

 <p>ISSN NO. 2320-5407</p>	<p>Journal Homepage: - www.journalijar.com</p> <h2>INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCED RESEARCH (IJAR)</h2> <p>Article DOI: 10.21474/IJAR01/2228 DOI URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01/2228</p>	 <p>INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCED RESEARCH (IJAR) ISSN 2320-5407 Journal homepage: http://www.journalijar.com Journal DOI: 10.21474/IJAR01</p>
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RESEARCH ARTICLE

COMMENTS IN ON-LINE NEWS : AN ANALYSIS.

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Manuscript Info

Manuscript History

Received: 28 September 2016
Final Accepted: 30 October 2016
Published: November 2016

Key words:-

All major newspapers, Readers.
Feedback Study, Objectives of the
Study.

Abstract

Online newspaper is also known as web newspaper. Thousands of online newspapers have been listed on the web media. The 'On-line newspapers' have provided facilities to give comments about news in various manners. The present paper gives an analytical description of comments given in 'On-line' newspaper.

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Introduction:-

Nowadays, all major newspapers have their online presence on web media where people can give their comments as feedback. Feedback is defined as the comment on the message that is fed to the source from the receiver that tells source some things about how his or her message being received. 'Letter to the editor' has been a very familiar column in printed newspapers for giving feedback. All newspapers give some space on their editorial page for readers to express their views. Pathaknama, Mailbox, Chhutti Charcha, are some such columns in different Hindi newspapers. Similarly, English newspapers also have letter columns on their editorial page.

Traditionally, the feedback in mass media, especially in print media, is deemed to be indirect, delayed, cumulative, institutionalised and quantitative. This was due to the particular format of mass communication and non availability of those technologies and facilities which are so easily available nowadays. At present, with the advent of online newspapers, several new trends have also developed. It has brought changes at various levels. At the same time, the behaviour of readers is also changing. Online newspapers have changed several traditional formats of activities in newspapers and also brought corresponding changes in giving comments by the readers. Now, newspapers' feedback can be given through e-mails and in the case of online newspapers, feedback has further converted into comments and interactions. Comments are considered to be the modern day equivalent to the letter to the editor.

At present, almost all e-newspapers have facilitated to give comments on news which they give in their online editions. Several discussions about the importance of comment are going on in different blogs. Feedback may be in different ways. It may be negative or positive. It has several other forms. Negative feedback doesn't mean only bad one and similarly positive feedback cannot be considered always to be a good one. After all, it gives an opportunity for improvement in the qualities of messages and brings corresponding change in them. A useful feedback should be clear, immediate, honest and meaningful. Feedback allows the speakers to know if their messages are being received properly. It regulates the messages. The most important thing of these kinds of feedback is that they give equal opportunity to all people. Now it depends on the wish of the readers about how to give a feedback.

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The feedback in mass communication has always been considered to be very Important for mass media. They give the Idea about how people are taking messages. This form of comments Is very Interactive. The visitors are free to make comment not only about any news but also can give reply to any comments already given at any time and in any length In every news item. The easy availability of technology for giving comment on news has certainly increased the number of such comments. How are the faculties provided by online newspapers for giving feedback being used by readers? It is really a matter of study.

Online newspapers have almost displaced print newspapers In developed countries. Its popularity is continuously Increasing even in India. At the same time, the participation of readers and the number of comments are also Increasing. How are these comments being given? Such study will give idea of opinions about various news in online newspapers. Keeping in view the above fact, the study in the field of online newspapers Is very useful and Important.

Objectives of the Study:-

The main objective of the study is to know the present trends of giving comment in on- line newspapers. It Is a basically trends study of giving comments In online newspapers. The answer of following questions will mainly be analysed-

- How do people give feedback and comment in on line newspapers?
- What is main format of presentation of opinion and feelings?

Methodology of the study:-

It is a case study of a newspaper. For the purpose of this case study, Navbharat Times newspaper has been taken. Descriptive research approach has been adopted for this study. It gives basically qualitative description about the comments being given in online newspaper.

People give different opinion and adopt different approach on different other Issues. Among these, religion is an Important issue on which there is a clear division of opinion among readers and they are mainly In three groups. First and second groups is of the followers of their religions and third group are of those people who adopt secular approach on such issues. These kinds of people are from all religions. The followers of Hindu religion are more expressive and are in majority as far as the number of comments is concerned. These three groups express their opinion accordingly. Many times, readers often make hot arguments among themselves In the name of religion. They describe their religion to be superior to others. They express their views on emotional grounds. A comparison of thoughts, actions and several other aspects between Hindu and Muslim religions can often be seen in different comments.

