

Available online at <http://www.ijims.com>

ISSN: 2348 – 0343

Coverage of Sports in the Mainstream Print Media: Study of Trends with Special Reference to Cricket

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Abstract

Owing to the commercialization induced shifts in news priority, sports in general and cricket in particular has gained more media attention, eventually leading to a consistent rise in media coverage of sports. Primarily for the huge money involved, and attempts for its branding, cricket has gained more attention compared to other sports in India. The growing public interest in cricket has made it a vital subject of media discourse. The readership of sports news is also on the rise indicating that sports reports continue to be interesting to the readers. Against this backdrop this study attempts to explore the changing trends in the reporting of sports, cricket in particular in the Indian mainstream print media. Through an analysis of the media content this study discusses the changing nature of sports reporting in the Indian media which makes sports reports continuously interesting.

Keywords: Coverage of Sports , Print Media , Trends , Cricket

Introduction

The ongoing phenomenon of media morphosis continues to make newspaper reading a pleasant experience and a rewarding pursuit for Indians despite the growing number of online news platforms. The demographic data in India inspires one to believe that the Indian print media is here to stay and continue to play a very important role in keeping the people informed, educated, and entertained, at least in the near future. Newspaper reading being a rewarding pursuit to its citizens is what a free media state desires to protect and promote. Alongside the morphosis, the media has also got commercialized. Profit prioritization has shifted emphasis to market driven media content eventually giving birth to concepts like sensationalist and celebrity-driven journalism. The developments have engaged the public in a debate about standards and ethics of journalism. In this new scheme of things portrayal of cricket as a brand and projection of cricketers as celebrities induce researchers to ask flurry of questions. Is the outgrown celebrity status of cricketers in India a deliberate creation of media? Does the out of skin coverage given to cricket hamper the status of other games? Do the media misuse its freedom in promoting Cricket over other games, ostensibly, to ripe financial gains through advertising and sponsorships? Is the Indian media's scheme of news priority in harmony with our desires of a sports power in the making?

These are the pertinent questions an aspiring sports power must not ignore to answer. The answers to these questions will give insights into our state of preparedness and the media's role.

It is widely believed that the Indian public's craziness for cricket is more or less the media's own making. Some recent Bollywood films featuring sports such as BhaagMilkhaBhaag , Chak De India, Jo JeetaWohiSikandar, but to name a few, supports this story. The huge audience response to these films making them super hit at the box office

conveys volumes about the public's love for these games. With proper media attention these sports can be huge brands.

At a time when India aspires to be a world leader, it cannot afford to ignore sports, one of the important indicators of overall prosperity and healthy citizenship. But, the attitude of media to get profit out of passion of cricket seems to break the moral of other players especially the budding talents involved in sports other than cricket. The name and fame a cricketer gets in the country, diverts the attention of youngsters from their talent as they want to become a Sachin Tendulkar or a Mahendra Singh Dhoni only. With this psyche the country cannot become a true world leader. India has never even qualified for the World cup of football since 1950 despite the game being widely appreciated world over. Indian hockey had a legacy but in recent times it has doomed. Till today we don't have a single medal in any track and field event in Olympics. Every young talent in India wants to become a cricketer because of the name and fame imbibed in it by the media. Every sportsman representing the country in any sporting event is a hero of the nation and deserves appreciation by the public, government and the media as well.

Understanding how media reports sports news especially cricket vis-à-vis other games will be a step forward in understanding the media's scheme of news priority. The fact and figures provided by the study will may be a building block in framing our future policies. Against this backdrop, this study attempts to find out the trends in the media reporting of sports through content analysis of selected mainstream newspapers.

Objectives of the Study

The central objective of the study is to find out the trends in the coverage of sports in the mainstream print media through an analysis of the contents of the sample newspapers. From this broad objective, the following specific objectives flow:

- To analyse the trends in the coverage of different sports in the mainstream print media;
- To find out the relative coverage of cricket vis-a-vis other sports, such as Hockey and Athletics;
- To examine whether the coverage of other sports have kept pace with that of Cricket;
- To explore the issues that drives the media coverage of Cricket and other sports.

Hypotheses

H₁- Media coverage of sports continues to increase during the last three decades

H₂- The mainstream print media has been giving more coverage to Cricket compared to Hockey and Athletics.

H₃- Newspapers carry more soft news on sports and sports persons than hard news stories on sporting events in recent times.

Research Design and Methods

This study primarily builds on the content analysis of selected mainstream English dailies to track down the trends in coverage of sports in Indian main stream print media. A quantitative content analysis was conducted to identify the quantum and tone of coverage of sports.

