

Effect of Local Newspaper in Selection of Environmental News - A Year Wise Study

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Abstract

Media has an enormous role in communicating information in various kind. Particularly, the print media is serving society strongly with their evolution in various fields including technological aspects. Within the steep competition each media wants to hold their own audience with continuous innovative items. Environment is such a contemporary subject which has a fair demand. In this study, the status of the English and the Bengali dailies in connection with environmental journalism has been scrutinized. This may be concluded that all the newspapers as a whole usually showed their seriousness by selecting environmental 'Hard News' in highest number. After 2006, the number-difference between 'Hard News' and other 'News Type' has gradually increased.

Key Words: Media, Press, Bengal, Communication, Hard News, Environment

1. Introduction

When Lord Clive defeated Nawab of Bengal Serajud-Daulah at the battle of Plassey and laid the foundation of the British Empire¹ in 23rd June of 1757, there was no mass media in India. For this reason, people across the country could not get such important news of that time in a quick period of time.

Newspaper is one of the early communication instruments of the society.²³ Now it becomes one of the strongest apparatuses of the modern society. Media pundits across the Globe are claiming that the print media is exploring its multifaceted potentiality day by day.

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Newspapers are popularly accepted medium to be used to disseminate local, national and international news to readers. Still, the most of the global people are fond of newspapers to get the different types of news of their interest.

The roles of the newspapers are significantly increasing day by day in modern time. Newspapers are also guiding in the promotion of trade and business. Writing on commerce, entertainment, culture, sports, politics, health, crime, law, science, environment, and other subject enrich people regular basis. In general, newspapers inform people about promotion of any products, job vacancies, admission in educational institutes, study materials, fashion, food, marketing facilities, hospitality, bullion reports, meteorological reports etc. The readers get knowledge of their interest or of any subject happening in and around the globe. The readers go through news, editorials, opinions, columns, reviews, features, photographs etc. to know the incidents in detail.

In this study, only the environmental news has been studied. Now, the environmental journalists are 'reactive not proactive'⁴ in their noble duty. The standard of impartiality should needs to be polished in the context of environmental journalism. The role of a journalist needs to be highly structured. Environment is always like a sensitive bed and whatever people do has an impression on it. To this context, environmental journalist can go beyond their limit. They may enjoy the advantages of being able to anticipate changes. In fact, this is how the debates on climate changes and global warming have been started. Environmental Journalists need to go beyond reporting and anticipate stories. New standard should be set.

2. Methodology

Nine prominent newspapers of five long years (edition of 1st January, 2005 to 31st December, 2010) have been monitored critically. In the category of prominent dailies, following publications published from Kolkata have been studied:-

1. The Telegraph (English)
2. The Statesman (English)
3. The Times of India (English)
4. Hindustan Times (English)
5. Anandabazar Patrika (Bengali vernacular)
6. Bartaman (Bengali vernacular)
7. Aajakal (Bengali vernacular)
8. Sambad Pratidin (Bengali vernacular)

9. Ganashakti (Bengali vernacular)

These are the most populated and widely circulated newspapers during 2005 and 2010 in Kolkata. One glimpses of average qualifying circulation of those newspapers are mentioned below:-

SR. NO.	NEWSPAPER	JANUARY - JUNE 2010	JULY - DECEMBER 2010
1.	The Telegraph	4,73,690	4,81,755
2.	The Statesman	1,72,195	Not accepted by ABC
3.	The Times of India	3,93,587	4,06,133
4.	Hindustan Times	60,000	60,000
5.	Anandabazar Patrika	11,73,751	11,85,779
6.	Bartaman	4,85,449	4,88,425
7.	Aajakal	1,81,431	1,81,353
8.	Sambad Pratidin	3,06,644	3,06,337
9.	Ganashakti	1,51,822	1,57,502

{Source: Audit Bureau of Circulations(ABC), excepting the data of Hindustan Times}

To find the status of media coverage and the current trends in local print media coverage of environmental news in local leading print media, the news items published in aforesaid nine different prominent dailies were collected according to a well-defined sampling procedure through which a broad spectrum of environmental science categories may be covered for long 72 months during 1st January, 2005 to 31st December, 2010. No promotional feature has been considered.

This was a very sturdy task to organize all the information, which has significant position in this research.

All the available paper clippings on environment related news published in previously mentioned newspapers for long 72 months during 1st January, 2005 to 31st December, 2010 have been organized month wise so that the convenient information can be marked out easily. All the information including different “News Type” has been analyzed by specially made software prepared on access platform and different tables and charts have been generated.

