

Trends of Paid News in Print Media and Its Impact: An Overview

(With Special Reference to Two Major Hindi Newspapers Published from Allahabad)

Dr. Ajay Kumar Singh

Assistant Professor

Department of Mass Communication, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur, Rajasthan

Abstract

The role of media in India's freedom struggle is not hidden from anyone. At that time, the media was dedicated to India's independence and new development beyond personal selfishness. But today the scenario of journalism has completely changed, it has become a profession from a mission. Be it print or electronic, both have completely entered the corporate culture. Media and journalists gradually moved away from public concern and there was a competition among them to earn profits by ignoring all the charges. Paid news has become a medium used by corporate sector companies or other business establishments. Due to the commercialization of journalism, paid news is now becoming essential. Paid news means news that has been published and broadcast by paying money or any other transaction that has taken place. In the present times, we have to accept that the fourth pillar of democracy is increasingly getting involved in the unethical and valueless commercial business of paid news and due to this, the character of the media is rapidly changing.

Keywords: Print Media, Paid News, Press Council of India, Election Commission

I. Introduction

Media was conceptualized keeping public interest at the core. The role of media in India's freedom struggle is not hidden from anyone. The media was dedicated to India's independence and new development beyond personal selfishness. For this reason, the reins of the then newspapers and magazines were in the hands of the freedom fighters. But today the scenario of journalism has completely changed, it has become a profession from a mission. Be it print or electronic, both have completely entered the corporate culture. It can be said that with the rise of commercialization, the sound of paid news started appearing in the media. In this era of globalization, news has also become a product. Product is related to business and business requires practicality rather than theory. This is the reason why usability is given priority in the world of media. Basically, usability is used in the context of forwarding communication to the masses, but nowadays, the way the true meanings of words are getting lost, the result is that usability has also become the meaning of earning money in the media. Corporate houses and political parties have been providing favorable and appropriate space in the media for their conferences and programs through cash or gift packages.

Concept of paid news – There is no valid definition of paid news. At present, paid news, a much-discussed topic in Indian media, has no parallel tradition in the West. Due to there being no limit on election expenditure, paid news is not visible in many countries in the form which is a matter of deep concern in the Indian democracy. Buying media space during elections by politicians and political parties is not considered against

policy in many countries. In fact, in many countries, political parties formally buy time on television. Similarly, another important question is cross-media ownership i.e., operation of different forms of media like print or TV etc. by the same media organization. There is neither any serious debate nor any rules and regulations regarding cross-media ownership in India, whereas there is a lot of caution regarding it in Western countries.

In the common language of journalism, paid news generally means that material is printed or shown in place of editorial material, which appears to be news but the newspaper or channels have taken payment for it, i.e., any news which is actually like an advertisement. Should be printed or visible. If it is printed or visible like news and instead of news, then it will be called paid news. This can also be called sold news. News that is written for personal gain comes under paid news.

The Press Council has defined paid news this way. If any news or analysis gets space in any media i.e., electronic or print in exchange for money or any other favour, then it will be kept in the category of paid news. This is an advertisement in the form of news. This is called paid news syndrome. Today anyone can buy news. Industry, business, politics and the entertainment world have been buying news. From this, it can be estimated to what extent the media kept misleading the readers with news in exchange for money. Due to the mutual tug-of-war between the media and the personal interests of the media owners, the voice of the public went unheard in the media. However, media organizations indulge in paid news unabated and argue that what they are doing is not paid news. And paid news must be banned.

In the 1980s, when Sameer Jain became the executive head of BCCL (Bennett Coleman & Company Limited, Times Group), the newspaper publishing company of Times of India Group, the style and rules of working in Indian media started changing. What later created a lot of turmoil in the field of media was the launch of paid content publishing services by BCCL in 2003 under the name Media Net. Under this, an open offer was made to send journalists to cover programs and events related to the launch of a product or a person in exchange for money. When other newspapers raised the question of violation of journalistic values by such activities, BCCL officials and owners argued that such advertorials were not being published in The Times of India. These are only for the colorful local pages of the cities, in which instead of publishing solid news, content is published about light and entertaining things of the society.

In this era of globalization, news has also become a product. That is why all the evils that are present in the product started getting established in it. Product is related to business and business requires practicality and not theory. For this reason, usability is given priority in the media world. Usability is used in the context of forwarding communication to the masses. But nowadays, the way the true meanings of words are getting lost, the result is that the meaning of usability has also become earning money in the media.

