

PUBLIC VOICE IN PRINT: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF LETTERS TO THE EDITOR IN SMALL HINDI NEWSPAPERS IN INDIA

Mukesh Kumar

Assistant Professor

PG Department of Journalism and Mass Communication
Maulana Mazharul Haque Arabic and Persian University, Patna (India)

ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the “Letters to the Editor” (LTE) sections of small Hindi newspapers in India. The letters section is a crucial part of the newspaper and can be described as a ‘platform for debate’ that gives voice to the readers. The letter's section is a platform for the opinions of individual readers. Letters are a ‘barometer of local feeling’ and represent the opinion of the community. The research finds that LTE columns widely recognized as platforms for public debate and readers feedback are unevenly implemented: only 12 of 23 examined small newspapers carried an LTE section. Overall, LTEs when present function as democratic fora that strengthen reader paper ties, surface accountability issues, and occasionally seed news agendas; however, their limited adoption, national issue bias, and participation gaps constrain their potential to reflect grassroots priorities in small Hindi newspapers.

Keywords: Letters to the Editor, Small Hindi Newspaper, Jürgen Habermas's concept of the public sphere, agenda-setting theory.

INTRODUCTION

The letters section is a crucial part of the newspaper and can be described as a ‘platform for debate’ that gives voice to the readers. The letter's section is a platform for the opinions of individual readers (Wahl-Jorgensen, 1998). Letters are a ‘barometer of local feeling’ and represent the opinion of the community (Sigelman, K. & Walkosz, B. J., 1992). The letter's page is for local people who are often afraid of getting in touch with officialdom. By writing a letter, they can have a say (Williams R. , 2005). The letters section is one of the most widely read items of the newspaper, after the front page (Gregory, L. & Hutchins, B. , 2004). The letter's page also acts as a ‘good PR for newspapers’ (Pharo, 2005). Letters are ‘hazy reflections of the public opinion (Grey, D. L. & Brown, T. R. , 1970). As (McNair, 2000), suggested, ‘the reader's letter was and remains an important medium for accessing the views of those members of the public who are motivated and literate enough to compose and submit a few paragraphs in the required style’. The letter's sections are a ‘wide open’ forum for public debate. Letter writers play an active role in shaping the discussion of local communities (Wahl-Jorgensen, 1998). “India is the largest democracy in the world; it becomes very important that the citizens have access to information for the proper functioning of its institutions. In the past, the print media shouldered the responsibility of disseminating information and news regarding the happenings within and outside the country” (RNI., Press in India., 2010). “Small newspapers are the pillars of democracy in this country as they cater to the needs of the majority of the Indian population and particularly those who live in the rural areas” (Sharma, 2006). The Registrar of Newspapers (India) defines small newspaper as “A newspaper with a circulation of up to 25,000 copies per publishing day” (RNI., Press in India., 2010). The small newspapers generally speak the local language of the people and are read and understood by them and thus are capable of influencing or building up public opinion at the grass-root level. They serve as a bridge between the people living at distant places in the interiors of the country on the one hand and the local administration, state government and the central government on the other” (A report: future of print media,2001). Small newspapers serving their

intimate involvement in the local scenario play a more direct role in the process of democratizing communication and motivating socio-economic transformation than newspapers published at trade area. Small newspapers play an important role in the local scenario. In the largest democracy of the world, small newspapers catering to the overwhelming majority of the people, mostly poor and uneducated, need special patronage and care, to make democracy meaningful.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The letters section is a crucial part of the newspaper and can be described as a 'platform for debate' that gives voice to the readers. The letter's section is a platform for the opinions of individual readers (Wahl-Jorgensen, 1998). Letters are a 'barometer of local feeling' and represent the opinion of the community (Sigelman, K. & Walkosz, B. J., 1992). The letter's page is for local people who are often afraid of getting in touch with officialdom. By writing a letter, they can have a say (Williams R. , 2005). The letters section is one of the most widely read items of the newspaper, after the front page (Gregory, L. & Hutchins, B. , 2004). The letter's page also acts as a 'good PR for newspapers' (Pharo, 2005). Letters are 'hazy reflections of the public opinion (Grey, D. L. & Brown, T. R. , 1970). As (McNair, 2000), suggested, 'the reader's letter was and remains an important medium for accessing the views of those members of the public who are motivated and literate enough to compose and submit a few paragraphs in the required style'. The letter's sections are a 'wide open' forum for public debate. Letter writers play an active role in shaping the discussion of local communities (Wahl-Jorgensen, 1998).