To represent the mainstream print media for the present study, three national level English dailies i.e. the Times of India, the Statesman and the Indian Express have been chosen. The selection of the three newspapers was based on the arguments that these newspapers represent the widely circulated, popular newspapers, catering to different geographic regions and ideological interests. The papers also appeal to divergent intellectual classes. The study was

conducted from the year 1978 to 2011 to properly understand the trends in the mainstream print media across different decades.

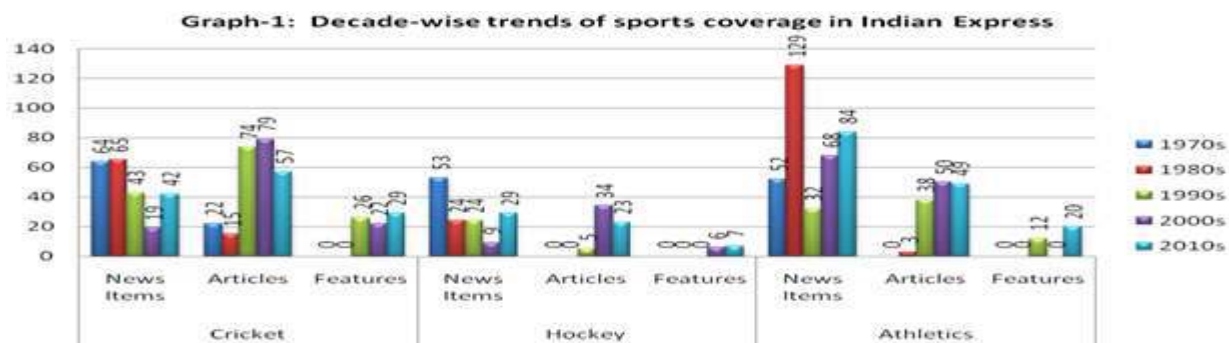
The study was intended to know the trends in media coverage of sports, hence a purposive sampling was done. The dominant sports categories in India being Cricket, Hockey, and Athletics, the tournament periods of these sports viz. the Cricket World Cup, The Hockey World Cup and the Asiads have been included in the study. Issues of the selected newspapers for two weeks each, during and two months before, of the above said tournaments from 1978 to 2011 have been included as sample for the study. A total of 15 events, with an estimate of 1350 copies were analyzed. All the news related to selected sports was taken into account including the front page, editorial page and the sports page.

Theorizing sports, media and society linkages

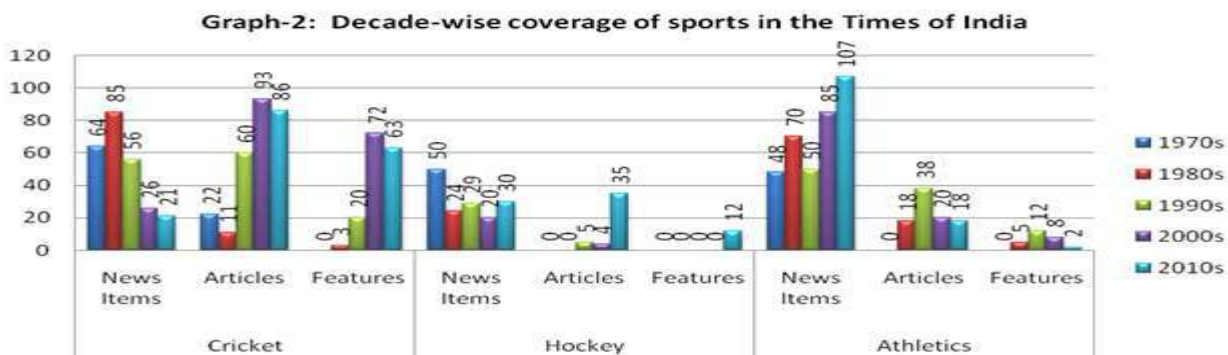
As depicted in the cultivation analysis, people's sense of reality of the world including sports is shaped by their repeated exposure to the media content. Despite the audiences' exposure and responses to media content being subjected to their individual subjective judgments (DeFleur,) they are sometimes exposed to contents designed by the media as a part of fulfilling its commercial agenda. By incorporating cricket in its agenda the media attempt to influence the audience perception about the importance of cricket. This agenda setting function of the media sometimes seeks to fulfill the interests of the dominant class and the media's own commercial interest. As explained in the uses and gratifications theory, the audiences most often make use of cricket and other sports news to gratify their own need for entertainment and fun besides using it as a tool for social interaction with others in the society. It provides relaxation or escape from daily problems and the audiences get their emotions released through vicarious participation in the roles being displayed in the media scene. By virtue of not having interest in sports, many members of the audience never read cricket and sports news thereby forming a part of the spiral of silence and in no way harm the growing media coverage of sports. In the present age of media globalization and corporatization, theorists in cultural studies maintain that the media represents ideologies of the dominant class in a society. Because media are controlled by corporations, the information presented to the public is necessarily influenced and framed with profit in mind. Rich sports federations like the BCCI, the cultural studies theorists believe, influence the framing of the media content with profit in mind. These forces play some role in the interpretation of culture, especially in the promotion of a sports culture.

