

**RATIONALE OF SPORTS COVERAGE IN THE INDIAN NEWSPAPERS: A
CONTENT ANALYSIS APPROACH”****Prof. (Dr.) Rakam Singh¹, Balvinder Singh*²**

¹Prof, Department of Physical Education, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra, Haryana, India.

²Research Scholar, Department of Physical Education, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra, Haryana, India.

ABSTRACT

The development of sports from the pre-historic times until now may be largely attributed to the exploration and modernization of industrial and telecom sectors. Today media is capable of bringing information from the remotest corner of the globe. This unique aspect of media makes it an important medium for sports' promotion and development. The connection between media and sports is an under-researched area and is being largely ignored by the researchers in India. To address this lapse, this study is related to the justification meted out to various sports as-far-as sports coverage in the Indian newspapers is concerned.

Keywords: Evolutionary, patriarchal, pioneering, quantitative, under-researched, symbolic.

INTRODUCTION

Sports are an integral part of world culture since ancient times and are enjoyed by people as a leisure activity as-well-as to satisfy the urge to compete and establish supremacy over the rivals. The history of sports activities is as long as the history of humans. Fitness played an important role in human evolution, e.g. hunting, one of the main features of the evolutionary history; required physical fitness and good teamwork. In the present scenario of worldly turmoil and disturbances these activities are playing a great role to establish peace and harmony among the nations across the world and have become a major source of entertainment and recreation to the world population.

The present status occupied by sports can be largely attributed to the advancement of the field of science and technology, exploration of the means of communication and enhanced media coverage to these activities. The significance of these events can be gauged from the fact that the T.V. channels try to outdo each other in a bid to buy the live telecast rights of the major sporting events like Olympic Games, Commonwealth Games, World Championships/World Cup matches of various games and sports. As a result, not only the popularity, but, the commercial value of sports has also increased manifold. For instance, the cricket players in the Indian Premier League and badminton players in the recently started Indian Badminton League have been signed for huge sums by the Team Franchises to play for their teams.

The print media has a fundamental role to play in creating awareness in the public and undoubtedly has an influence in promoting sport in India. The printed word has a lasting effect far greater than that of the spoken word or visual image. Sports journalism is a form

of writing that reports on sporting topics and games. Sports journalism is an essential element of any news media organization. Sports journalism includes organizations devoted entirely to sports reporting such as newspapers, T.V., radio, internet etc.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Greer (1999) many people see sports writing as a form of writing all on its own. He notes that sport writing is simply a combination of news and feature writing about sports. Sports journalism is ideological and reflects power relations in society.

Described by Lowes (1999) as a 'pioneering content analysis work', the three month study revealed 87 percent of sports items could be classified as male, and almost two-thirds of reporting was about professional sports. This supports his contention that an imbalance exists in the coverage of sport in daily newspapers.

The media contribute significantly to the betterment of the world around us. It presents ways to understand the world and represent the world, in images, sounds and writing. According to Parry and Karam (2001) the media touches people's lives at diverse levels and maintain that the media have always possessed the power to impart ideological and patriarchal messages.

Pederson (2002) sought to investigate an under-researched area of newspaper reporting. In his study of 43 Florida newspapers he found that of the study's 1792 articles only 31.4 percent were devoted to female athletes and 58.3 percent to males. Of these articles only 27 percent of the female articles made the front page with 33.4 percent of male articles making the front page. Sports sections in Florida newspapers, in turn, set the agenda that not only are male sports more readily covered, but are also given prominence over females' sports by their location on the page.

Etang (2006) Sport has been changed in part of daily life in internationally political, cultural, economical, organizational, social, and interpersonal relationships and sport value is higher than symbolic role of it.

Kian (2007) showed the balance between men and women media coverage. It was resulted from important events such as Olympics, Wimbledon tennis, and clear time periods in gender related fields. Besides quantitative research in media coverage, he did qualitative research to examine how male and female athletes to be shown in media.

According to the Media Development and Diversity Agency – MDDA (2008) media is considered to be the fourth pillar of the democratic society and is also the watchdog of democracy. The media is particularly important in contemporary society for a variety of reasons.

Horky (2010) carried out a cross-national comparative survey examining the sports coverage in newspapers from ten different countries shedding light on the arrangement of themes, patterns of construction and further aspects of quality of the sports reporting in three different types of newspapers. He found that coverage primarily focuses on male sports celebrities, while globalized reporting increases and journalistic accuracy decreases.

Mona et al (2011) conducted a research including 7 sports newspapers and magazines which were published three weeks before, during and after the events. The results showed that there is significant difference between the in print surfaces of the news relate to before, during and after the Olympics 2004, while there is no significant difference in the Olympics 2000.

