

Audience Perception of the Credibility of Local News Channels

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Abstract- People get most of their news from television news channels. India has the unique feature of having news channels in English and in regional languages. Due to the cosmopolitan nature of the cities like Bangalore, there are news channels which are in English and Kannada broadcasting 24 hour news from the city. Common sense tells us that locally produced news and in the language of the people will have credibility as opposed to news coming from Delhi or Mumbai. Many studies have established this hypothesis that television news audience believes in local channels more than the so-called national networks. Credibility factor depends on a nine dimension credibility measuring scale. The researchers would like to find out if this hypothesis is right and the reasons for the same. For this a combination of audience perception study using a questionnaire would be conducted along with in-depth interviews with the programming heads of the local news channels.

Index Terms- Credibility, local news channels, 24x7 news channels, online news, newspapers

I. INTRODUCTION

News is everywhere. One can access news through newspaper, radio, television or the internet. In this changed scenario one would not be wrong in doubting the veracity of news- source becomes an important variable in both the method of access and the credibility of the news. With so many choices at hand, source credibility is the most important consideration behind the believability of news. We have come across comments like, "If it is on *BBC* it should be true". *Reuters*, for example, one of the oldest news agencies in the world puts a lot of value in verifying news before supplying it to news organizations around the world. It would not mind being overtaken by a competitor if it means it safeguards its credibility. No wonder, news organizations and people generally put a lot of trust in the news supplied by *Reuters*. The brand *Reuters* took a while to establish but losing it would just take one false story.

India has seen a proliferation of television news channels. Initially it was slow- after the government took the monumental decision to open the broadcast media to private and foreign players. The first ten years was mainly trial and error- slow and sometimes jerky start gave way to consolidation. The initial takeoff in Hindi and the regional language channels finally culminated in the establishment of an English news channel in the form of *Star News* in 1998. But it was some years later that it became a 24 hour news channel. Other English news channels started mostly from Delhi and were national in character; the only exception being *Times Now* from Mumbai. Some regional

English channels came up- a few were successful but many either closed down or have turned into multi-lingual for survival.

Aaj Tak had a pre-history in the sense that the *India Today* Group's first foray into television had come as early as 1988 in the form of the monthly video magazine *Newstrack*. Instead of directly launching a channel, the group used *Doordarshan* to piggy-back on to larger ventures. The group began with *Aaj Tak* (till date), a 20-minute daily news bulletin that started in 1995. It was so successful that it gave rise to a series of copy-cat programmes on *Doordarshan* like *Saptahik Aaj Tak* and *Business Aaj Tak*. *Newstrack* transformed into a weekly programme for the Metro channel and in 1998 was telecast for a year on *Star TV* before folding up.

The *Aaj Tak* group later moved into the slot vacated by *NDTV* and produced the network's live coverage of the vote count in the national elections of 1998 and 1999. The 1998 coverage was a non-stop live programme on *Doordarshan* for 72 hours while the one in 1999 lasted a full 45 hours. *Aaj Tak*, the programme, succeeded to the extent that it convinced Arun Purie to convert it into *Aaj Tak*, the channel.

After its negotiations with *CNN* for a collaborative news channel in India broke down, Purie decided to go it alone- India's first stand-alone private news channel *Aaj Tak* was built on a low-cost, high-technology model. It was the first channel in India, and possibly in the world to have a complete newsroom automation system. This meant that all editing operations were conducted on non-linear systems, which was a great advantage for faster production. The tremendous rate of obsolescence of technology also brought down studio and equipment cost drastically. *TV Today* invested in small Panasonic cameras costing \$4,000-\$5000 each compared with Sony cameras that *NDTV* had invested in, costing roughly \$20,000- \$25,000 each. This low cost of investment in hardware was a significant factor in its success.

The other innovation that *Aaj Tak* introduced was mobile outside broadcast (OB) vans. Other channels had fixed V-SAT facilities at their bureaus across the country for live coverage; they did not have the ability to regularly produce live broadcasts outside the studio on short notice. *Aaj Tak* invested Rs. 36 million on two initial OB vans that could broadcast live to a satellite within 15 minutes of reaching the location.

The above reasons allowed *Aaj Tak* to break even on its initial investment within a year of its launch and become the leader in news market, a position it retains till date. Some credit its success to the aggressive use of Khari Boli, the language of the Hindi heartland, others to the live element in its broadcast.

The English news media is considered to wield disproportionate power over the government at the center and its

policies. The likes of *The Indian Express* and *The Hindu* are today part of myth for having taken on the government and succeeded in either directly or indirectly ousting them from power. The power seems to have shifted today to the 24x7 English news channels. The four big and popular channels- *NDTV 24x7*, *CNN-IBN*, *Times Now* and *Headlines Today* exert huge amount of influence on the government of the day. The way these channels covered the CWG and 2G Spectrum scandals among others has put the government on the back foot and led to many changes. It seems the government cannot ignore the warnings of the channels and is seen to be moving very fast to comply with the 'will of the people' as represented by the news channels.

Udaya TV was the first Kannada satellite channel to go on air in Karnataka in 1994. The entry of *TV 9* owned by Ravi Prakash of *Sneha Television Network* in 2006 opened a new chapter in the field of Kannada news channels with its aggressive journalism. *Kasturi News 24* owned by Anita Kumaraswamy (wife of former CM H D Kumaraswamy) with its tagline 'muktha, nirbheetha and nyayasammatha' entered the field in 2007. *Suvarna News 24X7* owned by MP and businessman Rajeev Chandrashekar came in 2008 followed by *Samaya TV* owned by the then Industries Minister Murugesh Nirani in 2010. *Janashri* entered the already crowded scene in 2011 and is owned by Gali Janardhana Reddy, though there are rumours doing the rounds that the channel has changed the hands.

Public TV, which went live on February 12, 2012, and the other Kannada news channels are now competing and combating with one another to climb to the top with 'breaking news' of every possible kind. Everyone is waiting with baited breath to know whether Ranganth's name alone will suffice for the general public to sit up and take notice of *Public TV* and thus threaten the domination of *TV9*. Crime, sex, scandals, sensationalism and political voyeurism and breaking news apart from ordinary events and happenings are the fodder on which these channels survive.

The credibility of Kannada television is seriously at stake. Kannada television is willy-nilly turning viewers into Peeping Toms. In their quest for eyeballs and TRPs, the local channels have been feeding viewers with a diet of gossip, crime, sleaze, stings and low-brow humour. It is not uncommon for journalists to lay their hands on documents or information that relate to people's private lives. But just because they get access to a divorce petition involving an actor, they simply cannot broadcast its contents to the whole wide world.