(Hynds, 1991), conducted a "large scale survey of newspaper editions in the United States and found that the letter's sections are seen as central to newspapers in 'identifying public concerns and issues, contributing to a forum for the discussion of these issues, making readers feel represented, and lending a variety to the editorial page". LTE section creates the public sphere through the readers.

The internet has created new opportunities and challenges for all aspects of local news production, including the letters' pages. Local newspapers now receive letters on email. Editors approve of this development because it may have resulted in an increase in volume of letters as email has doubled the number of contributions (Hansford, 2005). It also reduces the workload of journalist as emailed letters are not only easier to read than handwritten ones, but also arrive already typed and computerized, and thus easier to 'enter the system'. This also means that there is quicker turnaround from the receipt of letter to its publication which is particularly important for daily papers (Wahl-Jorgensen, 1998). The email option is more likely to mobilize the favored younger letter writers. The new technology is not without their drawbacks. One problem is that they enable the proliferation of 'Astroturf' or 'synthetic' grassroots opinion' (Berman, 2003). However, the Indian local newspapers readers do not contribute much through emails and hence in this study, the trend of LTE increase through email is not apparent.

Every newspaper has to reserve a column for letters from the readers, where readers can express their views on various subjects, including their critique of the inaccuracies in the news and views expressed earlier (PCI, 2001). Letters to the editor is the most popular Column of the newspaper which is also the most read part after the lead pages in a newspaper. The format of the newspaper has changed vastly over times and now letters are coming through the email. Yet the popularity of this column has never declined (Oreh, 1978).

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Letters to the Editor (LTE) exemplify Jürgen Habermas's concept of the public sphere, a communicative space where citizens debate issues of common concern. Situated within newspapers, LTEs allow ordinary readers to intervene in public discourse, challenge dominant narratives, and express dissenting opinions. They transform media from a one-way channel into a forum for dialogue, symbolizing democratic participation. However, editorial gatekeeping constrains inclusivity, often

filtering marginalized voices. Despite such limitations, LTES continue to function as a barometer of public feeling (Sigelman & Walkosz, 1992), reflecting the enduring role of media in shaping deliberative democracy.

Letters to the Editor (LTE) illustrate the principles of participatory communication, where audiences actively contribute to public discourse rather than passively consuming media. By offering feedback, personal perspectives, and alternative framings of news, LTES allow readers to become co-creators of meaning within journalism. Wahl-Jorgensen (2002) highlights that writing letters is both a ritual of participation and a quest for recognition, validating citizens' voices in democratic life. Although subject to editorial gatekeeping, LTES remain vital spaces where grassroots voices engage with institutional power, embodying participatory ideals that enhance dialogue, accountability, and inclusivity in media communication.

Letters to the Editor (LTE) intersect with agenda-setting theory, which suggests that the media does not tell people what to think but what to think about (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). While newspapers set agendas through news selection, LTES allow readers to influence and redirect attention by raising neglected or alternative issues. They function as feedback loops, signaling public priorities to editors and policymakers. Though editorial gatekeeping limits their reach, published LTES can elevate grassroots concerns into broader debates. Thus, LTES embody a dialogic extension of agenda-setting, balancing institutional influence with public intervention in shaping discourse.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Objective of the Research

1. To determine whether local issues are raised in Small Hindi Newspaper as compared to International, National, Regional, Local in Letters to the Editor
2. Examine the Developments content number and space in Small Hindi Newspapers in Letters to the Editor
3. To determine Developmental content gets more space in Small Hindi Newspapers as compared to political, crisis, sports, legal, economy & business and social-religion-cultural in Letters to the Editor.
4. To determine Developmental content gets more space in Small Hindi Newspapers as compared to political, crisis, sports, legal, economy & business and social-religion-cultural in Letters to the Editor.

