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Analyzing Print Media Coverage of Volunteerism Related Stories

Kaur Hemdeep*

Assistant Professor at Chandigarh University,
UIMS (University Institute of Media Studies),
Block 3, Gharuan

Email: hemdeepkaur20@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Volunteering is generally considered an altruistic activity, intended to promote good or improve human quality of life. A study was carried out to map the coverage of volunteerism in print media and to analyze the print media coverage in promotion of volunteerism. A census study of four newspapers- Ajit, Punjabi Tribune, Hindustan Times and The Tribune was carried out for three months. Results revealed that The Tribune in generating positive volunteer consciousness is latent than rest of all other newspapers. During newspaper-wise analysis it was found that The Tribune promoted volunteerism by giving special effects to more than half of its coverage. Volunteerism was also promoted by publishing picture with every 2nd story but very few stories on volunteerism were published on the front page. The study emphasized on the need for volunteerism in providing counselling to the people in stress and more voluntary work in the field of self-help projects.

KEYWORDS: Volunteer, Volunteerism, Print Media, The Tribune, Hindustan Times and Ajit.

***Corresponding author**

Dr Hemdeep Kaur

Assistant Professor at Chandigarh University,
UIMS (University Institute of Media Studies),
Block 3, Gharuan

Email: hemdeepkaur20@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Oxford dictionary defines volunteer as: A person who freely offers to take part in an enterprise or undertakes a task and works for an organization without being paid. Volunteer is someone who contributes his services without financial gain to a functional sub community or a cause.

Some people simply volunteer because there is a work to be done and nobody else is stepping up to the plate. Volunteering is generally considered an altruistic activity, intended to promote good or improve human quality of life. Many volunteers are specifically trained in the areas they work in, such as medicine, education and emergency rescue. Other volunteers serve on as-need basis, such as response to natural disaster. People also volunteer to meet others, to make contacts for possible employment, to have fun and variety of other reasons that could be considered self-serving.

Volunteering is to perform a voluntary action to maintain an institution and to achieve an end. It is the practice of people working on behalf of others or a particular cause without payment for their time and services. It helps to increase our social, economic, spiritual, physical and cultural health. A person who is concerned about the society can only volunteer without thinking of himself. Volunteerism plays an important role in the achievement and maintenance of democracy. Democracy allows for free association which in turn encourages individuals with common interests to work together and make their views known to governing bodies.

Volunteerism is born out of values we hold as a nation, about caring for each other and conveyed by the volunteer efforts of individuals, religions and non-profit groups. We all need the help of each other to grow socially because we all are the part of a society. Similarly, the contribution of media is also needed to promote volunteerism. It is important that media must highlight volunteerism related stories

To understand the role of print media in promoting volunteerism, a research is carried out to know that how much space is allotted to the volunteerism related stories. In this study, the comparison between Punjabi and English newspapers is done to know that which newspaper actually promotes volunteerism related stories the most. Second, special effects to these news stories are also analyzed to conclude whether volunteerism related stories have given special highlights or not. Third, location of the stories is also noticed to measure the importance given to these stories. Fourth, 'picture' or any 'graphic image' is also considered as an important variable to know whether such stories are of importance to newspapers or not.

This research is significant because for the voluntary sector, the newspaper and the mass media have the power to name and define them. Media can help to create a positive volunteering

environment by raising awareness and promoting involvement in volunteering. A newspaper article or radio advertisement might not be identified by someone as the reason why they volunteer. The media and its message can play an important role in influencing the way people think about volunteering more generally.

Objectives of the Study

Therefore, keeping in view the coverage of volunteerism in print media in this changing scenario, a study was carried out with the following objectives:

1. To map the coverage of volunteerism in print media.
2. To analyze the importance given to volunteerism related stories by print media