This brings out a pertinent question: How credible are these news channels and do the viewers believe what they hear and see? The perception of the viewers about the credibility of news organizations is important in evaluating its importance for the readers and viewers and at the same time the influence or power it exerts on the power structure in the country.

A study is the only way one can get answers to the question of people's trust in media today. It is not easy for any media organization to fool the people for a long time as it is possible to verify the news from other sources. At the same time people trust one news organization over the rest on the basis of many real and perceived criteria. For example, *The Hindu* as a national newspaper has overwhelming trust among the reading population, even among those who subscribe and read other

newspapers. This is something that did not happen overnight. The newspaper in question had to build this credibility slowly over the last hundred years. When *The Hindu* during the debate on 'The Indo-US civil nuclear bill' took a differing stance and attacked the government for selling out to the United States, everyone sat up and took notice. Its credibility went up further as people realized that its stand was purely influenced by national considerations and political in nature.

Newspapers have been around for many decades but the news channels in the private sector are less than a decade old. Some like *Times Now* and *CNN-IBN* just completed six years of existence. *NDTV 24x7* has a twenty-five year history but as distinct 24-hour news channel it is just 8 years old. This poses a dilemma- how one can jump to the conclusion that one television channel is more credible than the rest. A audience study is the only way to answer this and related questions.

Many polls suggest that credibility of media- newspapers and television news channels- is declining. One of the reasons attributed is the concentration of media in the hands of big corporations like *News Corp*. The dwindling variety in the content is directly proportionate to the declining credibility people perceive in media in the current scenario. This will only get worse as there is a clamour for big media with its advantage of economies of scale.

Today, we have access to an almost inconceivably vast amount of information, from sources that are increasingly portable, accessible, and interactive. The Internet and the explosion of digital media content have made more information available from more sources to more people than at any other time in human history. This brings an infinite number of opportunities for learning, social connection, and entertainment. But at the same time, the origin of information, its quality, and its veracity are often difficult to assess. This volume of information addresses the issue of credibility—the objective and subjective components that make information believable—in the contemporary media environment.

According to *Wikipedia*, credibility has two key components: trustworthiness and expertise, which both have objective and subjective components. Trustworthiness is based more on subjective factors, but can include objective measurements such as established reliability. Expertise can be similarly subjectively perceived, but also includes relatively objective characteristics of the source or message.

Source credibility is the believability of a communicator, as perceived by the recipient of the message. Academic studies of this topic began in the 20th century and were given a special emphasis during World War II, when the US government sought to use propaganda to influence public opinion in support of the war effort. Psychologist Carl Hovland and his colleagues worked at the War Department upon this during the 1940s and then continued experimental studies at Yale University. They built upon the work of researchers in the first half of the 20th century who had developed a *Source-Message-Channel-Receiver* model of communication and, with [Muzafer Sherif](#), developed this as part of their theories of persuasion and social judgement.

If the saga of the Indian media in the last 20-30 years is a story of great commercial success, it also chronicles the decline in journalistic standards down the line. Media has gained importance as an industry which is now one and a half percent of

GDP. We have some 350 plus news channels running in the country, but most of them are not making money. It is only the top ones in the ladder who are making money equivalent to media channels in the West.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The exposes contained in the taped telephone conversations of corporate lobbyist Nira Radia have dented the credibility of leading journalists and undermined the public standing of the profession (Narasimhan, Oct- Dec 2011). The recorded conversations show leading journalists promising to run political errands for Radia as she works the levers of power to influence ministry formation in the union cabinet after the 2009 general elections. The tapes also show them taking dictation from her about what to write and giving her detailed advice about how Mukesh Ambani of Reliance Industries, one of her leading clients, should fight his case in court. The conversations also have Radia ordering journalists about news placements and her boasting to others about how she got some of these worthies to do jobs for her.

The journalists named are some of the senior-most in the profession and are mostly gatekeepers of news in their publications (Vasanti, 2011). The conversations seem to suggest that these journalists were not only getting information but were, on the contrary, on very familiar terms with Nira Radia. There is no sense of distance between the work of the journalists and that of Radia, but rather, they seem to merge into one.

Subsequent to this expose, the brazen conduct of these journalists and their refusal to accept any blame has further damaged their credibility, as well as the reputation of the entire fourth estate. It has been shocking to see the manner in which the mainstream media, particularly the shrill TV news channels, have tried to blank out any discussion of this issue. This has added to popular misgivings that the media was protecting its own against public scrutiny.

Ohio University Journalism Professor Hugh Culbertson knew he had a hot topic. Editors around the country were agonizing over the use of anonymous sources, fearing they were relying on them too heavily, damaging the press' credibility in the process. Culbertson surveyed more than 200 editors.

The results: Most said competition forced them to use unnamed sources, even though 81 percent considered them inherently less believable. One-third were "unhappy to a substantial degree" with how anonymous sources were handled at their own newspapers, and editors estimated that more than half would go on record if reporters pushed harder. "They seemed to regard unnamed attribution as a crutch for lazy reporters," Culbertson says.

In *Manufacturing Consent*, Herman and Chomsky provide a systematic "propaganda model" to account for the behavior of the corporate news media in the United States (Chomsky, 2002). They preface their discussion of the propaganda model by noting their fundamental belief that the mass media "serve to mobilize support for the special interests that dominate the state and private support for the special interests that dominate the state and private activity." Although propaganda is not the sole function of the media, it is "a very important aspect of their

overall service", especially "in a world of concentrated wealth and major conflicts of class interest".

The credibility and legitimacy of the media system is also preserved by the media's lack of complete agreement on all issues. Indeed, there is vigorous debate and dispute over many issues, as Herman and Chomsky readily acknowledge. They contend, however, that debate within the dominant media is limited to "responsible" opinions acceptable to some segment of the elite. On issues where the elite are in general consensus, the media will always toe the line. No dissent will then be countenanced, let alone acknowledged, except, when necessary for ridicule or derision.

Bandwagon theory is cited as a possible explanation by researchers while understanding the perception of audience in news selection (Sundar & Nass, 2001). Chaiken (1987) argued that people use the heuristic that, if many think an opinion is valid, the opinion is probably correct. Accordingly, they could just follow the evaluations and choices made by others, thereby limiting their own cognitive selection efforts. Affiliation motives may be another reason for bandwagon effect, even when relating to strangers (Byrne, 1961).

