational structure of local and national dailies and local, regional and national television channels vary, samples from each of newspaper organizations and television channels too varied in nature. Thus, the total come upto 50 of them. These 50 media professionals further provided the names and addresses of their other friends and colleagues.

Construction of the research tools:

The present study was intended to be an exploratory research. Therefore, the survey method was preferred for studying the perceptions of media professionals regarding the contemporary role of the newspapers and television in democracy. The questionnaires, perception scale and knowledge test were the tools used for data collection. The tools were constructed keeping in mind various purposes after reviewing related literature desired from books, journals, and other literatures. The tools were prepared in English and later translated in Gujarati for better comprehension of the respondents and to ensure ease in communication.

Data collection:

The prior permission was sought from the concerned authorities of the concerned newspaper organizations as

well as television channels to collect the required data and to distribute the questionnaire. The media professionals contacted who were approached for the purpose belonged to various newspapers organizations namely, *Sandesh* (17), *Divya Bhasker* (15), *Gujarat Samachar* (13), *The Indian Express*(12), *The Times of India* (10), *Sambhav* (09), *Jansatta* (05), *The Financial Express*(03), *Yugprabhav*(02), *The Economic Times* (02), *The Hindu* (01) as well as from TV channels and TV organizations viz., the *Zee TV* (Gujarati-10), the *E-TV*(Gujarati-10), the *Doordarshan* (03), the *Sahara Television*(05), the *Educational Media Research Center* (02) and the *Vadodara News Magazine* (04) all operating in the Vadodara and Ahmedabad cities of Gujarat. A statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data. Different statistical measures for various purposes were used in the study. Profile of media professionals and overall and aspect wise differences in the perceptions of media professionals regarding contemporary role of newspapers in the democracy was calculated using frequencies and percentages. To understand the differences in the perceptions of media professionals and professionals other than the media regarding contemporary role of newspapers in the democracy with respect to selected variables, t-test and ANOVA(F-test) were used.

OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

The findings obtained from the present investigation as well as well as relevant discussion have been presented under following heads :

Profile of media professionals:

The findings of the data analysis revealed as follows:

- Almost fifty six per cent of the media professionals belonged to the younger age group whereas almost forty four per cent of them belonged to elder age group.
- A high majority (69.9%), of the media professionals were males and thirty per cent of them (30.1%) were females.
- A high majority (69.9%), of the media professionals were highly educated, whereas 30.1% of them were educated.
- Majority (59.3%) of the media professionals were having less than five years of work experience, and 40.3% of them were more experienced.
- Almost forty five per cent of the media professionals were high scorers in knowledge regarding democracy, whereas twenty five per cent were low scorers in knowledge regarding democracy.
- Thirty eight per cent of the media professionals

were more accountable towards media followed by equal per cent of them as moderate and less accountable to the media accountability (31.7% and 30.1%).

Overall, aspectwise and variablewise perceptions of media professionals regarding the contemporary role of newspapers in the democracy:

– Overall, more than forty per cent (42.3%) of the media professionals had favourable perceptions regarding contemporary role of newspaper in democracy.

– A higher per cent of the media professionals had favourable perceptions regarding contemporary role of newspaper in democracy on its aspects namely, Justice (52.8%), Liberty (43.1%) and Fraternity (45.5 %). And regarding Equality aspect almost half (49.6%) of them expressed less favourable perceptions towards the contemporary role of newspaper in democracy.

– Significant differences were found in the overall perceptions of media professionals regarding contemporary role of newspaper in relation to their media accountability.

– Significant differences were found in the perceptions of media professionals regarding contemporary role of newspaper on justice aspect of democracy in relation to their media accountability.

– Significant differences were found in the perceptions of media professionals regarding contemporary role of newspaper on liberty aspect in relation to their media accountability.

– Significant differences were found in the perceptions of media professionals regarding contemporary role of newspaper on fraternity aspect in relation to their media accountability.

The present study focuses on the perceptions of the media professionals regarding the contemporary role of newspapers on the selected aspects of democracy. It leads to conclude that newspapers are democratic media as perceived by the media professionals of Vadodara and Ahmedabad cities of Gujarat. It highlights prominently favourable perceptions of media professionals for the newspapers for its responsible behaviour to reinforce essential democratic values while keeping people in a society informed on democratic environment.

Further, the findings of the study also revealed that media professionals held favourable to somewhat favourable on the democratic aspects of Justice, Liberty and Fraternity regarding the role of newspapers. However, distinctly it reveals less favourable perception on the Equality aspect of the democracy.

