MALE SPORTS VISUALS RULE INDIAN PRINT MEDIA GENDER COMPARISONS IN LEADING INDIAN NEWSPAPERS

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluate how selected newspapers from North India published male and female players visuals on the front page in 2011. Content analysis was used to compare the female and male sports visuals used with all articles and stand alone during first week of January 2011 to June 2011. The study revealed that women sports persons get less representation in Indian print media than male. Male players visuals clearly dominate 74 percent in Indian print media, as female players only get 7 percent share. However, the joint (male and female) visuals were used after the male visuals 19 percent. The Times of India published maximum male visuals (86 percent) but these were small size photographs. Both the Punjabi language newspapers Punjabi Tribune and Ajit have not published female players on the front pages. Dainik Tribune was the only newspaper who gave the 10 percent space to female players. Maximum female sports visuals were used without the stories and without the caption, whereas most of the male visuals were used with the stories and 50 percent with the caption.

Key words: Male players, Sports visuals, Gender compression, Content analysis, Indian print media.

INTRODUCTION

Now a day’s visuals are an important part of our daily lives, visuals can be seen in the beginning of the day and till the end of the day. Visuals are very important for all the media, we can't think to publish a newspapers, periodicals, newsletters and other channels without the visuals. It's
always a credible source of information for the readers. Visuals explain the news in an effective way and it can be understand even by an uneducated and a child, who can’t understand the words but he is able to understand the visuals.

As per the Rowe (1999), Readers like photographic coverage in the sports page of the newspapers than textual coverage. Now visuals have taken the centre stage and today print media is depending heavily on them to give a more appealing look to their news. Not only this, now visuals are used with the vital info of the story and this has resulted in origin of a new concept in print media called info graphics. Be it any big news — election stories, mishap stories or sports stories — info graphics along with big visuals are used by newspapers and magazines to attract the reader and it has been accepted widely by the readers too.

"Male players visuals dominate in the Indian print media" (Tewari, 2014). Some researchers have argued that money dominates in sports journalism’s agenda. Professional male sports which create the biggest turnovers in advertising, sponsorship, numbers of television viewers and spectators in the stadium dominate the international sports press (Jorgensen, 2005). "News industry demonstrates little interest in women’s sports” and clearly “gen-ders its sports coverage to cater for male tastes in the pursuit of male audiences and advertising revenue"( Lowes, 1999, pp. 20-23).

Mass media and sports has a relationship, while "the media may appear to simply ‘report what happened’”, in reality they “ac-tively construct news through frames” (Kane, 1996, p. 4).
Framing highlights some bits of information, making them more salient or noticeable by placement or repetition (Entman, 1993).

In reviewing the literature for the study of male and female sports visuals used on the front page of Indian newspapers, it makes sense to examine literature relating to the portrayals of sports persons of both sexes in the print media. A number of studies have done to analyses the male and female coverage in the newspapers.

As per the previous research in print media shows that women sports persons get less media coverage than men in print media and broadcast media (i.e., Bishop, 2003; Bryant, 1980; Fink and Kensicki, 2002; Fullerton, 2006; Lumpkin and Williams, 1991; Billings and Angelini, 2007; Billings and Eastman, 2002; Billings and Eastman, 2003). Many scholars have also studied the photos coverage of male and female players (i.e., Bishop, 2003; Duncan and Sayaovong, 1990; Fink and Kensicki, 2002; Pedersen, 2002; Rintala and Birrell, 1984; Salwen and Wood, 1994; Tewari, 2014).

"If we go by the way print media emphasized on visuals during the Commonwealth Games held in New Delhi in October 2010, first time in India, most of the newspaper published male players visuals on the front page" (Tewari, 2011, pp. 14). The visual aspects of a men's and women's sports coverage vary in print media. In print media, men's sports photographs have been found to outnumber women's 13 to 1, as men's photographs constituted 92.3% of all photographs (Duncan
et al., 1991). Similarly, in a study about the photographs appearing in Sports Illustrated for Kids, it was found that men were portrayed three times as often as women (Hardin et al., 2002).