The perceptions audience members form regarding television news content has long been of interest to communication researchers. Perceptions of credibility have been found to be influenced by the content of the news reports (Austin & Dong, 1994) and characteristics of the news anchor (Markham, 1968), suggesting that perceptions of credibility may be influenced by presentation variables. The use of high-definition (HD) television may be one such variable.

One of the most important findings of this study is that perceptions of credibility can be influenced by the formal features of television. This suggests that credibility is not just an inherent quality of the source or person delivering a message. In a study conducted in Slovenia among journalists, majority of the respondents wrote that they rated the traditional news media as more credible because of their longer tradition during which they had earned a *reputation* of credibility and quality (Steensen, 2011). Some of them referred to the traditional news media's "good name" which they had achieved during years of practicing journalism. Most of them attributed such a reputation to personal "positive experiences" which they had as audience members or as journalists in their everyday practice and relations with the traditional news media, while they had negative, few, or no experiences with the online news media. Several respondents attributed the media's reputation to *personalities* who work in particular media, stating that credibility is linked to "good", "experienced", "acknowledged", "distinguished" reporters and editors. They chose the traditional news media because they employ reporters and editors whom they trust. The third key reason for rating the traditional news media as more credible is their quality *news supply*. Most respondents said that the traditional news media are more credible because they offer more "serious", "public affairs" topics, while the online news media offer more sensational news. They defined topics such as politics, economy, social affairs, and ecology as "public affairs" and listed entertainment, and especially lifestyle and sexual advice as sensational news. According to respondents, the traditional news media are more trustworthy because they offer more "exhaustive", "in-depth"

and “accurate” information, while the online news media offer “surface”, “quick” and “unverified” information. Thus, the work of journalists from the online news media is less highly rated than the work of those from the traditional news media; the main argument is that journalists from the traditional news media have a more professional journalistic approach to news production. Some respondents even wrote that they value journalism in the traditional news media more because their journalists more clearly separate facts from opinions. They also criticised journalistic writing in the online news media, arguing that online journalists construct sentences which are too short, use superficial language and make spelling and grammar mistakes. The fourth reason for rating the traditional news media as more credible was journalists’ *education* and *experiences*. According to respondents, journalists working in the traditional news media are more educated and experienced than online journalists.

The respondents who favoured the online news media mostly referred to their *promptness* at information gathering, which is very important in the contemporary fast-changing world. Some of them argued that online news media are credible because Internet users are given an opportunity to comment on published information. Thus, the *community of recipients* constantly verifies the credibility of a particular news item, the journalist who has written it, and the medium itself. The recipients who are active regularly verify credibility in this way; therefore, according to some respondents, the online news media are much more credible and of a higher quality than the traditional news media which hide behind their inaccessibility.

A TAM study after two Telugu news channels were launched showed a marked increase in the time spent on the Telugu news at the cost of Hindi news whereas the time spent on English news was more or less same (Regional news channels living up to their promise in AP, 2004). The inference here is to the preference of local news channels to national (read Hindi) ones.

In a similar finding, regional news channels were able to increase their viewership base whereas that of English and Hindi declined (Sarkar, 2011). The proliferation of regional language news channels, specially in the south, means that many viewers now have a choice and the affinity to mother tongue seems to have worked in their favour. But the biggest concern is the clamour among the national English and Hindi news channels to win back viewers with sensational coverage. As news media is dependent on big news stories, the years 2009-2010 were dull; 2008 turned out to be good with the Mumbai Terror attacks and the drama around the passing of the Indo-US Civil Nuclear Bill.

On the question of an additional news channel in Kannada, there is a feeling that the rest give too much importance to god, temple, crime and politicians (Is there space of another Kannada news channel?, 2012). *Public TV* was launched on 12 February 2012 with veteran journalist H.R. Ranganath at the helm. His reputation as a no-nonsense Editor at *Kannada Prabha* gives hope that things will be different and balanced coverage would be the hallmark of *Public TV*. A year into the telecast, *Public TV* has done phenomenally well due to the quality and trustworthiness of the channel.

III. METHODOLOGY

Design for credibility study

Survey research uses scientific sampling and questionnaire design to measure characteristics of the population with statistical precision.

A survey was conducted in which 250 respondents from all across Bangalore city were administered a questionnaire. The Questionnaire was first tested and the reliability and validity was ensured before a full scale survey was concluded. A convenience sampling technique was adopted to draw a representative sample from among the television viewing population of Bangalore city. Care was taken to ensure that all parts of Bangalore city was covered.

Many top news channel heads and senior journalists were interviewed to get a better idea of the workings on the news channels. This was also useful for designing of the questionnaire. This study intends to find if local news channels are perceived to be more credible by the viewers than national news channels and therefore believe the news on local channels more.

The main reason for the study is the rise and development of 24-hour news channels in India in the last decade and the impact it is having on the way news is gathered, processed and disseminated to an ever growing and ever hungry audience.

The following research questions will guide this study:

1. News is important for the citizens of Bangalore.
2. Traditional media sources are important for getting news.
3. Television is becoming an important source for the majority of the audience.
4. Local television channels provide credible news to Bangaloreans.
5. People tend to believe the local news channels over the national news channels.

IV. HYPOTHESIS

Credibility of local news channels will be higher than that of the national news channels.

