

**Media, Mediation and Marketing of Conflicts in India: A Study  
Based on Reconciliation of Peace and Profit in the Periphery of  
Communal Discord**

**Abstract**

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# **ABSTRACT**

## **Media, Mediation and Marketing of Conflicts in India: A Study Based on Reconciliation of Peace and Profit in the Periphery of Communal Discord**

### **1. Introduction:**

In the context of conflict reporting, sensitivity of the subject struggles hard to make its place among the sensational reporting and news selling ingredients, specifically in Indian broadcast media. The practice of news with entertainment, in an unprecedented way, has reached such a stage where sensibility of news content and delivery is losing its grip over production process. The research work is based on conflict reporting in Indian broadcast media in the light of peace and profit making scenario. Conflicts are vividly defined by many scholars and theorists. Primarily, it is a state of opposition or incompatibility with respect to ideas, ideology, and interests, feelings which is manifested in social, psychological, or behavioural phenomenon. In India, there are many conflicts such as communal conflicts (Godhra case, Muzaffarnagar, Babri Masjid) or Maoist problem, border issues. In this research, the focus is narrowed down to Kashmir situation 2016.

Kashmir situation 2016 is taken as case study and the Kashmir valley is taken as area of the study. Burhan Muzaffar Wani, also known as Burhan Wani, was a commander of the Kashmir-based Hizbul Mujahideen. He was killed in an encounter by the Indian security forces on 8 July 2016. Widespread protests have erupted in the Kashmir valley since his death, in which large number of injuries and deaths was reported. Kashmir being placed under 51 consecutive days of curfews imposed by Indian authorities that was lifted from all parts of the region on 29<sup>th</sup> August 2016.

Based on various literatures, researcher has developed the conceptual understanding of mediation and marketing in the scenario of television news content. Two tier conciliatory paradigm of mediation is developed in which conciliatory components of conflict dynamics and facilitative mediation is elaborated. In conciliatory components of mediation, conflict exploration, effects, humanitarian response and reconciliation is discussed upon. For the marketing of contents, researcher has developed the suitable parameters in which selling of contents can be visualized. These parameters include sensationalism, moral panic, negative news, ethnocentrism and labelling. (Zumeta, 2015) In facilitative mediation, the mediator structures a process to assist the parties in reaching a mutually agreeable resolution. The mediator asks questions; validates and normalizes parties' points of view; searches for interests underneath the positions taken by parties; and assists the parties in finding and analyzing options for resolution. The format of this mediation is develop in such a way which attempt to bring parties on agreement based on information and understanding. This research study has worked on developing the functional framework of media for facilitative mediation and explores its scope and challenges.

In theoretical paradigm, News framing is an appropriate theory which emphasises the framing or highlighting of the selective news content. The theory of framing is the crucial part of agenda setting theory which emphasises media role of structuring particular perspective for media consumers in respect of agenda. Framing is relevant in the theoretical paradigm of study because frames are the part of mediating which reflect gatekeeping process of media to highlight particular frames. Robert Entman stressed on Framing definition by specifying that “to frame a communicating text or message is to promote certain facets of a ‘perceived reality’

salient in such a way that endorses a specific problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or a treatment recommendation” (Entman, 1993)

## **1. Research Methodology:**

The broad approach of semiotic structural analysis, news frame analysis and an interview is employed to discern selection and representation in the news content. The interview method is used explore the scope and challenges of media’s role in conflict reporting. Moreover, the study is based on quantitative and qualitative data collection approach.

In research methodology part, the research problems which are identified are as follows:

- i. The on-going media strategy is ineffective for conflict mediation and conciliation.
- ii. Commodification of Conflict through excessive branding.

### **1.1 Objectives of the Study:**

- i. To evaluate the content of conflict news programs in the perspectives of mediation.
- ii. To examine the content of conflict news programs in the perspectives of marketing.
- iii. To do comparative analysis of the frames of mediation and marketing in the respective channel’s scenario.
- iv. To develop the functional framework of facilitative mediation through media.
- v. To examine the contents of conflicts branded as commodity.

