

City pages content analysis of the Hindu newspaper, Coimbatore

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Abstract

This paper purposes to provide an in-depth content examination of the city pages of The Hindu newspaper published in Coimbatore in the month of June 2016. The aim of the paper is to find what kinds of articles are published in these city pages and with what regularity. After having studied the earlier papers a checklist was prepared to study the content and the data has been examined both quantitatively and qualitatively. The need of such study arose with the interest to understand what kind of news or information people of Coimbatore are provided in the city pages. In addition, this study has also examined the kind of advertisements in these city pages.

Keywords: Coimbatore, city pages, Hindu, content, analysis, advertisements

1. Introduction

The Hindu newspaper started in Madras in the year 1878 and turned to daily in 1889, its headquarter is based in Chennai and their printing centers are Coimbatore, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Chennai, Madurai, Noida, Visakhapatnam, Thiruvananthapuram, Kochi, Vijayawada, Mangalore, Tiruchirapalli, Kolkata, Hubli, Mohali, Allahabad and Kozhikode. Irrespective of the threats from the new media newspaper like The Hindu has not just survived but also grown over the years. As per Audit Bureau of Circulation the Hindu's circulation went up from 1,261,658 from January-June 2015 to 1,518,082 in July to December 2015. In 2012 The Hindu newspaper crossed hundred thousand readerships in Coimbatore as per the Indian Readership survey. The number of people reading this paper has been constantly increasing year by year and this is how the researchers were drawn to the topic of the research to find what is published in the city pages of this paper. Thus, this research paper is based on the content examination of the City Pages of The Hindu newspaper published in Coimbatore.

The book 'Content analysis in Communication Research' by Berelson in 1952 has opened up content analysis to be an adaptable tool for social science, communication and media researches. Berelson states that content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication. This tool has been used for this research to understand the content of the city pages of the Coimbatore edition of the Hindu.

In the process of communication, the message plays an important role and every theorist has focused on the content. Starting from the Aristotle's theory of communication which imbibes the three important elements of communication - the speaker, the speech and the audience. Here the speech is the message or the content. Thus, even in this research paper the focus is on the message.

Another theorist, Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in their Agenda Setting theory which was published in the Public Opinion Quarterly, the American Association for Public Opinion Research in 1972 stated that: *In choosing and*

displaying news, editors, newsroom staff, and broadcasters play an important part in shaping political reality. Readers learn not only about a given issue, but also how much importance to attach to that issue from the amount of information in a news story and its position. In reflecting what candidates are saying during a campaign, the mass media may well determine the important issues—that is, the media may set the “agenda” of the campaign.

Just like the above mentioned statement this research too has focused on the content part of the research stating what the readers are given to read. Thus, the objectives of the study are:

1. To find the kind of articles published in the city pages of The Hindu, Coimbatore edition
2. To find the kind of advertisements published in the city pages
3. To understand the focus of these pages whether it is news oriented or entertainment orientated
4. To find if there is a pattern of publication in these pages

2. Methodology/Research Design

For this study content analysis methodology, has been used to qualitatively analyse the data collected for a period of 1 month from 1 July – 30 June, 2016. The first basic study was to see the nature of the articles on how many local, national, international news articles were featured in these pages. A check list was prepared under the following categories to study the content:

- a. Nature
- b. News
- c. Feature Stories
- d. Special Columns
- e. Cartoons
- f. Games – Sudoku/Crosswords/Quizzes
- g. Classifieds Advertisement
- h. Public Opinion
- i. Advertisements
- j. Miscellaneous

Some of the above-mentioned categories has further sub divisions such as under news will come Crime, Sports,

Development, Politics news etc. These will further be analyzed to see if it's local news, national or international. Apart from the content the design, style and structure of the city pages has also been studied looking at the placement of the articles and the advertisements, the color combinations used, layout, font sizes etc.

The Hindu in the Coimbatore city pages are not more than 3-4 pages, in these pages the kinds of advertisements was also studied under the category of Local, National and International Advertisement and the placement of these articles have also been examined. This methodology and design best suited to study this topic as it has given an entire representation of the content in the Coimbatore City pages of The Hindu newspaper from the basic layout to the articles published.