Sampling

Considering the objectives of this study, two Hindi newspapers each from 19 States (including 3 union territories) were selected for the study, amounting to a total of 38 newspapers. The selected 19 states are the only states which show a significant presence of small newspapers in the Hindi language. The sampling of newspaper issues (edition dates) was undertaken based on the sampling technique devised by Stempel (1952): a monthly stratified sample of 12 issues (one issue per month) for a single newspaper for one entire year was taken (Stempel, 1952).

Procedure for selection of sample: -

For selection purposes and to rule out the element of bias, the states were first arranged in an alphabetical order as shown in column one. Thereafter, two daily newspapers each with the largest circulation in respective states were chosen. These newspapers were arranged in a chronological order according to the unique numbers assigned to each one of them, as shown in column two and three of the chart.

Andhra Pradesh	1.SWATANTRA VAARTHA(Nizamavad)	2.SWATANTRA VAARTHA(Vishakhapatnam)
Assam	3.DAINIK PURVODAY(Guwahati)	4. DAINIK PURVODAY (Jorhat)
Bihar	5.BIHAR KI HAKIKAT(Muzaffarpur)	6.MONA TIMES(Muzaffarpur)
Chandigarh	7.PAHALI KHABAR(Chandigarh)	8.JANSATTA(Chandigarh)
Chhattisgarh	9.SAMACHARKHOJ(Raipur)	10.CHHATTISGARH SWAR(Raipur)
Daman and Diu	11. SAVERA INDIA TIMES (daman)	12. ASALI AZADI(Daman)
Delhi	13.RASHTRAWADI TIMES(Delhi)	14. ISHAN TIMES(Delhi)
Gujarat	15.JANABHUMI HERALD(Surat)	16.JAN HITAISHI(Baroda)
Haryana	17.BABYYIAN TIMES (Rohtak)	18.TYAGI TIMES(Sonipat)
Himachal Pradesh	19.DAINIK BHASKAR(Shimla)	20.JAGRAN DAINIK (kangra)
Jharkhand	21.CHAMAKTHA AIYNA(Jamshedpur)	22.APNA INDIA (Ranchi)
Jammu and Kashmir	23.DAINIK JAGRAN (Jammu)	24.NORTHEN TIMES(Jammu)
Maharashtra	25.DOPAHAR KA SAMANA(Mumbai)	26.TARUN MITRA(Thane)
Madhya Pradesh	27.DAINIK ALOK(Bhopal)	28.KRITI KRANTI(Bhopal)
Punjab	29.DAINIK JAGRAN(Patiala)	30.DAINIK JAGRAN(Bathinda)
Rajasthan	31.ASIAN STANDARD(Jaipur)	32.HELLO TIMES(Jodhpur)
Uttar Pradesh	33.CITY TIMES(Lucknow)	34.NEWS READER(Lucknow)
Uttarakhand	35.RUDRA TIMES(Haridwar)	36.KUMAON TIMES(Haldwani)
West Bengal	37.HIND SAMWAD(Asansol)	38.RAJASTHAN PATRIKA(Kolkata)