Many comments are not directly associated with the contents of the news. Instead, the content of the news become just a means for expressing their own opinion which they hold on any issue. It is also surprising to see that many comments are against the style of functioning of newspapers. They blame newspapers for violating journalistic and ethical norms, biased reporting and for giving unverified stories. They strongly oppose the views and news published In newspapers and gives very logical facts for me same.

Many times, the readers express their feelings in different forms like irritation, satisfaction, dissatisfaction, or in some other ways. The comment of one reader often becomes the issue for discussion to other visitors which they give In their replies. They also motivate, guide, aware people through their comments.

It is very difficult to present the contents of feedback and comment in a very organised manner specially keeping in view the wide variations of their nature in a online newspaper. However, attempts have been made to give the description in a systematic manner. Following are Important analytical description of the content.

Location of readers:-

The comments given by different people on the site are from different locations of India, especially from Hindi states. But they contain mainly metropolitan and other well known cities. New Delhi, Mumbai, Halderabad, Aungmye, Jodhpur, Ludhiana. Lucknow etc. are some such places from where comments are given. The participation of people of foreign countries is also found in the list of comment It Includes Dubai, Toronto and Riyadh. But more than 70 percentages of comments belongs to people living in Delhi and Mumbai. Many participants have not revealed their location. So it is not possible to Identify their location. The names of small city or districts are hardly

found in the comments. However, the comments indicate that online newspapers have their access in all parts of the country and the world and person with technical faculty can easily view them.

Time of feedback:-

It is not easy to give the time of feedback of each news. It has been found that online newspapers can update their stories at any time. The majority of the Indian visitors still have a certain pattern of lifestyle in which they read newspapers either in the morning or in the evening. If news stories are updated late In night or early In the morning, they do not have Immediate comments. Similarly, the maximum comments are given within one to two hours from the time of loading of the news. But the newspaper continuously update news and it is very difficult to describe the correct duration of giving comment in all cases. The news loaded after 10 pm has hardly any comment on the same day. Similarly, news given on other location of the news site does not get comment.

Maximum comments are uploaded within one hour of the publication of the news. But It is not true If news is loaded at odd hours. Morning comments begin normally after 6 a.m. and this continues till around 8 a.m. The comments before 6 a.m. are very small in number. It Is around 1 percent or even less than that of the total comments. Normally, the comments are given nil 10 p.m. The frequency of giving comments rapidly decreases after this. The news which is uploaded In late night doesn't get any Immediate comment.

Reply to comments:-

The online technology has also provided the facility of interaction among readers. Now they can give feedback or reply on the comments of visitors. Many a times, this goes in mumstep In a chain style. It has also been found that such replies are given to show-agreement or objection to the comments. Sometimes it is also given as a complement to the comment. Many times, the people of different faith, religion and opinion involve themselves In hot discussion and give various kinds of arguments In favour or against any comment. People also tease through these comments. People give more reply on those comments which have some teasing nature or show superiority upon someone In any way. These commentsoften use very ugly language. They often abuse each other. This happens In case of political and religious Issues. Many times, the readers, in reply, give a detail report for or against the view expressed by the other readers.

Doubt about the truthfulness of news:-

There are several occasions when the people express doubt about truthfulness of the news on the basis of several facts. Similarly, the readers have also blamed newspapers for biased reporting and publishing paid news. They also evaluate news for Its news value and Its other aspects and they boldly criticize It for alleged violating ethical norms in their opinions. This reveals that readers have their own way of evaluating the events. They give several other Interpretations of an event which in Itself has some particular approach In its news presentation. Similarly, they also comment about the criteria of the selection of news, accusing newspaper for publishing useless kind of material.

They also raise doubts about those aspects of events which are not clarified and raise doubts about various points. They point out such aspects of events which are not clarified by newspapers but they should have been given. The readers show their Irritation on Incomplete news.

Language of the Comments:-

Hindi is the language of comments for which Hindi font is used. But English words are often used. However, some comments are given even in English language, but they are less than one percent of the total comments given at the end of any news In online newspaper. The language of comments has different kinds of grammatical mistakes. Some mistakes are due to the typing error and some are due to lack of knowledge and ignorance of language of those readers who give these comments. The structures of many sentences are full of error which Indicates that newspapers do not give enough care to edit the material which is loaded in the online newspapers by the readers.

