
Television News Anchoring: A Comparative Study of Hindi and English Television News Channels

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Abstract: *Anchors are the faces of television news channels; hence they play crucial role in shaping the image of any news channel. Presentation style varies with the nature of content, and news demands objective, credible and responsible presentation. The presentation style of Indian television news anchors has become matter of discussion during last few years. This study was focused to analyze the news anchoring of Indian Hindi and English national television news channels. Content analysis was employed to achieve the objectives of this study. A comparative analysis of Hindi and English news channels was also done. Findings revealed that the anchors of English news channels performed better than their Hindi counterparts.*

Keywords: *Television News Anchoring, Hindi national TV news Channels, English TV news channels, gender representation*

1. INTRODUCTION

Around two decades back, India witnessed the emergence of 24x7 television news industry which changed the Indian journalism scenario completely. 'Speed' became the key concern and the news content completed a journey from simple news bulletins to dramatic news and current affairs shows with a lot of special effects. 24x7 television news channels set the new rules for this profession. The number of 24x7 TV news channels has increased and reached near 400. This vast growth has created cut-throat competition among the channels. In this changed scenario, presentation of the news content has become very crucial and it made the news anchors' role very important. A lot of creativity and experiments have been observed in news presentation to attract more and more eyeballs. The presentation style of Indian television news anchors has become matter of discussion during last few years.

The issue of television news content has multiple aspects. Several things affect the content of any television news channel. Financial status, TRP (Television Rating Point), business and other interests of the owners, demands of the advertisers, editorial policies, the nature and orientation of editorial team, quality of the employee journalists are few important factors which influence the content of a television news channel. Except DD news the whole TV news industry comes from private sector and profit is the key factor for them. For profit, they need more viewership and cost-effective programming. The competition to catch the eyeballs and reduce the programme production cost, these two factors mainly decide the content of television news channels (Rao, 2016).

Here, two factors are playing very important role. First, competition to catch more eyeballs and second, reducing the programme production cost. Both factors are contradictory. If news channels want to grab more viewers then ideally, they should improve their programmes which'll enhance their programme production cost. But they are not ready to do that. So, they are trying to get more and more viewers' attention without improving the quality of their content. For achieving this target, they are trying to use some shortcuts and news anchors play greater role to execute these shortcuts successfully. Sensationalization, tabloidization, loud and shouting debates are few shortcuts in which news anchors play the crucial role.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

News media plays very important role in any society, especially in democratic societies. So, study of the news media content has been a popular and significant research area for the scholars of various disciplines, like, Communication, Political Science, Sociology, etc. According to Thussu (2008), news is not just an ordinary media product specially in democracy. It plays very crucial role in engaging common people in democratic processes.

As mentioned earlier, the presentation style of Indian television news anchors has become a popular topic of discussion among academicians, journalists and even common viewers. Many authors have raised their concerns on few emerging trends of television news anchoring. According Varma (2015), Indian news anchors must realize that freedom comes with responsibilities. They must not act as judge, jury and executioner. As journalists, their duties are -investigate, report and inform.

Singh (2016) argues that debates are good for serious and in-depth journalism. An important news story should be followed by the debate. It helps to expand the viewers' understanding of an issue, but the scenario is quite different in Indian television news media. Confusing and shouting matches of debates on trivial issues have become quite common on Indian television news channels.

Rather (n.d.) highlights the important role of television news anchors. According to him, the role of news anchor has been broadened. They have become faces of the channels and helping in securing viewership in times of cutthroat competition.

Several researchers and senior journalists have raised their worries on tabloidization of mainstream television news media. Tabloidization also affects the news anchoring. Roy (2015) described the tabloidization as the biggest threat for the Indian television news media. According to him, tabloidization is the death of good journalism.

The various studies found that television news media is blindly running after the TRP. They desperately need eyeballs because the number of eyeballs gives them ad revenue which is the backbone of the financial model of these channels. Kotvani (2012) declared, "If the TV channel is guaranteeing eyeballs for the committed outlays, advertisers will not shy away from the program" (p. 29).