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mass media coverage of volunteerism in the context of the World Trade Center disaster (9/11). The pictures of volunteers in newspaper doing voluntary activities encouraged other people to volunteer. Media's coverage about the illegal behaviours during disaster may actually not be about the incidence of crime but about a cultural message. These type of news stories reinforces cultural views that it is pathetic to commit illegal acts against highly vulnerable individuals. Media also helped to find out the fake volunteers those were only enjoying the resources provided to needy people. Media coordinated the individuals, groups and organizations those were interested to help the needy people. Media transmitted a fragmented reality. ⁵A report on a 2003 survey of volunteer involvement in Georgia local government, which followed a similar 1990 study and provides a rare opportunity to examine long- term trends in public volunteerism. The 1990s witnessed extensive promotion of volunteerism, the creation of a federal and state infrastructure to support government's voluntary activities. Volunteerism in Georgia cities and counties has increased during the past decade, with 81 percent of all jurisdictions now reporting some volunteer engagement. The events of September 11, 2001 had a small but generally positive effect on volunteer utilization.¹ Authors in their report described a voluntary program that was established to resolve staff shortages in a high school media centre. Three voluntary groups were involved to sort out the problem. Adult volunteers, teachers and students who volunteered for duty during after school hours were active voluntary groups those succeeded in resolving the staff shortages in a high school media centre.² It was reported that the mass media, such as newspapers, magazines, radio or television is used to communicate information to large groups of people. By regularly conveying information to important audiences, from the general public to government and international decision makers, the

media played a large role in shaping public debate. The media were among the most important allies to the NGO community. Establishing good relationships with journalists was an integral part of any effective media outreach campaign.³ Researchers revealed substantial continuity in volunteerism from adolescence through the transition to adulthood and highlight the importance of values expressed in adolescence for volunteerism. Attending school during this life stage promotes volunteerism. In contrast, full-time work investments in the early life course are found to hinder volunteer participation, as does the presence of young children in the family, especially at earlier parental ages. The results support a life course perspective for understanding civic participation.⁴

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Volunteering is considered an altruistic activity, intended to promote good or improve human quality of life. There is need to focus on this neglected issue and put the idea of volunteerism high on agenda of newspapers. In order to map the coverage of volunteerism in print media and to analyze the print media coverage in promotion of volunteerism, the study was conducted with the following material and methods.

Research Design

A comprehensive quantitative analysis of Print media was undertaken with different variables.

Operational Area: The present study was conducted at Ludhiana (Punjab).

Sample: Two English newspapers (*The Tribune*, Chandigarh & *Hindustan Times*, Chandigarh) and two Punjabi newspapers (*Ajit*, Jalandhar and *Punjabi Tribune*, Chandigarh) formed the sample of the study.

Parameters

A structured inventory was developed to explore coverage of volunteerism in selected newspapers. The parameters included:

- **Special Effects:** Story in box, Headline in color, Headline with kickers & additional information, Stories with background color and Boxes in news story
- **Pictures Location:** Front page above, Front page below, Last page above, Last page below and Page 3.

Data Analysis: Simple percentage method was adopted to map and analyze the whole coverage of printed stories on volunteerism.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to map the coverage of volunteerism in print media, data was collected from four newspapers namely *Ajit*, *Punjabi Tribune*, *Hindustan Times* and *The Tribune* on daily basis. Variables selected included: presentation (special effects and pictures), number of columns, location on page and place of origin of news stories related to NGOs, etc.

Mapping of coverage on volunteerism

Four newspapers (*Ajit*, *Punjabi Tribune*, *Hindustan Times* and *The Tribune*) were selected to map the coverage of volunteerism related stories. Mapping of the coverage also reveal the comparison between Punjabi and English newspapers.

Table 1: “Comparison of coverage on volunteerism by Punjabi and English Newspapers”

Newspaper→	<i>Ajit</i>	<i>Punjabi Tribune</i>	<i>Hindustan Times</i>	<i>The Tribune</i>	Total
Month↓					
May	58 (7.75)	104 (13.90)	26 (3.48)	25 (3.34)	213 (28.48)
June	100 (13.37)	101 (13.50)	34 (4.56)	31 (4.14)	266 (35.56)
July	93 (12.43)	104 (13.90)	38 (5.08)	34 (4.55)	269 (35.96)
Total	251 (33.56)	309 (41.31)	98 (13.10)	90 (12.03)	748 (100)

Table 1 presents the comparative figures of coverage on volunteerism in each newspaper, every month. *Punjabi Tribune* promoted volunteerism better than all other newspapers by having the maximum coverage, 104 stories (13.90 percent) in the month of May followed by *Ajit* having 58 stories (7.75 percent). While *The Tribune* had the least coverage of 25 stories (3.34 percent). Both *Hindustan Times* and *The Tribune* had the least coverage in this month with 26 (3.48 percent) and 25 (3.34 percent) stories respectively.