3. Findings

The finding is given as per the categories mentioned in the methodology:-

a) Nature

It has been found that the city pages of The Hindu, Coimbatore covers only the local news of the city. The city pages in the Coimbatore edition are not more than 2-4 pages including the advertisements however, at times they may increase one or two pages depending on the content and the advertisements. The articles in these pages mainly focus on the developmental issues of the city.

b) News

The kinds of article published in the newspaper plays a key role in analyzing the space and importance given to each topic. The major space of the city pages is covered by the news articles related to the developmental issues of the city. Fig 1 shows the kinds of news articles published and their quantity.

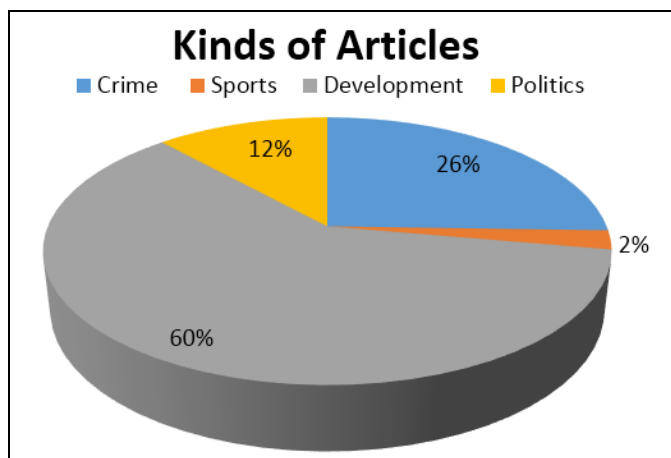


Fig 1

The data from the Fig shows that the major news articles are based on the city's development issues. Apart from developmental articles, political and crime news occupies the major space in the city pages. Pictorial news with captions is also published in the city pages.

c) Feature Stories / Special Columns

The scope for feature stories is higher in the supplements and the special columns of the newspaper. Therefore, the content of the news articles is mostly informative in nature. Being the

partner of the Car-Free Sunday's program, a special space was given to cover those programs on a weekly basis (Mondays). The 'Coimbatore Today' column reveals the engagements around the city in a daily basis. Movie reviews are published on a weekly basis (only on Saturdays and Sundays). The 'Education Hub' is column news which contains the current events held at the educational institutions of the city. The 'Crime Notes' column provides a gist of the crimes which occurred in the city. It is also clear from Fig 2 that the least number of articles was published on sports.

From the data collected, it has also been found that there is no particular pattern for the content. However, the main articles which are mostly local developmental news in nature take the first spot in the city pages followed by locality related news. The daily weather updates of the city are given in Page 3. The first half of the pages are mostly occupied by the local political or road based development news. The left-hand corner of the page has a column titled 'Around the city' which mainly covers the gist of the local achievements, events, crime, etc.

The number of local or regional news and advertisements collected determines the need for extra pages. Page 3 of the city edition chiefly covers the regional, local, political and developmental news. The regional news items primarily come from Salem, Tirupur, Namakkal and Udthagamandalam.

d) Cartoons / Games / Entertainment

The data collected from the city pages reveal that there is very less scope for games and entertainment in the city pages of The Hindu, Coimbatore edition. The games like Sudoku, Word puzzle, etc. are published only at the bottom space of the Sports page of the paper.

'Cinema. Arts. Events', is a separate column in the city pages containing information on the latest movies and the theatre timings. This page also provides information regarding the concerts, spiritual talks or events happening in and around the city. Apart from that, there is no scope for entertainment items in the city column.

e) Classifieds Advertisement

Classified advertisements is a source of revenue for any newspaper organization. Enough space is given for the classified advertisements which may be local, national or international. Owing to the demand and the number of ads the space for the classified advertisement is determined. The major advertisements are from the local entrepreneurs. Remembrance and obituary news are also published in this section. The data in Fig 2 reveals the different kinds of classified advertisements and the number of days it was published in a month.