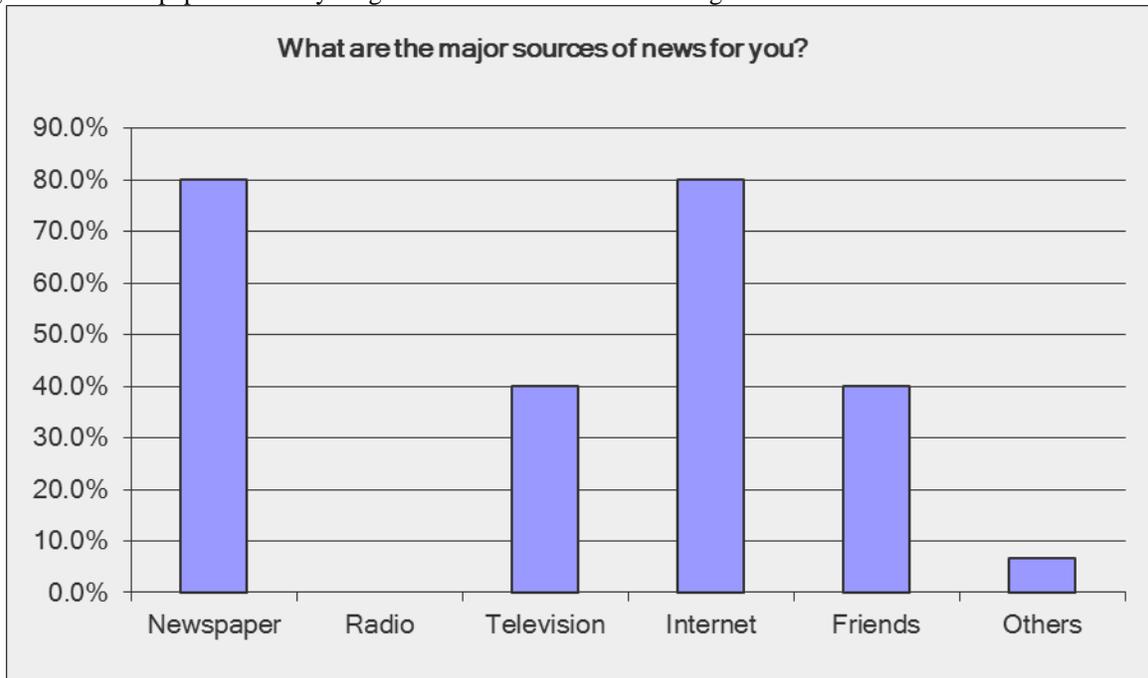
Data Presentation and Analysis

The survey provided the following results-

1. News is very important for the citizens of Bangalore. Newspapers are still the preferred mode of getting news for the older generation of Bangaloreans. But surprisingly the young get their daily dose of news from internet and specially online news portals and social media sites. Television is gaining but is still behind newspapers as the preferred source of news. Television is seen as an entertainment medium rather than a source for serious news. Newspaper has a high trust value among all age categories and is able to maintain its credibility due to the adage: If it is in print, it should be true. Radio, unfortunately, doesn’t have any takers as far as news is concerned- purely for music.

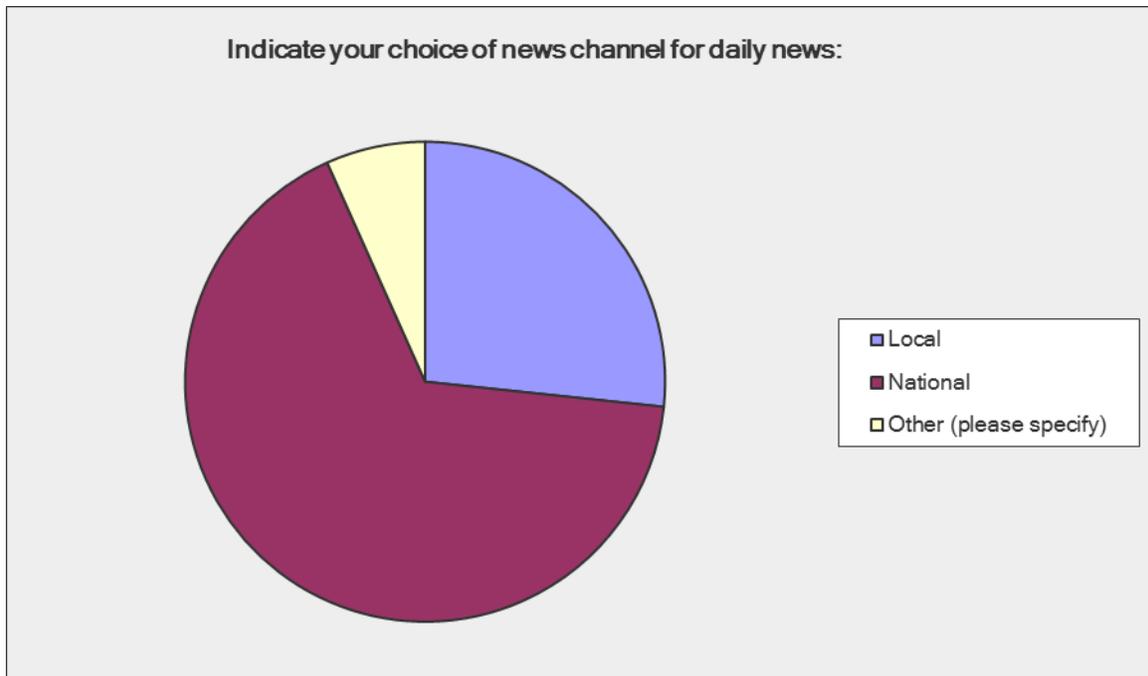
Convenience and affordability are the reasons behind newspapers’ large readership despite the inroads made by television. New media has a loyal following and in the near

future will gain over newspapers as the young out-number the old in Bangalore.



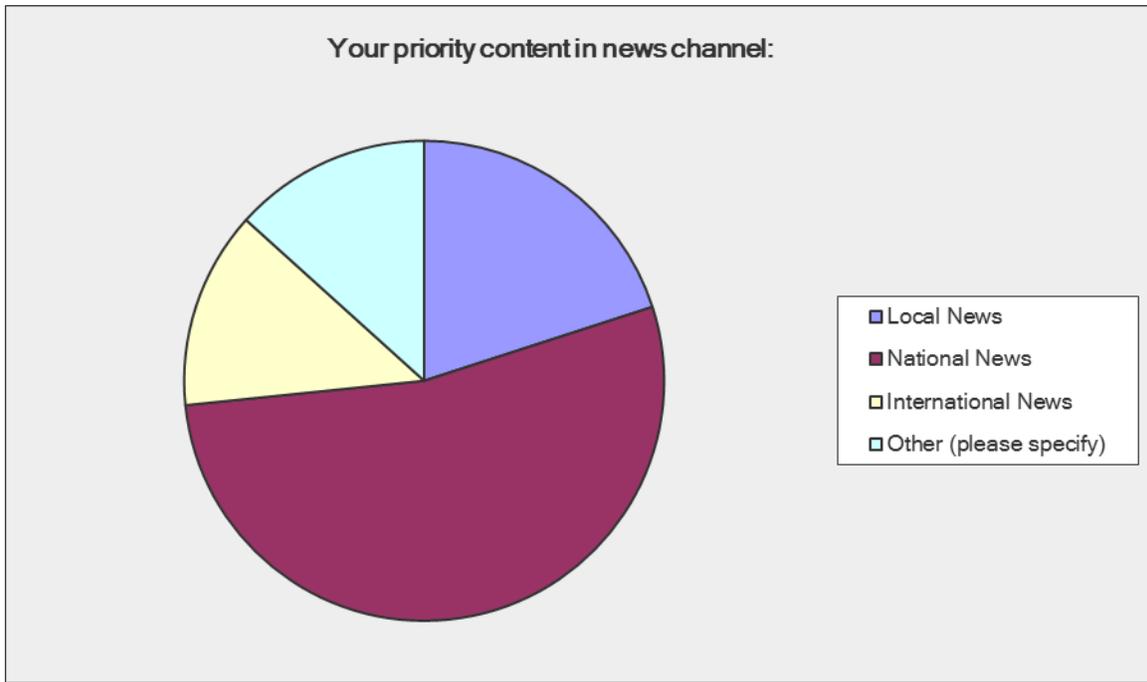
2. National news channels are preferred over local news channels for getting daily news. A huge majority of the viewers polled for this survey chose national over local news channels for getting their daily dose of news. The