Results and Discussions

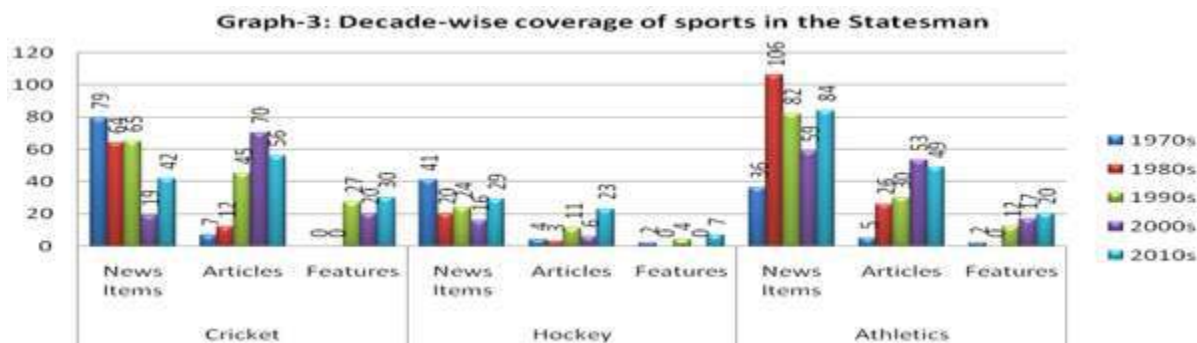
The sports contents of the sample newspapers were quantified in terms of the number of items and the space covered in square centimeters. The contents so quantified have been classified according to different parameters and presented in bar charts and tables in the sections that follow. Graphs- 1, 2 and 3 show decade-wise growth of media coverage of sports in three sample news papers.



Graph 1, evinces that Athletics and Cricket have received better coverage compared to Hockey in the Indian Express, despite Hockey being India’s popular game. The number of ‘hard news’ stories related to cricket registered a decline against a reasonable increase in its articles and features. But, in case of athletics, number of ‘hard news’ continued to be much higher despite heavy fluctuation and articles continued to register a marginal growth. The reason for this phenomenon is media has to cover many events while covering any tournament related to game of athletics. There are track and field events like running, long jump and discuss throw, pool events like individual swimming relay swimming, synchronized diving and water polo, and ring events like wrestling and boxing, media covers all the events so the hard news count related to athletics is bound to be more than any other tournament. A noteworthy feature of the media coverage is that soft news as proportion of the overall sports coverage has continuously increased over the decades. Further, it reveals that cricket got more ‘soft news’ coverage compared to other games especially post 1990s, this is, perhaps an indicator to the growing public involvement in the game of cricket. It also speaks volumes about the changing trends in sports journalism in terms of its shift towards soft content and gossip replacing the hard news stories.



Bar graph-2, representing the decade-wise sports coverage in the Times of India, reveals that Athletics and Cricket have received better coverage compared to Hockey. A striking feature of the media coverage is that in case of cricket, the number of news items continued to decline over the decades where as articles and features as proportion of the overall sports coverage increased over the decades. In case of athletics, however, ‘hard news’ items continued to increase over the decades due to dedication of media to inform about all the events being held simultaneously in the athletics tournament such as running, swimming, jumping and so on ; articles and features did not show unexpected variation. Additionally, it reveals that cricket got more ‘soft news’ coverage compared to other games especially post 1990s, this is, perhaps an indicator to the growing popularity and public involvement in the game of cricket. It also indicates about the changing trends in sports journalism in terms of its shift towards soft content and gossip replacing the hard news stories.



It is manifest from the graph that the Statesman has paid more attention to the coverage of Athletics and Cricket compared to Hockey. A cursory glance at the graph reveals that the proportion of soft news in the overall coverage of sports has been rising throughout the past decades. Further, it reveals that cricket got more ‘soft news’ coverage compared to other games especially post 1990s, this is, perhaps an indicator to the growing public association with the game of cricket. It also speaks volumes about the changing trends in sports journalism in terms of its shift towards soft content and gossip replacing the hard news stories. We can also see the increasing number of hard news dedicated to athletics because of large number of events has to be covered by media in a single tournament related to athletics.

