Coverage of RTI Messages in Print Media: A Content Analysis

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Abstract: Information is a power. It is a key factor of any kind of development. Today, there is a very special and powerful right as RTI (Right to Information Act, 2005) in common hands to get information from any authority and official for the sake of individual and social interest. This Act can be a very effective tool to explore concerned information which can help anyone to make decision and take required action to solve the problem facing by him, community or the society. We have also the powerful media in our society. But the reality is this, with having both facilities of RTI and Media, rural peoples are still not very much aware about the RTI Act and its uses. They have no good information about the running programs, schemes, planning and projects by the governments in the rural areas for the rural peoples. They are also not so much active and interactive towards their progress and development. They are still living a very poor and below standard life.

Since, creating awareness, educating the rural population and motivating them for active participation in the development process are also the prime objectives of the print media. And in this regard, print media and RTI both can play a very pivotal role to empower the rural society for their positive changes and improvements. But there is a general perception about our media, especially Hindi Daily Newspapers that they don’t pay proper attention and give adequate space to cover the RTI messages. The present study examined Hindi daily newspapers i.e. Dainik Jagaran, Amar Ujala, Hindustan and Rastriya Sahara on various parameters like quantity of news coverage, types of news, allotted space and tone of RTI stories, etc. The results showed that Hindi Daily newspapers have no good interest, focus and priority for publishing RTI stories and they are very poor in coverage of RTI messages.

Dainik Jagaran, Amar Ujala, Hindustan and Rastriya Sahara were taken and analyzed during a year i.e. from 1st July 2015 to 30th June 2016. These newspapers were analyzed on a day to day basis. The analysis and interpretations of the research study showed that the national Hindi daily newspapers are very poor in the publication of RTI stories. They have no good interest, focus and priority for publishing RTI stories. The study also indicates clearly that the coverage of RTI contents is very low. It is far away from a satisfactory stage and almost negligible in Hindi daily newspapers.

Keywords: Right to Information, News Monger, Fourth Estate, Vox-populi, Tone, Editorial.

1. Introduction

In today’s world, Media is playing tremendous role in the society. It has become a part of human civilization. It is not only showing the face of society as a ‘mirror’ but also securing the public and social interests in many ways. It is also shaping the public mind and strengthening the society. It is raising the voice of common people and embracing all roles to act against the injustice, corruption and ill-manner of the society. However, Media has been serving as a vigilant watchdog from day one. It has always been alarming the people and awakening the society for their betterment.

In order to media profession, Print Media has unique role and position. Print Media plays a very crucial role in enlightening and educating the people. It is aiding the public involvement through advocating issue and transferring knowledge, skills and technologies to the people. Awareness about various development programmes, propagation of family planning is being spread by using the media.

Print Media plays very emphatic role in awakening people against many evils prevailed in the society like child marriage, killing of female unborn child, the evil practice of child labour etc. Print Media has exposed a number of corrupt practices, hidden deals and wrong doings of the officials and authorities. It has the capability to empower the common man by spreading awareness and keeping the government on its toes. Media is important in order to keeping a check on corruption and bad administration. The role of media as a force multiplier in creating awareness and informing the general public is important as no country can progress if only a section of the population is doing well. All sections of the society should reap the benefit of progress and development. Communication plays a big role in bringing all people together.

Print Media has created awareness among the people regarding their rights and duties. Print Media has been nicknamed as ‘News Monger’ or the fourth...
Estate. We can update us just by going through the morning newspaper, getting each and every kind of news form every nook and corner of the world. It is due to the effect of the print media that people associated with robberies, thefts, murder, rapes, drugs and alcoholism are working with an apprehension of being caught and recognized. They are now constantly under fear of being caught by the law enforcing agencies. Through this medium we get news about things happening around us-good as well as bad.¹

In a democracy; newspapers are the best way of educating people politically and socially. They play a decisive role not only in updating the public but also in formulating a well-balanced public opinion. The public reads about the current event, interprets them and learns to intelligently participate in the political, social and economic affairs of the country.

Print media also work as a bridge between the government and the people. People get to know about the latest policies of the government and it also builds up the public opinion, there like, disliking or demands. In fact, newspaper is the vox-populi or voice of the people in any country. It is the common man’s university, giving a lesson on life at large.