cosmopolitan nature of Bangalore has a lot to do with the national outlook as opposed to the local or regional stance.



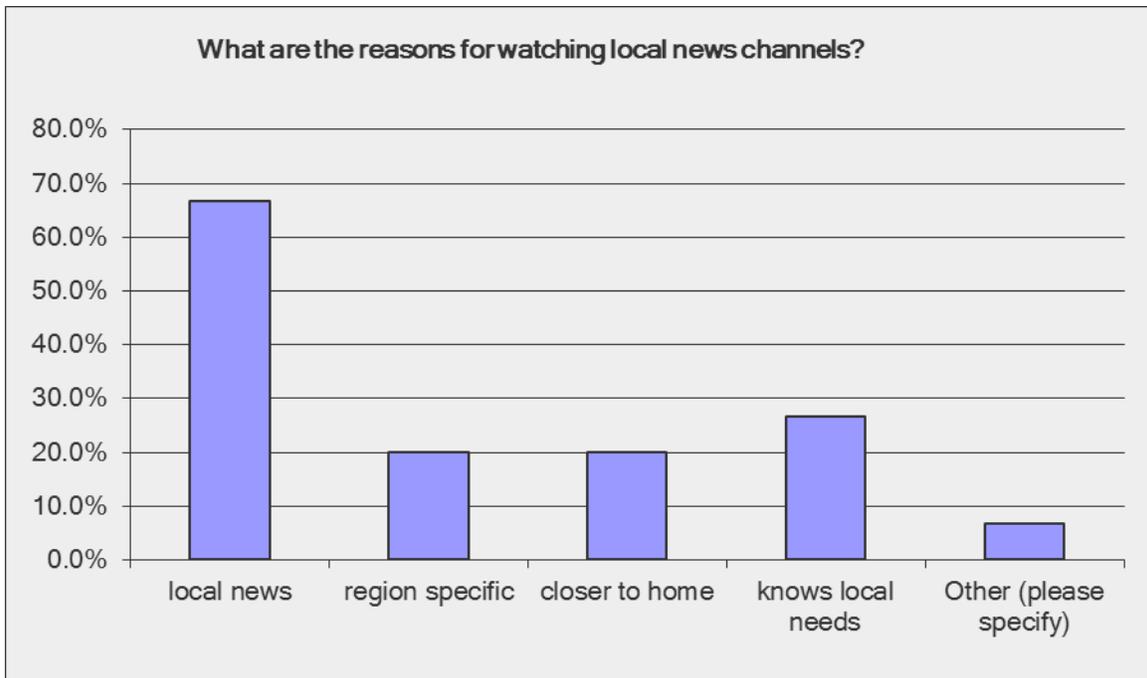
3. National news is ahead of local news the respondents like to watch. The sheer number of stories that are carried on national news channels coupled with the diverse nature of the viewer may be the reason for preferring national news, even when they are watching

local news channels. The worry that parochialism and regionalism will increase with sub-nationalistic tendencies don't bear out from this survey. In fact, pan Indian feeling is taking root among the residents of Bangalore.



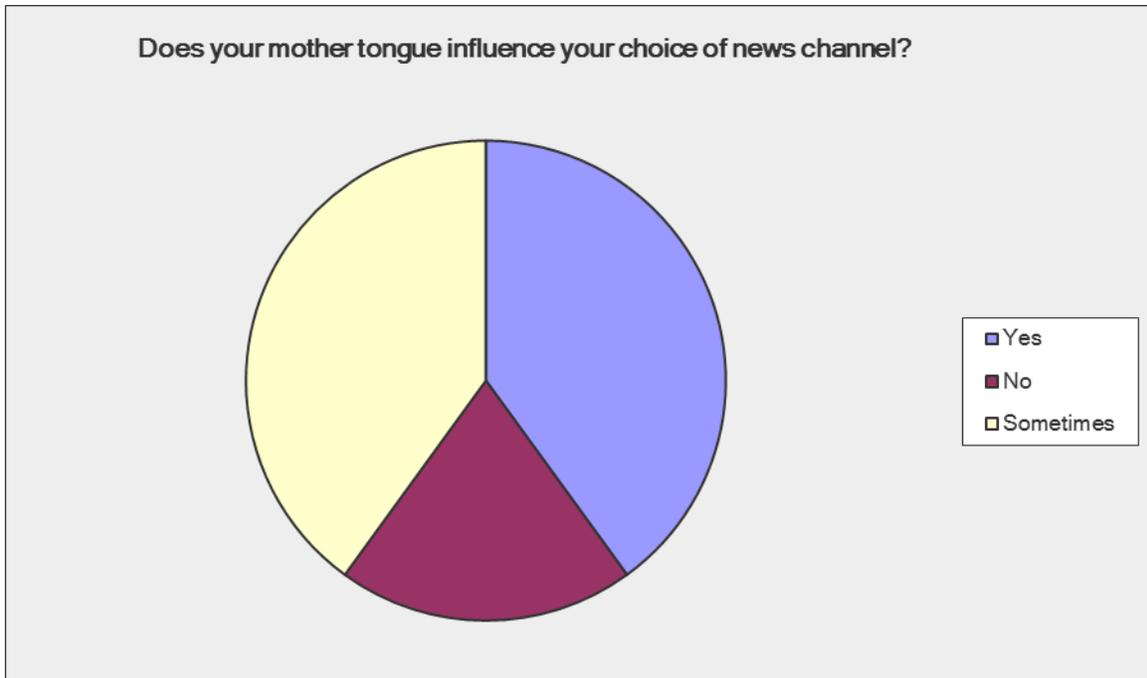
4. When they were quizzed about the reasons for watching local news channels, majority spoke about the local news coverage being the main reason followed by knowledge of the local needs of the viewers. If one looks deep into this phenomenon it is clear that people

who are from different parts of the country want a bit of local news of their region in addition to the general news from around the country. They want to keep in touch with their motherland- be it Tamilnadu or Andhra Pradesh- and its goings on.



