

**A study on The framing of headlines in
the news sites www.thehindu and
www.thenewindianexpress about the fall
of LTTE in Sri Lanka for a period from
1st January to 31st May 2009**

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Abstract:

The role of media be it Online, Print and Audio-Visual becomes engrained in the public consciousness over a period of time. It is vital in generating a democratic culture that extends beyond the political system. It is through the media that people share their experience, learn and become aware. Hence, it is rightly called media as the fourth pillar of democracy, the Fourth Estate.

Media plays an influential role in portraying other countries image in a striking way. The mass media can contribute to people's understanding or Misunderstanding of each other's country. Mass media play a crucial role in constructing the image of various societies and their people, as good or bad.

The professional way of news reporting with sense of objectivity will take care of many problems of journalism. The role of media in portraying the image about the people, culture, crisis etc cannot be ignored. The Media can either propagate messages of intolerance and disinformation or serve as a tool of conflict resolution, which is a part of conflict news reporting. This study tries to explore the role of media in reporting a conflict.

The Role of Media in Reporting Conflict

The mass media have powerful influence on how people view the world. Newspaper, radio, TV are frequently the only link to event happening outside of one's neighborhood. A reporter's story on a conflict can be the sole information available to his audience. How the reporter frames the conflict can bias the audience in favor of one party, or one solution over another. It can intensify the conflict or cool it down.

Many difficult and intractable conflicts involve whole communities or nations. People get their information about what is going on in these conflicts through the media, So the media plays a critical role in how these conflicts develop and change.

This study explores the role of media in more depth looking at the media coverage of a conflict.

Steps involved in analyzing the war news coverage.

Conflict Assessment- Deep rooted and intractable conflicts tend to be very complex. Conflict assessment is essential to understand who all the parties and what role they are playing in the situation.

Underlying causes of the conflict- As the conflict has gone on so long and become so embedded in the culture, that raw emotions fear humiliation and anger overlie earlier substantive concerns. It is essential to understand and explore both the superficial and underlying causes of the conflict from all points of view.

Effects of conflict in different constituency group Conflict participants particularly those most directly involved in the struggle often don't really understand the full cost of the conflict and potential benefits of settlement or resolution. Doing an assessment of the human as well as monetary costs of the conflicts on the primary parties, people caught in the middle and on allies and neighbors of the disputants is essential.

Fact Finding- Conflict participants from both the sides claim different "facts" are true and the opposing "facts" are false. It is very important to find the real fact. Post modernism appreciated and celebrates the plurality unlike those of other periods .

The media can either propagate messages of intolerance and disinformation or serve as a tool for conflict resolution. It is difficult for the journalist to be neutral, even if he/she wants to be. Pressure from the government, the policy of the news paper, prevailing socio economic condition constantly act upon him/her in direct or indirect ways .

In this study, the researcher analysis the “News framing” of the fall of LTTE in Sri Lanka. Framing theory posits that media transfer the salience of specific attributes to issues or events. According to Entman (1993:52), to frame means “to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text.” Tankard (1997) Dimitrova et al. / War on the Web summarizes that, in news media coverage, “framing stems from a process of selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration by the news organization. For instance, in a case of war, the media can select to focus on the destruction of war as opposed to freedom from tyranny, can frame the event as an invasion versus attack, can emphasize the victims versus invaders, and can highlight a positive versus negative attitude toward the war”. Tuchman (1978) considers media’s framing ability to organize everyday reality as their most important task. Gitlin (1980) argues that media frames organize the world both for journalists who report it and for consumers who rely on their reports. Different factors influence how journalists frame issues, including social norms and organizational pressures. Journalistic practices and routines, cultural values and broader sociopolitical forces shape the selection of media frames (Jha-Nambiar 2002; Shoemaker and Reese 1996). Iyengar (1991) distinguishes between two types of frames: episodic and thematic. Episodic frames are references to isolated news events without providing broader context—“only a passing parade of specific events” (p. 140). Thematic frames, on the other hand, provide broader societal context to issues and events and thus present more complete pictures and collective evidence. Episodic and thematic frames have different effects on the audience, according to Iyengar. Episodic frames tend to put responsibility on specific groups or individuals whereas thematic frames attribute responsibility to societal/political forces.

