

## **Newspaper Coverage of 17<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha Election 2019**

**M.Kirubakaran**

Doctoral Research Scholar, Department of Journalism & Mass Communication, Periyar University,  
Salem TN, India- 636 011. E mail: kirubaslm68@gmail.com,8072455655

### **Abstract**

Elections are an important part of any democracy. It is very difficult to study how any voter arrives at a decision in casting his or her vote for a party or a candidate, the vibrant Indian democracy make it more difficult in comparison to western democracies. Many factors influence the decision of voter's in democracy like India, where many diversities influence the decision of voter's, like-cast, color, creed, religion, region, family, personality of candidates, parties, mass media so on. With the proliferation of mass media, they have become very vital tool for politicians and political parties in reaching out to large masses, which was impossible till few years ago. It is however, that media have become an inevitable part of the political process especially during elections. Indian election campaign 2014 was the second most

expensive campaign in the history of sphere, after the US presidential campaign. There was a significant progression in the campaigning methodology as the parties tried to move to original campaigning methods like social media, crowd fundraising, digital rallies and effective storytelling rather than sticking to the conventional print and television.

This research study proposed to analyze the patterns of influence, role and impact of print media during the election campaigns in the 2019 Indian General Election to constitute the 17<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha. The analysis is done over three Tamil dailies namely Dinathanthi, Dinakaran, and Dinamalar, their coverage on election campaigns during the period of 10<sup>th</sup> March to 10<sup>th</sup> April 2019 Parliament General Election.

**Key words:** Political campaign, Dinathanthi, Dinakaran, Dinamalar, Lok Sabha Election

## Introduction

The communication brings people together. People are living in a world of network communication. History of Print Media and written communication follows the progress of cultivation which in turn moves in response to changing cultural technologies. The transfer of complex information, ideas and concepts from one individual to another, or to a group, undergoes extreme evolution since prehistoric times.

The Press in India, particularly the Indian language newspapers, was in the forefront of the fight for freedom. During the British rule Indian newspaper came into survival. Indian newspaper played an important role in the country's freedom struggle at the national as well as regional level. Bal Gangadhar Tilak brought *Kesari* and *Mahratta* newspaper. Mahatma Gandhi started *Young India* and *Harijan*. Jawaharlal Nehru started the *National Herald*. Many leaders from Mahatma Gandhi downwards used their newspapers to participate actively in the freedom struggle.

Political leaders used the Press to wake the people. It was, therefore, natural that the British rulers of India used every weapon in

their armory to silence the nationalist press. Newspapers always had the sword of

Damocles hanging over their head. For the editors and people who worked in newspapers, journalism was a mission. Pays for journalists were poor and there was no safety. Newspaper publication was not profitable and journalism was not paying as compared to other professions but things changed after Independence and each year saw acceleration in change.

The first newspaper published in India was *The Bengal Gazette* started by James Augustus Hicky in 1780. Papers such as *Bombay Herald* and the *Bombay Courier* stood started in the country. Fascinatingly, the *Bombay Courier* later merged with the *Times of India* newspaper. In 1818, the first local language newspaper *Samachar Darpan* was published in Bengali. *The Bombay Samachar* started in 1822. *Kesari* was established in 1880. It was published in Marathi. Prior to 1947, the newspaper industry had only one goal – to multiply the cause of Independence.

After India converted free in 1947, British owners of the newspapers like *The Times of India* also left the country, handing over the businesses to Indian companies.

Nehru had attained the liberal outlook as a part of his education in Britain, in the public school at Harrow and the University of Cambridge. He was democrat to the core and welcomed censure, whether it was from political parties or from newspapers. During his regime, the press was tolerated as he was quite generous in overlooking and ignoring its criticism of his government's policies and programs. To him, criticism was a way in which the working of the government could be better and so not only to be tolerated, but also to be stimulated. No other public man of his standing stood criticism as much as he did.

### **Media and Society**

There are various perspectives in terms of exploring the inter-relation of media, politics and society. This study takes a society-centric perspective that entails examining media as an institution and its influence on society in terms of its relation with state (largely represented by politics) and electorate (that represents society). There are several schools of thought regarding what role media plays and what role it should play in society, especially political news. Arguably, there are four possibilities in terms of the tripartite relationship of media, politics and society

(McQuail, 2006): one is that the media strongly influences politics and society (for good or ill), another is that the media simply reflects what is going on in the state and society at large – this makes media more an effect than a cause, while a third is that the inter-relationship is an interactive and circular one, with no clear line of influence; there is a fourth possibility that posits a lack of influence in either direction among the three, where media, politics, and society are three independent complexes of social and cultural practice.