Content Analysis

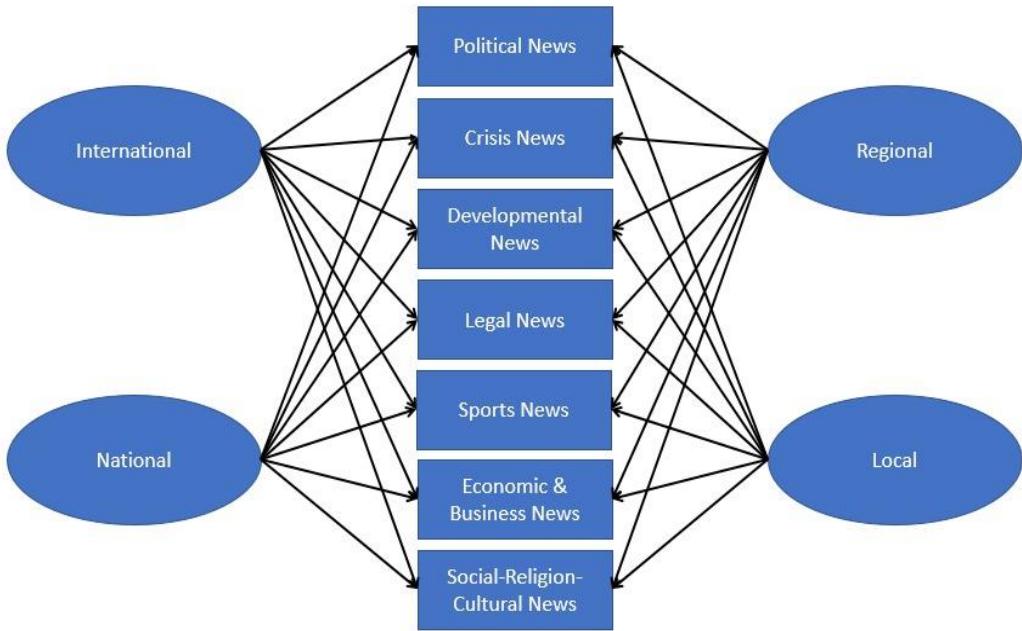
Content analysis is a “popular research method in social sciences, primarily used in analyzing written, verbal, or visual messages in any channel of communication”(Cole, 1988). It is generally defined as “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use” (Krippendorff K. , 2013). As a research method, it is a “systematic and objective means of describing and quantifying phenomena”(Krippendorff K. , 1980).

In this present research paper, study content is available in the following forms for content analysis.

A. Letters to the editor (First two Letters to the editor from each newspaper selected for the sample will be selected).

For this research following categories were studied for the content of the selected newspapers:

- A. International
- B. National
- C. Regional
- D. Local



Qualitative and Quantitative content Analysis of all forms of content were conducted of letters to the editor were analyzed as,

For the qualitative content analysis, the following factors were taken into consideration depending upon the nature of the content of the sample News. For example, in the case of Letters to the Editor, they were analyzed based on three ingredients properties. All the properties are presented in a tabular form below as shown below.

For qualitative
What
Clarity
Continuity

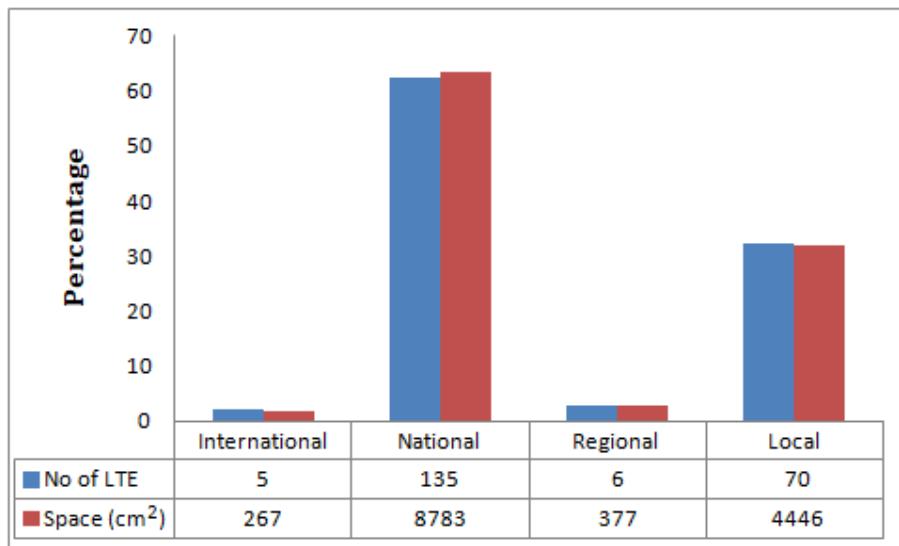
For quantitate
Space (cm ²)
Font Size of Headline
Style of Headline

The numeric point scale will be used for the qualitative content analysis of the data in the following manner: Letter to Editor will be analyzed with the help of -3-point scale. The parameter for the content analysis of Letter to the editor was constructed by the researcher from 1W (What) and relevance elements of 7Cs of communication (Clarity and Continuity).

