



Visual Elements in Newspapers – A Study of Two Indian and Two Iranian Newspapers

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ABSTRACT:

We are today living in the information age, where most of us are interested about the events taking place not only around us, but also in various parts of the world. Despite the advent of e-newspapers and the electronic media (radio and TV), print journalism continues to hold its pride of place as a reasonably reasonable source of ‘infotainment’ (information and entertainment), especially in developing countries like India. The newspaper industry may be facing a decline in the western world, but it is thriving in countries like India. This may be due to the phenomenal rise in the literacy rates and the hunger for news of the literate population. No wonder, more and more newspapers, both in English and the regional languages are appearing on the media landscape. The established newspapers are facing a stiff competition from their existing rivals, as also the new entrants. Today, no newspaper can claim to have

a monopoly in the market since the readers have a wide range of choices before them. Thus, newspapers have to adopt innovative means to capture the eyeballs of the ‘undecided’ readers. One of the means is by having an attractive and innovative layout and design.

This paper will explore how two Indian (*The Times of India* and *Eenadu*) and two Iranian (*Etelaat* and *Jamejam*) newspapers have been handling their design and layout issues. Before proceeding further, it needs to be highlighted here that the means of news gathering and presentation and display of news items in online newspapers are largely based on the principles followed by the conventional newspapers. Issue like proximity, immediacy, consequence, human interest, and ‘negative news is more newsworthy than positive ones’ continue to the mantras for the newshounds. On the design side, the



stiff competition on the media scene is forcing newspapers to adopt the most creative and innovative practices. The issue of design and layout is all about adapting to situational demands, while, at the same time, projecting a distinct identity of the newspaper so that the readers can locate it even from a distance [1].

The choice of the four newspapers has been a very conscious one. *The Times of India* is one of India's longest surviving newspapers. *Eenadu* (in Telugu) is a leading regional language newspaper. The two Iranian newspapers should give an idea of how, despite the strict government control in a number of ways, these have been able to attract a large number of readers. Like in many cases, newspapers are operating in a buyers' market and have a wealth of choices before them. In this context, one may recall the comment of Henry Ford, "My customers can purchase cars of any colour – as long as it is black!" [2]. Newspapers of today cannot afford to adopt such an arrogant stance. They, there, need to be on their toes to retain the existing readers and attract new ones. The lesson that the writer would like to project is that newspapers, including the four under study, are giving a lot of importance to the get-up and 'marketability' aspects [3].

Keywords: Eenadu, Etelaat, Electronic media, Newspapers, The Times of India, Jamejam.

INTRODUCTION

It is a well-known fact that the actual selection of news is done by the editorial department. The next issue is how to display that and where – the front page, the editorial page, the business page, the sports page or in some other inner page. Each page cannot have the same design principles, since the purpose of every page varies.

Any printed newspaper page, today, needs to synergise the textual matter and the graphics, so that it neither looks like a photo album, or a drab handout. No wonder, it has been said, "Visual interchanges of any sort, whether convincing or useful, from boards to birth declarations, ought to be seen as the epitome of structure and capacity: the mix of the delightful and the helpful" (Rand, P. and Pires, 2005, p. 126). Such a blend was characterised by Bonsiepe (1997) as info-design, the expansion of data configuration and data administration: "another class of visual communication is going to pick up its legitimate profile in an orderly manner. It is still really taking shape and not yet obviously characterised." Also, there are three capacities those realistic pictures perform: typical, epistemic and tasteful. Typical implies

that the picture remains for, or speaks to, something else. "The something else may be a divine being, a thought, or a social quality" (Barnard, 2005, p 13). Epistemic pictures seek to pass on data about the world and its substance. "The way of the data conveyed by an epistemic picture can change tremendously and Amount incorporates guides, scenes, and representations among his illustrations" (Barnard, 2005, p. 13). "Tasteful pictures" are expected to satisfy the onlooker or to create in the observer particular sensations" (Barnard, 2005, p. 13).

As already mentioned, each page consists of a group of visual and textual elements that will form the format of the page. The visuals can include: photos, illustrations, cartoons and diagrams. The textual matter can consist of letters of the alphabet and numbers. Simple as it may seem, letters, whether in simple font, bold, italics, or underlined, of in different sizes, can impart beauty and variety to the page.

It can provide a sense of comic

Effects of Visuals

The impacts of photos as a rule are very much archived. Pictures attract readers to the stories, since these are more eye-catching. Essentially for this study, photos that donot specifically identify with the stories they go with produce the most minimal levels of information. Pictures, which include photos, sketches, maps and charts, also provide a visual relief to the readers from the cold, drab textual matter. Cartoons, can be used as comic diversions from the heavy and serious matter found in the page. The 'white space' between the various news items cannot always be regarded as a waste of space. It helps in separating out the various news items, and, if used innovatively, can enhance the aesthetics of the page.