### **Media and Elections**

The mass media is essential to the conduct of democratic elections. A free and fair election is not only about casting a vote in proper environments, but also about having acceptable information about parties, policies, candidates and the election process itself so that voters can make an informed choice. A democratic election with no media freedom would be a illogicality in terms. The prime concern is the right of voters to get full and accurate information. Parties and candidates are enabled to use the media to get their messages across to the electorate. The media plays a more specific part in enabling full public participation in elections, not only by reporting on the

performance of government, but also in a number of other ways such as by educating the voters, by reporting on election campaign, by providing a platform for the political parties, by allowing the parties to debate, by reporting results and monitoring vote counting, by scrutinizing the electoral process itself in order to evaluate its fairness, efficiency, and probity. In a world of mass communications, it is increasingly the media that determine the political agenda, even in less technologically developed corners of the globe.

### **Review of Literature**

Election campaigns are the highlights of democracy. It is the time when candidates struggle for attention, cuing up in front of reporters and TV cameras, and voters are exposed to a more intense flow of political information than at any other time in the election cycle. The literature on campaign effects has traditionally judged the importance of election campaigns in terms of their impacts on election outcomes (e.g., Erikson & Wlezien, 2012), but from a democratic perspective, equally, if not more, important questions are how campaigns affect voters' level of political knowledge, which is necessary to navigate the political space (Craig, Kane, & Gainous, 2005;

Freedman, Franz, & Goldstein, 2004; Stevenson & Vavreck, 2000), and how they affect voters' perceptions of the political system and their own political competence.

The media can engage in framing. Framing is a powerful tool that allows the news media to call attention to certain aspects of issues or events while excluding other features (Entman, 1993). Framing theory asserts that the media select and highlight certain items of an event or issue over others, in effect, elevating them in importance to the audience (Entman, 1993; Chong, 2007). It is widely studied and noted that the media often tend to cover political events and election campaigns with a focus on the winners and losers, and tactics employed by opposing parties, rather than the substantive matters. However, the attention to strategy and conflict can also "crowd out or delay substantive coverage of those issues" (Lawrence, 2000).

Over the past several decades, studies have continued to define exactly what constitutes media framing. "Ideally, framing research examines the construction of news stories, how these stories articulate frames, and how audience members understand these frames" (Carragee & Roefs, 2004). The majority of framing

research that has been directed on the mass media has followed various aspects of this process (Entman, 1991, 1993; Gamson, 1992; Reese, 2001). Other studies have defined framing as “a central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration” (Tankard, 2003). Although many definitions have been presented to describe framing theory, it can broadly be described as being concerned with the way the media portray the news in their discourse and how these portrayals shape audience opinions and cognitions.

**Objective of the Study**

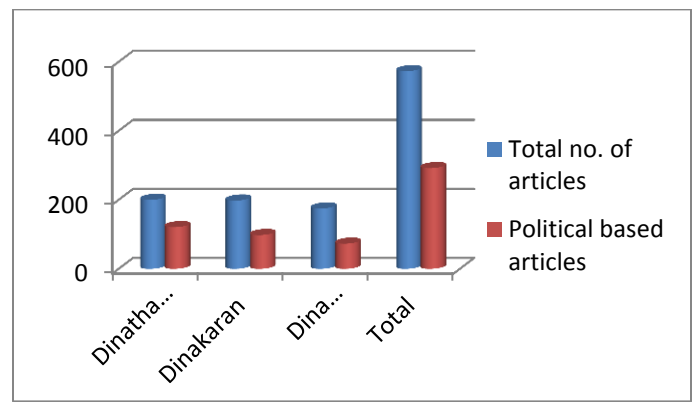
- To examine the coverage given to the 17<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha election 2019 news stories across Tamil dailies in Tamil Nadu.

**Methodology**

The research study adopts Qualitative Content Analysis method to examine the coverage given to the 17<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha election 2019 news stories across Tamil dailies in Tamil Nadu viz. Dinathanthi, Dinakaran and Dinamalar over a period of 10<sup>th</sup> March to 10<sup>th</sup> April 2019.