Louise (2012) analyzed a month of Pre-Olympic sports coverage and general sports coverage in two major Australian newspapers, finding that while pre-Olympic coverage includes more women's sport than in general sport, sportsmen and men's sport remains highly privileged in both areas.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Quantitative content analysis of newspapers was done with a view to find out the rationale of sports coverage in Indian newspapers. For this purpose, three English newspapers namely – The Tribune, The Indian Express and The Hindu all of Chandigarh edition were taken up for study. The six month time period from 01 March to 31 August 2013 was chosen for the study. 31 issues of each newspaper were randomly selected for the study. News related to Cricket, Football, Hockey, Athletics, Boxing and Golf were analyzed. Variables of space and sports news were measured in square centimeters by using simple scale. Percentage was used to calculate the data.

Analysis

Table 1: Coverage to Selected Sports in Terms of Space

Newspaper/ Sport	The Tribune		The Indian Express		The Hindu	
	Space (sq cm)	%age	Space(sq cm)	%age	Space(sq cm)	%age
Cricket	29808.46	42.45%	63648.86	45.31%	32327.26	28.37%
Football	3215.52	4.58%	9128.9	6.50%	9672.08	8.49%
Hockey	4168.49	5.94%	4916.85	3.5%	3948.06	3.47%
Athletics	6073.5	8.65%	9650	6.87%	7566.9	6.64%
Boxing	712.55	1.01%	4382.6	3.12%	1244	1.1%
Golf	5009.95	7.14%	7702.62	5.48%	1234.54	1.1%
Other Sports	21222.21	30.23%	41034.41	29.22%	57942.44	50.83%
Total	70210.68	100%	140464.24	100%	113935.28	100%

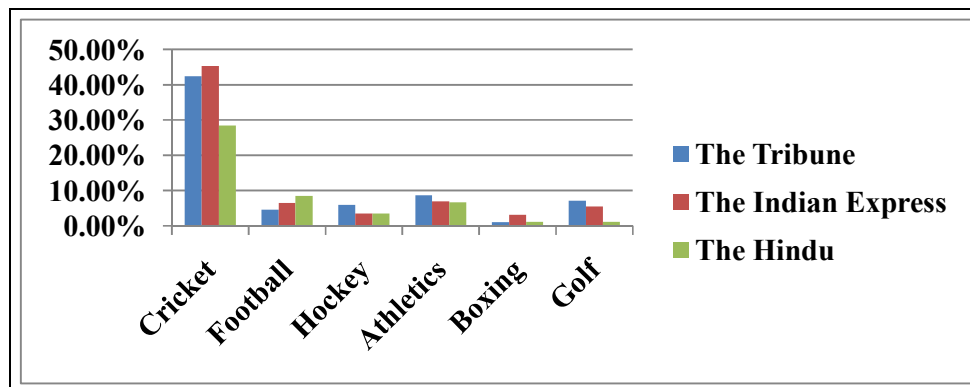


Fig 1: Graphic Presentation of Coverage to Selected Sports in Terms of Space

Table 2: Coverage to Selected Sports in Terms of Sports News

Newspaper/ Sport	The Tribune		The Indian Express		The Hindu	
	No.	% age	No.	%age	No.	% age
Cricket	148	36.36%	258	37.94%	236	24.50%
Football	28	6.88%	97	14.26%	145	15.05%
Hockey	32	7.86%	20	2.94%	37	3.84%
Athletics	33	8.1%	50	7.35%	46	4.78%
Boxing	8	1.96%	18	2.65%	15	1.55%
Golf	27	6.63%	32	4.7%	14	1.45%
Other Sports	131	32.21%	205	30.16%	470	48.83%
Total	407	100%	680	100%	963	100%

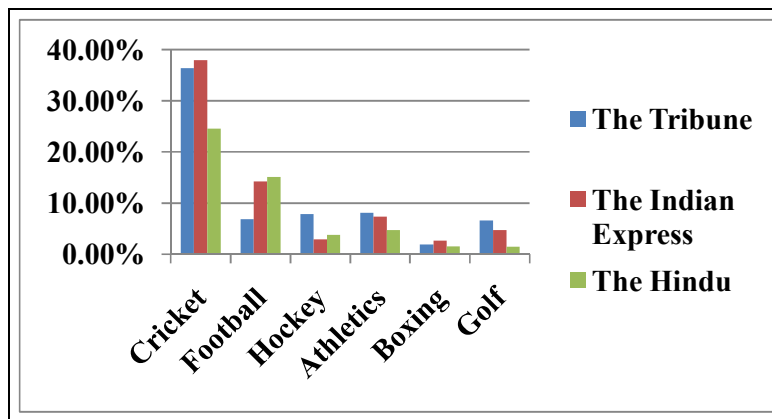
**Fig 2: Graphic Presentation of Coverage to Selected Sports in Terms of Sports News**

Table 1 and figure 1 revealed that The Tribune attributed a large chunk of the total sports coverage in terms of space to Cricket scoring 42.45% followed by Athletics (8.65%), Golf (7.14%), Hockey (5.94%), Football (4.58%), Boxing (1.01%) and 30.23% to Other Sports. Table 2 and figure 2 revealed that The Tribune attributed a large chunk of the total sports coverage in terms of sports news to Cricket scoring 36.36% followed by Athletics with only (8.1%), Hockey (7.86%), Football (6.88%), Golf (6.63%), Boxing (1.96%) and 32.21% to Other Sports.