## **2.2 Research Questions:**

- i. What is the nature of news content in the perspective of mediation?
- ii. What is the nature of news content in the perspective of marketing?
- iii. What is the comparative status of mediation frame in the respective news channel?
- iv. What is the comparative status of marketing frame in the respective news channel?
- v. What is the scope and challenge of facilitative mediation in Indian News broadcast Media?
- vi. How news channels branded conflict as commodity?

## **2.3 Research Design:**

In semiotic structural analysis, the major axis of analysis i.e. syntagmatic and paradigmatic analysis are deployed. In syntagmatic analysis, Hartley's news narrative function is chosen as an appropriate method to evaluate news narrative structure. In paradigmatic analysis, commutation test is used. The test determines whether a change on the level of the signifier leads to a change on the level of the signified. Under this test, text is divided into minimal significant units. A particular signifier in a text is selected. Then alternatives to this signifier are considered. The effects of each substitution are evaluated in terms of how this might affect the sense made of the sign.

In frame analysis, quantitative and qualitative approaches used to collect data. In frame typology, mediation and marketing frames are defined with suitable variables which are measured to analyse the news content. Rhetorical and technical devices are used to identify frames. Rhetorical devices include word choice,

metaphors, and exemplars. The technical device includes verbal, visual and audio content.

<b>Mediation Frame</b>	<b>Marketing Frame</b>
Exploring Conflict	Sensationalism
Humanitarian response	Moral Panic
Visible/ Invisible effects	Negative News
Reconciliation	Ethnocentrism
	Labelling

An interview approach is sought to discern the potential of media in the process of conciliation of conflicts. Under this method, unstructured interview is conducted to seek the scope and challenges of media's role as a mediator under the Indian Media scenario. Telephonic interview is conducted i.e. information is collected by contacting respondents on telephone itself. The respondents chosen for purpose include to the Media personnel like members from television production team, television editorial board, academic professionals, researchers and other expertise from conflict studies. The questions are open-ended and are directed on the feasibility of facilitative mediation through media in Indian media scenario for different conflicts.

#### **2.4 Media Index and Sampling:**

Researcher will prefer to work on television news channel in view of the following reasons

- i. Television has Audio-Video advantage where impact level of mediation and marketing are deeper.

ii. The continuous broadcasting gives wheel to run the mediation and marketing phenomenon smoothly and effectively.

The selection of the news channel is based on its popularity and credibility. The popularity of news channel is checked against its TRP and viewership. From the data acquired from broadcast audience research council of India (BARC) during the period of conflict coverage (May- December 2016), it is obtained that the news channels which maintained its peak position is Aaj Tak News Channel.

The credibility is judged against the reliability, trust worthiness and social commitment. Based on the Trust Research Advisory's Brand Trust Report, NDTV news channel has been named India's Most Trusted Media Brand for the two consecutive years 2014 and 2015. The report measured and understood consumers' trust and brand insights were quantified by measuring variables that influence consumer behaviour.

1. **Universe:** The universe of the study is news stories on Kashmir uprisings 2016.
2. **Unit of Study:** Unit of study is individual news stories of Burhan Aftermaths.
3. **Time Frame:** The time frame for news stories are from July 2016 to August 2017.
4. **Area of Study:** Kashmir Valley

### **3. Delimitations of the Study:**

- i. Presence and absence of visual effects are measured but elaborative meaning conveyed through particular effects have not brought into research study in view of paucity of time and resource.
- ii. Similarly, meaning conveyed through the use of particular audio content .i.e. perceptions developed through sound effects and music are not evaluated in the research due to paucity of time and resource.

### **4. Limitations of the Study:**

- i. The researcher has the insights that there would be a better understanding of news content, had the news content of regional news media been evaluated and compared in respective of mediation and marketing. But the limitation of this study is that the language of the regional news media was Urdu and Kashmiri which could be categorised as language barrier for the researcher who belong to Hindi spoken region of India.
- ii. The frequency of some certain words, video footage and audio content whose recognition could provide more better understandings of news frames .i.e. whether the frame belongs to mediation or marketing. But the lack of parameters that demarcate frequency level for mediation and marketing is the challenge to pursue this task.