In the month of June, again *Punjabi Tribune* had the maximum coverage of 101 stories (13.50 percent) closely followed by *Ajit* with 100 stories (13.37 percent). *The Tribune* had again the least contribution of 31 stories (4.14 percent) while *Hindustan Times* had little more coverage i.e. just 34 stories (4.56 percent).

In the month of July, surprisingly *Punjabi Tribune* was again the leader by promoting the maximum volunteerism related stories 104 (13.90 percent) which was again closely followed by *Ajit* 93 stories (12.43 percent).

Analyzing the overall coverage by all newspapers in the specified time period of three months, it was found that *Punjabi Tribune* had the good policy of publicizing the volunteerism related issues while *The Tribune* had lagged behind from all other newspapers by having the coverage of just 90 stories (12.03 percent). Data reveals that the maximum coverage was made in the month of July followed by the month of June and lastly May.

Figure 1: “Comparison of coverage on volunteerism by Punjabi and English Newspapers”

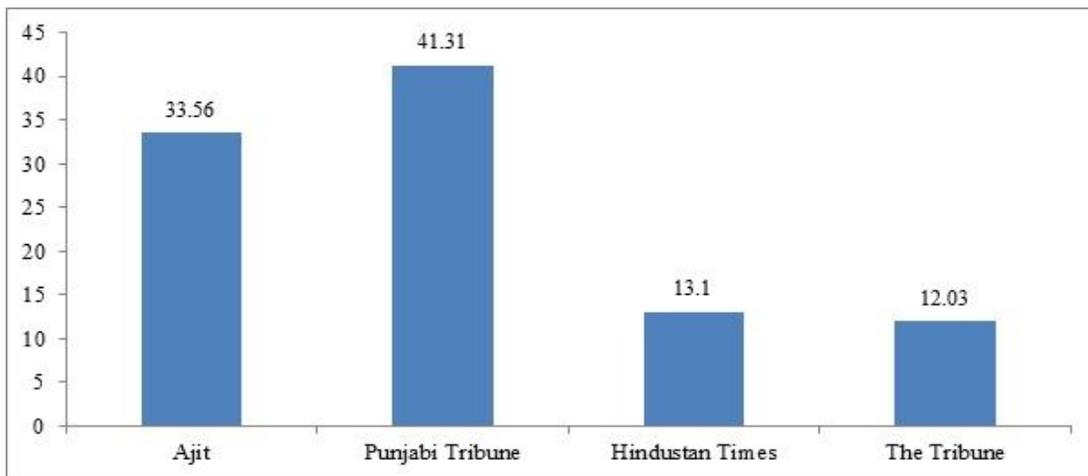


Figure 1 shows the comparison of overall coverage on volunteerism by different newspapers. Data reveal that *Punjabi Tribune* had the maximum share in whole data. So, almost every 2nd story belonged to *Punjabi Tribune*. The least was made by *The Tribune* while *Ajit*--- a Punjabi newspaper, was more aware about its social responsibility of promoting positive stories. Going by the data of coverage of stories on volunteerism in vernacular and language dailies an overwhelming three fourth; (74.87 percent) coverage was by Punjabi newspapers and just one fourth; (25.13 percent) coverage by English newspapers.

Coverage of volunteerism with special effects

Special effects help in increasing the readership of the news story. Analysis of the coverage of voluntarism related stories with special effects reveal the data of each newspaper and help in knowing that which newspaper is emphasizing on coverage the volunteerism related issues.

Table 2:“Stories with Special Effects”

Newspaper-wise analysis Special Effect→ Newspaper↓	Stories in Box	Headline in Color	Headline with Kickers & Additional Information	Stories with Background Color	Box in News Story	Total coverage by each newspaper of Special Effects
<i>Ajit</i>	16 (6.37)	14 (5.58)	14 (5.58)	06 (2.39)	02 (0.80)	52 (20.72)
<i>Punjabi Tribune</i>	54 (17.48)	17 (5.50)	05 (1.62)	06 (1.94)	07 (2.27)	89 (28.80)
<i>Hindustan Times</i>	07 (7.14)	10 (10.20)	10 (10.20)	10 (10.20)	08 (8.16)	45 (45.92)
<i>The Tribune</i>	41 (45.56)	08 (8.89)	07 (7.78)	12 (13.33)	01 (1.11)	69 (76.67)

Table 2 demonstrates the data on volunteerism of each newspaper accompanied with special effects on the coverage of volunteerism. Overall coverage reveals that in case of ‘Stories in Box’, *The Tribune* promoted volunteerism by having the maximum publication of 41 (45.56 percent) stories out of its overall 90 stories. While out of the total coverage of 251 stories by *Ajit*, just 16 (6.37 percent) stories were in Box, this is the minimum percentage of the total stories in respect of a particular newspaper.

