

PRIME TIME CONTENT OF TELEVISION NEWS CHANNELS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF HINDI & ENGLISH CHANNELS

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Abstract:-

Many factors have an impact on the selection and presentation of the content in any television news channel. Language is one of the prime factor. Actually, language of the channel is linked to the nature of the target audience and hence plays important role in the selection and presentation of the content. This small study talks about the differences between the prime time content of a Hindi and an English national TV news channel owned by the same company. The determined keep the 'ownership' factor constant so that the role of language can easily be by using content analysis as the method, this study highlights the differences between the prime time content of Hindi and English TV news channels.

Key Words:- Prime Time, Television News Channel, News Content

INTRODUCTION

We are living in a 24X7 news broadcast era. Hundreds of 24x7 television news channels in various languages (English, Hindi and other Indian languages) are providing news content continuously according to their policies, focus area and target audience. According to the report of Ministry of Information & Broadcasting (2016), as on 31st January 2016, the total number of permitted private satellite channels in India is 857 and around 400 out of them are news and current affairs channels. Many of these channels are regional in nature and focused on certain states or regions. They cover news of that particular region prominently with other important national level activities. On the other hand national news channels provide content of the whole country. Various companies are running different types of television channels. They are providing national news channels in Hindi and English, regional news channels in different Indian languages and non-news channels in their bouquet. It is a well-known fact that various elements play important role in the selection and presentation of the content for a television news channel. Nature of ownership and policies of the owner are important in them. It is observed that language of the channel also

plays an important role in the selection and presentation of the content. Many companies have Hindi and English national news channels in their bouquet. For example : AajTak and India Today (earlier Headlines Today) of TV Today Network, News18 India and CNN-News18 of TV 18 group, NDTV India and NDTV 24X7 of NDTV group etc. In these cases nature of ownership and policies of the organization are same for both the channels but still there are differences in content. It shows the role of language in the content selection and presentation. Language is not an isolated and independent factor. It is linked with social and economic structure of the society. It creates separate target audience with certain tastes and preferences in the context of news& current affairs and channels try to meet the same. It is captivating to know the differences in the content of Hindi and English national news channels run by the single company with the same ownership nature and policies. The findings may also indicate towards the social, economic and political features of the language based target audiences.

Review of Literature

Analysis of television news content has

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been a popular research area among the mass communication scholars. A number of studies have already been done on the various aspects of TV news content including the language. While researching on pluralism and political news on national TV news channels Kaisii (2011) found that the politics had the highest share in the content of television news channels and Hindi channels were more balanced than their English counterparts in giving coverage to the national and regional political news stories. In a content analysis based study of leading Hindi television news channels, Kuthiala and Singh (2006) found that the developmental issues were not in the priority for television news channels and very less coverage was given to these issues. On the other hand political stories and cricket got the major share in the content. In a study on the coverage of environmental issues in leading national television news channels in both the languages Hindi and English, CMS (2014) reveals that only 0.8% share of prime time was given to environment and wildlife related issues. Various studies through different angles have been conducted on the content of television news channels.

Objectives

The objectives of this study were as follows:

- i) To find out and analyze the differences between the prime time content of Hindi and English national television news channels owned by the same organization.
- ii) To find out the news-advertisement ratio of Hindi and English national television news channels owned by the same organization.

Methodology

Quantitative content analysis was applied as the research method for this study. Prime time content (8pm to 10pm) of one Hindi and one English national television news channels was analyzed. The researchers compared prime time content of AajTak (Hindi) and Headlines Today which is now India Today (English). The name of Headlines Today has been changed and now it is known as India Today. The ownership of the channel is considered a very important factor

that influences the selection and presentation of news content. According to Price (2003), various studies show that the owners influence the news content significantly. To keep this factor constant and find out the role of language, the channels were selected from the same group (TV Today network). The period of study was of one week (7 days), 12th April 2015 to 18th April 2015 and the time slot from 8pm to 10pm was considered as prime time. The total 28 hours footage were studied and the 'time' variable was analyzed in minute.

Language of the television news channel was taken as independent variable and advertisement - content ratio, number of advertisement breaks, programme format and category (subject or issues) of news item were considered as dependent variables. The programme formats were classified into four categories: News bulletin, Interview based programmes, Debate and discussion, and Special show (single issue centric).

The subjects or issues of the content were classified into 15 different categories : Politics; Crime (Individual, organized & corruption); Conflict (terrorism & naxalism); Accident & disaster; Defense and central security forces; International; Sports; Government (Policies, planning, legislation & judiciary); Science & Technology; Entertainment & lifestyle; Agriculture & farmers; Environment; Religion and culture; Business, Economics & Finance and others.