**Table 1: Total No. of Articles**

Category/ Newspapers	Dina Thanthi	Dina Karan	Dina Malar	Total
<b>Total no. of articles</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>573</b>
<b>Political based articles</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>292</b>

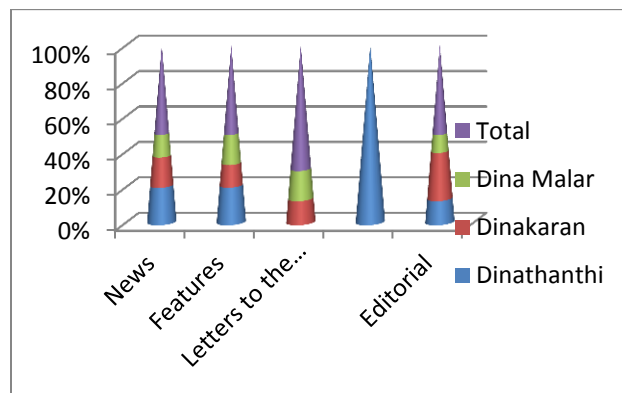


**Figure 1**

- Regarding the total number of articles from 10<sup>th</sup> March to 10<sup>th</sup> April in the year 2019, the total number of articles were 573 out of these Dinathathi showed 200, Dinakaran 198 and Dinamalar 175 articles.
- Dinathathi showed 121 political based articles out of 200, whereas Dinakaran revealed 98 political based articles out of 198 and Dinamalar showed 73 political based articles out of 175 articles.

**Table 2: Articles by Story Type**

News papers	Dina Thanthi	Dina Karan	Dina Malar	Total
News	121	98	73	292
Features	5	3	4	12
Letters to the Editors	24	8	10	42
Editorial	4	8	3	15



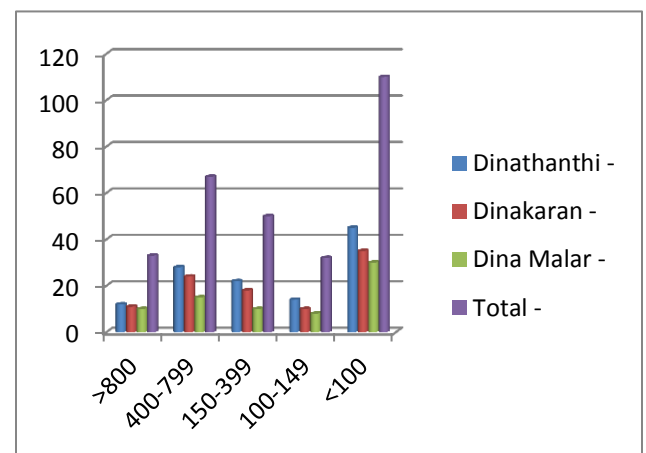
**Figure 2**

- When enquired about the type of news story, there were a total of 121, 98 and 73 news items in Dinathanthi, Dinakaran and dinamalar. There were a total of 292 news articles, 12 features, 42 letter to the editors and 15 editorials from 10<sup>th</sup> March to 10<sup>th</sup> April in the year 2019.
- Out of these 12 features, Dinathanthi showed 5, Dinakaran 3 and Dinamalar as 4 features. The total number of letter to the editors was 42, out of these Dinathanthi revealed 24, Dinakaran 8 and Dinamalar 10.

- The table reveals the total number of editorial was 15, on these 4 in Dinathanthi, 8 in Dinakaran and 3 in Dinamalar.

**Table 3: Articles by Length**

News papers	Dina Thanthi	Dina Karan	Dina Malar	Total
Number of Words	-	-	-	-
>800	12	11	10	33
400-799	28	24	15	67
150-399	22	18	10	50
100-149	14	10	8	32
<100	45	35	30	110