3. Conceptualization

Environmental news published in Dailies have been classified into several “News Type”. Among them only major seven (07) categories like comments, editorial, features, general news, hard news, letter, photo news have been studied here. Usually all the categories of news have their own characteristics. Only any doubt or confusion may be raised between general news and hard news. News of both the categories has different news-value. News-value depends on four (04) basic factors like importance, proximity, size and timeliness.⁵General news is more casual in nature than hard news. Hard news always possesses the better significance of effectiveness, timely actions and results than any general news. Though, this may be mentioned that the gap between these two categories is not so prominent. Even also, it is not easy job to differentiate both the categories every time.

Carrying opinion of the citizens or audience is perhaps the most treasured part of the mass media in this information age. It is now very easy to get information about the actions taken by the government from different mass media. It is also easy to get and share opinions on specific issue. Audience can harmonize opinion of one’s own. In most of the cases, mass media take nonpartisan stand and accept opinions based on different school of thoughts. In case of electronic media, debate on specific issue is frequently seen. Online sources like blogs, emails exclusively handled by any individual are the key components of such debates in electronic media. In print media, ‘letter to the editor’ is the only platform to share the readers’ opinions. Sometimes print media itself feel to find opinion of readers on any issue. In that case, print media collect opinion by interviewing experts, concerned people and general mass.

Editorial is the mirror of a newspaper and it projects the viewpoint of the newspaper on a particular policy.⁶Usually a group of senior journalists are involved in writing daily editorial. Some of the newspapers used to publish more than one editorial every day. Specialized features and other columns are also found in local print media regular basis. Feature has a great importance in all newspapers. News does not carry previous records, future consequences, and does not have documentation value etc. Feature focuses on overview details and possesses documentation value.

All photographs which were published in nine prominent dailies during January to March, 2005 have been divided into eight (08) further types like Colour(Natural), Black & White (Natural), Colour (Symbolic), Black & White (Symbolic), Collage (Colour), Collage (Black & White) Sketch (Colour), Sketch (black & White).

Published news was also categorized into three (03) i.e. local, national and international vide the content of the news in respect of place of interest.

4. Analysis

4.1. A.Explanation:

After long scrutiny of the available information, it is tried to find out the status of the English and Bengali dailies. Date wise total available 20,697 news on different 'Report Type', published in nine different newspapers as various 'Report Type' have been shown in the Table – 1 and Chart – 1.

From the Table – 1 and Chart – 1, following observations have been made:-

6.1.B. Observation:

1. The highest numbers of 'Hard News' published on all days as a whole.
2. 'General News' news published in second highest in number on all days as a whole.
3. Other 24 'Report Types' published in very few in numbers comparing to 'Hard News' and 'General Type'.
4. Maximum numbers of news were published as 'Hard News' (379).

6.1.C. Remarks:

1. Hard News (43.67% of all news) were preferred by all the newspapers. News published comparatively lesser in numbers under other three major 'Report Type' like 'General News' (28.74%), 'Feature' (6.28%), 'Letter' (4.91%) and 'Comments' (3.92%).
2. Maximum numbers of news were published as 'Hard News' (379).
3. Maximum numbers of news under chart leader 'Hard News' were published continuously during 5th to 10th June during considerable six years in connection with World Environment Day and it signifies that a day dedicated for environment influenced all the media.

6.2.A. Explanation:

'Report Type' wise distribution of total available news in different years, published in nine different newspapers during six years as shown in the Table – 2 and Chart - 2. A total number of news (20,697) was published during 1st January, 2005 to 31st December, 2010.

6.2.B. Observation:

1. During considered six years, only two 'Report Type' like 'Hard News' and 'General News' have been prominently identified in Chart – 46 {more than 650 number of news published in both the 'Report Type' in each year}.
2. 'General News' (1,177) were published better in number than 'Hard News' (691) in 2005.
3. 'Hard News' and 'General News' both were published in same number (1,322) in 2006.
4. After 2006, 'Hard News' went much ahead than 'General News' in considerable each year.
5. After 2006, gradually the differences between 'Hard News' and 'General News' was increased.
6. Presence/performance of the 'Report Type' like 'Photo News', 'Letter', 'Feature', 'Editorial' and 'Comments' have been observed each year but not prominent like 'Hard News' and 'General News'.
7. Highest total number of 9,040 news published in all the six years as 'Hard News'.
8. Second highest total number of 5,949 news published in all the six years as 'General News'.
9. 'Feature' and 'Letter' only other two categories crossed 1,000 number news barriers in all six years.
10. 'Hard News' published in highest in number of news (2,277) in an individual year 2009.
11. 'General News' published in highest in number of news (1,322) in an individual year 2006.
12. Out of 26, news of only 10 'Report Type' published in all the six years.
13. Most of the 'Report Type' published in all six years failed to contribute minimum 100 number of news.

