

Pictorial visibility and graphics in the news of Mullai Periyar Water Conflict in the Tamil Newspapers

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Abstract: *The Media is believed to have shaped up an extravagant conflict over Mullai Periyar issue between the two states Tamil Nadu and Kerala over the right of ownership of the dam, speculation over managing the water levels, and the safety rights of the ancient structure. The coverage over the issue has received a wider coverage both from the regional and the national media. In order to investigate and find factual information on the role played by the regional newspapers, this paper aims to study the Pictorial visibility and graphics in the newspapers on the Mullai Periyar conflict news stories and to analyze various angles of news published.*

Key Words: *Pictorial visibility and graphics; Media and Mullai Periyar; Water conflict; Mullai Periyar: Newspapers.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

The media occupies a vital role in this dreadful world. Especially, at times of distress, every single space of print media is really significant. Every word uttered or impressed, can have the power to concord the minds of people or simultaneously they have the power to make great revolutions and evolutions. Throughout centuries, the power of words and messages are clearly reflected in the dawn and dusk of civilizations. They have the power to throne and dethrone civilizations. The media, both print and electronic, can play an important role in diffusing tensions, reducing and curtailing conflicts. It can do so by being deeply aware of the fragility of a country's social fabric, of the efforts being expended at unifying a country's polarized and ethicized politics and more importantly by objectively reporting dispute incidences as they unfold. Journalists should avoid basic representations of issues by probing further and verify their sources in order to uphold the dignity of the media they work for and also to take to a higher level the role of media in peace building, well beyond reproach.

2. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY:

Mullai Periyar dam is a portmanteau of Mullaiyar and Periyar as the dam is located after the confluence of the Mullaiyar and Periyar rivers, the west flowing perennial rivers that originate from the Sivagiri group of hills in the Western Ghats traversing through Idukki and Ernakulam districts of Kerala and joins the Arabian Sea. Mullai Periyar dam, Idukki and the Lower Periyar Hydel projects and the Periyar Valley Irrigation Project of Kerala are located in the main Periyar River. There are densely populated human settlements along the downstream stretch of this dam. The total drainage area of the Periyar river basin is 5398 sq.km of which 114sq.km lies in Tamil Nadu. (Thatheyus et al 2013).

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Studies related to Media Coverage on Interstate Water conflict

Conflicts around the state's rivers are spreading fast of late, from north to south, from big rivers down to small drainage channels and involving structural to environmental, economic and cultural issues. Interstate water conflict was a hardly an issue of the state, now draw overwhelming political and media attention. (Choudhury, Sahoo, Sandbhor, Paranjape, Joy& ti Vispute ,2012).

Water-related news published in Odia and local English dailies with an objective to help water professionals and researchers to capture and comprehend issues and conflicts around water (through eyes of media). It also provides geographical, seasonal and media perspectives of water issues and conflicts with respect to Odisha. (Cullet, P., 2012 Forum for Policy Dialogue on Water Conflicts in India, 2010).

Velayutham. C and Arul Aram (2010) conducted a study by comparing the news life cycle of the Cauvery Tribunal Verdict from two leading newspapers of Tamil Nadu. The results of study proves that, any type of news which is related to the conflicts particularly water conflict, could have a lengthy life cycle than other type of news. Sensitive issues like this, boost the scope for news follow ups, since the public gets involved as a stakeholder in the conflict. Even this is purely an agricultural related issue of the delta region, but starting from politicians to general public including students involved in the protest and bandit, hailing the Tribunal verdict and unanimously stood together against Karnataka.

4. METHODOLOGY

The study works on the basis of quantitative content analysis. Four leading Tamil newspapers based on sales, *Daily Thanthi*, *Dinamalar*, *Dinakaran* and *Dinamani* were selected for analysis. The entire news cycle of the conflict, which starts from 2008 to 2018, was taken as the period of the study. Articles and news stories of various forms – Pictorial visibility and graphics and others pertaining to the conflict become the primary data for the study. In order to meet the objectives of the study the researchers developed a detailed coding sheet to collect the relevant data. The coded data was analyzed by using percentage analysis.