Despite their nomenclature, cartoons are in fact very serious business. A good cartoon can project a point in a very telling manner.



Homeless: Yes, we aren't homeless... we just prefer sleeping in the street... we are utterly thankful to the government

Readers in both countries are able to have their funny bones tickled. The two images below – the left one from Ethihad and The Times of India will bear out this statement.

Based on this affirmation, obviously the procedure of building a format is quite a well-thought out one. It is important to consider the blend of workmanship – in the significance of inventiveness – and the specialized tenets. It is equally important to remember that configuration is a meaningful exercise. It intends to manage a kind of potential outcomes ready to advance the perusing, to progressive systems, coordinate, underline and, in a profound examinations, even to dissimulate the data. Because of this, to comprehend the realistic discourse or the visual talk inside the newspaper outline, it is

important likewise to consider the advancement of the media when all that is said in done. Be that as it may, the premise of advanced configuration hypothesis and the standards of all thoughts of cutting edge outline actualized in the most recent 50 years were depicted toward the end of the twentieth decade by the Parisian printer Alfred Tolmer, in his book, "MiseEn Page: The Theory and Practice of Lay-Out. "The craft of design is all about achieving a reasonable degree of balance (Tolmer, 1920 apud Hurlburt, 1989, p. 62).

METHODOLOGY:

For the purpose of this study, the writer selected four newspapers: *The Times of India*, *Eenadu*, *Etelaat* and *Jamejam*. The focus was more on how the news items were displayed – rather



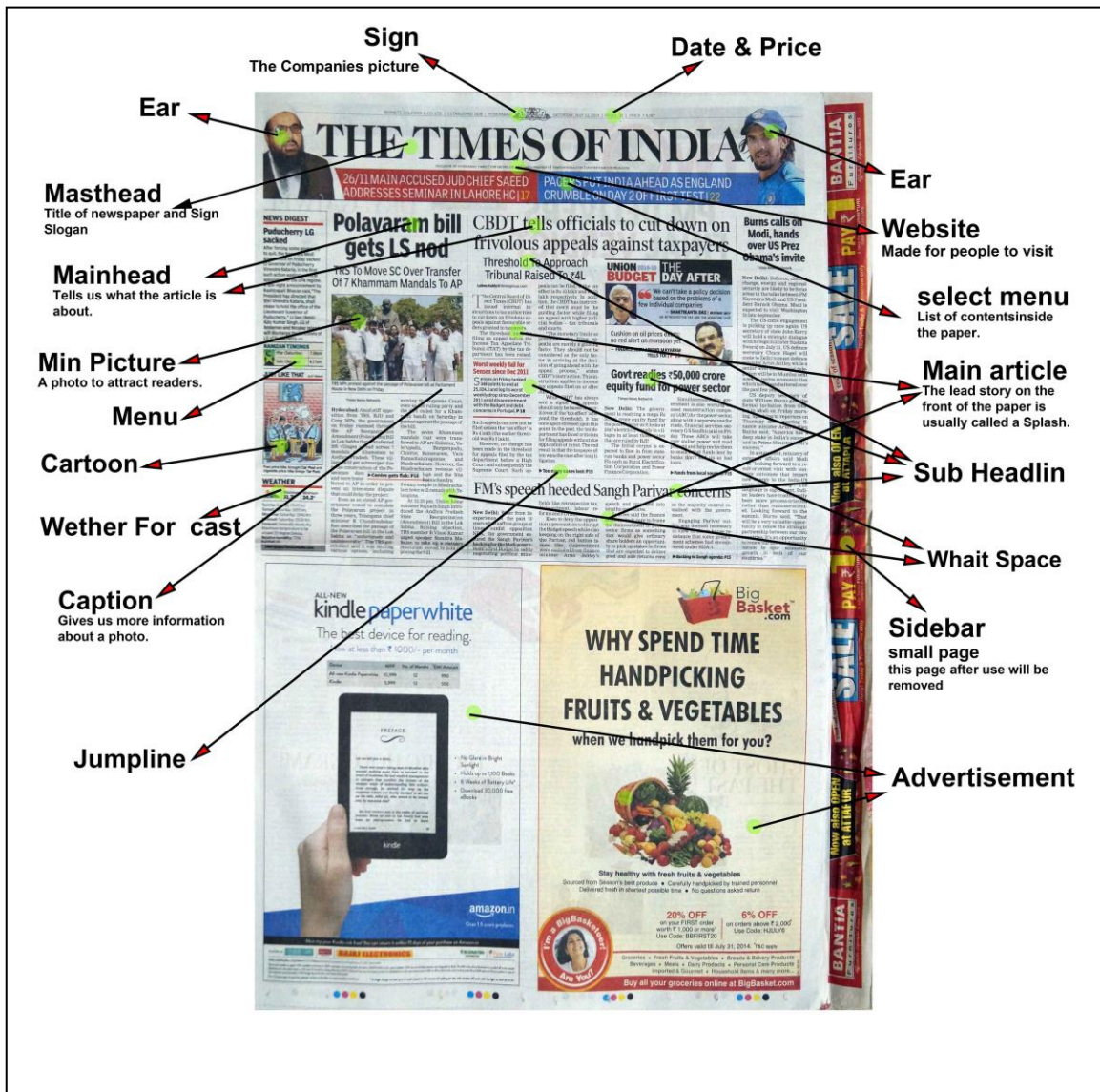
than the matter conveyed in the pages. After all, each newspaper has its own editorial policy, readership profile, and places where it has a relatively strong presence. Hence, it be unreasonable to expect all newspapers to give the same degree of coverage to the same news items.