Table 1 and figure 1 revealed that The Indian Express also devoted a large share of its space to Cricket with 45.31% followed by Athletics with 6.87%, Football (6.5%), Golf (5.48%), Hockey (3.5%), Boxing (3.12%) and 29.22% to Other Sports. Table 2 and figure 2 revealed that The Indian Express also devoted a large share of sports news to Cricket with 37.94% followed by Football (14.26%), Athletics (7.35%), Golf (4.7%), Hockey (2.94%), Boxing (2.65%) and 30.16% to Other Sports.

Table 1 and figure 1 revealed that The Hindu provided the highest coverage in terms of space to Cricket (28.37%) followed by Football (8.49%), Athletics (6.64%), Hockey (3.47%), Boxing (1.1%), Golf (1.1%) and 50.83% to Other Sports. Table 2 and figure 2 revealed that The Hindu provided the highest coverage in terms of sports news to Cricket with (24.5%)

followed by Football (15.05%), Athletics (4.78%), Hockey (3.84%), Boxing (1.55%), Golf (1.45%) and 48.83% to Other Sports.

Findings

After analyzing the three newspapers, it was found that Cricket was given top priority in terms of space as-well-as sports news while the rest of the sports are devoted very little coverage in terms of space as-well-as sports news by all three newspapers. Football was the next preferred sport by The Indian Express and The Hindu, whereas, Athletics was the second most covered sport by The Tribune. The findings revealed that sports coverage in Indian newspapers is inclined towards a particular sport and seems to be biased and unfair. The findings suggested that there is enough bias in the newspaper coverage to various sports in India.

CONCLUSION

Although sports are provided significant coverage in the Indian newspapers, but, there is no justification of newspaper coverage to various sports in India as it is largely unfair and biased. The newspaper reporters queue up to cover those sports which can raise the TRP ratings of their respective newspapers. Every effort is made to cover and popularize these privileged sports. This trend of sports coverage in the Indian newspapers is resulting in the downfall of Indian sports at the national and international level. The irony is that our national game hockey is also neglected by the newspapers and is dying a slow death day-to-day. To come out of this dilemma, sports policy makers, sports administrators, sports federations, sports persons, sports journalists and sports editors should come together to formulate a policy to provide equal and unbiased coverage to all sports in the Indian newspapers.

REFERENCES

- Etang I. Public Relations and Sport in Promotional Culture. *Public Relations Review* 2006; 32: 386-394.
- Greer G. A New Introduction to Journalism, Juta & Co. Ltd., Kenwyn, RSA, 1999; 134.
- Horky T. Contents and Patterns of Construction of Sports Coverage in the Press: Results from a Cross-National Comparative Study. *European Journal for Sport and Society* 2010; 7(3&4): 265-282.
- Kian ME. Will A New Medium for sports News Offer Less Trivialization of Female Athletes?, Examining Descriptors and Traditional Stereotypes in Internet Articles on the NCAA Women's and Men's Basketball Tournaments, University of Central Florida, USA, 2007; 16-19.
- Louise N. The Gendered World of Sports Reporting in the Australian Print Media, *Journalism. Media and Cultural Studies Journal*, Melbourne, Australia, 2012; 25-29.
- Mark L. Inside the Sports Pages: Work Routines, Professional Ideologies and the Manufacture of Sports News, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1999; 9-19.
- Media Development and Diversity Agency – MDDA. Trends of Ownership and Control of Media in South Africa, Gauteng, South Africa, 2008; 7.

Mona R, Moslem B, Farshad T. Selected Sport Newspapers Content Analysis: Case Study of Sydney 2000 and Athens 2004 Olympics. Indian Journal of Movement Education and Exercises Sciences 2011; 1(1): 19-21.

Parry L, Karam B. Feminist Media Theory, in Fourie P.J. Media Studies: Institutions, Theories and Issues, Juta Education, South Africa, 2001; 1: 383.

Pedersen PM. Investigating Interscholastic Equity on the Sports Page: A Content Analysis of High School Athletics Newspaper Articles. Sociology of Sport Journal 2002; 19: 419-432.