1.1 Right to Information and Role of Print Media

Information is a basic requirement and key factor of development. Information brings development. It opens the way of progress. Lack of information breeds confusion and increases uncertainty and backwardness in every field. The concept of the right to information is based on the concept of the free flow of information in giving and receiving both manners. It helps in free thinking and decision making. It enables the people to express their views and opinion on important issues or concerning interests.

The Right to information believes in openness. Open culture in working culture is a basic indicator of good governance. And the viability to access to government is the prime criteria in deciding the openness of a government. Open government means transparent government. Without maintaining the transparency, no any government can be trustable in the eye of public. And when governments are lowering its images due to corruptions and are being charged by favouritism and misuse of public fund day by day, then it is necessary that there should be complete transparency in all public dealings. Government should disclose all the information about public acts which are related to public interest. This

gap between development planners and villagers. The planners plan the development programs for the people according to their own perception of people’s needs and priorities. They plan to deliver development through a top-bottom communication system without knowing the views and responses of the rural peoples upon their wants and priorities. And, the second thing, whatever programs are being made by the government planners, they are not also communicated properly among the rural peoples and society.

Thus, the majority of rural people are not able to get the benefits of the running programs. So, information and its distribution both are very important issues to attain any kind of development. It is needless to say that the more information a society has, the more developed it shall be. In fact, information is such an instrument which enables the people for their empowerment, betterment and required development.

And today, while we have a very special right as RTI (Right to Information Act, 2005) to get information from any authority and powerful media for the sharing of knowledge and information among the people and society, then there is no any reason for the rural population to be deprived from this information which can develop them and the whole rural society. But the reality is this, having both facilities for Media and RTI; rural peoples are still not very much aware about their concerning programs, schemes, projects and their rights. They are also not so interactive and action towards their progress and development. They are still living very poor and below standard life. There is no satisfactory condition in rural society.

Since, creating awareness, educating the rural population and motivating them for active participation in the development process are also the prime objectives of the print media. So, in the era of information, print media and RTI both have certain major responsibilities and they can play a very pivotal role to empower the rural society for positive improvement and changes.

But now it is realising that something is missing and nowadays newspapers are not paying their good attention towards rural reporting or spreading such messages which can aware them towards development and progress. So, there were some queries in researcher’s mind like: What are the roles of print media in spreading RTI messages in rural areas? How much print media (particularly the Hindi daily newspapers) is covering RTI messages? What are the effectiveness and weaknesses of print media in promotion of RTI messages in rural society? These were certain questions, which had created the need of research in the mind and view of researcher, and the same were analyzed thoroughly in the present study.

1.3 Research Questions
Keeping the above research problems in mind, the present study had formulated the following research questions to find the answers:
(i). What is significance of print media in coverage of RTI messages?
(ii). How much print media (particularly the Hindi daily newspapers) is covering RTI messages?
(iii). What is the effectiveness and weaknesses of print media in promotion of RTI messages in rural society?

1.4 Scope of the Research Study
The present study aims at the Coverage of RTI Messages in Print Media. This study examined all the specified important key issues associated with the research problem thoroughly and systematically. Hopefully, the findings and conclusions of this research study will provide a clearer picture and invaluable knowledge that will help and benefit the concerning scholars, students, individuals, media persons and public authorities in this subject.

1.5 Aim and Objectives of the Study
The aim of this research study is to examine ‘The Coverage of RTI Messages in Print Media’. The overall aim is further specified by the following objectives:
1. To analyze the print media (particularly the Hindi daily newspapers) with respect to the coverage of RTI messages.
2. To study the different forms of RTI contents published in the newspapers.
3. To find out the significance of print media (particularly the Hindi daily newspapers) in strengthening the RTI messages in rural areas.