This study aims at categorizing the presence of different “Frames” and the presence of dominant “Frame” .

How to identify Frames.

One approach is inductive in nature and refrains from analyzing news stories with a prior defined news frames in mind.

A second approach is deductive in nature and investigates frames that are defined and operationalized prior to the investigation.

A news frame must have identifiable conceptual and linguistic characteristics.

Second it should be commonly observed in journalistic practice.

Third it must be possible to distinguish the frame reliably from other frames

Fourth A frame must have representational validity and not be merely a figment of a researcher’s imagination.

When working with a deductive approach the relevant question is What(Which components)in a news story constitute a frame.

Entman suggested that frames in the news can be examined and identified by “the presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments.

The most comprehensive empirical approach is offered by Tankard, who suggests a list of framing mechanism or focal points for identifying and measuring news frames. They are: Headlines, Sub headlines, Photos, Photo captions, Leads, Source selection, Quotes selection, Pull quotes, Logos, Statistics and Charts, Concluding statements and paragraph.

In sum Scholars within the empirical approach to measuring frames agree that frames are specific textual and visual elements or framing devices.

These elements are essentially different from the remaining news story which may be considered core news facts. A news content is divided into frames and core facts. Certain frames are pertinent only to specific topics or events such frames may be labeled issue specific frames. Other frames transcend thematic limitations and can be identified in relation to different topics. Some even cover time and in different cultural context. These frames can be labeled as generic frames.

The Objectives:

To find out the dominant frames in the headlines of the news in the news sites www.thehindu and www.thenewindianexpress about the fall of LTTE in Sri Lank.

The headlines were coded and the presence of the dominant frames were identified as follows.

<D:\headline analysis og hind express.xlsx>

Analysis Of Headlines

Headline are the index of the news stories. The headlines explains the entire meaning of the news stories in a nut shell. So it is very important to analyze the views expressed in the Headlines.

When the Headlines were categorized the researcher found that the Victory of the Sri Lankan army were highlighted in most of the headlines in both the news sites And so it is proven that the presence of Military conflict frame in the headline is more when compared to the presence of the Human interest frame.

The headlines of both the news sites glorifies the success of the Sri Lankan military rather it portrays the sorrows and sufferings of the people caught in between. The table vividly states that the no of headlines which narrates the success of the Sri Lankan army is more in both the news sites than the no of headlines which portrays the human suffering is less.

After categorizing and coding the headlines of the online version of the News Paper “The Hindu”. The researcher observed the following:

1 The NO of Headlines about the victory of the Sri Lankan military over LTTE falls first in the line.

2.The NO of headline about the “Voice of the Vulnerable” falls only next to the success of Sri Lankan Government

3.The Presence of “ Reason why ” headline was little

4.The opinion of the international communities were less expressed in the Headlines

5”Cause and Effects” of the war was not explained in the headline

6. NO of headlines about the Sri Lankan army blaming the LTTE for harassing the

Conclusion:

The analysis proves the hypothesis that the presence of the Military/Conflict frame were the most than the presence of the Human interest frame.

The news about the “Sri Lankan crisis” was framed in both the news sites as a Military/Conflict frame. The Success of the Sri Lankan military was glorified.

The news about The plight of the people occupies only second position. The presence of the Human interest frame falls only next to Military Conflict frame

The Presence of the Responsibility frame in the news stories was more than the diagnostic and prognostic frame. The news about the Sri Lankan government blaming LTTE for harassing the Sri Lankan Tamil was more.

The presence of diagnostic frame was very little. The news about the Sri Lankan crisis was only reported and it was not diagnosed and discussed in detail.

The presence of the Prognostic frame was also very minimum. The after effects of the war, The plight of the war victims, the plight of the Internally displaced people, the future plan of the Sri Lankan government for the welfare of the Tamils were not vividly discussed in the news stories in both the news sites.

The presence of Media referential frame where the emphasis will be given to the Media was little.

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