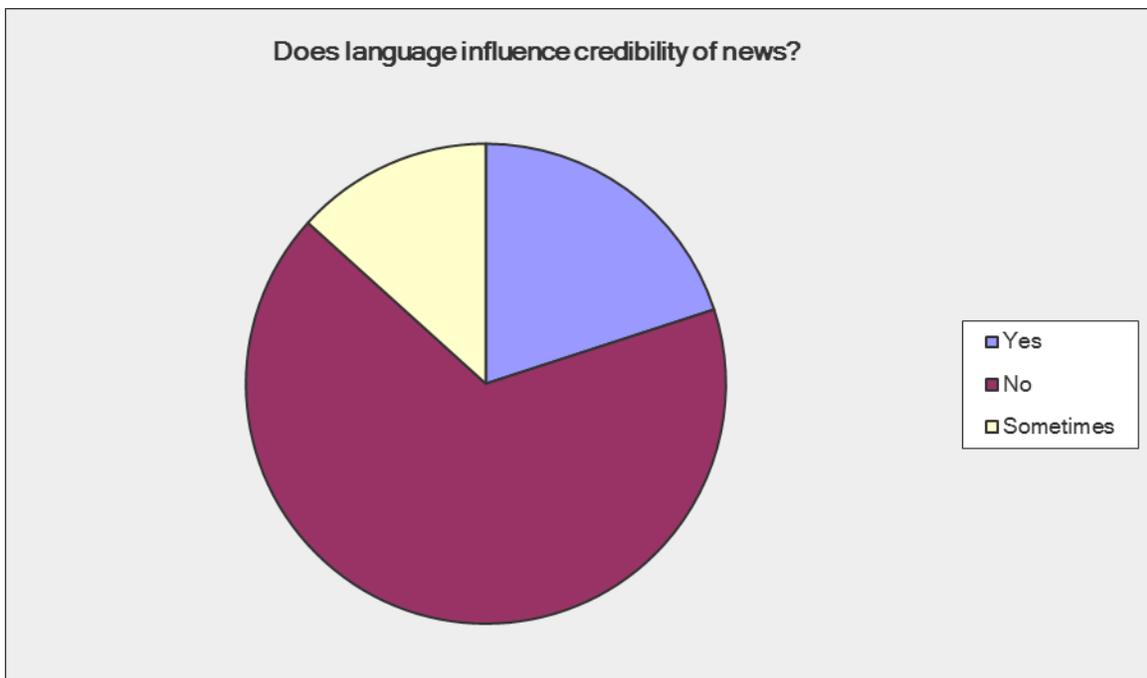
5. Mother tongue matters in the choice of local news channels. Only 30% said that it doesn't matter in their choice of news channel. One likes to watch news in the language that one is comfortable in. Hindi speakers prefer to watch Hindi news channels as Kannadigas like to watch news in Kannada channels. This give ample

scope for news channels in all languages. English doesn't have a monopoly, so is the case with Hindi or Kannada for that matter. The more cosmopolitan one gets, the preference shifts to English news channels from local ones. Bangalore is one of the three cosmopolitan cities in India; Delhi and Mumbai being the other two.



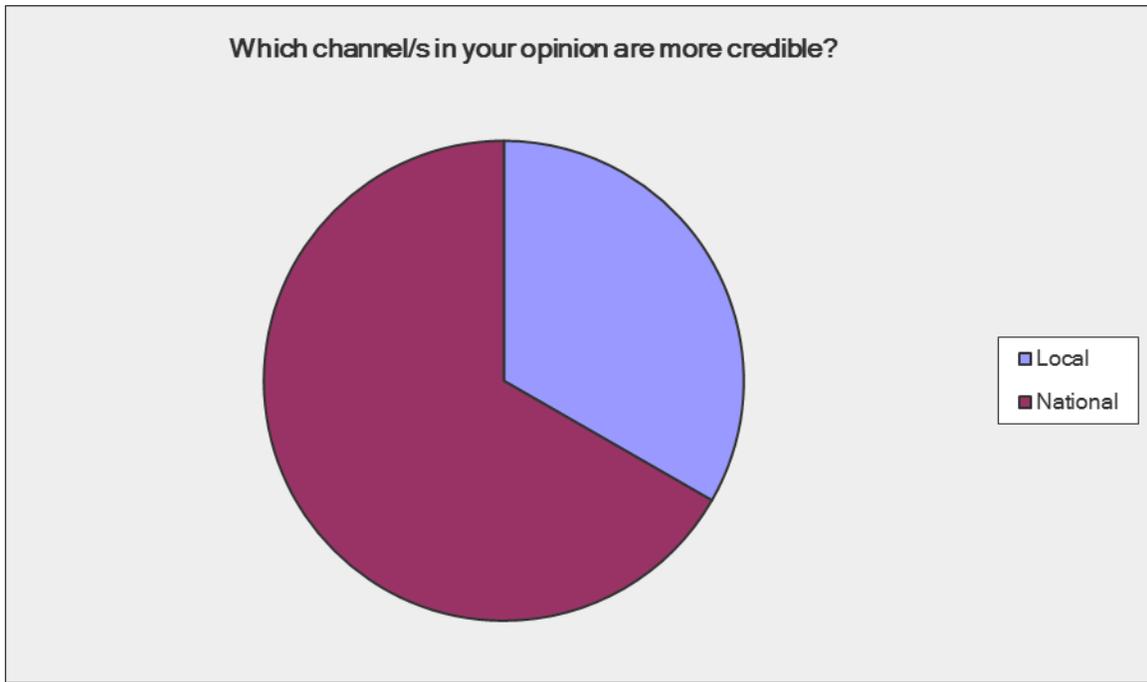
6. But surprisingly language was not instrumental in linking the news channels to the credibility. Majority felt that credibility has very little to do with which language the channel is in. What is more important is

the way the news is presented and dealt with by the news channels- sober and sticking to facts.