Jo Ann M. Buysse of School of Kinesiology, University of Minnesota, did the research in “Constructions of gender in sports, An Analysis of Intercollegiate Media Guide Cover Photographs”. The sample was collected from 1989-1990 (hereafter 1990) and 1996-1997 (hereafter 1997) academic years. 307 covers analyzed in the period of 1989-1990, as per the research 47 percent portrayed women’s sports, while 53 percent men’s sports. During the 1996-1997 the total 314 covers were studied in which 51 percent published women’s visuals, and 49 percent showed men’s. As per this study in 1990, 59 percent men visuals were in action compared to 43 percent for women during 1997, 62 percent of men action visuals and 41 percent of women in action published.

Richard Pringle of University of Western Australia has studied the two important newspapers of Western Australian, the Daily News and The West Australian, to find out whether sportswomen and sportsmen received disparity dealing during the 1990 Commonwealth Games. As per the study coverage of men and women sports person was not equal, sportsmen received 1.6 times more coverage than sportswomen. Women sports persons news is underplayed it doesn’t show the actual sports news.

Amateur Athletic Foundation of Los Angeles has sponsored a study of women in sports titled “Coverage of Women’s Sports in Four Daily Newspapers”. It was done by expert scholars
Margaret Carlisle Duncan, Ph.D., Michael Messner, Ph.D., Linda Williams, Ph.D. Edited by Wayne Wilson, Ph.D. For this study they examined four newspapers: USA Today, the Boston Globe, the Orange County Register, and the Dallas Morning News. As per the study findings 92.3 percent of all photographs were pictures of men and photographs of male athletes outnumbered those of female athletes 13 to 1. USA Today published higher number of women’s stories and women’s photographs than any of the other newspapers. Stories exclusively on men’s sports outnumbered stories addressing only women’s sports by a ratio of 23 to 1. Study shows some photographs in the sports sections were not related to any story. Most, however, were used to enhance stories. The majority of stories with photographs were stories about men sports persons. Almost half of all of the women-only stories had pictures compared to less than a third of the men’s.

Katherine N. Kinnick have done a study of 1996 summer Olympic games title “Gender Bias in Newspaper Profiles of 1996 Olympic Athletes: A Content Analysis of Five Major Dailies”. For this study five important newspapers of U.S were studied to know the gender bias in reporting and photography. No evidences of gender bias were found in this study in terms of quantitative representation of female athletes, or in the placement and prominence of stories. While profiles of athletes in this study found evidence of gender bias for a number of criteria; however, for other items, female athletes received similar or more favorable treatment than male athletes.

A study by the Hardin et al. (2002) found that women were presented as inferior to men in Sports Illustrated for Kids’ photographic coverage. The study found a 3:1 ratio in number of male to female photos, a greater disparity than Duncan and Sayaovong’s (1990) findings from a decade
before, when the ratio was 2:1. In addition, Hardin et al. (2002) found that female athletes were “underrepresented in all editorial photographs, overrepresented in aesthetic sports, and framed more often than men in inferior ways”. Duncan (1990) argues that media outlets focus on sexual difference as a mechanism to put women in a position of powerlessness. Along with sexual differences, some researchers have also studied the sexual suggestiveness of photographs.

Shaun Kohn of University of Oregon studied Men vs. Women in newspapers sports section photographs under the supervision of Kim Sheehan in 2000. This study examines photographs of males and females in newspaper sports sections. A content analysis of sports section photographs from four newspapers covering a 20-year span, starting in 1978, found that gatekeepers attached more salience to male athletes, and presented female athletes in a higher percentage of photos indicating dominance, indicating being dominated, and indicating emotion, when compared to males. Additionally, it was found that the presence of female athletes is increasing in the sports section, though there is still a large gender gap in 1998.

As per the study of tennis players coverage of 2004 Wimbledon Championships in three countries important newspapers suggest, male players had significantly more total coverage than female players and significantly more articles/photographs. But, the size of the articles/photographs was not significantly different (Crossman, Vincent and Speed, 2004).
Under-representation of women in sports coverage, sends the message that women’s participation in sport is less important, significant, exciting and/or newsworthy than that of men’s sports participation (McGregor and Melville, 1992; Vincent et al., 2007).

Sports visuals of Indian print media was not studied and there was some gap in previous research with regards to male and female sports visuals coverage in print media; serving as a motivation for this research paper.