4.1 PICTORIAL VISIBILITIES

In this section, the significance of the photographs and graphics presented in the newspapers were analyzed. For this, the distribution of variable such as ‘Photos and Graphics’, ‘Photo Diversity’, ‘Appeal of the Photo’, ‘Frames Constructed in the Photograph’, ‘Span of the conflict’, and ‘Size of the picture In Sq.cm’ have been analyzed.

4.2 PHOTOS AND GRAPHICS

The parameter ‘Photographs and Graphics’ has been taken to study the type of photographs and/or graphics that accompanied the news stories on the Mullai Periyar Dispute. To study this, the variables were set to ‘B/W Graphics’, ‘Color graphics’, ‘B/W photographs’, ‘Color photographs’ and ‘None’.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

Table 1 Newspaper wise percentage distribution of Photos and graphics

Photos and Graphics	Name of the newspaper								Total	%
	Daily Thanthi		Dinakaran		Dinamalar		Dinamani			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
B/W Graphics	6	26.08	6	26.08	7	30.43	4	17.39	23	1.20
Color Graphics	7	21.21	10	30.30	4	12.12	12	36.36	33	1.72
B/W Photographs	67	24.10	71	25.53	55	19.78	85	30.57	278	14.48
Color Photographs	34	23.61	64	44.44	18	12.5	28	19.44	144	7.50
None	416	28.84	338	23.43	373	25.86	315	21.84	1442	75.10
Total	530	27.60	489	25.46	457	23.80	444	23.12	1920	
χ^2										52.261**

Note: **= $p < 0.01$; Sources=Primary Data

The above table throws light on newspaper wise percentage distribution of ‘Photos and Graphics’. The findings of the study reveals that the percentage wise distribution of the ‘Photos and Graphs’ among all the *Daily Thanthi*, *Dinakaran*, *Dinamalar* and *Dinamani* are 1.19%, 1.71%, 14.47%, 7.5% and 75.1% respectively. The distribution of ‘B/W Graphics’ in the newspapers are 26.08% in *Daily Thanthi*, 26.08% in *Dinakaran*, 30.43% in *Dinamalar* and 17.39% in *Dinamani*. The proportion of ‘Color Graphics’ were 21.21% in *Daily Thanthi*, 30.30% in *Dinakaran*, 12.12% in *Dinamani* and 36.36% in *Dinakaran*.

With respect to ‘B/W Photographs’, *Daily Thanthi* exhibits 24.1%, *Dinakaran* exhibits 25.53%, *Dinamalar* exhibits 19.78% and *Dinamani* exhibits 30.57%. Among ‘Color Photos’, found in the news papers *Daily Thanthi* exhibits 23.61%, *Dinakaran* exhibits 44.44%, *Dinamalar* exhibits 12.5% and *Dinamani* exhibits 19.24%. Finally, the variable ‘None’ were distributed in *Daily Thanthi* 28.84%, *Dinakaran* 23.43%, *Dinamalar* 25.86% and *Dinamani* 21.84%.

Calculated χ^2 value 52.26 ($p < 0.01$) showed that the distribution of Frames constructed in the photograph were statistically associated among observed newspapers. Because p value showing that alpha level less than 0.001.

Table 2 Newspaper wise percentage distribution of Photo diversity

Photo Diversity	Name of the newspaper								Total	%
	Daily Thanthi		Dinakaran		Dinamalar		Dinamani			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Identifiable faces	101	29.19	91	26.30	61	17.63	93	26.87	346	18.02
Non identifiable Faces	13	9.84	60	45.45	23	17.42	36	27.27	132	6.88
None	416	28.84	338	23.43	373	25.86	315	21.84	1442	75.10
Total	530	27.60	489	25.46	457	23.80	444	23.12	1920	
χ^2										53.816**

