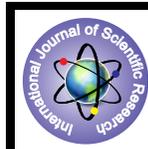


Copenhagen Climate Change Summit, 2009: A Content Analysis of Two National English Dailies of India



Journalism

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ABSTRACT

The Copenhagen Climate Change Summit, 2009 held in Denmark has been considered one of the crucial events in bringing fruitful decisions on the emission of greenhouse gases. The world media covered the event throughout and have helped portray the significance of the event in the life of a common person. This research tends to calculate the difference two Indian print media houses provided in covering the issue and in turn analyzes role played by them in making the global issue a concern for the masses along with their way of presentation of the whole event. The research helps understand the importance of environmental journalism. The findings support the growing trend of such journalistic attitude but the two newspapers vary greatly in their way of highlighting the event.

1. Introduction

The 15th United Nations Climate Change Conference 2009, also known as Copenhagen Climate Change Summit was held at the Bella Center in Copenhagen, Denmark. The conference, organized for a period of twelve days (December 7, 2009 to December 18, 2009), focused to reach an agreement on a Kyoto Protocol successor that will ensure global reductions in greenhouse gas emissions beyond 2012. The conference tried to find suitable means to curb global warming along with ways to reduce the greenhouse gas (GHG). All countries that are member of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), participated the event increasing the tally of overall delegates to many thousands. The Kyoto Protocol, ratified by nearly 189 countries along with the European Union, binds industrialized countries to reduce their emissions by 5.2 % by 2012 compared with 1990 levels. Global greenhouse gas emissions are estimated to have increased by 22% between 1990 and 2005 (IEA, 2009). The IPCC synthesized all the available evidence and concluded that global average mean temperatures have increased by 0.74°C (+/- 0.18°C) over the past 100 years (IPCC, 2007) and it was very likely that this was due to the emissions of greenhouse gases. In March 2009, the International Alliance of Research Universities (2009) concluded that greenhouse gas emissions had changed near the upper boundary of the IPCC range of projections. The UN Environment Programme (UNEP, 2009) further supported the increase in emission.

The summit received wide media coverage. Around 56 newspapers from 45 countries around the globe took an unprecedented step of speaking with one voice through a common editorial marking the beginning of the Copenhagen Summit (The Hindu, December 7, 2009). For the first time developing countries especially India, China and Brazil have sent journalists in force to cover the event. Thus there arises a necessity to study the importance provided by various media houses on the event which has been considered crucial in deciding the fate of our environment.

2. Objective

- To find the space devoted to news related to the summit in both the newspapers.
- To measure the editorial space given to the summit.
- To know the space allocated to summit photographs.
- To make a qualitative assessment of few editorials.

3. A look back

The issue 'Climate change' is not a new one and many research has been carried out throughout the globe taking it as the subject of study. Titled 'The perception of and adaptation to climate change in Africa' (Maddison, 2007) the researcher talks about the impact of climate change both positive and negative on the people of Africa specially the rural ones. In another paper Maddison, Manley & Kurukulasuriya (2007) projects African agriculture is vulnerable to climate change. The findings reveal the effect of climate change is not the same throughout. In the paper 'The Carbon Bomb: Climate Change and the fate of the North-

ern Boreal Forests' (Jardine, 1994), the researcher stresses the change in climate is about to decline the boreal forests. In the paper 'Aviation and Climate Change' (Smith & Bolton, 2008) the researchers studied the effect of gases released by aeroplanes in UK. The research finds that aircraft emits several sorts of gases which have a direct effect on the atmosphere and may lead to warming of earth's surface. In the paper 'Climate Change and Forced Migration' (Piguet, 2008) the researcher showcases climate change as an agent for human migration. Citing example over the period since Ice Age till recent times, the research as a whole takes a step in determining the future context of forced migration pattern. In the paper 'Media Coverage of Climate Change: Current Trends, Strengths and Weaknesses' (Boykiff & Roberts, 2007) the researchers try to identify the role played by media to aware masses about climate change. The research analyses that the English language newspapers of Western Europe and North America give higher coverage to climate change than that of Asia, Australia, South Africa, Middle East and Eastern Europe newspapers.

4. Methodology

The researcher has adopted quantitative content analysis method to find the extent of coverage (col.cm) of the Copenhagen Climate Change Summit, 2009. The qualitative part focuses on the depiction of the event from few editorials. By purposive sampling two English dailies, The Hindu and The Telegraph, are selected for the period December 2, 2009 to December 23, 2009. Following questions are sought to be analyzed-

- i) How much coverage is given to Copenhagen Summit by the two newspapers?
- ii) What is the amount of coverage as far as editorial is concerned?
- iii) What is the percentage of print space given as far as photograph of the event is concerned?
- iv) What orientation and assessment the select newspapers gave towards the event on the basis of a qualitative content analysis of the editorials on the event?