Number of comments:-

There is too much variation in the number of comments In different news. It ranges from zero to more than 2 hundred or even more than three hundreds. Controversial subjects have more than 100 comments. The most prominent news gets maximum comment leaving others far behind. But 20 to 40 is normal number of comments in news. Similarly, there is hardly a comment in case of some news. But average number cannot give any idea about the number of comments as there is wide variation in the total number of comment It depends on the subject of news besides other things.

Controversial stories with more comments:-

Any kinds of controversial subject have Immediate comments. People are quick to say something on it .They express their anguish. Irritation and other feelings through it. There is hardly any comment in case of those stories which are simple in nature. Sometimes a sigh of relief and feeling of happiness and satisfaction are expressed by the readers in case the news is positive and good one. Many times they also express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction over the events.

Sharing of experiences:-

Several comments were given by readers sharing their experiences which they thought to be appropriate in the reference of the news. Such types of comments are Important in explaining the exact nature of the event. This kind of comments Is important in understanding the story in a clear manner.

Publicity materials with popular news:-

It has also been found that readers give publicity materials to such news which they consider to be popular and appropriate in online. Much factual information has been attached with them. They give publicity Information with some facts in reference to some news.

Length of Comments:-

Almost 60 percent comments have length between one to four lines. On line comments are more in number. But some readers have kept their own written material which they load as comment once they get appropriate subject of news. At present, this number seems to be around 10 percent of all readers who give comments In such way. They also give the material not as an opinion but in the form of campaign against or in favour of particular person, ideologies, issue or religion. Sometimes such types of material of one person are more than the total material presented by all other people In case of particular news. The average numbers of lines of different days have different values or number. It Is very difficult to draw a meaningful conclusion from It. It has also been found that one line comment got various replies of above hundred lines from more than one person.

There are views on all aspects of the subjects in those cases where a large number of comments are given. Many of the readers are well familiar with certain aspects of the subject and they want to share it with other people. They give their comments on the basis of their experience and knowledge. The accumulation of various Informations at one place makes it very useful material. This happens In those cases where serious and meaningful comments have been given.

Comments for entertainment:-

Many times, the discussion or continents seems to be in a form of entertainment It seems that they have become a means of entertainment for all the participants. Readers enjoy the discussion not only in blaming other people for adopting a particular opinion but also for being blamed for giving a particular comments. They just tease other or those persons who are probably opposite of their views.

It has also been found that some people also make joke of the comments given by others in a very joking style. If someone raises any logical points about any subject, the other one makes Joke of that point. Readers often give such stories which are in joke forms. They also make jokes of various political leaders.

A comment in Political news:-

Political news has maximum number of comments. It contains mix opinions. It draws Immediate attention of various visitors. Political debate continues endlessly. Congress and BJP are two main parties about which comments have mainly been sent in the online newspapers by the visitors. The Inaction of government on the matter has received strong reactions among the readers of online newspapers. Similarly the ban on the film also created heated debate among readers.

Newspapers normally show the popular opinion given by the readers on a particular time. They reject the view expressed by any person in case of any kind of doubt. The supporters of main political parties can often be found fighting among themselves on different issues. At the same time, the person having secular approach tries to diffuse the tense and hot discussion which often otherwise creates a very negative environment.

Major findings and Conclusions:-

The analysis suggests that the correct, honest, immediate comment about news is very useful and they have their own impact on the readers, at the same time, meaningless comments reduce the value and Importance of news. Main findings can be summarised as below-

- Politics and religion are very important subjects of discussion in the comments.
- Some political leaders are main centre of discussion in the comments.
- The language used in comments has several grammatical mistakes.
- Abusive language is also used in the comments.
- Most of the comment Is given In one line.
- Popular subjects have comments In number from 100 to 300.
- Readers use this place to tell stories which they have seen or realised.
- All stories do not have comments.
- Audience does not take message directly in all the way.
- Some comments are repeated.

Suggestions:-

The present trend of comment cannot be described to a very healthy condition. It seems that readers are not using the opportunity given to them In an effective manner.

There is a great scope for improvement in giving comment. The readers can help in Improving the quality of news in online edition. They should give suggestions more timely.

The seriousness of this column may be maintained. It should not be made a place of campaign for a particular Ideology. The language should not be abusive. Newspapers should use effective system of filtering to avoid useless, meaningless and vulgar comments given in online newspaper. They should motivate readers to give meaningful comment.

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