Paid News and Press Council of India

According to the Press Council of India, paid news refers to the publication of news or articles in exchange for cash or anything of value in favour of a candidate's campaign. This is considered a serious electoral offence. Under which the election expenditure limit is violated by the candidates. It is noteworthy that paid news is not yet formally included in the category of electoral crime. Earlier, journalism was considered a mission, but in the globalized era of the 1990s, journalism has gradually become a part of the profit-making business. From that perspective, the work of journalism has become more of a business process. To stop this, there is a need to set some concrete criteria. The work of controlling the media is looked after by the Press Council of India. There are some rules and regulations in the Council's code to control newspapers, magazines

and agencies, but electronic media, which has emerged rapidly in the last two decades and has spread across the country, is more or less out of its scope.

The importance of the Council's national directives on print media lies in the broader public interest. (Report published by the Press Council, 2009) These include advice to exercise caution in times of communal tension, not to exaggerate violence, not to interfere in the privacy of any person, and to publish an explanation of the accused person also. But there are no boundaries outlined for incidents like violence and communalism, hence which boundary should be considered a violation? This identification remains impossible in most of the cases, hence the usefulness of the code of conduct measures remains only on paper. This code of conduct is defined within the scope of print media. The printed news media that are responsible and sensible towards society also follow these codes. Therefore, the Press Council intends that electronic media should also come under its jurisdiction.

This is the reason that ever since Chairman of the Press Council of India and retired Justice Markandey Katju has taken over the work of the Council, efforts have been made to change the current Code of Conduct in such a way that the Council can directly control the media and punish them. Get the rights to. In this form, Katju is strongly raising the demand for financial punishment and a ban on advertising. Till now the Press Council can only condemn the newspaper editor and owner and has no right to punish him in any way. Anyway, Katju does not consider freedom of expression greater than national interest. A similar request is made by former President APJ Abdul Kalam. He says that the first loyalty of Indian journalists should be towards the country and its people.

Criteria set by the Election Commission regarding paid news

1. Some authors published similar news and photos at the same time.
2. Newspaper articles praising candidates during elections.
3. It is reported in the news that a candidate is getting support from every section of society and will win the election from the constituency.

II. Review of literature

Thakurta (2012), co-author of the Press Council report on paid news, said that whenever there is a recession in the economy. Advertisement revenue of newspapers also starts decreasing and jobs are at stake. The values and ethical standards of journalism take a back seat. **Bishwash (2012)**, believes that globalization is affecting the code of conduct of Indian media. He opines that the main reason for the paid news syndrome in India is the increasing commercialization of media practices in the post-2000 era. **Joshi (2010)** wrote a piece in his column published in Jansatta, stating that newspaper owners acted similarly by demanding money from candidates in exchange for publishing news about them just before the elections. **Ranjan, PA (2009)** The phenomenon of paid news was first seen in the 1994 Gujarat assembly elections. It was claimed that several instances of paid news were detected in the assembly elections. Many candidates from different political parties tried to seek media support through payment of money. **Sainath (2010)** said that paid news has become widespread, structured, highly organized and weakening democracy in India. **Gaura (2012)** in his study he said that the materialistic world has changed the concept of everything and media is no exception. The phenomenon of paid news in the media has become established as institutional misconduct, especially evident in the coverage of recent Lok Sabha and Assembly elections. He further argued that paid news or paid content is articles in newspapers, magazines and electronic media that indicate favorable conditions to the institution that has paid for it. News is much like an advertisement but without the advertising tag.

III. Popular cases of paid news

Mrs. Umlesh Yadav Case: In this case, the example of Umlesh Yadav, wife of Uttar Pradesh's powerful leader DP Yadav, was the first case in Indian politics when a winning candidate was disqualified. During the 2007 assembly elections, Umlesh Yadav was elected from Bisauli constituency of Badaun. Had happened. Yogendra Kumar, who lost the election to Rashtriya Parivartan Dal candidate Umlesh Yadav, filed a complaint against him in the Press Council. Kumar had said in his complaint that two leading Hindi dailies, Dainik Jagran and Amar Ujala, had published articles against Umlesh Yadav just a day before the voting. Had published paid news in favour of. However, on the complaint of paid news, both the newspaper managements claimed that they had published that news as an advertisement and an advertisement was also written along with the news. After the complaint and the reply from the newspaper management, the Press Council said in its report that the news was published in different formats and how it was published is likely to create confusion in the minds of common voters. Elections were to be held a day later and there was a ban on campaigning, so this is not only wrong as a journalistic standard but is also a violation of election provisions. Only after this, on October 20, 2011, the committee of three election commissioners, in its 23-page decision, disqualified Umlesh Yadav from membership and banned him from contesting elections for three years. Paranjay Guha Thakurata considers the rejection of Umlesh Yadav's membership as a major change. According to him, this has at least sent a message that if one gets involved in paid news, there can be serious consequences.

If you get caught in the news, you may face serious consequences.