### **5. Findings and Conclusion:**

Data are collected based upon quantitative and qualitative methodology. In quantitative data, news frame analyses are used. The two broad frames of mediation

and marketing are being investigated within the verbal, visual and audio data of news content in the respective channels of NDTV and Aaj Tak. For verbal content, the mediation frame is operationalized in the following sub-frame as: conflict exploration, humanitarian response, effects and reconciliation. (Vreese, 2005) conducted a research study based on multiple-item scale for each of the two news frame. Referring to his study, four news items are developed for the frame 'mediation' and five news items are developed for the frame 'marketing'. NDTV with  $M=.57$  has more mediation frame in comparison to Aajtak news channel with value of  $M=.41$ . In marketing frame, NDTV ( $M= .23$ ) is far less than Aajtak with mean value as  $.64$ . Cronbach's alpha for the mediation frame (NDTV=  $.76$ , AajTak=  $.61$ ) and marketing frame (NDTV=  $.57$ , Aaj Tak=  $.67$ ).

A comparative analysis is discussed in this sub-section regarding mediation frames and its variables. NDTV India has mediation frame with the mean value as  $.57$  with standard deviation of  $1.04$ . While Aaj Tak news channel shown only  $.41$  mediation frame with standard deviation of  $2.3$ . This data shows that NDTV India news program were more de-escalation oriented and through the news content of the program, it has put effort to bring stability or peace in the crisis-ridden zone. While Aaj Tak was comparatively less effective in mediation approach and lagged in the effort of conciliation. The qualitative approach for mediation and marketing frame in the respective news channel shows that NDTV India's news content include conflict exploration and reconciliation sub-frame whereas Aaj Tak's news content included humanitarian stories and effects based stories. For marketing frame, it is revealed that Aaj Tak has used sub-frame of marketing more than NDTV India and sub-frames used were negative news, sensationalism and moral panic. For Sound and Visual effects, results shows that Aaj Tak news content used these effects to market

these contents whereas NDTV India's news content have not used these effects. Evaluation of these contents and their semiotic analysis revealed the branding attributes of these contents.

Beyond the evaluation of news contents, interview method provided the pool of ideas for the scope and challenges of the functional framework of mediation frame. There were various issues discussed in the telephonic interviews with experts from various fields. The issues which came into the limelight are: neutrality of media organisation, credibility, communication facilitation, framing, information gathering, break the deadlock, convince parties, diversion from conventional role, commercialization, competition, conflict dynamics, ideology, lack of secrecy, sustainable process, media literacy. These issues are evaluated on the basis of scope and challenges for the facilitative mediation.

## **6. Recommendations:**

With lots of technological and conceptual development, needs and aspirations of news production and reporting has changed, or say, upgraded. But under all these media revolution, there is no escapism from the media's role of social responsibility. With the vision of serving society, news should always be structured to maintain congruity with peace, stability and development at the social, political and economic level. A thorough analysis of news contents and the trend reporting conflicts propel the researcher to suggest the recommendations which are listed below:

- i. Conflict reporting is a crucial genre of news reporting. In India, professional norms and practices of conflict journalism is not as much developed as in western countries. The competency of Indian media reporting on conflicts

can only be enhanced by regular training and structuring framework for reporting.

- ii. Commercial needs of media organisation should be managed as such that it will not impact news production process and framing of conflict news. Regarding this, suitable guidelines and instruction should be designed.
- iii. A regulatory authority to supervise the presentation and delivery of conflict news so that veracity of news could be maintained and exaggeration and sensational elements could be ignored.
- iv. There should be development of curriculum regarding conflict reporting and conflict communication so that basic knowledge could be instil among journalism students and further scope of good research could be encouraged.
- v. Facilitative mediation is one of the conciliation seeking approach in any conflict. According to research findings, there are many scopes and challenges. So, this is a recommendation to strengthen its scope and try to find out ways to overcome challenges.
- vi. Media literacy is a prominent concept to recognise the credible news content and distinguish between mediation and marketing of contents. Therefore, promotion of media literacy is a crucial task.

## **7. Future Extensions of the Research:**

- i. In the sphere of media platform, social media is a new emerging and crucial aspect of research in which there is a scope to evaluate where social news website producing news content on conflicts and attract the readers through catchy headlines.