Finding

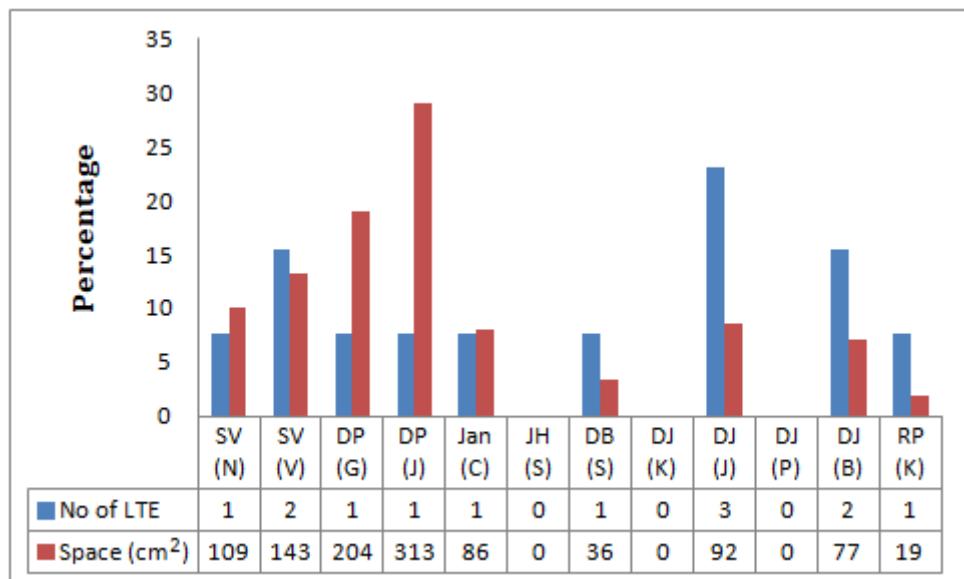
To determine whether local issues are raised in Small Hindi Newspaper as compared to International, National, Regional, Local in Letters to the Editor

62.50% of the LTE were related to National area with 63.30% space. 32.40 % of the LTE were related to Local area with 32.06% space. This is followed by Regional (6%) and International (5%). This graph show that Regional and International LTE given less importance in small Hindi newspapers.



Graph 1: LTE and Geographical region

Examine the Developments content number and space in Small Hindi Newspapers in Letters to the Editor



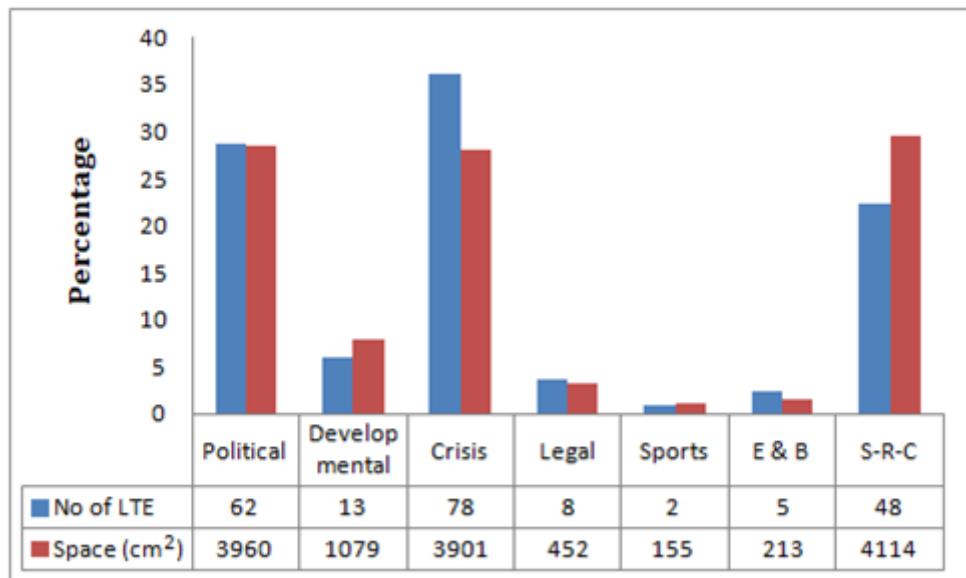
Graph 2: Number and Space of LTE on Developmental issues