In case of ‘Headline in Color’, *Hindustan Times* published maximum 10 stories (10.20 percent) out of its total coverage of 98 stories. On the contrary, *Punjabi Tribune* was at last place by publishing 17 stories (5.50 percent).

In case of ‘Headline with Kickers & Additional Information’, *Hindustan Times* had again the maximum publication with 10 stories (10.20 percent) whereas *Punjabi Tribune* had again the minimum publication of merely 5 stories (1.62 percent).

‘Stories with Background Color’ were mostly published in *The Tribune* (13.33 percent) while the least contribution was by *Punjabi Tribune* (1.94 percent). ‘Boxes in News Story’ were more used by *Hindustan Times* with 8 stories (8.16 percent) while *Ajitwas* at last place with 2 stories (0.80 percent). Regarding *The Tribune*, Chandigarh the data showed that though the newspaper carried minimum stories on volunteerism yet when it comes to projecting the story by giving Special Effects, *The Tribune* leads with an overwhelming coverage of (approximately 77 percent) stories with special effects. This was followed by *Hindustan Times* which published almost half of stories (45.92 percent) with special effects.

Punjabi Tribune published almost every 3rd story (28.80 percent) with special effects. *Ajit* newspaper holds the last position by publishing just (20.72 percent) of its coverage with special effects. While the data show that *The Tribune* tried to attract the readers attention towards the stories on volunteerism, *Ajit* did not care about highlighting these stories.

Table 3: “Stories with special effects----- overall analysis”

Newspaper→ Special Effect↓	Ajit	Punjabi Tribune	Hindustan Times	The Tribune	Total Stories with Special Effects
Stories in Box	16 (2.14)	54 (7.22)	07 (0.93)	41 (5.48)	118 (15.77)
Headline in Color	14 (1.87)	17 (2.27)	10 (1.34)	08 (1.07)	49 (6.55)
Headline with Kickers & Additional Information	14 (1.87)	05 (0.67)	10 (1.34)	07 (0.94)	36 (4.81)
Stories with Background Color	06 (0.80)	06 (0.80)	10 (1.34)	12 (1.60)	34 (4.54)
Box in News Story	02 (0.27)	07 (0.94)	08 (1.07)	01 (0.13)	18 (2.41)
Total	52 (6.95)	89 (11.90)	45 (6.02)	69 (9.22)	255 (34.09)

Table 3 presents the overall data powered with special effects irrespective of each newspaper. Giving a Box to a story means to attract the attention of the reader and to give extra importance to the theme. Special effects not only help in increasing the readership of a newspaper but also beautify the newspaper. Table shows that „Stories in Box“ were used maximum in *Punjabi Tribune* (7.22 percent) while contribution of *Hindustan Times* was just negligible (0.93 percent). ‘Headline in Color’ were most used in *Punjabi Tribune* (2.27 percent) closely followed by *Ajit*(1.87 percent), which was the minimum percentage of total stories in respect of a particular newspaper.

‘Headline with Kickers and Additional Information’ were rarely used by any newspaper. *Ajit* represents the maximum use (1.87 percent). On the contrary *Punjabi Tribune* had used it least (0.67 percent). Comparison among all the newspapers regarding ‘Stories with Background Color’ reveals that both *Ajit* and *Punjabi Tribune* had equally used it (0.80 percent).

The maximum use of ‘Stories with Background Color’ was by *Ajit*(1.60 percent). The data show that *Hindustan Times* had both beautified and powered the news stories by using Boxes in news stories (1.07 percent) while *The Tribune* made the least efforts to attract the readers by publishing Boxes in just (0.13 percent) news stories.

It cannot be said that newspaper of a particular language had fair policy of promoting stories on Volunteerism by giving special effects to them. The reason is that among these newspapers, the maximum publication of special effects was in *Punjabi Tribune* followed by *The Tribune*; an English newspaper whose contribution of Special Effects was of (9.22 percent) stories. *Ajit* also tried very less (6.95 percent) to promote stories on volunteerism accompanied with special effects followed by an English newspaper; *Hindustan times* whose contribution was only (6.02 percent) in same manner.