While discussing the reasons and remedies of tabloidization of Indian television news media, Roy (2015) found the advertising fraternity responsible to some extent. According to him, the journalists and viewers are not the main reasons of this tabloidization. He strongly disagreed with the widely used assumption that Indians have tabloid taste. According to him, advertisers and media buyers must own a part of blame. Our media buyers give importance only to the number of eyeballs but it is not so in the developed countries like U.K. and U.S. Roy (2015) gave examples of The Times vs The Sun and CNN vs Fox News. The Sun has five times more circulation than The Times and the Fox News has three times more viewership than the CNN, but advertising rates for The Times and CNN are much higher than The Sun and the Fox News. The advertisers place a premium on the quality and credibility of the journalism. So, the higher advertisement rates for good and credible journalism and lower rates for tabloid journalism can enable both types of news media to be survived.

3. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study were as follows:

- i. To analyze the news anchoring of Hindi national television news channels during their prime-time broadcast (7p.m. to 11p.m.).
- ii. To analyze the news anchoring of English television news channels during their prime-time broadcast (7p.m. to 11p.m.).
- iii. To compare the news anchoring of Hindi and English national television news channels during their prime-time broadcast (7p.m. to 11p.m.).

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Content analysis was employed as research method in this study. Multi-stage sampling approach was applied to select the television news channels. Two sets of channels were selected for this study. Every set had one Hindi and one English news channel owned by the same group. Set-1 consisted of Aaj Tak (Hindi) and India Today Television (English) owned by TV Today Network, and set -2 contained News 18 India (Hindi) and CNN News 18(English) owned by Network 18. Total four news channels, two Hindi and two English were selected.

Constructed week sampling was used to select the dates of broadcasts. Two constructed weeks were taken from four months, from June 2017 to September 2017. Constructed weeks were created by selecting Monday from the

first week, Tuesday from the second week, Wednesday from the third week, Thursday from the fourth week, Friday from the fifth week, Saturday from the sixth week and Sunday from the seventh week. This was the first constructed week that had representation of all seven days. The same process was continued for creating second constructed week.

After selecting the dates, next step was selection of broadcast time or duration. Purposive sampling was done at this stage. All these news channels broadcast 24 hours and seven days. However, they repeat a sizable content twice or even thrice in a day. Sampling was required at this stage too. Literature suggests that prime time is the most suitable broadcasting duration for the TV news content analysis. The maximum scholars selected prime time broadcasting for their television news content analysis across the world. Following the same, prime time was selected as the broadcasting duration for this study too.

Prime time is a part of daily broadcasting time during which the highest number of viewers watch the television (BusinessDictionary, 2017). Every channel wants to present its best during the prime time. Nielsen (2011) also defined the prime time in the same way but the duration of television prime time is not fixed universally. It may be different in the different countries or different parts of the world.

In India also, prime time has been defined differently. Wikipedia (2017) defines 8p.m. to 10.30p.m. as the prime time for India. On the other hand, Directorate of Advertising & Visual Publicity (DAVP) (2017) considers 7p.m. to 10p.m. as the super prime time and 10 p.m. to 11 p.m. as prime time for television news channels. CMS (Centre for Media Studies, New Delhi) has done many content analysis-based studies on television news in India. In many studies, CMS (2015, 2016) defined the prime-time duration for Indian national television news channels as 7p.m. to 11p.m. The same prime time duration was accepted for this study too.

Finally, after finishing all the above-mentioned stages, prime time (7p.m. to 11p.m.) content of two Hindi (Aaj Tak and News 18 India) and two English (India Today Television and CNN News 18) television news channels for two constructed weeks was recorded and analyzed. It means total 224 hours television news content was recorded and analyzed manually for this content analysis.

5. FINDINGS

Gender Representation in Anchoring during Prime Time (7p.m. to 11p.m.) Broadcast of Hindi and English TV News Channels

Anchors are the face of TV news channels. They also play very important role in branding of these channels. Keeping the importance of anchors in consideration, gender representation in anchoring during prime time was also included in this study.

Share of male and female anchors during prime-time broadcast of set:1 channels - India Today (English) and Aaj Tak (Hindi)

The following table shows the share of male and female anchors during prime time broadcast of India Today (English) and Aaj Tak (Hindi).

Table (1.1) Share of male and female anchors during prime-time broadcast of India Today (English) and Aaj Tak (Hindi)

| TV News Channels | Language | Share of Male Anchors (In Percentage) | Share of Female Anchors (In Percentage) |
|------------------|----------|---------------------------------------|---|
| India Today | English | 72.77 | 27.23 |
| Aaj Tak | Hindi | 54.02 | 45.98 |

Note: Percentages were rounded to two decimal digits.