The total sports coverage in all the sample newspapers spreading over four decades both during the tournaments and off-tournaments periods are presented below in tables 1 and 2, which gives a holistic view of the print media coverage of sports in India.

On-Tournament sports coverage in the sample newspapers

Event/year	The Times of India			The Indian Express			The Statesman		
	Cricket	Hockey	Athletics	Cricket	Hockey	Athletics	Cricket	Hockey	Athletics
W C H '78	4712 (39)	5630 (50)	1490 (10)	3584 (40)	4713 (53)	2161 (15)	5840 (38)	6546 (47)	820 (06)
Asiads '78	4192 (38)	2910 (22)	4945 (48)	2365 (20)	2006 (17)	6023 (52)	6020 (56)	3815 (27)	3870 (44)
W C C '79	5844 (87)	1882 (24)	275 (04)	5794 (87)	1917 (24)	272 (04)	5894 (87)	1847 (24)	278 (04)
W C H '82	3734 (35)	3087 (24)	425 (06)	3529 (38)	2174 (25)	280 (06)	3940 (32)	4000 (23)	570 (05)
Asiads '82	2035 (27)	6915 (32)	32016 (95)	2856 (27)	14544 (75)	43632 (140)	12096 (38)	8260 (21)	64646 (139)
W C C '83	10783 (99)	540 (11)	280 (05)	8518 (80)	972 (11)	460 (07)	8319 (78)	992 (13)	460 (07)
W C H '94	11267	9988	818	10248	9616	386	12286	10360	1250

	(63)	(34)	(06)	(50)	(29)	(03)	(76)	(39)	(10)
Asiads '94	7644 (44)	6772 (25)	23982 (105)	7715 (27)	6570 (29)	18712 (85)	7573 (57)	6975 (22)	29252 (124)
W C C '92	29687 (142)	2125 (20)	1450 (08)	36525 (143)	2335 (18)	716 (07)	36455 (140)	2322 (16)	745 (06)
W C H '02	14376 (97)	4264 (24)	244 (04)	13820 (58)	8528 (49)	380 (05)	15292 (68)	4901 (22)	411 (4)
Asiads '02	11202 (89)	1626 (20)	58365 (115)	13481 (53)	1414 (10)	29487 (118)	22529 (87)	599 (12)	29850 (134)
W C C '03	40950 (197)	40 (02)	60 (02)	37207 (119)	368 (03)	584 (06)	45251 (116)	695 (03)	4093 (10)
W C H '10	13698 (79)	17274 (80)	1136 (09)	12588 (70)	16292 (60)	436 (04)	10425 (70)	9498 (60)	2934 (04)
Asiads '10	13080 (82)	2740 (15)	32722 (127)	12673 (73)	2769 (18)	31119 (153)	12278 (73)	4170 (18)	38378 (153)
W C C '11	44640 (170)	104 (02)	1220 (18)	47156 (132)	210 (02)	446 (06)	48803 (132)	309 (02)	4556 (06)
Data in parenthesis represents no. of stories									

Off-tournament sports coverage in the sample newspapers

Table-2: Trends in off-Tournament Sports coverage in the sample newspapers									
(cm²/No of Items)									
Event/year	The Times of India			The Indian Express			The Statesman		
	Cricket	Hockey	Athletics	Cricket	Hockey	Athletics	Cricket	Hockey	Athletics
W C H '78	4476 (55)	686 (08)	1083 (11)	4802 (64)	638 (10)	1246 (16)	4150 (46)	735 (07)	920 (07)
Asiads '78	4706 (52)	2030 (28)	2168 (16)	4412 (56)	1586 (34)	1672 (18)	5000 (49)	2475 (21)	2665 (18)
W C C '79	8269 (53)	623 (15)	90 (05)	8219 (52)	620 (14)	85 (03)	8320 (54)	626 (16)	95 (03)
W C H '82	4287 (45)	1932 (16)	2389 (22)	5670 (64)	574 (10)	3874 (38)	2905 (26)	3290 (22)	905 (06)
Asiads '82	7355 (88)	1230 (10)	815 (08)	5572 (59)	589 (11)	779 (9)	6571 (74)	485 (12)	985 (10)
W C C '83	5187 (46)	2135 (25)	999 (20)	5923 (49)	1385 (19)	478 (06)	5842 (58)	1473 (23)	429 (06)
W C H '94	14760	1412	1988	14910	1407	1982	14610	1417	1994