7. Majority felt that national and not local news channels are more credible. Even though many watch regional language news channels they attribute less trust to them as compared to national news channels. This is very surprising as it breaks the myth that people attribute

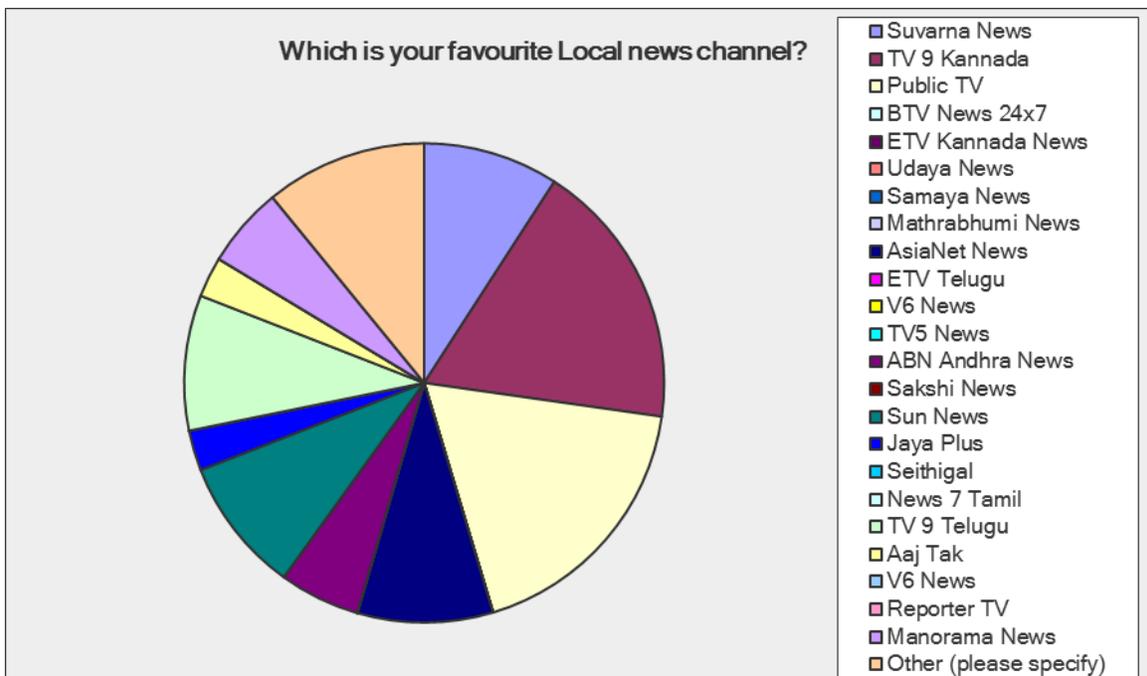
trust to their language and a television news channel in their mother tongue is much more credible. English national news channels for all their flaws get thumbs up from the viewers in Bangalore.



8. As is well known *TV9 Kannada* has the highest rating among the Kannada news viewing audience. But *Public TV* has caught up with *TV9* and as things stand it may very well become the number one Kannada news channel in days to come. Some of the news channels in Kannada have fallen in popularity and are struggling to find viewers. This may be due to the staleness of their presentation and the strategies of the top two channels to go all out to woo the audience with sensational and loud content. The view of the people of Bangalore is mixed as far as credibility of local news channels is concerned. They feel that some channels are more

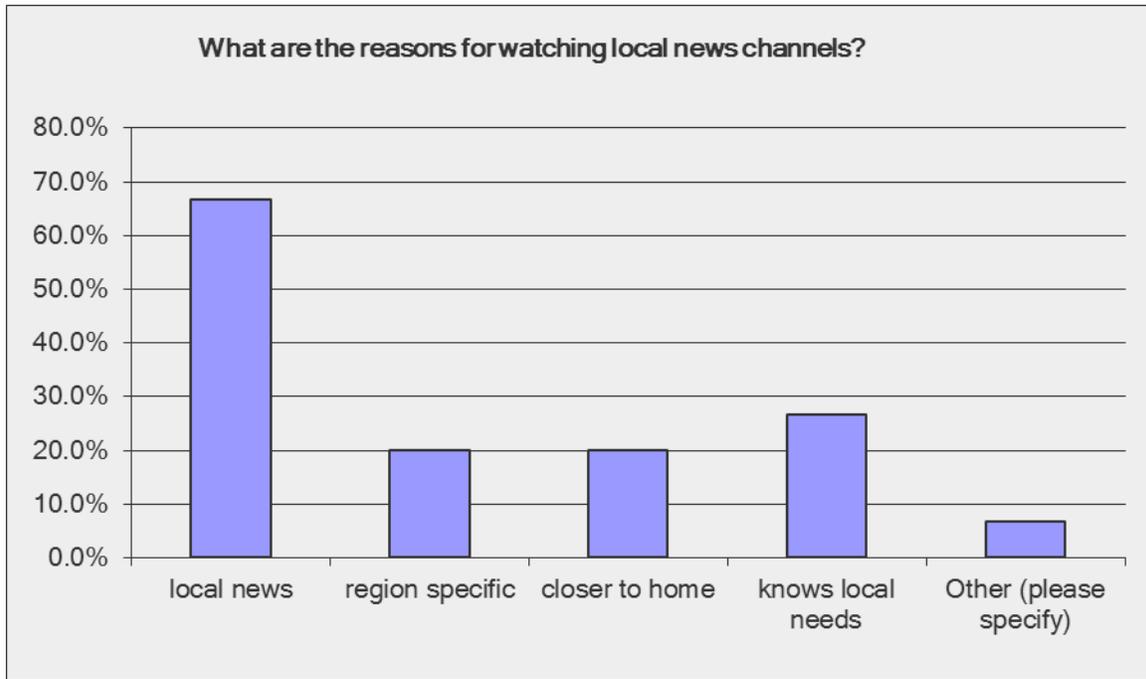
credible than others due to the ownership and reputation of the editor in chief. The reason given in case of *Public TV* is the apolitical ownership and the reputation of the editor as being no-nonsense person.

9. As Bangalore is a cosmopolitan city, people watch television news in many languages. Kannada and English news channels have equal number of viewers, followed by Hindi and Telugu. It more or less goes with the demography of Bangalore which is highly diverse in the way the people belonging to different languages are spread across the city.