The results revealed that male anchors had more share in the prime-time broadcast of both Hindi (Aaj Tak) and English (India Today) channels of the set: 1, but the Aaj Tak (Hindi) gave more share to female anchors in comparison to its English counterpart, India Today.

Share of male and female anchors during prime-time broadcast of set: 2 channels - CNN News 18 (English) and News 18 India (Hindi)

The following table displays the share of male and female anchors during prime-time broadcast of CNN News 18 (English) and News 18 India (Hindi).

Table (1.2) Share of male and female anchors during prime-time broadcast of CNN News 18 (English) and News 18 India (Hindi)

| TV News Channels | Language | Share of Male Anchors (In Percentage) | Share of Female Anchors (In Percentage) |
|------------------|----------|---------------------------------------|---|
| CNN News 18 | English | 64.29 | 35.71 |
| News 18 India | Hindi | 85.27 | 14.73 |

Note: Percentages were rounded to two decimal digits.

The findings revealed that the male anchors got the major share in the prime-time broadcast of both the Hindi and English channels of the set:2. Here, the English channel (CNN News 18) gave more representation to female anchors during its prime time.

Hindi vs English: Share of male and female anchors during prime-time broadcast of overall Hindi and English TV news channels

The mean of both the Hindi channels was taken as the observation of overall Hindi channels and the same was applied for English channels too. The following figure (1.1) presents the share of male and female anchors during prime-time broadcast of the overall Hindi and English TV news channels.

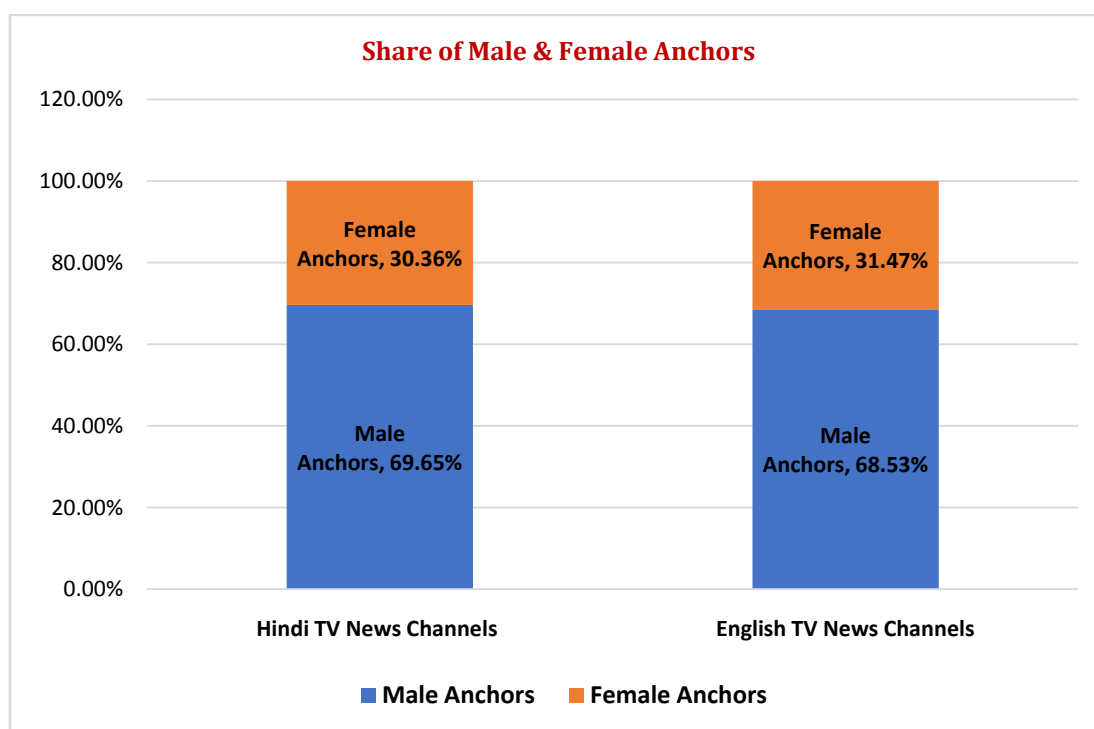


Figure (1.1) Share of male and female anchors during prime-time broadcast of the overall Hindi and English TV news channels

The prime-time of both Hindi and English TV news channels was dominated by male anchors. In English channels, male anchors had 68.53% share whereas in Hindi news channels, 69.65% content was presented by the male anchors during the prime time (7p.m. to 11p.m.) broadcast.