	(68)	(08)	(7)	(70)	(08)	(10)	(67)	(09)	(10)
Asiads '94	18451 (90)	1456 (07)	3047 (06)	18651 (96)	1566 (09)	3002 (10)	18251 (94)	1346 (07)	3092 (12)
W C C '92	4355 (33)	1090 (10)	2215 (21)	4654 (29)	1781 (11)	2304 (14)	5654 (39)	1699 (11)	2554 (16)
W C H '02	14259 (94)	573 (05)	1600 (16)	8920 (40)	132 (02)	Nil	6818 (39)	99 (01)	Nil
Asiads '02	20275 (136)	857 (08)	215 (03)	13482 (56)	1379 (06)	2734 (15)	14482 (66)	1679 (07)	2734 (15)
W C C '03	9978 (86)	373 (09)	3959 (24)	6083 (68)	2550 (10)	717 (03)	7645 (56)	1158 (09)	2780 (24)
W C H '10	12372 (83)	Nil	865 (10)	12479 (86)	Nil	805 (08)	8031 (73)	232 (05)	1158 (07)
Asiads '10	30874 (147)	200 (2)	514 (08)	30564 (130)	130 (1)	401 (05)	21853 (149)	77 (04)	386 (07)
W C C '11	17989 (72)	32 (01)	7040 (30)	21698 (81)	328 (04)	1748 (05)	27490 (78)	78 (02)	9961 (27)
Data in parenthesis represents no. of stories									

Sports coverage in the Indian Express

During the decades of 1970s and 1980s, sports reporting in Indian express leaning towards the hard news pattern of reporting. Balanced hard news reports just providing information about the game was the dominant trend. For example, during the cricket world cup of 1979, out of the total 87 stories published, 64 were hard news reports and 22 were articles about different aspects of the tournament including 14 stories on the life of cricketers, 3 on events of world cup and 2 post-match discussions. There was just one editorial published in that course of time. Of the 10 articles and 6 features published during the post match coverage in the newspaper, bulk of reporting was hard news. The coverage of Hockey reveals that not even a single article or feature could find place in the 53 news stories published during the world cup hockey in 1978.

The reports of athletics in 1982 Asiads were represented variety as 3 articles, 3 editorials and 5 letters to the editor were published along with 129 hard news stories which include 8 post match dissections and 2 articles on athletes. Bulks of the reports were information about the event but here also the change can be sniffed. However, the post tournaments coverage reveals that the athletics news were very less in numbers, of the total of 9 news stories there were only 5 articles.

In the decades of 1990s the pattern of reporting of cricket further shifted towards publishing more and more reports related to cricketers and stories off the field. Covering the world cup cricket the Indian Express published 74 articles and 26 features. Stories related to cricket players lead the list with 48 followed by 28 post match discussions. Coverage of athletics slightly changed, more articles and features were published during the Asiads of 1994. Very low coverage was given to athletics news during the post tournaments phase.

The dawn of 2000s, brought with it the ITC boom and so also camera technique, competition in the market increased and so the style of reporting shifted from simple fact based reporting to a more enticing and beckoning style of features and articles. While covering the cricket world cup of 2003 only 19 of the total 129 stories were straight hardcore reporting, there were 79 articles and 22 features published in which 43 stories were related to cricket players, 22 related to the event, 37 stories discussed the pre/post match scenario. With 42 articles and 18 feature stories about cricket in post tournament coverage, the style of reporting is apparent in the sample news papers. While covering the hockey world cup of 2002 the Indian Express shifted its priority towards articles and features, of 49 stories it reported 34 were articles and 6 were features. In post tournament coverage of hockey the space given to the game was reasonably low. Only 2 articles about hockey were published during that period of study.

News of athletics also drifted towards articles and features in this decade, out of total 118 stories published on 2002 Asiads, 68 were articles, 50 were features and 10 were hard news stories. Among the features and articles 18 were pre/post match discussions, 16 stories were about the event and 6 were related to athletes. The news about athletics was also low in numbers in post tournament news papers of the same year. Only 15 stories in total were published in which 9 were hard news and 6 were articles about athletics.

In recent years the trends in covering of cricket has remained the same, 57 articles and 29 features were published out of total 132 stories in the 2011 cricket world cup. The articles and features mostly covered reports about cricketers (32), 25 pre and post match discussions and 20 on the event. Analysis of the post-tournament newspapers coverage shows that cricket stories were large in numbers, with 47 articles and 6 features out of 86 stories in 2010. The post- cricket world cup in 2012 coverage reported 34 articles and 14 hard news stories.