Ashok Chavan Case: Many questions were raised on the expenditure on advertising by former Maharashtra Chief Minister Ashok Chavan in the 2009 assembly elections. The Delhi High Court strongly condemned the media and political parties on this issue. However, the editors of the newspapers that highlighted Ashok Chavan refused to accept the published material as paid news and also fabricated many fallacies to prove their point. In a newspaper report published on November 30, 2009, in the account of his expenses presented by Ashok Chavan after the election, it was stated that he spent only Rs 5379 on advertisements in print media and only Rs 6000 on electronic media. But based on the space Chavan got in newspapers during the election campaign, these advertising expenditure figures proved to be untrue. In this case, the committee investigating paid news of the Press Council had found that 156 pages of advertisement in favour of Ashok Chavan was published in Lokmat newspaper alone. The Election Commission had issued a show cause notice to Chavan asking him to reply within 20 days. Although this matter also reached the Supreme Court through the High Court, this matter was also in the headlines because the Supreme Court while rejecting the petition of Ashok Chavan, had refused to interfere in the rights of the Election Commission in any way. However, in this case, on September 13, 2014, the Delhi High Court acquitted Ashok Chavan of the charges of paid news. The Delhi High Court had said in its decision that these advertisements were given by Ashok Chavan only, but this could not be proved. In its decision, the High Court said that the benefit of the doubt is being given to Ashok Chavan. These examples make it clear that it is very difficult to prove any case of paid news. This report, written by P Sainath, editor of rural development issues of The Hindu, states that Ashok Chavan got a total of 47 full pages of coverage in various newspapers during the election campaign. Not only this, Ashok had also challenged the right of the Commission to get to the bottom of truth and lies by objecting to the questions raised on him by the Election Commission of India.

Narottam Mishra case: After Umlesh Yadav, the powerful minister in Shivraj Singh Chouhan government in Madhya Pradesh, Narottam Mishra, was also banned from contesting elections for three years by the Election Commission after finding him involved in paid news. However, later Narottam Mishra got relief from the Delhi High Court. Narottam Mishra was accused of paying money to get news published in his

favour during the 2008 assembly elections. Congress candidate Rajendra Bharti, who lost the Datia assembly election against Narottam Mishra in 2009, filed a petition in the Election Commission. In this petition, he alleged that the expenditure incurred by Mishra on paid news was not included in the election expenditure.

Cobra Post's Sting Operation: A web portal named Cobra Post conducted a sting operation on several media groups in which many revelations were made on paid news. It was revealed how in exchange for money, media houses agree to run news in favor of or against any leader. However, it is very difficult to prove whether a particular news shown on a channel or published in a newspaper is paid or not. This is the reason why success has not been achieved so far in curbing paid news.

Importance of Research Study: Indian journalism has been in the grip of a serious disease called paid news for the last two decades, due to which the basic principles of journalism have been sidelined and the credibility of the media has also reduced. Such reports are considered a serious misconduct. Media organizations never miss an opportunity to take advantage of paid news. This is a sheer betrayal of the readers because they have not been made to differentiate between advertising and news. Additionally, the methods of payment for paid news usually violate tax laws and election expenditure laws.

The Election Commission has also acknowledged the enormity of the problem of paid news and is trying to take all possible measures to stop this malpractice. The way paid news is growing today in both print and electronic media is posing a threat to ethics and value-based journalism. Paid news misconduct has destroyed the credibility of the media and is therefore harmful to their long-term interests.

Media and journalists gradually moved away from public concern and there is a rush among them to earn profits by ignoring all the charges. Paid news has become a medium used by the corporate sector or companies and other business establishments. Due to the commercialisation of journalism, paid news is now becoming essential. Paid news means that news is published and broadcast by paying money. This is often seen in political elections when candidates publish news instead of advertisements to reduce their election expenses. Its biggest advantage is that the advertisement is published in a distorted form of news and the reader is confused. Generally, due to common readers being ignorant about paid news, they consider it to be normal and true news.

Advertisers and corporate entities began exploiting news outlets to further their interests. Today, coverage of villages, agriculture and labour has been excluded from the entire media. This situation has stopped seventy percent of the country's population from interfering in the media. Which depends on village zonality. Despite all the government schemes related to rural development, this population is moving towards minimum income. Whereas the scope of showing news like religious hypocrisy, underground mafia and fear of doomsday is expanding. Such ridiculous news that crosses the Lakshman Rekha of the code of moral conduct definitely does not help in keeping the society alive and aware.

If the media is aware of the right to freedom of expression, then it is important that it should also be sensitive and aware towards the society and the country, otherwise, the media will prove to be a factor in promoting situations of chaos and anarchy.