It was found that special effects were used with 255 stories (34.09 percent) out of 748 total stories. Medium use of special effects means that almost every 3rd story was powered by giving special effects.

Table 4:“Coverage of Volunteerism Stories with Pictures-----Newspaper-Wise Analysis”

Newspaper→	<i>Ajit</i>	<i>Punjabi Tribune</i>	<i>Hindustan Times</i>	<i>The Tribune</i>
Stories with pictures→	133 (52.99)	115 (37.22)	43 (43.88)	24 (26.67)
Stories without pictures→	118 (47.01)	194 (62.78)	55 (56.12)	66 (73.33)

Table 4 shows the coverage of stories with pictures in different newspapers. Pictures add to the importance of stories and influence news and articles in a positive manner. An accompanying picture leaves an impact on the mind of the reader by attracting him to go through the story.

Ajit promoted volunteerism by publishing pictures with its 133 stories (52.99 percent). *Punjabi Tribune* published pictures with its just 115 (37.22 percent) stories followed by *Hindustan Times* who had given pictures with 43 (43.88 percent) stories. Minimum publication was by *The Tribune* who facilitated only 24 (26.67 percent) stories with pictures.

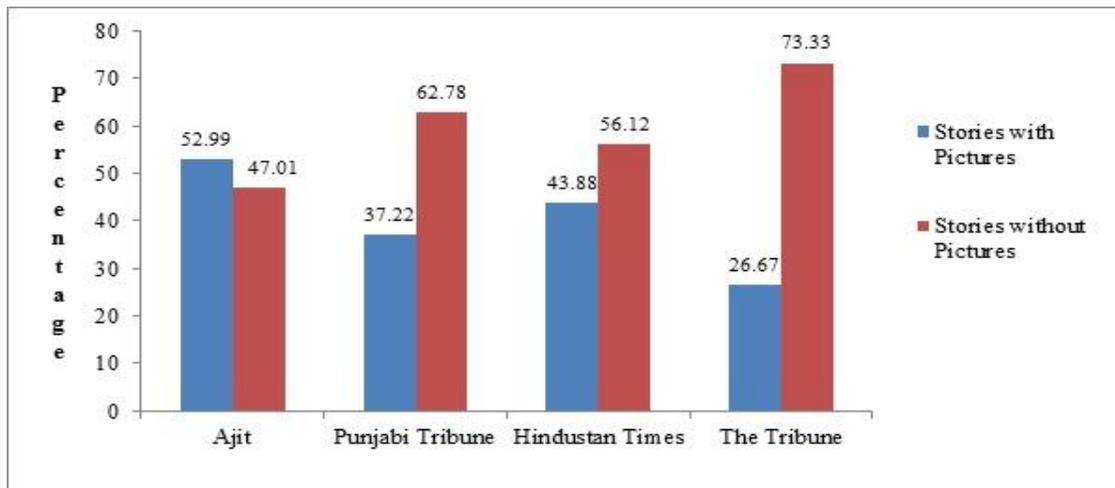


Figure 2: “Coverage of volunteerism stories with pictures----- newspaper-wise analysis”

Figure 2 demonstrates the coverage of stories with and without pictures in different newspapers. Study reveals that only *Ajit* promoted more than half of its stories on volunteerism with the help of pictures. It is not encouraging to know that *The Tribune* had least published its stories with pictures which means that this newspaper does not have a policy of carrying volunteerism related stories with pictures.

CONCLUSION

It was found that among the four newspapers, *Punjabi Tribune* promoted volunteerism better than all other newspapers by publishing maximum (41.31 percent) stories. While *The Tribune* has the minimum publication (12.03 percent). Going by the data of coverage of stories on volunteerism in vernacular and language dailies an overwhelming three fourth coverage was by Punjabi newspapers and just one fourth coverage was by English newspapers. Regarding the presentation of the news stories including special effects and pictures newspaper-wise analysis shows that *The Tribune* promoted volunteerism by giving special effects to more than half of its coverage i.e. (76.67 percent)

where as *Ajit* published its minimum stories with special effects. On the other hand, overall analysis of the stories reveals that *Punjabi Tribune* had beautified and powered maximum stories (11.90 percent) with special effects. On the contrary, *Hindustan Times* had lagged behind all of the rest of newspapers.

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