Sports coverage in the Times of India:

The reporting of cricket in the 1970's and 1980's was mostly objective, information of the event being provided mostly as hard news reports than features and articles. In 1982, during the Asiads 19 out of the 28 stories reported were hard news providing only information about the event. Five articles, three features and one editorial was also published. Even during the world cup triumph of the Indian cricket team in 1983, 85 out of total of 99 were hard news reports covering 9180 cm². Coverage of hockey in the in the Times of India during 1970's and 1980's was similar to that of cricket. It was found that 22 of the 32 stories during the Hockey world cup of 1982 were hard news reports on hockey. Only six articles and four features on the life of hockey players and other soft stories relating to Hockey were covered. Almost the same trend was noticed in post Asiads Hockey coverage in 1982. The pattern on coverage of athletics was no different from Cricket and Hockey. Hard news consisted major chunk of the athletics coverage in the sample news papers. 70 out of the 94 stories were hard news reports, while only 18 articles, 5 feature stories and a single letter to the editor was published. The articles and features were mostly focus on the triumph of the athletes and their lives. The post Asiads coverage of the news papers evinced that focus was more on hard news than features and articles. 4 out of the 8 stories were hard news reports.

1990s witnessed a change in the style of sports specially cricket coverage in the Indian print media. Soft news stories surpassed the number of hard news reports as well as the space covered. Out of a total of 142 stories, 56 were hard news reports and 80 were articles and features. During this phase, features and articles on cricket and cricketers appeared almost regularly in the sports pages of the news paper. The nature of media coverage changed and spicy pre/post- match discussions substantially increased. During the cricket world cup of 1992, there were 25 post match comments, 38 features on the life of players and 20 stories on the event of world cup were published in the

newspaper. During the post- cricket world cup coverage, 12 features on cricket, 4 on hockey and 13 on athletics appeared. There was no major shift in the trends in the coverage of Hockey.

With the advent of ICT and increase in competition in the 2000s and after, the style of reporting cricket drifted from being information rich to entertainment oriented. Hard news stories gave way to articles and features in large numbers. In the year 2003, during the world cup cricket, out of the total 197 stories published there were only 26 hard news reports against 165 articles and features reported. Bulk of features and articles (93) focused on the life of cricketers and their preparation for the game. There were 6 stories related to cricket controversies and 32 pre/post-match discussions. Post- asiads coverage revealed that cricket remained the favorite as bulks of stories were dedicated to the game. With 64 articles and 16 features the zest for covering the game was apparent in the sample news papers.

Coverage of hockey almost maintained the pace of previous decades, with focus on hard news stories compared to articles and features. Coverage of athletics followed the same pattern in which hard news stories were given a preference. During the Asiads of 2002, of the total of 115 stories, 85 were hard news and 28 were features and articles about players and the event of Asiads. Negligible amount of coverage was given to the game post tournament, just 3 out of 3 stories were article and no feature or hard news was published.

Sports coverage in the Statesman:

In the 1970s and 1980s coverage of sports in the Statesman mostly confined to hard news reporting providing information about the matches with hardly any sensational and celebrity drove content. In the period of analysis during the cricket world cup of 1979, there were 79 hard news stories and 7 articles appeared. There were 41 hard news stories, 4 articles and 2 features on hockey mainly focusing on the players (2) and pre/post match discussions (3) during the 1978 hockey world cup which shows that despite hockey being a favorite sport of Indian masses it's reporting was simple and oriented towards providing information about the game only. News on athletics also appeared in a similar pattern as other sports. With only 26 articles out of 141 stories reported coverage of athletics during the 1982 Asiads followed the same trend of focusing more on hardcore news.

The decade of 1990s saw a drastic change in the trend of media coverage which is evident from the fact that 27 features appeared in the sample copies of statesman during the cricket world cup of 1992 there were 45 articles and 65 hard core news stories in the 140 stories reported. Stories featuring the event of the world cup were leading in numbers with 27 stories, features about the cricketers were 21 in number and 18 pre/post match comments were also published. With 26 hard news and 13 articles, cricket stories were the largest in post tournament phase.

With 4 features on hockey during the world cup of 1994, coverage of hockey also started to drift towards entertainment type of reporting. During the Asiads of 1994, the fashion shifted towards soft news, there were 80 hard news reports, 30 articles and 12 features published. The features covered news about athletes (12), news about

event (120), pre/post match discussions (11) and news related to the controversy (3). In post tournament analysis period there were 12 athletics stories of which there were 5 hard news and 7 articles.