10. There are multiple reasons for people to prefer local channels. In addition to the language preference there seems to be the issue of coverage and relevance. Local news channels give extensive coverage to local and regional stories and issues that are close to the citizens of Bangalore. The cosmopolitan nature of Bangalore is to some extent responsible for a sizable percentage

opting for national news channels over local ones. People who are from outside of the state end up watching either English, if they are from a higher socio-economic background or Hindi, if they are the typical middle-class from north of the Vindhya's.

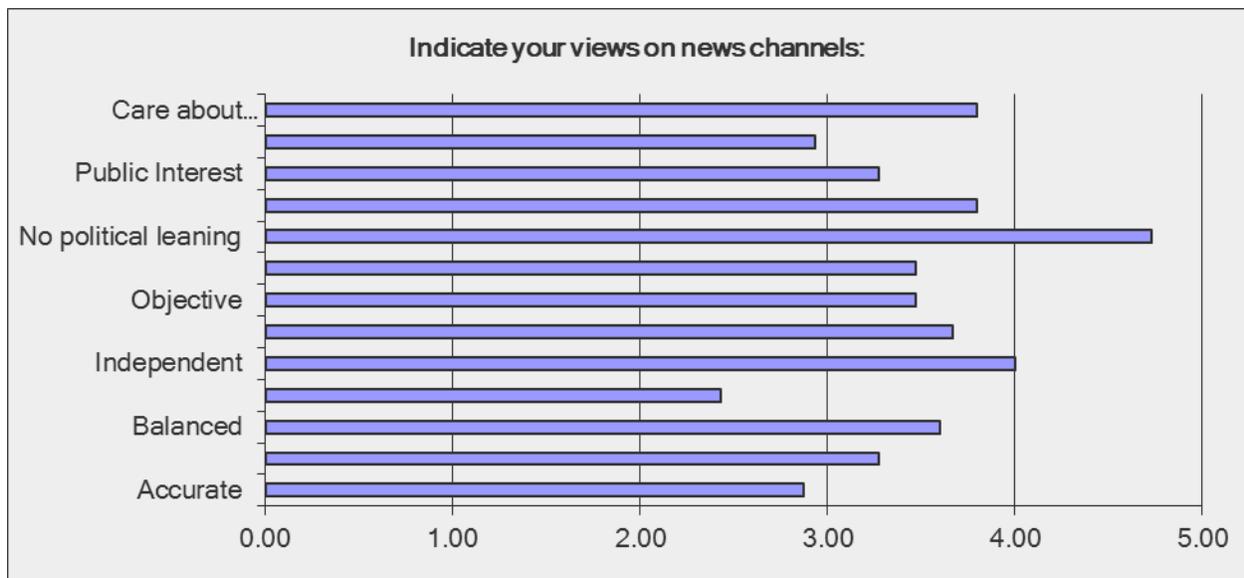


11. The most important finding of this study would be the correlation between the cosmopolitan nature of the news viewers and the preference for English news channels. English is still considered to be the language for upward mobility in India. From speaking English at home to communicating in the colonial language at work, people perceive English language to have the ability to put them on-par with the so-called elite in society. That is precisely the reason why a large percentage of the respondents preferred national channels, English at that.

12. Regional news channels can flourish in India and in particular in Bangalore for the reason that the nature of society is fast undergoing rapid changes. The economic imperative that have been unleashed a little over two decades back is coming home to roost. Demographically Indian cities are changing from being the preferred destination of locals- people in the neighbourhood- to migrants from near and far. With most Indian languages

spoken in tier 1 and tier 2 cities, the media scene is reflecting this new reality. Gone are the days when one language could be imposed on the entire population of India in the name of National Integration and nation building was the sole object. Today, regional aspirations are getting translated into news channels that cater to niche language demands of an ever prosperous populous.

13. Finally, what this survey provides is the data that proves that local news channels are perceived as being less credible than the national news channels. This perception is based on the fact that language news channels indulge in far more sensational and trivia news content than national channels. The more the competition the depths to which a channels will stoop to conquer the viewership heights. Very few people feel that local news channels provide accurate, balanced and objective news.



V. CONCLUSION

In 1995 when the Hindi news channel *Aaj Tak* was launched, there was a belief that like *Doordarshan* for over three decades, private channels will also cater to a national (Hindi) speaking audience. But soon the scene changed and in the last decade regional language news channels have flourished everywhere in India. It is not surprising given that the top five newspapers in terms of circulation and readership happen to be regional language newspapers. *The Times of India* is number eight, way behind the leaders *Danik Jagaran* (Hindi), *Malayala Manorama* (Malayalam) and *Daily Thanthi* (Tamil). The number of English language news channels is just eight and that in Hindi is a little over ten. But the largest number of news channels are in the other Indian languages- close to one hundred and growing. The saturation point for English news channels has been reached and soon Hindi will follow suit. The potential for regional language news channels in India is driven by economic realities as much as by the socio-political considerations. The true nature of India- unity in diversity- is translating into regional news hubs in virtually all states. Space for articulating and strengthening the culture that is specific to every state, and in some cases within states, is to be found in language specific television channels; more specifically news channels. Regional aspirations in the form of political agitation is finding voice in the language press (includes television). Further fragmentation of the existing news channels, specially the Indian language ones, shows the impatience of the regional aspirations trying to assert its uniqueness.

In all this the credibility factor seems to take a back seat as competition is driving the TRP wars. Everything is fine to get one more viewer to switch to your channel- ethics is confined to the text books to be taught in J-Schools and not practiced in news rooms. Its impact is obvious in the news and views on news one gets to see on news channels. The more harsh, shrill and noisy the debates on primetime news the better for TRPs, or so is the perception among the news heads. The fact that more people in cosmopolitan cities like Bangalore are switching to national news channels is a point to be noted by the decision makers in the local

news channels. But it is also true that audience for regional language news channels is increasing faster than that for English channels. Credibility depends on the culture- the practices prevalent in news rooms of television channels. Unless that changes for the better with strict code of ethics, credibility will be low. What is also lacking is a role model that begs to be emulated by others in the industry. In case of newspapers we have *The Hindu* but the beating *NDTV 24x7* took after the revelations in the Nira Radia tapes episode has left a vacuum in the broadcast news industry.

Far more cause for concern to the news channels per se is the increasing reliance on online news by the young population of Bangalore. The lack of credibility coupled with convenience may very well push a majority of viewers of news to online sources. The West, where majority get their news from digital media as opposed to newspapers or television channels, may get replicated right here in Bangalore.

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