6.2.C. Remarks:

1. 'Hard News' dominated the Table – 2 and Chart – 2 though out the six years, signifying that the seriousness of all the newspapers as a whole in selection of news.
2. 'General News' topped the Chart – 47 as the second best option.
3. It signifies that all the newspapers carried the least serious news as well as serious news.
4. After 2006, 'Hard News' went much ahead than 'General News' in considerable each year.
5. After 2006, gradually the number-difference between 'Hard News' and 'General News' was increased.
6. All the newspapers were becoming more serious about selection of news year by year.
7. It signifies that all the newspapers preferred local public opinion on environmental issues.

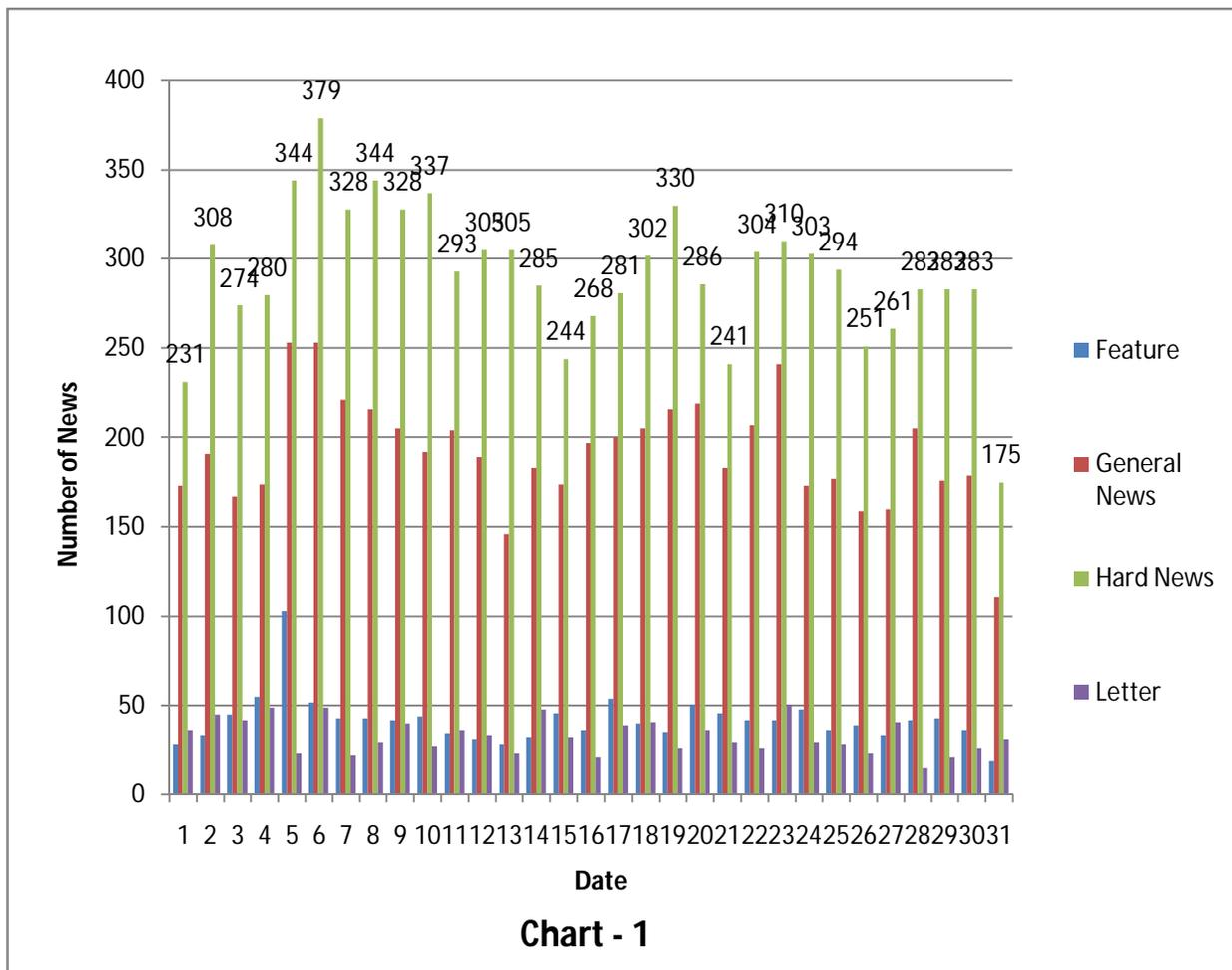
8. Conclusion

From the above study, this may be concluded that all the newspapers as a whole usually showed their seriousness by selecting environmental 'Hard News' in highest number. After 2006, the number-difference between 'Hard News' and other 'News Type' has gradually increased and it is proved that all the newspapers were becoming more serious about selection of news year by year. For further study, what type of other environmental 'News Type' get the importance and by which newspapers could be studied.