This graph shows LTE on developmental issues published in small Hindi Newspaper. During the content, analysis totals 13 LTE published in the newspaper. The maximum number of the LTE on developmental issues (3) published by Dainik Jagran (Jammu). This is followed by Swatantra Vaartha (2) and Dainik Jagran, Bathinda (2).

Janabhumi Herald (Surat), Dainik Jagran (Kangra) and Dainik Jagran (Patiala) have not been given any space on developmental related issues in LTE.

According to maximum space given to LTE on the developmental issue, Dainik Purvoday (Jorhat) gives 29% space in the newspaper. This is followed by Dainik Purvoday, Guwahati (18.90%) and Swatantra Vaartha, Visakhapatnam (13.24%).

To determine Developmental content gets more space in Small Hindi Newspapers as compared to political, crisis, sports, legal, economy & business and social-religion-cultural in Letters to the Editor.



Graph 3: Letter to Editor and Topic

The small Hindi newspaper carries maximum news LTE content (62) of political content (28.54%) space but Maximum space given to Social-religion-cultural content (29.65%) and lowest number of stories (2) on Sports LTE content 1.11%. This is followed by crisis news content (28.11%), Developmental news content (7.78%), Legal (3.28%) and Economy & Business (1.53%).

Examine the developmental content in the Small Hindi Newspaper in News Stories, Editorials and Letters to the Editor

The developmental news stories published in the small Hindi Newspapers are related to Administration, Agriculture, Defense missile development, Electricity, , Gym, Environment, Education, Gas related issues, irrigation, Health, food security bill, Infrastructure, Livelihood policy, Local area development program, Memorial spot development, National employment guarantee program, Park, Planning related issues, Railway station development, Roads, School, water, Science congress, , Solar plant, Transport, Special protection force policy, Wage policy, Wan program and Water drain issues.

The developmental related editorials published in the small Hindi Newspapers are related to Administration, Education, Environment, Food, Governance, Health, Information technology, Labor, Livelihood Planning, Planning, Policy for livelihood, solar energy, Tourism development planning and Water.

The developmental related LTE published in the small Hindi Newspapers are related to Cleanliness drive, De addiction center issue, Education, Farmer loan, Food bill, Girl's hostel, Health, Indian space research development, Job policy, Literacy, Rickshaw, Road and Tourism.

DISCUSSION

Every newspaper has to reserve a column for letters from the readers, where readers can express their views on various subjects, including their critique of the inaccuracies in the news and views expressed earlier (PCI, 2001). However, only 12 newspapers out of the 23 small newspapers publish Letters to the Editor, (15 Small Hindi Newspapers are not found). Example – *Swatantra Vaartha*, Nizamabad and Visakhapatnam (Pathak Vartha), *Dainik Purvoday*, Guwahati and Jorhat (Priy Sampadak), *Jansatta* (Chaupal), *Janabhumi Herald* (Chitti Charcha), *Dainik Bhaskar* (Pathak Samwad), *Dainik*

Jagran, Kangra, Patiala, Bhatinda and Jammu (Pathaknama), Rajasthan Patrika (Pathak peeth). Dopahar ka Sammna publishes the LTE section only in the Sunday edition called 'Pati'. Usually, in the LTE section. All newspapers publish the name and place of the writer but the *Janabhumi Herald* newspaper publishes only the name of contributors.