Limitations of the study: The proposed research also has some limitations. The area of study is limited to two Hindi newspapers published in Allahabad. Therefore, it does not cover Hindi newspapers published from

other places. Besides, the number of newspapers is also only two. Lack of resources does not allow expansion of the field of study.

IV. Objectives of the research study:

Every researcher aims to advance knowledge by drawing some general conclusions regarding the analysis of available material. Therefore, the objectives of the proposed research study are as follows,

- a. In the proposed research study, the main reasons for the increasing trends of paid news in newspapers and its effects will be analyzed.
- b. The committees formed from time to time regarding paid news and their recommendations will be studied.
- c. How aware is the readership of paid news? This will be investigated in depth in the proposed study.
- d. In the presented study, various methods of paid news publication will be analyzed.
- e. In the research study, an attempt will be made to find out what is the relationship between paid news and advertising.
- f. In the proposed research it will be discussed whether there are any criteria for publishing paid news.
- g. Whether the effective steps taken by the government to stop paid news are sufficient and effective or not. This will be investigated by the researcher.

V. Research Methodology

Social research is the scientific study of social phenomena and no study can be scientific unless the scientific method is used in it. The use of the scientific method is not possible unless there is knowledge of the main problems related to the research subject. Based on the knowledge of these two main problems, the researcher makes a general estimate regarding the aspects of his study. In this way, the researcher gets guidance so that his study remains focused on his study subject only, hence the researcher has made hypotheses related to the study to provide guidance and scientific to his study subject.

Hypotheses

- a) There is no difference between paid news and other editorial content.
- b) Self-regulation and state intervention can stop the menace of paid news.
- c) Paid news is a challenge to ethics and value-based journalism.
- d) Paid news media is a means for industrialists and politicians to further their business interests.

Research Techniques: Research techniques include general procedures such as identification of the research problem, review of literature, formulation of hypothesis, process of testing the hypothesis, data collection and analysis, interpretation of results and conclusion.

Research Methods: The survey method used to collect data has been used in the proposed research. Newspapers, magazines, project reports, annual reports of the government, websites and books were used to collect relevant information for the research. The present questionnaire and interview schedule method have been used by the researcher for the collection of primary data.

Sampling or Sample Size: Based on random sampling in Allahabad city, only those 200 readers were included who have been reading either one or both of these newspapers (**Dainik Jagran** and **Amar Ujala**) regularly for at least 2 years. The respondents included 100 general newspaper readers, 25 media experts, 25 academicians, 15 media teachers, 10 Research Scholars and 25 politically active people. A schedule questionnaire was prepared for this. After the survey, it was used for field study with sampling. Apart from this, 10-15 editors, journalists and media management associated with well-known print media of the country including Allahabad were interviewed and their opinion regarding paid news was sought. Thus, convenience sampling was used for data collection in this study. Apart from this, content analysis of two major Hindi newspapers **Dainik Jagran** and **Amar Ujala** was done. For this, newspapers of three days every week have been studied based on the process of rotation from May 1, 2015, to October 31, 2015. That means, in one month, content analysis of 15 issues of Dainik Jagran and 15 issues of Amar Ujala was done. A list of 10 questions has been prepared for this.

VI. Findings and Conclusion

This study revealed that paid news is a powerful weapon which has turned the fourth pillar of democracy into a tool for corporate lobbying. News channels have now turned into commercial enterprises. Its biggest loss is to the public whose voice has now been captured by the corporates. No system is final and if democracy as a system fails in the future, it will be due to paid news and corporate journalism. Paid news is a modern form of advertising. In this, anchors, editors and experts all start working like salesmen of some political party, group or organization. This business of news is done so cleanly that you do not even realize with what cleanness you have been brainwashed and you see your environment from a particular perspective like upper caste or Dalit, Hindu or Muslim, Bengali or Marathi. But have started watching.

The facts are very clearly distorted and implanted in your mind to suit the ideology of a particular group. Due to paid news, the public may get wrong information, rumours, lies, etc., which may affect their decision-making ability. Due to paid news, the voting inclination of the public may change, which may also affect the outcome of the election. Paid news may cast doubt on the intentions and quality of the media, which may weaken its role in democracy. Paid news can create distance, disagreement, opposition, etc. between different classes, religions, and castes, etc. in society, which can lead to a loss of peace and harmony.

In the present times, we have to accept that the fourth pillar of democracy is increasingly getting involved in the unethical and valueless commercial business of paid news. Another issue of media is whether it is changing the news under the pressure of commercial competition. To win in the commercial competition, some media houses are making the news interesting to attract the people who want a particular point of view. Encourages. Media should be aware to stay on the right path of democracy. Staying away from unethical professionalism, the media should remain truthful, so that our society can be alerted to correct and true information.

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