Often, the classified marts column is printed in the state pages due to the unavailability of space in the city pages. Normally, the space covered by the classified advertisements under the column 'Classified Marts' ranged from 28cm x 18cm to 40cm x 14cm. It also varies according to the number of advertisements collected and published in these pages.

Fig 2 clearly shows that the classified advertisement has a major concentration on job vacancies, business proposals, walk-in interviews, household and tenders both from local and national clients. It also focusses on advertisements like health centers, garments, wires for Tamil Nadu spectrum, Loans, etc.

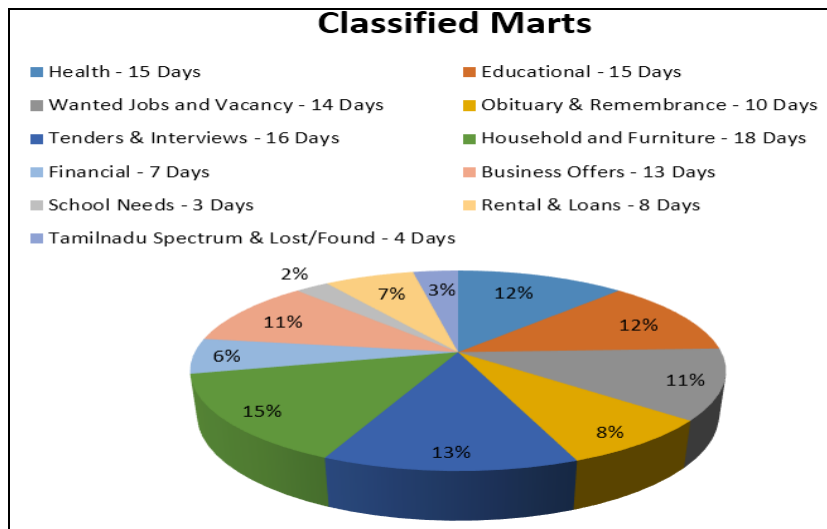


Fig 2

f) Public Opinion

Public opinion is the key for many organizations to analyses and modifies their way of publishing. The contribution of the public for the news organization is getting higher and higher at present.

The Coimbatore edition of The Hindu has its own website and e-mail id to connect with the readers (Twitter, Facebook - @KovaiConnect and via mail in thread@thehindu.co.in). ‘The Coimbatore Connect’ online service allows the readers to send their opinions and news articles from their locality. For ‘The Readers’ Mail’ column, relevant articles written by the public are chosen and published with their names. It is frequently published on Tuesdays in the city pages.

Apart from publishing the public’s news, the social networking site also allows the public to connect with the organization.

g) Advertisements

Advertisements published in the newspaper plays a vital role in increasing not just the revenue of the newspaper organization but also in providing information and creating awareness among public.

Through this research it has been found that the advertisements in the Coimbatore edition of The Hindu can be categorized into local ads and national ads. With respect to the space covered by an advertisement in a page, it can further be classified into certain groups. Generally, the second or fifth page of the city column covers full space advertisements.

As per the Fig below the ads in the city pages are also mainly local ads as compared to national ads. Local ads here refer to ads related to the City or regional alone.

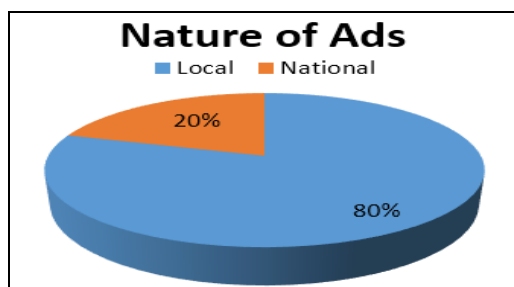


Fig 3

Further from the data of Fig 3, advertisements in the Coimbatore edition of The Hindu in this research has been classified as the full-page ads and smaller ads. The Fig below shows the kinds of ads and the percentage of the space it occupies in the city pages.