In the following newspapers, the LTE column was not being published, example-- *Savera India Times, Ashali Azadi, Jan Hitaisi, Tyagi Times, Chamaktha Aiyna, Dopahar ka Sammana, Tarun Mitra, Dainik Alok, Kirti Kranti, Kumaon Times, Hind Samwad*.

Letters to the editor is the most popular Column of the newspaper which is also the most read part after the lead pages in a newspaper. The format of the newspaper has changed vastly over times and now letters are coming through the email. Yet the popularity of this column has never declined (Oreh, 1978). Example- *Rajasthan Patrika, Dainik Jagran (Kangra)*.

The publication of the first letter in *Times of India* and *statesman* newspaper was considered very prestigious. It used to include letters of great writers (Ogan, 1982). Similarly in the LTE of *Jansatta* the letters of many esteemed writers are also published. Example - K. Vikram Rao and Chaman Lal.

The letter's sections are also often a source of ideas for news stories (Wahl-Jorgensen, 1998), Example when Indian Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) showed three historical men Akbar, Ranjit Singh, and Ashok as hosts in the hoarding of its hotels, then Arvind Mohan wrote a letter in the 'Dinman' magazine, after which ITDC was forced to withdraw this advertisement (Rampal, 1984), this is the power of LTE. Through this column, readers expose many problems in their own locality. The reader also reveals the error of an article and news in the letters to the editor (Sinha, 1986). In *Jansatta* newspaper, readers also point out errors that may exist in an article. Moreover, in the LTE section both aligned and opposing views are published together which results in a holistic representation of a news story or view point.

"The letters to the editor section have a unique place in local journalism, because it is the only place in the newspaper where readers have their say, in their own words, on both small and large issues that preoccupy communities everywhere" (Wahl-Jorgensen, 1998). *Swatantra Vaartha* newspaper gives the maximum space to issues related to their region. "Readers should be encouraged to participate and to express their opinions, their fears and their hopes in the columns of their newspaper. The local newspaper should provide the individual with a platform, which is often their only platform" (Hadwin, 1998), but some local newspapers do not have an LTE column.

The letter's sections serve a series of practical purposes for local papers, they strengthen ties between newspapers and their communities (Tunstall, 1977), (Jorgensen-Wahl, 2002) and newspaper with a poor letter's page has poor contact with its community. The section provides the newspapers with much-needed feedback on their coverage. This is especially useful for the vast majority of local newspapers (Franklin, Local Journalism and local media : Making the local news , 1998). This section is a 'measure of the papers health' (Hadwin, 1998). The reader's column is not a charity to the readers. It is one of the ways in which accountability of the newspaper is ensured (PCI, 2001), but the researcher found many newspapers they do not publish the LTE section.

Most papers will not print contributions that are anonymous or lack contact information. Editors usually reject contributions from outside the papers. Editors prefer shorter letters, and rarely publish ones that are longer than 200 words, but the first letters published in *Jansatta* and *Dainik Purvoday* newspaper respectively were longer than 200 words. *Dainik Jagran* and *Dainik Bhaskar* mostly publish 100 words letters. They edit down longer contributions that add to the debate, even as they lament that getting them into a publishable shape can be one of the toughest jobs in the newsroom. It is difficult because letter writers often express themselves in what editors describe, variously, as 'convoluted', 'confused' and 'rambling' language – the language of the impassioned amateur writer, rather than that of a polished professional journalist. Editors struggle to preserve the personal voice

and the substance of the letter (Wahl-Jorgensen, 1998).