The decade of 2000s and after brought noticeable change in the trends of reporting of sports in the print media. The Statesman published 70 articles, 20 features and 19 hard news reports on cricket while covering the Cricket world cup of 2003. Features and articles depicting profile of cricketers topped media coverage with 43 stories, followed by 37 pre/post match discussions, and 22 event news stories. Among others 6 letters to the editor and 01 editorial were also published. There was less emphasis on hard news stories a total of 55 stories were published in post tournament coverage of cricket including 24 were hard news stories, 16 articles and 15 features.

Hockey coverage witnessed no substantial change, a total of 22 stories were published during the world cup hockey in 2002 of which 16 were hard core news stories and 6 were articles. With bulk of its coverage being hard news, coverage of athletics in Statesman was more of a conventional style. Of the total 134 stories reported, 53 were hard news, 17 articles about the events and stories related to sport persons and 1 feature about the event published during the Asiads of 2002. But, during the post tournament analysis of the game, the space allocated was very low, with only 7 hard news stories and 8 articles being published.

During the Asiads of 2010, 84 hard news stories, 49 articles and 20 features were published which shows that the newspaper changed its nature of reporting the athletics event but not to the extent of change in reporting of cricket. But, analysis of the post tournament phase coverage shows that space given to athletics was very low and only 7 stories were found in which 5 were hard news and 2 were articles.

Findings and Conclusion:

Testing of Hypotheses: The first research hypothesis of the study assumes that print media coverage of the selected sports have continued to rise over the period of study. To test this hypothesis three null hypotheses H_{01} (a) H_{01} (b) and H_{01} (c) have been proposed.

H_{01} (a). **There is no significant variation in the news coverage of cricket across different decades.**

Table-3 Descriptives

Area								
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
1970s	12	5366.67	1732.115	500.018	4266.13	6467.20	2365	8320
1980s	16	6068.81	2832.679	708.170	4559.38	7578.24	2035	12096
1990s	14	15826.71	11093.045	2964.741	9421.78	22231.65	4355	36525
2000s	18	17558.33	11714.341	2761.097	11732.93	23383.74	6083	45251
2010s	18	22149.50	13268.429	3127.399	15551.27	28747.73	8031	48803
Total	78	14074.56	11649.269	1319.020	11448.06	16701.07	2035	48803

Table-4 ANOVA

Area					
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3.371E9	4	8.426E8	8.690	.000
Within Groups	7.079E9	73	96969806.527		
Total	1.045E10	77			

The above tables (3 and 4) shows the result of ANOVA test used to ascertain significant variation in the news coverage cricket across different decades. The result shows that the mean value in 2010s is more than that of other decades which shows that coverage of cricket has increased in recent times.

Table-5 Descriptives

Area								
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
1970s	12	2294.17	1857.189	536.124	1114.16	3474.17	626	6546
1980s	16	3094.50	3822.032	955.508	1057.88	5131.12	485	14544
1990s	14	3614.93	3276.049	875.561	1723.39	5506.46	1090	10360
2000s	18	1735.28	2171.233	511.764	655.55	2815.01	40	8528
2010s	16	3402.69	5783.456	1445.864	320.90	6484.47	32	17274
Total	76	2806.96	3684.958	422.694	1964.91	3649.01	32	17274

The value of F is 8.690 and sig = .000 which is less than .05 (at 95% level of significance) which indicates significant variation in the coverage of cricket news across different decades.

Hence hypothesis H_{01} (a) there is **no significant variation in the news coverage of cricket across different decades** stands rejected.

H_{01} (b) **There is no significant variation in the news coverage of hockey across different decades**

Table-6 ANOVA

Area					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	39969047.238	4	9992261.809	.725	.578
Within Groups	9.784E8	71	13780983.403		
Total	1.018E9	75			

The above tables (5 and 6) show the result of ANOVA test used to ascertain significant variation in the news coverage of hockey across different decades.

The result shows that the mean value in 1990s is more than that of other decade which shows that coverage of hockey has decreased in recent times.

Table- 7 Descriptives

Area								
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
1970s	12	1675.58	1793.144	517.636	536.27	2814.89	85	6023
1980s	16	9475.50	19479.396	4869.849	-904.34	19855.34	280	64646
1990s	14	4975.29	8354.483	2232.829	151.55	9799.02	386	29252
2000s	16	8638.31	16395.109	4098.777	-98.02	17374.65	60	58365
2010s	18	7545.83	12543.484	2956.527	1308.11	13783.56	386	38378
Total	76	6781.67	13604.663	1560.562	3672.87	9890.47	60	64646

The value of F is .725 and sig = .578 which is more than .05 (at 95% level of significance), therefore there doesn't exist any variation between hard and soft news of hockey.

Hence hypothesis H_{01} (b) **There is no significant variation in the news coverage of hockey across different decades** stands accepted.