All the prior research has indicated that females players receive less coverage in sport media than men around the world. This study examined the image portrayals of females and males players in the 8 most popular Indian newspapers. My objective of this study was to compare the male and female players representation on the front page of the Indian newspaper through the visuals and compare the space given to female players and how these visuals were used. To investigative the gender representation, a set of four research questions was devised for this study.

RQ 1: Do front page contain significantly more visuals of males than females in 2011?

RQ 2: How much space is given to women and men visuals in 2011?

RQ 3: How many male and female visuals were used with stories in 2011?

RQ 4: How many male and female visuals were found with caption in 2011?
METHODOLOGY

Content analysis method was used for this study. As it is a reliable method to analyses the media content. In previous studies many researchers used content analysis to compare photographs of male and female track and field athletes in two British national newspapers (King, 2007). The sampling framework of this study was taken from the previous study of Janet Lever and Stanton Wheeler, they have used this methodology in their study of the sports pages of the Chicago Tribune.

The newspapers that researcher chosen for the gender study of sports visuals on the front-page are: The Tribune, The Times of India, The Indian Express, Dainik Bhaskar, Punjab Kesri, Dainik Tribune, Ajit, and Punjabi Tribune. These papers represent three different language readers, English, Hindi and Punjabi all the newspapers are leading newspapers in their languages in India. Sample was collected from the front page of Chandigarh edition in the 1st week of each starting six month from January 2011 to June 2011.

A coding sheet was prepared and sports visuals were coded in various ways for collecting the data. This process was done for 336 front pages of selected newspapers. For checking coder reliability, Scott’s (1955) Pi formula was used. Fifty visuals were coded twice to get the Scott's pi these visuals were not included in this study. The coder reliability value of Scott's Pi was 0.534 and 80 Percent Agreement.
Content analysis is very effective method to analysis the media images , this method has been used by many researchers in previous newspaper studies to find the answer of newspaper photographs (Blackwood, 1983; Singletary, 1978; Wells, Burnett, and Moriarty, 1998). As per the Harold Lasswell (1927) "Media content analysis was introduced as a systematic method to study mass media initially to study propaganda". Through content analysis, it should be possible to draw inferences about how a printed medium like a newspaper covers and portrays female athletes (Vincent et al., 2003: 7).

In the process of this study, 289 sports visuals out of the 2,394 total visuals from the 336 front pages (editions) of eight selected newspapers of Chandigarh editions were examined. Based on my study, the statistical data percentage wise is defined in tables for each newspaper. The tables have been elaborated and explained.

**Table 1**

*Total women and men sports visuals for 2011*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspapers</th>
<th>Visuals</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Joint visuals (Men and Women)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ajit</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>(N=9)</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>(N=5) 36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.Bhaskar</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>(N=25)</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>(N=2) 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(N=12) 31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.Tribune</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>(N=13)</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>(N=1) 6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(N=4) 22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.Exp</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>(N=42)</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>(N=4) 7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(N=11) 19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.Kesri</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>(N=46)</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>(N=7) 12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(N=4) 7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.Tribune</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>(N=10)</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Times of</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>(N=49)</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>(N=6) 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As per the table number 1, male sports visuals were maximum used on the front page, 74 percent visuals were devoted to male compared to 7 percent for female players in the selected newspapers. Whereas 19 percent joint (male and female) visuals were used on the front pages. Punjabi Tribune used all the male sports visuals in the study time. The Times of India published maximum sports visuals on the front page, but they have published only 8 percent female sports visuals as compared to 82 percent male visuals. Maximum female visuals 12 percent were published by the Punjab Kesri all other newspapers used less than 8 percent female sports visuals on the front page. Maximum joint (male and female) visuals 38 percent were used by the The Tribune, followed by the Ajit, Dainik Bhaskar and Dainik Tribune.