**Figure 3**

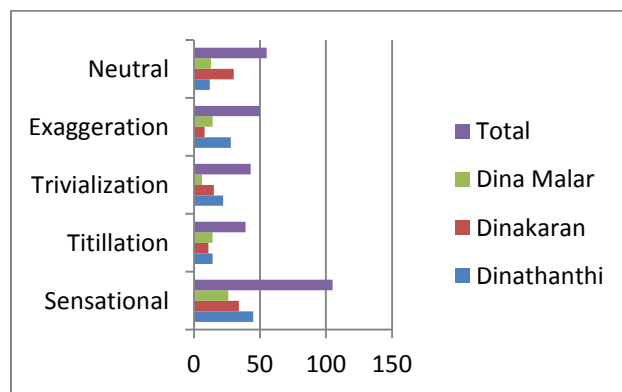
- Regarding articles by length, the total of 33 articles showed more than 800 words. In these Dinathanthi had 12 articles, Dinakaran had 11 and Dinamalar had 10 articles from 10<sup>th</sup> March to 10<sup>th</sup> April in the year 2019. There were a total of 45, 35 and 30 articles from Dinathanthi, Dinakaran and Dinamalar which were below 100 words in length.

- As regards with Tone of Headline, there were a total of 45,34 and 26 headlines in Dinathanthi, Dinakaran and Dinamalar which were sensational totaling to 105 from 10<sup>th</sup> March to 10<sup>th</sup> April in the year 2019. There were a total of 12, 30 and 13 headlines in Dinathanthi, Dinakaran and Dinamalar which were neutral totaling to 55.

**Table 4: Tone of the Headline**

Tone of News Headline	Dina Thanthi	Dina Karan	Dina Malar	Total
Sensational	45	34	26	105
Titillation	14	11	14	39
Trivialization	22	15	6	43
Exaggeration	28	8	14	50
Neutral	12	30	13	55

- Dinathanthi revealed 28 exaggeration, 22 trivialization and 14 titillation headline which were political based headline. Whereas Dinakaran showed 8 exaggeration, 15 trivialization and 11 titillation headlines and Dinakaran exhibits 14exggeration, 6 trivialization and 14 titillation headlines.



**Figure 4**

**Conclusion**

Media has ability to act as a whistle blower of the society in order to keep the government in check. The basic reach for the golden days to the print media is due to the steadily expanding literacy, better purchasing power, aggressive publishing, and political excitement which is not in case of electronic media. Most of the campaign

players are targeting the print media heavily and are in talks with the publishers for front page ads, jacket ads and full page ads ect. In conclusion, the present study reveals the maximum number of articles published by the print media viz Dinathanthi, Dinakaran and Dinamalar were political based articles during the 17<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha election over a period of 10<sup>th</sup> March to 10<sup>th</sup> April 2019. Dinathanthi exhibited more sensational, exaggeration, trivialization and titillation headlines when compare to Dinakaran and Dinamalar.

## **Reference**

- McQuail, D. (2006). Media roles in society. *Researching media, democracy and participation*, 47.
- Erikson, R. S., & Wlezien, C. (2012). *The timeline of presidential elections: How campaigns do (and do not) matter*. University of Chicago Press.
- Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of communication*, 43(4), 51-58.
- Chong, D., & Druckman, J. N. (2007). Framing theory. *Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci.*, 10, 103-126.
- Craig, S. C., Kane, J. G., & Gainous, J. (2005). Issue-related learning in a gubernatorial campaign: A panel study. *Political Communication*, 22(4), 483-503.
- Freedman, P., Franz, M., & Goldstein, K. (2004). Campaign advertising and democratic citizenship. *American Journal of Political Science*, 48(4), 723-741.
- Stevenson, R. T., & Vavreck, L. (2000). Does campaign length matter? Testing for cross-national effects. *British Journal of Political Science*, 30(2), 217-235.
- Carragee, K. M., & Roefs, W. (2004). The neglect of power in recent framing research. *Journal of communication*, 54(2), 214-233.
- Gamson, W. A., Croteau, D., Hoynes, W., & Sasson, T. (1992). Media images and the social construction of reality. *Annual review of sociology*, 18(1), 373-393.
- Entman, R. M. (1991). Framing US coverage of international news: Contrasts in narratives of the KAL and Iran Air incidents. *Journal of communication*, 41(4), 6-27.
- Reese, S. D., Gandy Jr, O. H., & Grant, A. E. (Eds.). (2001). *Framing public life: Perspectives on media and our understanding of the social world*. Routledge.
- Shoemaker, P. J., Tankard Jr, J. W., & Lasorsa, D. L. (2003). *How to build social science theories*. Sage publications.
- Lawrence, R. G. (2000). Game-framing the issues: Tracking the strategy frame in public policy news. *Political Communication*, 17(2), 93-114.