- ii. News production process where process of gate-filtering and news framing can be investigated.
- iii. A picture speaks thousand words. Research is crucial from the point of view of investigation in visualization of conflicts in print and electronic media.
- iv. Comparative analysis is an important aspect where different parameters could be evaluated in comparative news content public broadcasting or local news media against national news media.

## **8. Chapter Breakdown**

Research study is segmented into eight chapters which provide complete insights of the various aspects of the study.

### **I. First chapter**

First chapter titled as “Introduction: Media, Mediation and Marketing of Conflicts in India: A Study Based on Reconciliation of Peace and Profit in the periphery of Communal Discord” gave a wide account of various aspects of the research study. The chapter is divided into two parts, first part is Introduction strive to develop familiarisation of research idea. The second part is the methodological part where all the tools and technical aspect of research is presented. As the subject of the study is multidisciplinary which is an amalgamation of three discipline i.e. communication, peace and conflict, international studies. Introductory part include the elaboration of concept of conflict, its dynamics, the different conflicts of India, peace and conciliation strategies, and media practices in mediation and marketing. Research

methodology part presented a structure of whole research idea from the research preliminaries to the research design and its delimitations.

## **II. Second Chapter**

Second Chapter “Mediatizing Conflict: Review of Literature” is the part of reviewing literature. The chapter is broken down into three main sections. First section is Indian media discourse of conflicts where trends of reporting conflicts in Indian media is cited through the subsections of propaganda, ethnocentrism, compromised ethical values, selling conflicts, case study of Burhan Aftermath. Second section includes the literature on media’s potential performance in conciliation and commoditizing conflicts. Third section gives the theoretical framework of the study and highlighted framing conceptual theorisation of the research implications.

## **III. Third Chapter**

Third Chapter “Background of Kashmir Conflict: A Study” is based on area of study i.e. Kashmir conflict. The chapter begins with geographical, demographical and physical detailing of the state. Further it proceeds with the insights of historical and political account of Kashmir state. Emergence of armed conflicts in the state and its various dynamics are elaborated. Birth of militancy, second phase of militancy, conflict in 2008, 2010, Burhan Aftermath 2016, Conflict actors are the subsections of the chapter.

#### **IV. Chapter four**

Chapter four “Media Imagery on Conflicts” is unfolded with emergence of conflicts and communication relationships and past documentation reflect their dependence on each other world-wide. Role of media is spotlighted with its de-escalation and escalation performance in conflicts. Further, segments highlighted the reporting of conflicts in the light of reconciliation approach where convention reporting and advocacy journalism is described. Under advocacy journalism, the concept of peace journalism by J Galtung is explained.

#### **V. Chapter Five**

Chapter Five “Mediation: A Conciliatory Paradigm of Media and Mediation: Special Reference to Kashmir Situation 2016” is focussed on mediation concept in media. Mediation is analysed in the light of general terms and under the specialised knowledge of media. A two tier conciliatory framework is developed where mediation in conventional journalism and in advocacy journalism is studied. The structural and functional framework of facilitative mediation and practices of media in conciliation of conflicts are elaborated.

#### **VI. Chapter Six**

Chapter six “Commercialization of news content: A Study” strive to develop the understanding of economic pressures to serve news as commodity irrespective of professional norms and ethics. News contents are sold in the viewership market with application of various strategies and tactics. The chapter

highlighted these media tactics of marketing news and attempts to raise their TRP.

## **VII. Chapter Seven**

Chapter seven “Data analysis and Interpretation” provides the quantitative and qualitative measurements of news contents. Frame analysis and semiotic analysis are deployed to evaluate the news contents. Interview technique is used to elicit responses on facilitative mediation and interview discussions and responses are structurally written under the various sub-heads. Findings are detailed in numerical and textual form.

## **Chapter Eight**

Chapter Eight “Conclusion and Recommendations” begins with introduction and gist of summaries of all chapters of the thesis. Conclusion part derives conclusions based on various quantitative and qualitative findings. This part is segmented into various sub-section based on objectives and the research questions. It consists of Mediation frame, Marketing frame, comparative analysis, Facilitative mediation and branding of contents. In the later part recommendation and future extensions of the research work is mentioned.