**Table 2**

Total Space (area) for the women and men sports visuals in 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Area of visuals</th>
<th>Area of Men visuals</th>
<th>Area of Women visuals</th>
<th>Area of Men and Women visuals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ajit</td>
<td>(N=14) 628 sq cm</td>
<td>526 sq cm 84%</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>102 sq cm 16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dainik Bhaskar</td>
<td>(N=39) 3615 sq cm</td>
<td>2867 sq cm 79%</td>
<td>8 sq cm 0.5%</td>
<td>740 sq cm 20.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dainik Tribune</td>
<td>(N=18) 1288 sq cm</td>
<td>777 sq cm 60%</td>
<td>130 sq cm 10%</td>
<td>381 sq cm 30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Express</td>
<td>(N=57) 4553 sq cm</td>
<td>3806 sq cm 84%</td>
<td>125 sq cm 3%</td>
<td>622 sq cm 13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab Kesri</td>
<td>(N=57) 3576 sq cm</td>
<td>2684 sq cm 75%</td>
<td>183 sq cm 5%</td>
<td>709 sq cm 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjabi Tribune</td>
<td>(N=10) 686 sq cm</td>
<td>686 sq cm 100%</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Times of India</td>
<td>(N=60) 2778 sq cm</td>
<td>2379 sq cm 86%</td>
<td>61 sq cm 2%</td>
<td>338 sq cm 12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Tribune</td>
<td>(N=34) 2562 sq cm</td>
<td>1760 sq cm 69%</td>
<td>149 sq cm 6%</td>
<td>653 sq cm 25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Table number 2 indicated that majority area of sports visuals occupied by the male players in all the newspapers. *The Times of India* published maximum photos (n=60) of sports visuals and male players despite that the space given to the visuals (2778 sq cm) was very less as compare to other newspapers. *Dainik Bhaskar* published only 39 sports visuals but the space was much higher than *The Times of India* (3615 sq cm). *The Indian Express* has devoted maximum space to sports visuals as compare to other selected newspapers (4553 sq cm), they have also given maximum space to male players (3806 sq cm) than female players (125 sq cm) and joint visuals of male and female players (622 sq cm). *Dainik Tribune* was the only newspaper who gave the 10 percent space to female players. *Punjabi Tribune* and *Ajit* newspaper didn't publish female players photos.

### Table 3

**Women and men sports visuals with story and without story in 2011**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Total Visuals</th>
<th>Men Visuals</th>
<th>Women visuals</th>
<th>Men and Women visuals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>With Story</td>
<td>Without Story</td>
<td>With Story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ajit</td>
<td>14 (N=9)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>(N=5) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dainik Bhaskar</td>
<td>39 (N=15)</td>
<td>(N=10) 60%</td>
<td>(N=1) 50%</td>
<td>(N=3) 25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dainik Tribune</td>
<td>18 (N=11)</td>
<td>(N=2) 15%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>(N=4) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Express</td>
<td>57 (N=15)</td>
<td>(N=27) 64%</td>
<td>(N=1) 100%</td>
<td>(N=4) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab Kesri</td>
<td>57 (N=26)</td>
<td>(N=20) 43%</td>
<td>(N=2) 29%</td>
<td>(N=5) 71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjabi Tribune</td>
<td>10 (N=7)</td>
<td>(N=3) 30%</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Times of India</td>
<td>60 (N=16)</td>
<td>(N=33) 67%</td>
<td>(N=1) 20%</td>
<td>(N=5) 83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Tribune</td>
<td>34 (N=19)</td>
<td>(N=1) 5%</td>
<td>(N=1) 100%</td>
<td>(N=12) 92%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table number 3 revealed that maximum female sports visuals were used without the stories, whereas most of the male visuals were used with the stories. Ajit used all the male players visuals with the stories, followed by The Tribune (95 percent), Dainik Tribune (85 percent), Punjabi Tribune (70 percent). The Times of India used maximum male players visuals (67 percent) without the stories, followed by The Indian Express (64 percent) on the front page. The Tribune and The Indian Express used all the female players visuals with the stories. Whereas Dainik Tribune used 100 percent female players visuals without the stories, followed by The Times of India (80 percent) and Punjab Kesri (71 percent). Punjab Kesri and Ajit newspaper have used all the joint visuals with the stories.