2. Research Methodology
Keeping in view the specified objectives of the research study, secondary data were collected and analysed properly. To analyze the coverage of RTI messages in the newspapers, content analysis method was utilized. For this study, four popular, well established and national level Hindi language daily Newspapers (from Allahabad) –Dainik Jagaran, Amar Ujala, Hindustan and Rastriya Sahara were taken and analyzed during a year i.e. from 1st July 2015 to 30th June 2016. These newspapers were analyzed on a day to day basis. All kinds of contents related to RTI (like News, special stories, Articles, Editorials, Interview etc.) were covered to analyze on the parameter of frequency, allotted space and tone of stories. This study was based on only RTI contents of four national Hindi daily newspapers i.e. Dainik Jagaran, Amar Ujala, Hindustan and Rastriya Sahara.
3. Data Collection and Interpretations

A systematic analysis of RTI contents of various four newspapers revealed very important facts about the orientation of the national Hindi daily newspapers towards the Right to Information. They differ in various parameters like quantity of news coverage, types of stories, allotted space for RTI contents and tone etc. The analysis and interpretations of the research study are as follows:

3.1 RTI Contents Published in the Newspapers on the basis of Frequency and Space

The study analyzed the coverage of RTI stories published in the different four national Hindi daily newspapers. The relation between newspapers and RTI news is quite important to aware the public and society about Right to Information and uses of RTI for their further development and welfare of the society. In this study, newspapers differ interestingly in the publication of RTI contents on an average basis. The study revealed that each and every newspaper prefers to publish different types of RTI contents from one another.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Newspapers</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Allotted Space (Cm²)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Rastriya Sahara</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>9523</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Dainik Jagran</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Amar Ujala</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2950.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Hindustan</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2845.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table No.1.A

The data in Table 1.A reveal that during a year of research period, Rastriya Sahara published highest number of contents on RTI i.e. 29 stories while Dainik Jagran published 27 stories, Amar Ujala 24 and Hindustan covered only 19 stories in total during a year of research period. In this study, data shows that all newspapers are focused towards the RTI issues with minor differences in view of quantity of publishing news. But as per analysis, Rastriya Sahara was more focused on RTI rather than other newspapers during a year of research period.

3.2 Details of Published RTI Contents in Various Forms in the Newspapers

Data presented in Table 1.A reveal that the National Hindi daily newspapers have published RTI contents mostly in the form of news. On the basis of publishing RTI contents in form of news, Dainik Jagran published highest number of news i.e. 27 followed by Amar Ujala 23, Rastriya Sahara 18 and Hindustan published only 16 news in total while on the basis of publishing Articles on RTI, Rastriya Sahara published highest number of article i.e. 10 whereas Hindustan published only 2 Articles, Amar Ujala only 1 and Dainik Jagran didn’t publish any Article on RTI during a year of research period which is very strange.

On the basis of publishing Editorials on RTI, only Rastriya Sahara and Hindustan have published a single – single editorial while Dainik Jagran which is the largest newspaper in circulation number didn’t publish a single editorial at least. And very popular Hindi newspaper Amar Ujala didn’t also publish any editorial.

Among all taken four Hindi daily newspapers for this research study, only Rastriya Sahara was the newspaper which published a supplement based on RTI matters and issues during a year of research period. The other three newspapers didn’t publish and provide any supplement to the readers during a year of research period. This finding shows clearly that these newspapers are not giving proper importance to the most effective and powerful RTI act in the current scenario. They are not focused to educate the people about this revolutionary act Right to information. During a year, only Rastriya Sahara has published a supplement on RTI issue. On the basis of publishing the contents on RTI, it is found that Rastriya Sahara was much focused among all the newspapers. It has published the highest number of RTI contents in comparison to other newspapers. Here, one thing is also very noticeable that RTI is not in priority to publish by Hindi daily newspapers.
3.3 Total Allotted Space for RTI Contents in Newspapers

Figure No. 1.B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Allotted Space (Cm²)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hindustan</td>
<td>2845.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amar Ujala</td>
<td>2950.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dainik Jagran</td>
<td>3105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rastriya Sahara</td>
<td>9523</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Space is also an important factor for print media. The given space size shows the importance of story. From this point of view, data from Table 1.A reveal that Rastriya Sahara has given maximum space to publish RTI contents, i.e. 9523 Cm² followed by DainikJagran 3105 Cm², Amar Ujala 2950.25 Cm² and Hindustan has given space of 2845.25 Cm² to the RTI contents during a year of research period which is very low and not satisfactory.

3.4 Tone of Story Coverage in Newspapers

The tone is also an important basis to publish the content. The tone of RTI stories coverage was positive among the Hindi daily newspapers. Most of the stories published in a positive tone (93.94%), followed by neutral tone (4.04%) and negative tone (2.02%).