Performance of Television News Anchors of Hindi and English TV News Channels

Performance of television news anchors is one of the important indicators of presentation. In this study, the performances of all anchors who presented programmes on all four studied news channels during the prime-time (7p.m. to 11p.m.) were evaluated. Five general viewers who watched both Hindi and English news channels were selected as evaluators. The recorded programmes (15 minutes) of each anchor were shown to these five evaluators. The evaluation process was clearly explained to them. Evaluation was done on the five following criteria:

- i. Objectivity of the anchor
- ii. Knowledge of the anchor

iii. Presentation style of the anchor (unnecessary aggression and loud voice were considered as negative elements for appropriate journalistic presentation style)

iv. Command on language

v. Physical Appearance of the anchor (dramatic and scary appearances of the anchors were considered as negative elements for appropriate journalistic presentation style)

All these above-mentioned criteria were selected with the help of existing literature and discussion with working journalists and media academics. The clear definitions of all the five criteria were prepared and validated by the experts. Evaluators were given evaluation sheets and requested to give scores (out of 10) to each anchor in each above-mentioned criterion. The average (mean) scores were calculated and finally the grand mean scores came out for overall anchors of Hindi and English news channels.

Hindi vs English: The anchors of English TV news channels performed better than the Hindi ones. English news anchors scored 7.87 (out of 10) whereas Hindi news anchors got 5.80 (out of 10).

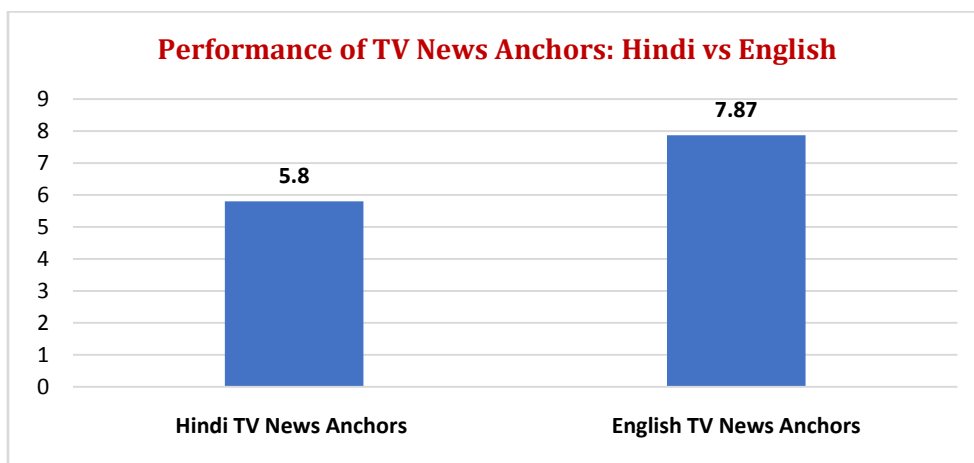


Figure (1.2) Performance of TV news anchors of Hindi and English news channels.

During this study, it was observed that one of the studied Hindi news channels (News 18 India) had dramatic appearance of its anchors for few programmes. Figure (1.3) gives an example of such dramatic appearance of the anchor in Hindi news channel.



Figure (1.3): Example of dramatic appearance of the anchor in Hindi news channel.

(News 18 India, Date: 12-06-2017, Time: 10.51P.M.)

The researcher did not find any such example in English news channels selected for this study.

6. CONCLUSION

The prime time of both Hindi and English TV news channels was dominated by male anchors. In English channels, male anchors had 68.53% share whereas in Hindi news channels, 69.65% content was presented by the male anchors during the prime time (7p.m. to 11p.m.) broadcast.

As far as the performances of anchors are concerned, English TV news anchors performed better than the Hindi ones. English news anchors scored 7.87 (out of 10) whereas Hindi news anchors got 5.80 (out of 10). During this study, it was also observed that one of the studied Hindi news channels (News 18 India) had dramatic appearance of its anchors for their crime shows. No such case was noticed in English news channels. There is no doubt that the Indian television news industry is working in a cut-throat competitive environment and viewers' attention is required to get more TRP and finally more revenue for financial survival, but the very basic principles of the profession (Journalism) should not be ignored.

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