The study reflects that the media professionals selected for the present study highlight that changing time,

pace and advancement of technology and modern tools have changed the face of newspapers journalism. They perceived that this print media has changed its role from collecting facts to first and fast server of information, from reporter to vigilant interpreter. This indeed has changed the functions performed by today's newspapers. So, it seems that in the present world, the newspapers are increasingly playing the role that was once played by a family, community, religion and formal education. It concerns not only to disseminating information and knowledge but also to shaping values and inculcating attitudes and behavior to influence positively the process of living.

Further, the study highlights that newspapers is autonomous organization with freedom of its working team. Further, the Liberty value of democratization of communication is seen when this medium use power of freedom of expression in the interest of the people. Today, the it appears to be focusing widely on issues of injustice in the judiciary, corruption in the executive fonctionnaires, mal-practices in co-operative bodies and exploitation at cultural and religious levels. It is found to be making sting operation to expose wrongs in the society. The objectives of such sting operations ought to be cleaning and cleansing of public affairs and system in the interest of public welfare. This objective poses an ideal for the media professionals.

When this medium seems to be coming out with excessive reporting with highlights of trivial matter and it may possibly arouse common viewers to sensational effects. Many of the media professionals reported that they enjoy Liberty to write and report but in many cases they found to be exploiting violence, manipulate facts through one side presentation just to increase total rating point or readership. Another point of suspicion is the media dwell on trivial matters so heavily and get their excessive projections on report. This is with a view to sensationalizing the effects of the reporting for increasing total rating point for business. Such things raised a kind of aversion in people's mind about genuineness of media professionals' working.

Next point which is widely noticed is imbalance priorities and projection allow to rural sector programmed and reports. This imbalance seem to cause absence of communication and communication gap between urban and the poor.

In order to consider this aspect positively some sort of reasoning need to be worked out. It may be in the form of restrictions or reasonable emphasis with reasonable priorities and equality based equal distribution of time allocation to common man including rural sectors even by

private channels or owners. This might change the face of India to arouse appreciative response from readers. Further mass media like newspapers must do ‘sorting’ of information efficiently to reflect on needs and expectations of a rapidly changing society. To strengthen the Justice value of the democratization communication in both the mediums, media professionals and policy makers should together do efforts to enhance increase social, political, cultural accountability of mass communication.

In sum, the study reflects on conflicts between tendency to popularize verses serious solutions of democratic issues, the unwanted verses the essential in the present context. When conflicts dominate editors’ interests verses public interest it becomes hurdles in the path of democratization of communication in newspapers and the television. Further, influence of anti-democratic factor of timeliness in democratization of communication in newspapers cover information of the plight of the poor during the time of crisis or with visit of any celebrity. This strikes on the Justice value of the democratization of communication. Other factors like prominence to the person, state or nation also work against democracy in today’s time during discourse of media related practices. This directly affect on Equality value of democratization of communication in newspapers in the present context. Besides, sensationalisation of trivial issues, creation of conflicts, coverage of unusual information further, creates imbalance in Fraternity value of democratization of communication in newspapers.

Thus, the present study conclude that in such environment, it is the pious duty to raise a voice of protest against unreasonable ways of media professionals and media owners both and look for cleansing of the motives and performance in the interest of readership or viewership in common. It is their voice that may restrict the powerline of media on one hand and the line of understanding of common readers and viewers on the other. If this happens the mind of a general readers and viewers in a in a democratic setup like India would come out with responsible reading of facts and current events and better responses.

Recommendations:

Following Suggestions were given by the media

professionals to strengthen the role of media namely newspapers and television in democratic society of India.

- Be honest in giving information to the masses / should be unbiased / provide accurate information / provide information without exaggeration or sensationalism/ verify information whenever required / Be ethical / Be fearless / Impartial and not to be influenced by politician /rich people
- Support and encourage subordinates for better output
- get the help from the government to strengthen organisation financially;
- Motivate people to take purposeful action
- Prompt in responding needs of reader / viewer
- control feelings by giving balance reporting during crisis
- Not to instigate society by providing distorting news/ don’t highlight cases causing disharmony / not to take advantage of power of information
- Develop sense of responsibility among people
- Develop professionalism
- Emphasis on societal values / cultivate moral values
- Believe in integrity and diversity / foster patriotism
- Not dependent on government for finance
- give space for coverage of common man
- Undergo training to sensitize own-self for media practices.
- Use more investigative journalism in case of fact finding.
- Show accountability in selecting and covering information / news.

LITERATURE CITED

Sawant, P.B. (2001). Media in Democracy, Media Asia, AMIC, 28 (1) : 44-50.
 Sharma, M. (2002). Media and governance, June 2002 (Web search : <http://www.india-seminar.com/2002/514.htm>)