Dainik Jagran has a more positive tone towards RTI stories (96.3%) in comparison to others i.e. Amar Ujala 95.84%, Hindustan, 94.73% and Rastriya Sahara 86.2%. With regard to the neutral stories, Amar Ujala is more neutral (4.16%) than Rastriya Sahara (6.90%) and Hindustan (5.27%). Dainik Jagaran didn’t publish any neutral story. In publication of stories with negative tone Rastriya Sahara published 6.9% and Dainik Jagran 3.7%. Amar Ujala and Hindustan didn’t publish any negative story.

4. Findings

The study found several important findings. The overall picture emerging from the above study is that the national Hindi daily newspapers are very poor in the publication of RTI stories. They have no good focus and priority for publishing RTI stories. The research study indicates clearly that the coverage of RTI is very low. It is far away from a satisfactory stage. In other words, it is almost negligible in Hindi daily newspapers. Through this study, it found that overall; all the newspapers have published only around 2 (two) stories of RTI in a month which is a very small number as compared to other beat stories. Sometimes they didn’t publish any RTI stories for a few months.

On the basis of analysis of data, it is also found that they were only published news on RTI and they have very less interest in giving knowledge to the people through publishing Articles and Editorials. This is very strange and serious issue that all the newspapers have published hardly 1 or 2 articles only during a year of research period. Hindustan and Rastriya Sahara have only published a single- single editorial but Dainik Jagaran and Amar Ujala didn’t publish at least a single editorial during a year of the research study. In this reference, Dainik Jagran has very poor approach in giving article and editorial among all the taken newspapers for the present study.

In matter of giving supplement on RTI, only Rastriya Sahara has given it, otherwise none of three other newspapers have published any supplement based on RTI. And regarding space, Amar Ujala has also given maximum space to publish RTI contents, i.e. 9523 cm² than other newspapers. In reference to Tone, it is found that the tone of RTI news coverage is positive among the Hindi Daily Newspapers. They have a more positive tone in the publishing of RTI contents and stories.

Therefore, this research study has found that the overall present scenario of Hindi Daily Newspapers towards RTI story publications is not satisfactory. They have given almost very less importance to the RTI subject which is not healthy for the sake of public and society’s interest. Since, Right to information and empowerment of people are closely related. RTI is a powerful tool to make the system more transparent and accountable. It is an effective means to bring good governance and fight against many bad practices of public officials and corruptions. So it is important for the print media that they should spread the information and knowledge about RTI and its uses, filing process and related other procedures among the rural people and rural society at large so that people could be more informed and aware about RTI.

5. Conclusion

Print media have also strengthened the RTI messages in rural society. It has made aware the rural people about RTI; however, study found that the role of Print media was not very supportive for RTI. Since, print media is one of the oldest public institutions which have been sincerely serving the people for more than two hundred years and served the nation as a powerful weapon in freedom struggle.
and movement, it has major responsibility over other media to play more proactive role for RTI.

The RTI act has definitely come in this country for the noble cause and with new hopes. It has, indeed, brought the open-culture in functioning, and made the governing system more transparent, responsible, and accountable. At present, its speed may appear slow because of poor infrastructure, but it is moving forward steadily. At the place where it has been used, it has nabbed the corruption and checked on the wrong doings. The RTI act is, really, a very powerful piece of legislation that has immense potential to help the people from many problems particularly, in rural society in their day to day life.

6. Recommendations

Though it is well proved that RTI is a revolutionary act in independent India which has potential to improve the system and remove the corruptions. It has ability to make the good governance. But it is found that having all the abilities and potential, it is not as performing as it can. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations can be made:

1. The National Hindi daily Newspapers should publish RTI news on a regular basis to aware and educate the rural society about the RTI.
2. Newspapers should pay proper attention in publication of the RTI Messages.
3. Newspapers should provide a proper space and coverage to RTI messages because this study has shown a clear picture that newspapers are very poor in the publication of RTI News.
4. Newspapers publish hardly 2 or 3 RTI News in a month on an average and they are very precisely written news. They don’t provide even essential information regarding RTI and its uses and impacts. Thus, they should also provide a complete knowledge about its objectives, functioning and filing process through RTI news and publishing a special supplement.

References