5. Findings

The Hindu

Total print space (TPS) for the 22 days (excluding editorial) = 157387.4 col.cms

Total print space for news = 112507.9 col.cms

Total print space for photographs = 16327.3 col.cms

Total print space for Copenhagen Climate Summit = 2120.4 col. cms (1.34% of TPS)

Out of 2120.4 col.cms of space given to Copenhagen Climate Summit, the print space devoted to photographs = 566.6 col. cms (0.36% of TPS)

Editorial

Total print space for 22 days (including op-ed) = 15655.2 col. cms

Total print space for photograph = 380.3 col.cms

Total print space for cartoons = 688.6 col.cms

Total print space for letters-to-the editor = 1734.5 col.cms

Total print space for Copenhagen Climate Summit = 1026.5 col.cms (6.55 % of editorial space)

Out of 1026.5 col.cms of space given to Copenhagen Climate Summit, the print space devoted to photographs = 17.6 col.cms (0.11% of editorial space)

The Telegraph

Total print space (TPS) for the 22 days (excluding editorial) = 120369.4 col.cms

Total print space for news = 80176.6 col.cms

Total print space for photographs = 13937.7 col.cms

Total print space for Copenhagen Climate Summit = 2844.4 col.cms (2.36% of TPS)

Out of 2844.4 col.cms of space given to Copenhagen Climate Summit, the print space devoted to photographs = 830.3 col.cms (0.68% of TPS)

Editorial

Total print space for 22 days = 8999.2 col.cms

Total print space for photographs = 630.3 col.cms

Total print space for letters-to-the editor = 1479.8 col.cms

Total print space for Copenhagen climate Summit = 668.2 col.cms (7.42% of editorial space)

Out of 668.2 col.cms of space given to Copenhagen Climate Summit, the print space devoted to photographs = 55.1 col.cms (0.61% of editorial space)

Front page

In The Hindu the print space allocated to the event in the front page is 799.5 col.cms while that of The Telegraph is found to be 768.5 col.cms.

Story

The number of stories (including photographs) focusing on Copenhagen Climate Summit in The Hindu is 28 while in case of The Telegraph it is 29.

Editorial analysis

Both the newspapers gave quite different coverage in its editorial to the Copenhagen Climate Change Summit. The editorial of both the papers in December 8, 2009, clearly shows the difference. The Hindu gave a much optimistic outcome for the summit stressing on the economy and investment on climate change as a fruitful way to deal the cut in emission. The Telegraph, on the other hand, cited the reasons for the summit to be a failure. The editorial in The Hindu in December 15, 2009 brought forward the facts, which were almost anticipated, in editorial of The Telegraph. In another editorial in The Hindu, just after the end of the Summit, it carried the article, which chronologically unfolded what happened inside Bella Center and the response that developed among the less developed nations. The Telegraph though carried quite a similar thing in the editorial in December 21, 2009, but

stressed more on the role of India and China in the event apart from the differences of opinion among the various countries. The Hindu followed quite simple style of writing with simple words, easy to understand. The Telegraph on the other hand used hard-hitting words to make the content harsh in outcome.

6. Conclusion

The coverage on the Copenhagen Climate Change Summit, 2009 is quite interesting. The Hindu covered the event for a longer duration than The Telegraph as far as the study period is concerned. Though The Hindu has given longer coverage to the event, it is The Telegraph that provided maximum print space to the event. The stories in The Telegraph are mostly hard hitting in nature. Especially the stories that this newspaper contained in the fourth page are all direct reactions of people or protest to save the world or direct quote of delegates speaking inside the Bella Center from across the globe. While in case of The Hindu, most of the stories are found to be feature type and mention may be made of the higher editorial content about the summit. As far as photograph is concerned, the type of pictures that The Telegraph has carried is mostly in a way making fun of the event. The Hindu on the other hand maintained seriousness in its pictorial representation of the event.

The Copenhagen Summit acted as the meeting point for all the members of UNWCCC to find a means to cut the emission of carbon dioxide. The media across the globe has given a huge coverage to the event. The various debates that flickered among the developed and developing countries have been highlighted either through hard stories or through feature articles in the editorials. Even the photographs played a huge role to bring in focus the turmoil that these countries are facing in terms of global emission.

The newspapers highlighted the role India played in the Summit. India has been the fifth country in the world emitting the highest amount of carbon (IEA, 2009). The newspapers stressed on various imbalances that are present on the Copenhagen Accord especially The Hindu which gave a sequential report on the happenings of the Summit in its editorial. Both the newspapers brought forward the circumstances a developed and a developing country faced in coming to any legally binding solutions to cut carbon emissions. Further the newspapers also highlighted the drawbacks in some points of the Copenhagen Accord.

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