Table 4

Women and men sports visuals with caption and without caption in 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newspaper</th>
<th>Total Visuals</th>
<th>Men Visuals</th>
<th>Women visuals</th>
<th>Men and Women visuals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>With Caption</td>
<td>Without Caption</td>
<td>With Caption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ajit</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>(N=6) 67%</td>
<td>(N=3) 33%</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dainik Bhaskar</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>(N=6) 24%</td>
<td>(N=19) 76%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dainik Tribune</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>(N=6) 46%</td>
<td>(N=7) 54%</td>
<td>(N=1) 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian Express</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>(N=26) 62%</td>
<td>(N=16) 38%</td>
<td>(N=2) 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab Kesri</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>(N=5) 11%</td>
<td>(N=41) 89%</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjabi Tribune</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>(N=8) 80%</td>
<td>(N=2) 20%</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Times of India</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>(N=13)</td>
<td>(N=36)</td>
<td>(N=1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table number 4 shows that Maximum female sports visuals were used without the caption, whereas 50 percent newspapers used male visuals with and without caption. *Punjab Kesri* used maximum (89 percent) male players visuals without the caption, followed by Dainik Bhaskar (76 percent), *The Times of India* (73 percent) and *Dainik Tribune* (54 percent). *The Tribune* used maximum (85 percent) visuals with the caption. *Dainik Bhaskar* and *Punjab Kesri* used all the female sports visuals without the caption, while Dainik Tribune and The Tribune used all the female players visuals with the caption. Majority of the joint visuals (male and female) were used with the caption.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Indian daily newspapers are carrying rare pictures of the sports event from around the world. The results of the data analysis help to explain the state of sports visuals on the front page of Indian newspapers, particularly gender-based portrayal of sports persons. The first research question for this study was whether front page of Indian newspapers use significantly more visuals males players than of females. The study shows the majority of images feature males as the prominent subjects, with only 7% of visuals featuring a female player as the primary subject. These finding strengthen the previous studies, point that newspapers are not focusing on the female players. Government should provide equal funding to men and women players. So that female player can also perform better around the world level competitions.
The second research question was the space allocation to male and female visuals by all the papers. Again the results were in favor of male visuals. *The Times of India* published maximum photos (n=60) of sports visuals and male players despite that the space given to the visuals very less (2778 sq cm) as compare to other newspapers, mainly *Dainik Bhaskar* published only 39 sports visuals but the space was much higher than *The Times of India* (3615 sq cm). *Dainik Tribune* was the only newspaper who gave the 10 percent space to female players. *Punjabi Tribune* and *Ajit* newspaper didn't publish female players photos.

The third research question for this study asked whether male and female visuals were used with caption. Photo caption is a short explanation of a published image. Photo caption is most readable news content after the headline of a newspaper. Therefore caption is an important content to explain the visuals more accurately to a reader. It can be above the picture, or below the picture. The study revealed that maximum female sports visuals were used without the caption. Within the newspapers *Punjab Kesri* used maximum (89 percent) male players visuals without the caption. *The Tribune* used maximum (85 percent) visuals with the caption. *Dainik Bhaskar* and *Punjab Kesri* used all the female sports visuals without the caption. Majority of the joint visuals (male and female) were used with the caption. We should always use caption with the photos for better explanation of the visuals.

The fourth research question for this study was asked whether male and female visuals were used with stories. It is proved that stories with the visuals are more noticed by the readers, we should always use stories and article with visuals. Despite that in this study we have found that maximum female
sports visuals were used without the stories. Whereas most of the male visuals were used with the stories. *Punjab Kesri* and *Ajit* newspaper have used all the joint visuals with the stories.

**CONCLUSION**

In my personnel experience, being a media person. We always publish the quality news, without thinking the gender. We always use Indian female players who excel in the respective fields (badminton, tennis, shooting, etc). Cricket is one of the most popular game among all the Indians after the hockey. It's played round the year, from last few years Indian men cricket team is performing better, whereas Indian women cricket team is not performing good. In the Indian newspapers most of them giving good space to male cricket, because of their performance and cricket is the most readable content among the sports readers.

The major limitation of this study is that its results can only be generalized to the front page sports visuals of selected newspapers. While the 8 newspapers examined in this study were the most popular newspapers of the North India as per Audit Bureau of Circulations (India).

Another possible limitation of the study is the time period during which it was conducted. During this period cricket world cup was underway and India was performing extremely good after so many years and finally India won the world cup in this study period, which feature male players. It is possible that a similar content analysis of sports visuals during a different time of year could have an impact on both the number of images of male and females.
Future studies should explore, which game is getting maximum coverage in Indian print media.
Furthermore, audience research should be conducted on readers, what is the favorite sports of
readers and their liking and disliking of females sports visuals.

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