

ABSTRACT

A country's image is the sum of peoples' beliefs, opinions, ideas and impressions about it. Nations develop a certain image for themselves due to the kind of media representations they receive. A positive image plays crucial role in earning respect and increasing a nation's weight in international affairs (Lodhi, 2021). It helps to attract investors, tourists, international students, donors etc. Hence, every country aspires for a positive and favourable global image. Thus, they invest a lot of money in advertising campaigns, public relation activities, nation branding and soft power activities to promote a favourable image for themselves.

India's image has also been evolving with the passage of time. In the colonial days, for the British rulers, it was an ancient, uncivilized, backward and primitive nation. In the post-independence years it was seen as a Third world country largely dependent on others for food, economic and military aids. In 2023, it is the fifth largest economy in the world and seen as an emerging global power. Previous studies such as Mac Bride Commission (1980), Poornananda (1998) and Talpade (2005) found that the portrayal of developing countries (including India) in the media of the developed countries was mostly negative. This was because of the one way and imbalanced Western control over global flow of news and information.

The Mac Bride Commission report(1980) wanted a New World Information & Communication Order (NWICO) where developing countries were given a fair representation. It recommended the decentralization and democratization of media. But, even now (in 2023), the ownership of the substantial number of major book publishers, news agencies, newspapers, magazines, music, films, advertising, social media networking sites, search engines, radio and television channels continue to be in the hands of Western corporations and it is these media organizations which go on shaping the global narratives around any issue.

The aim of this study has been to examine the extent and frequency of coverage of India by the Western media (*nytimes.com* & *theguardian.com*) between 2009-2019. It aims to understand the major issues covered in the above time period as well as analyse the difference in the coverage of both the news portals. Going through available literature, it was found that there was dearth of studies on the image of India. Hence, a study like this is the need of the hour for a country like India because it is the world's largest

democracy; has the second largest population; is the fifth largest economy and aspires to become a permanent member of United Nations Security Council and a developed country by 2047. A study like this has the potential to impact its geopolitical interests, economy, tourism etc.

It is a positivist and empirical study which follows a mix methods approach. It combines elements of both quantitative as well as qualitative research design to answer the research questions. Between June 2009 to May 2019 total 2736 news stories were taken for the analysis out of which 1123 were in NYT and 1613 were in TG. Content analysis method was used in the study to analyse the data. Tone of the headlines and news stories were observed on a three point scale- favourable, unfavourable and neutral. Intercoder reliability (for tone analysis) was derived using the Holsti's Formula where the level of agreement found among the coders was 86%. Agenda setting theory was used as the theoretical framework. Later, word cloud for all 2736 headlines was also prepared to find out the words which were used most frequently in the headlines. Some subject matter experts were also contacted for in-depth interviews.

The study revealed that both the selected Western news portals, theguardian.com gave greater coverage to news related to India (59%) in comparison to nytimes.com (41%). Political news related to India (32.7%) was the topmost priority in Western media followed by Social (31.0%) and Scientific news stories (11.5%). Issues related to international relations were topmost on the agenda of nytimes.com while issues related to Crime were topmost in theguardian.com. The overall tone in western media was mostly unfavourable with 46.5% news stories having negative kind of tone.

Most of the unfavourable coverage was related to crimes (rape, honour killings, atrocities against women, female foeticide, murders), internal security challenges (riots, stone pelting, protests and violence in Kashmir), environmental problems (air pollution, threats to wildlife and endangered species), international relations issues (mostly Indo-Pak conflict) and human rights violations. Overall, it could be concluded from the study that the amount of coverage given by the Western media to India had increased significantly from the past but this coverage continued to be mostly unfavourable in its tone.

Keywords: India, Image, News, Western media, New York Times, The Guardian.