Note: **= $p < 0.01$; Sources=Primary Data

The table explains the percentage wise distribution of the Photo diversity the findings reveals that the photos have 18.02% identifiable faces, 6.85% of the photos have 'None' identified faces and majority of the content did not have any photo at all (75.10%) were none among all newspapers. Photo diversity of identifiable faces was in *Daily Thanthi* 29.19%, *Dinakaran* 26.30%, *Dinamalar* 17.63% and *Dinamani* 26.87%. 'None identifiable photos were distributed 9.8%, 45.45%, 17.42% and 27.27% in *Daily Thanthi*, *Dinakaran*, *Dinamalar* and *Dinamani* respectively.

Furthermore, calculated Chi square value was 55.816 with probability value less than 0.001, so that Photos diversity the news stories were significantly associated with all studied newspapers.

Table 3 Newspaper wise percentage distribution of Appeal in the photographs

Appeal in the photographs	Name of the newspaper								Total	%
	<i>Daily Thanthi</i>		<i>Dinakaran</i>		<i>Dinamalar</i>		<i>Dinamani</i>			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Action Photos	10	14.28	28	40.00	14	20.00	18	25.71	70	3.65
Portraits	89	27.72	90	28.03	56	17.44	86	26.79	321	16.72
General	2	8.00	15	60.00	2	8.00	6	24.00	25	1.30
Stock Photographs	13	20.96	18	29.03	12	19.35	19	30.64	62	3.23
None	416	28.84	338	23.43	373	25.86	315	21.84	1442	75.10
Total	530	27.60	489	25.46	457	23.80	444	23.12	1920	
χ^2										46.970**

Note: **= $p < 0.01$; Sources=Primary Data

The above table shows that chi square test between Appeal in the photo and the name of the newspaper. Appeals of the newspapers were categorized into Action Photos, Portraits, General, Stock, Photographs and None.

It can be observed from the study that the overall percentage wise distribution of appeals in the photographs were 3.64%, 16.71%, 1.30%, 3.22%, and 75.01% in 'Action Photos', 'Portraits', 'General', and 'Stock photographs', and 'None' respectively.

The distribution of 'Action photos' across the newspapers is 14.28% in *Daily Thanthi*, 40% in *Dinakaran*, 20% in *Dinamalar* and 25.1% in *Dinamani*. The proportions of Portraits were 27.72% in *Daily Thanthi*, 28.03% in *Dinakaran*, 17.44% in *Dinamani* and 26.79% in *Dinakaran*. Regarding the variable 'General' *Daily Thanthi* exhibits 8%, *Dinakaran* exhibits 60%, *Dinamalar* exhibits 8% and *Dinamani* exhibits 24%. Further, the study also finds that among 'Stock photographs' *Daily Thanthi* exhibits 20.96%, *Dinakaran* exhibits 29.03%, *Dinamalar* exhibits 19.35% and *Dinamani* exhibits 30.64%. Finally, the variable 'None' was distributed in *Daily Thanthi* by 28.84%, *Dinakaran* 23.43%, *Dinamalar* 25.86% and *Dinamani* 21.84%. Chi-square test was done and founded that statistically high association between Appeal of the photographs and observed newspapers.

6. CONCLUSION:

The study on the Pictorial visibility and graphics of the coverage of Mullai Periyar water conflict in Tamil newspapers clearly proved that media has played a significant role in shaping the conflict. It was to determine the pictorial visibility and graphics in the conflict news. Majority of the news/articles published in all leading newspapers were without photos or graphics. Photographs diversity in the news articles also low. Articles without the photos were published in all newspapers, in more numbers so appeal of the photographs was very low. There were very few articles of frames constructed in the photographs. In addition, publishing photos about span of the conflict were also low. Hartley (1982) noted that photographs play an important role in the construction of meaning in a story. Sometimes, newspapers use similar photographs. This study found that not many photographs were used in the print media but this may be attributed to the fact that journalists were strictly not permitted to enter the dam site (Deepika, 2012).

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