H_{01} (c) **there is no significant variation in the news coverage of athletics across different decades.**

Table-8 ANOVA

Area					
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	5.403E8	4	1.351E8	.719	.582
Within Groups	1.334E10	71	1.879E8		
Total	1.388E10	75			

The above tables (7 and 8) shows the result of ANOVA test used to ascertain significant variation in the news coverage of athletics across different decades.

The result shows that the mean value in 1980s is more that of other decade which shows that coverage of athletics has decreased in recent times.

The value of F is .719 and sig = .582 which is more than .05 (at 95% level of significance) therefore no significant variation exists in the news coverage of athletics across different decades. Hence H_{01} (c), there **is no significant variation in the news coverage of athletics across different decades** stands accepted.

From the results of H_{01} (a) H_{01} (b) and H_{01} (c), the research hypothesis H_1 stands partially validated i.e. only in case of cricket the media coverage continues to rise.

Table-9 Descriptives

Area								
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Of Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Cricket	78	14074.56	11649.269	1319.020	11448.06	16701.07	2035	48803
Hockey	76	2806.96	3684.958	422.694	1964.91	3649.01	32	17274
Athletics	76	6781.67	13604.663	1560.562	3672.87	9890.47	60	64646
Total	230	7941.53	11519.690	759.586	6444.86	9438.20	32	64646

H_{02} **There is no significant variation in the news coverage of cricket vis a vis other sports.**

Table-10 ANOVA

Area					
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	5.040E9	2	2.520E9	22.565	.000
Within Groups	2.535E10	227	1.117E8		
Total	3.039E10	229			

The above tables (9 and 10) show the result of ANOVA test used to ascertain significant variation in the news coverage vis a vis different sports.

The result shows that the mean value of cricket is more than hockey and athletics which indicates its popularity during the period of 1978 to 2011.

The value of F is 22.565 and sig = .000 which is less than .05 (at 95% level of significance) which indicates significant variation in the coverage of sports news with different sports.

Hence hypothesis H_{02} **there is no significant variation in the news coverage of cricket vis a vis to other sports** stands rejected

Therefore the research hypothesis H_2 stands accepted indicating that cricket has got better media coverage compared to the other sports under the present study.

H_{03} **There is no significant variation in the number of sports news between hard and soft news items.**

Table-11**Group Statistics**

Status	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
No hard news	202	26.03	24.866	1.750
soft news	210	19.57	27.469	1.896

Table-12**Independent Samples Test**

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	.020	.888	2.503	410	.013	6.468	2.585	1.387	11.549
Equal variances not assumed			2.507	408.508	.013	6.468	2.580	1.397	11.539

The above tables (11 and 12) shows the result of Independent T test used to ascertain significant variation in the number of sports news stories between hard and soft news items.

The result shows that the mean value of hard news is more than the soft news which indicates the reporting pattern of the newspapers.

The value of T is 2.503 and sig= .013. The significant value is less than .05 (at 95% level of significance), therefore there exist a significant variation in the number of sports news between hard and soft news.

Hence hypothesis $H_{0.3}$ **here is no significant variation in the proportion of hard news and soft news as reported in the print media during the period of study** stands rejected. Which signifies that the research hypothesis H_3 gets validated. As such the proportion of hard news and soft news as reported in the print media changed over the period of study registering a shift in favour of soft news.

The above findings reveals that there has been a consistent rise in the media coverage of sports in general and cricket in particular. In every sample news paper studied athletics and cricket has got better media coverage

compared to hockey, during the period of the study. Sports journalism and its priorities have shifted towards providing a package of entertainment rather than providing information which could be understood from the increasing number of soft news content in sample news papers. This shift towards soft news may primarily be attributed to two reasons:

- Shift in public attention from hard news serious public sphere discourses to entertainment- the media provide more entertainment to cater to the change in public taste and demand- sports is given a soft touch
- By the time the print media reports a sporting event the result is already known to the public and hence the hard news hardly interest the readers – the media try to provide additional background information, and present it in a interesting manner through discussing the personal performance of the players, carrier statistics and lucid language of the narratives.

Besides, a look at the sports pages of mainstream newspapers reveal that the concept of sports journalism has evolved over time by incorporating innovative features in news presentation to make sports news continuously interesting. In response to the increase in market competition owing to advent of visual media like television and new media, news papers increased the usage of pictures and graphics to enhance the visual appeal. To make the news piece interesting and in attempt to drag the reader, sports pages widened the spectrum of news content related to sports. Controversies are investigated, off and on field news are gathered and reported to bring in spice in the sports stories.

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