Findings & Discussion

The findings indicate towards the differences between Hindi and English television news channels owned by the same group. The major findings of this study are following:

Advertisement-news content ratio

Hindi news channel had more advertisement than the English one. The average share of advertisement in Hindi news channel was 37% but in the case of the English channel it was only 24%. The figure (1) explains the share of advertisement in both the channels.

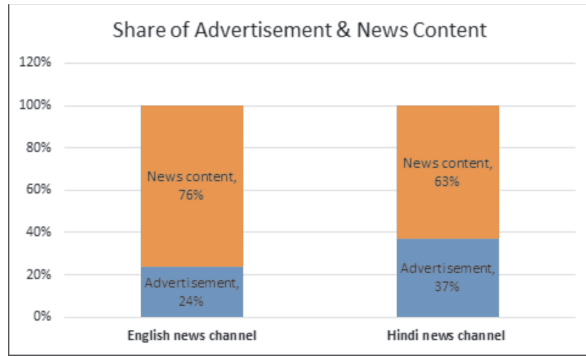


Figure Share of Advertisement & News Content

The findings show that the same owner group was following two different policies for advertisement-news content ratio. English news viewers were getting more news content than the Hindi viewers.

Advertisement breaks

The Hindi news channel had more advertisement breaks than the English. Average 11 advertisement breaks per day were observed during the prime time (8pm to 10pm) in Hindi news channel whereas only 5 ad breaks per day in the English channel for the same time duration, 8pm to 10pm. It means, English channel provided comparatively long and disturbance free sessions of news content.

Programme formats, scheduling and related issues

As far as programme formats and programme scheduling are concerned, many differences were observed between Hindi and English channels. Hindi channel broadcasted 5 programmes daily during the 2 hours (8pm to 10pm) of the prime time and no major changes were observed in the programming of week days and weekends (Saturday & Sunday). On the other hand, the English channel showed only 2 programmes daily during the studied time slot (8pm to 10pm) on week days. Programming for weekends was completely different. On Saturday 4 programmes were broadcasted and on Sunday 3 programmes during 8pm to 10pm. The Hindi channel used three types of programme formats (News bulletin, Interview based & special show) during the studied period while the English channel showed four types of programme

formats (News bulletin, interview based, special show & debate-discussion). The Hindi channel was found more creative in programming than the English one. 'Third Degree', an interview based programme (more than one interviewer for one interviewee), broadcasted by the Hindi channel, was one example of creativity in programming. The table (1) shows the share of different programme formats in prime time (8pm to 10pm) content of both the channels.

Table 1: Share of different programme formats in prime time (8pm to 10pm)

Programme Formats	Hindi Channel (in percentage)	English Channel (in percentage)
News Bulletin	34	43
Interview based	16	7
Debate-discussion	00	43
Special show (Single issue based)	50	7
Total	100	100

(Note: in percentage, decimals were rounded to the nearest whole number)

Special show had the highest share (50%) in prime time of the Hindi channel, on the other hand the English channel gave equal importance to news bulletin (43%) and debate-discussion (43%) during the prime time. Aaj Tak (Hindi channel) did not use the format of debate-discussion during its prime time (8pm to 10pm) broadcast.

Share of different issues/subjects in prime time content (8pm to 10pm) of both the channels: Programme format-wise findings

As mentioned above, the Hindi channel used 3 types of programme formats (News bulletin, Interview based & special show) while their English counterpart utilized 4: News bulletin, interview based, special show & debate-discussion. Debate-discussion format was not used by the Hindi channel during their prime time (8pm to 10pm) broadcast. On the other hand, 15 different subject/issue based categories were created to classify the broadcasted content. Now the findings related to the share of different issue/subjects based categories in the prime content of both the channels will be discussed.

First, the share of different issues/subjects will be discussed programme format-wise and finally in the whole content. The following tables show the share of different issues/subjects in prime time content (8pm to 10pm) of both the channels:

Table: 2 Share of different issues/subjects in Interview based programmes

Issue or subject based categories	Hindi Channel (in percentage)	English Channel (in percentage)
Politics	100	50
Entertainment, leisure & lifestyle	00	50
Total	100	100

In interview based programmes of studied duration, politics had the 100% share in the Hindi channel. All the interview based programmes aired by the Hindi channel were related to political issues whereas the English channel gave equal-equal share (50%) to 'politics' and 'entertainment, leisure & lifestyle'.

Now the table (3) gives the details of the share of different issues/subjects in Special shows (single issue centric):

Table: 3 Share of different issues/subjects in Special Shows (single issue centric):

Issue or subject based categories	Hindi Channel (in percentage)	English Channel (in percentage)
Politics	43	00
Conflict (terrorism & naxalism)	36	00
International	21	00
Sports	00	50
Agriculture & farmers	00	50
Total	100	100

(Note: in percentage, decimals were rounded to the nearest whole number)

In the special show format (single issue centric), in Hindi, again the 'politics' had the maximum share (43%) followed by 'conflict' (36%) and 'international' issues (21%). In English, 'sports' and 'agriculture & farmers' got the equal share of 50%. Table (4) provides the findings related to the share of different issues/subjects in debate-discussion format.