There are many notions about what functions a layout should perform. However, there is almost universal acceptance of the following:

- It helps in arranging the items on the page in the order of their importance,
- It makes the different items easy to locate, read and understand,
- It makes the page attractive
- It imparts a distinct identity to the particular publication.

The picture below should give one an idea about how a typical front page of a newspaper should look like. The example may be of a particular newspaper, but the

Front Page of the Hyderabad Edition of *The Times of India* - July 12, 2014



concepts behind the placement of the individual elements on the front page would almost be the same.

At a first glance itself, one can notice that any typical front page of any daily, in any language is making copious use of colours and colour photographs. Also, advertisements are liberally

splashed on the page. A lot of attention is being paid to the positioning of the news items, in the order of importance. Let us now see how the four newspapers under study are treating the essential front page elements like masthead, main news, cartoons, weather forecasts, and cartoons.



The banner on the front of a newsletter or other periodical that identifies the publication is its nameplate. The nameplate usually contains the name of the newsletter, possibly graphics or a logo, and perhaps a subtitle, motto, and publication information, like the place from where published and the price of that issue.

The nameplate is the lynchpin in a publications brand. And to most casual observers it is the single most recognisable element of a newspaper's design. The nameplate provides a visual identity for the newsletter and except for a dateline or issue number is usually the same from issue to issue although variations are not unheard of — such as making colour changes or adding graphic embellishments to match the theme of that issue [1].

Masthead

It can be seen that only *The Times of India* has its name in black type, the other three have this in colour. The name *Jam-e-Jam* is in calligraphy, and towards the left side, while those of the others are in type and nearly aligned towards the centre. *Eenadu* differs from the others in that its name is

flanked by advertisements. The other three newspapers give the reader an idea of what to expect in the inner pages. One thing is clear: despite the marginal variations, all the four newspapers have made ample use of colour, even in their mastheads.

Positioning of Main News

Both the Iranian newspapers have given a lot of prominence to the main news item, complete with the photographs. On the other hand, both *The Times of India* and *Eenadu* have sought to achieve a sort of 'balance' by featuring other news items, along with photographs.

Advertisements

One cannot fail to notice the heavy reliance on images in both the Indian newspapers. On the other hand, the Iranian ones give more importance to textual matter to get the message across. One area where *Eenadu* differs from the rest is that, while the other three have specific areas, mostly the bottom half of the page, marked out for the advertisements, in *Eenadu*, there is a news item between the two advertisements towards the bottom of the page.



It can be seen that The Times of India is spread over seven columns and Eenadu and Jam-e-Jam , over six. For *Eetelaat*, there is no specific rule

Overview of all the four front pages

It is clear that all the four newspapers have made ample use of colour, visuals and advertisements. True, there are some variations about the placement of the items, but these are largely conditioned by the ‘culture’ of the particular newspaper and its readers. What stands out is that each newspaper has its distinct identity, due to which, the readers can easily locate it.

CONCLUSION:

It becomes amply clear that newspapers of today have ‘traversed’ a long way from the time when these were first launched. Earlier, the accent was only on conveying the news to the readers. Hardly any attention was paid to make the page reader-friendly. Such was the monopoly that certain newspapers enjoyed in their spheres of influence. The mushrooming of newspapers in the same centre (and in the same set of languages) is forcing the editors to be more focused on how their newspapers are showcased. It could be clearly seen that both the Indian newspapers have had greater scope to experiment by using catchy headlines, making ample

use of colour photographs and positioning their advertisements in strategic positions than their Iranian counterparts. A possible reason for the greater allure of the Indian newspapers is that they have greater access to ad revenue and the government media authorities more tolerant of criticism than the functionaries in Iran.

Despite the excessive controls like censorship, the two Iranian newspapers have within the bounds, managed to express their quite creatively. Once press freedom becomes more like a universal right, the newspaper industry, especially in the developing countries is bound to thrive and continue to retain a valuable band of dedicated readers.

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