Fig 4 and Fig 5 clearly reveals that major concentration and minor concentration of the advertisements published in the city pages of the Coimbatore edition of The Hindu newspaper for the month of June 2016.

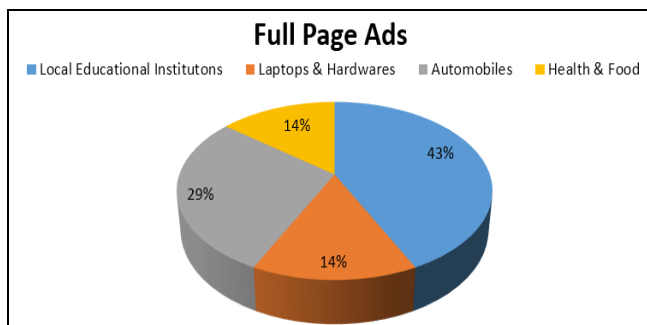


Fig 4

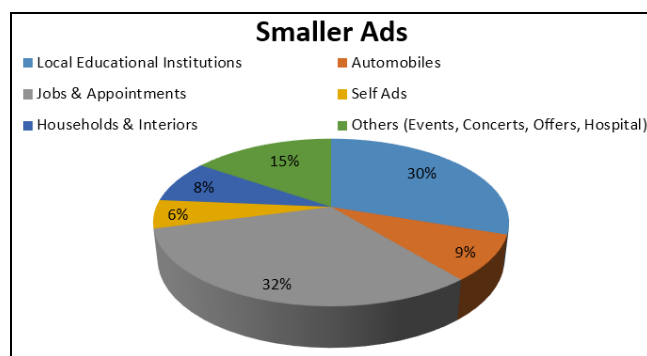


Fig 5

Fig 4 shows that the space covered by the local educational institutions is higher in the month of June 2016. The advertisements of popular cars, bikes, laptops, etc. are also published but in a lesser percentage.

Fig 5 concentrates on the smaller ads which mostly covers the bottom left side space of the city pages. These ads are mainly

published in the second and third page of the city column. Self-advertisements were also done by The Hindu for the Tamil Hindu's initiative of the Car-Free Sundays, competitions and for the contact details of their advertisement sections. The percentage of advertisements is higher for local educational institutions and job opportunities whereas lesser for household and interiors in this section.

h) Miscellaneous

The researchers have also studied the pictorial news item. It has been found that there are 3 main categories for such news that is developmental, sports and crime. Fig 6 reveals that the major concentration of the photo news is in the developmental issues of the city whereas sports and the crime new are given lesser importance in the city pages.

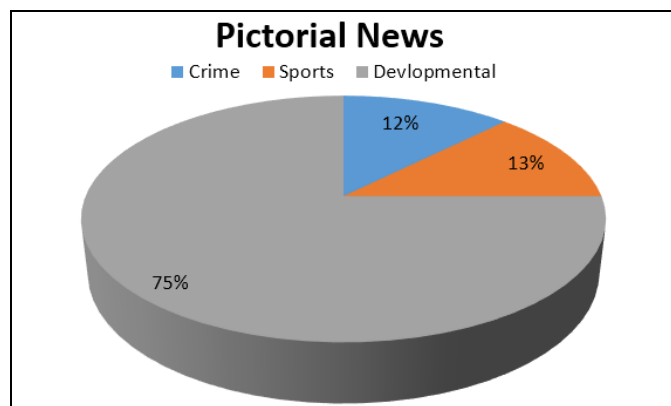


Fig 6

4. Conclusion

As per the findings we can understand that the city pages of The Hindu, Coimbatore edition focuses on the development news about the city making it news oriented rather than merely entertainment oriented. Even the advertisements in the month on June were specially focused in the educational sector. Other than educational sector jobs and automobiles were also the major advertisement contributors. In terms of pattern or design, the city pages has few columns that get the same slot on a daily basis but the rest depends on the number of article and advertisements. This paper has further opened other research potentials such as understanding the gate keeping or agenda setting policy of The Hindu newspaper and advance studies on the use of public opinion in the newspaper.

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