Table 4: Share of different issues/subjects in Debate-Discussion format.

Issue or subject based categories	Hindi Channel (in percentage)	English Channel (in percentage)
Politics	00	59
Defense and central security forces	00	8
International	00	25
Business, Economics & Finance	00	8
Total	00	100

(Note: in percentage, decimals were rounded to the nearest whole number)

Findings show that the Hindi channel prohibit broadcasting any programme in debate-discussion format during the studied time duration, but the English channel did so. In English, political issues had the highest share (59%) in debate-discussions followed by international matters (25%). 'Business, Economics & Finance' and 'Defense and central security forces' got the equal-equal share of 8%. Table (5) shows the details about the share of different issues/subjects in the content broadcasted in news bulletin format by both the channels.

Table: 5 Share of different issues/subjects in the content broadcasted in News Bulletin format

Issue or subject based categories	Hindi Channel (in %)	English Channel (in %)
Politics	34	25
Crime (Individual, organized & corruption)	11	4
Conflict (terrorism & naxalism)	23	15
Accident/Disaster	2	2
Defense and central security forces	1	4
International	6	13
Sports	5	6
Government (Policies, planning, legislation & judiciary)	6	8
Science & Technology	2	5
Entertainment, leisure & lifestyle	2	4
Agriculture & farmers	1	1
Environment	00	2
Religion and Culture	3	00
Business, Economics & Finance	4	11
Others	00	00
	100	100

(Note: in percentage, decimals were rounded to the nearest whole number)

The findings show that the political issues had the highest share in the prime time content broadcasted in the format of news bulletin by both the Hindi and English channels. In Hindi, 'politics' had 34% share followed by 'conflict' (23%) and crime (11%). In English, 'politics' had 25% share followed by 'conflict' (15%) and 'international' issues (13%). In Hindi, there was no content on 'Environment' whereas in English, 'Religion and Culture' had no share.

Share of different issues/subjects in the whole prime time content (8pm to 10pm) of both the channels

After the programme format-wise analysis, now the share of different issues/subjects in the whole prime time content (8pm to 10pm) will be discussed. Table (6) presents the findings:

Table 6: Share of different issues/subjects in the whole Prime time (8pm to 10pm) content:

Issue or subject based categories	Hindi Channel (in %)	English Channel (in %)
Politics	49.00	39.30
Crime (Individual, organized & corruption)	3.70	1.65
Conflict (terrorism & Onaxalism)	25.70	6.40
Accident/Disaster	00.70	00.85
Defense and Central security forces	00.35	5.25
International	12.70	16.30
Sports	1.70	6.20
Government (Policies, planning, legislation & judiciary)	2.00	3.45
Science & Technology	00.70	2.15
Entertainment, leisure & lifestyle	00.70	5.25
Agriculture & Farmers	00.35	4.05
Environment	00	00.85
Religion and Culture	1.10	00
Business, Economics & Finance	1.30	8.30
Others	00	00
Total	100	100

(Note: Since many categories had the share of less than 1 percent, so decimals were not rounded to the nearest whole numbers in this case)

After analyzing the whole content, it was found that politics had the maximum share in the channels of both the languages. In Hindi, 49% content was related to politics while in English, the share was 39.30%. In the Hindi channel, 'Conflict (terrorism & naxalism)' got the second highest share (25.70%) followed by international issues (12.70%). Environment issues didn't find any coverage and issues like Accident/Disaster; Defense and Central security forces; Science & Technology; Entertainment, Leisure & Lifestyle; and Agriculture & Farmers got less than 1 % share in Hindi channel. The picture of English channel was quite different. Though politics got the highest share here also but other categories performed differently. International issues got the second highest share (16.30%) followed by 'Business, Economics & Finance'. 'Religion and Culture' had no coverage but only one category, 'Accident/Disaster' got less than 1% share in the prime time content.

Conclusion

The study showed that the language of the channel played important role in selection and presentation of the content. Clear differences were noticed during the prime time (8pm to 10pm) broadcast of Hindi and English national TV news channels owned by the same group. Though politics had the highest share in both Hindi and English channels but percentage wise it was lower in English. Defense; Science & Technology; Environment; Business, Economics & Finance had longer coverage in the English channel but 'Religion and Culture' was missing. Advertisement duration and number of advertisement breaks were lesser in the English channel. It means, English channel provided comparatively long and disturbance free sessions of news content. Language can't be considered in isolation. It is linked with social, economic and political structure of the society. It creates separate target audience with certain tastes and preferences in the context of news and current affairs and channels seem to be trying to meet the same.

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