Tables and Charts

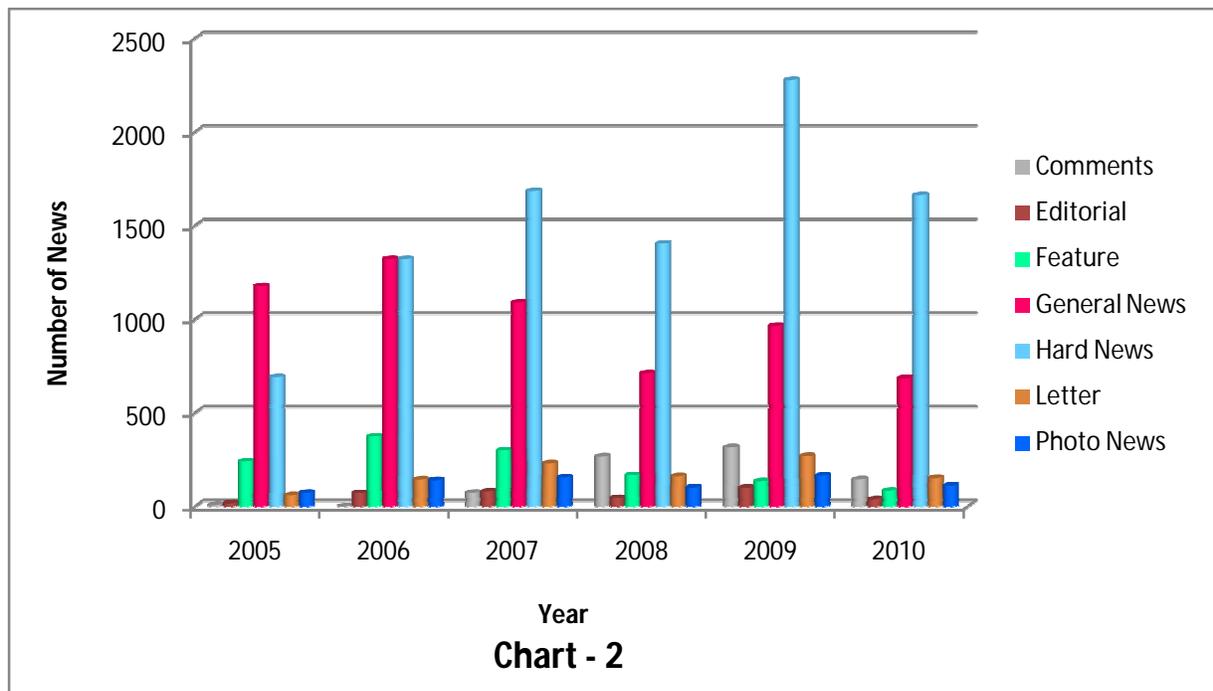
Row Labels	Feature	General News	Hard News	Letter	Grand Total
01	28	173	231	36	595
02	33	191	308	45	661
03	45	167	274	42	643
04	55	174	280	49	651
05	103	253	344	23	897
06	52	253	379	49	877
07	43	221	328	22	729
08	43	216	344	29	771
09	42	205	328	40	772
10	44	192	337	27	743
11	34	204	293	36	672
12	31	189	305	33	674
13	28	146	305	23	590
14	32	183	285	48	642
15	46	174	244	32	583
16	36	197	268	21	638
17	54	200	281	39	662
18	40	205	302	41	697
19	35	216	330	26	703
20	51	219	286	36	688
21	46	183	241	29	596
22	42	207	304	26	683
23	42	241	310	51	745
24	48	173	303	29	664
25	36	177	294	28	625
26	39	159	251	23	551
27	33	160	261	41	587
28	42	205	283	15	665
29	43	176	283	21	650
30	36	179	283	26	637
31	19	111	175	31	406
Grand Total	1301	5949	9040	1017	20697

Table - 1



Row Labels	Comments	Editorial	Feature	General News	Hard News	Letter	Photo News	Grand Total
2005	9	18	241	1177	691	60	74	2300
2006	1	72	374	1322	1322	144	141	3475
2007	74	80	299	1089	1684	230	155	3825
2008	267	45	167	711	1403	162	102	3149
2009	316	100	135	964	2277	269	165	4723
2010	145	39	85	686	1663	152	111	3225
Grand Total	812	354	1301	5949	9040	1017	748	20697

Table – 2



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