The letters section is one of the most dangerous pages in the newspaper, because people can slip in the most diabolical things. As their role is to manage the debate, rather than censor it (John, 2005). Editors generally prefer letters that relate directly to the local news agenda and will generate further discussion. The letters to local newspapers reflect ongoing debates on issues central to the well-being of the community. Thus, local issues take up the majority of the letter's pages (Wahl-Jorgensen, 1998). Although, newspapers discuss many local issues but there are newspapers in which letters to editors are on a different geographical region than the one they are published from. For example, *Rajasthan Patrika*, is published from Kolkatta but it publishes letters from Rajasthan. Similarly, in *Dainik Bhaskar* (Shimla), letters of readers from Chandigarh and Punjab. *Dainik Jagran*, Jammu edition gives space to letters from Punjab readers. Whereas the nature of the LTE of *Jansatta* is national. *Jansatta* is published from Chandigarh but it features letters from readers from all over India. Hence, the newspaper is unable to establish a connection with local readers through the LTE section. As per the researcher's analysis most LTE sections are published by big houses running small newspapers, hence the letters are not regional but of those geographical areas from which that edition is not published. However, *Swatanta Vaartha* (Andhra Pradesh) and *Dainik Purvoday* (Assam) publish letters from local readers. In these newspapers, the LTE Section also publishes poetry.

Local issues take up the majority of letters page. Moreover, these issues often tie into larger national debates and concerns in the letter's sections of the local newspapers. There were debates found on the same topics that dominated the pages of national broadsheet newspapers. The quality of public health, transportation services, and the rising price of petrol are a few examples (Wahl-Jorgensen, 1998). The LTE of *Swatantra Vaartha* and *Dainik Purvoday*, *Janabhumi Herald* and *Dainik Jagran* has letters written by regional readers. Letter writers are 'local people who feel motivated and involved in a given issue' (John, 2005). These are people who make the effort to pen a letter 'feel anger, passion, or the urge to set the record straight. They want to uncover something that they feel others should know about (Deacon, 2005).

"The older readers were frequent readers of letters to the editor" (Skogerbo, Eli. & Winsvold, Marte., 2011). Hart concluded that 'typical letter writers are elderly and confirmed 'that letter writers are older, wealthier and better educated than average' and 'letter writers as people who 'have civic pride, have seen things change in their communities, and do not like it (Keighley, 2005). In this particular study, we cannot comment on this analysis because the age group was not mentioned in the LTE.

However, the researcher analyzed that in this particular section, the contribution of the female's readers was less than 10 %. Out of the 216 letters to editors published in this section, only 20 were from female contributions. The maximum number of letters published in this section were 5 published in *Dainik Bhaskar* (Shimla) and *Dainik Bhaskar* (Jammu), followed of *Dainik Jagran* (Patiala).

Letters from a local councilor are of little relevance to the public debate. Such contributions move the section away from the idea that it is for ordinary people. "Editors are less keen to include the letters of their 'regulars', or those letter writers who are frequent contributors" (Wahl-Jorgensen, 1998). There are some who write letters regularly, for example- Indra Singh Dhigan (*Jansatta*, Chandigarh), Umasankar Gopal (*Dainik Jagran*, Patiala), Sham Vidrohi (*Dainik Jagran*, Kangra) and Madan Singhal (*Dainik Purvoday*, Jorhat). Editors seek to limit contributions from regulars because they seek out a diversity of voices (John, 2005). Therefore, editors prefer letters from 'new writers', also because they see letter writing as a means of enhancing bonds between the newspaper and its readers. Most editors are particularly keen to hear from young writers, who are underrepresented on the letter's page, and whose interest in their local paper is vital to its future financial success. When young readers do write in, their letters are often given top billing on the page (Wahl-Jorgensen, 1998). The point of these letters is to give different people a platform (Hadwin, 1998) and not stick to creating a monopoly of opinions on the LTE page.

Reader's letters remain a vital part of local newspapers, despite changes and challenges to the form. Editors view the letters section not only as a key democratic responsibility, but also as a useful tool for maintaining good relations with the community. Yet letters are not necessarily reliable indicators of local public opinion, because the keenest contributors are also the people who have the strongest, most polarized, and unchangeable stances. The letters' section is one of the few places that provide a sense of the hotly debated topics in each local community, and they are invaluable in forging and maintaining ties between newspapers and their readers (Wahl-Jorgensen, 1998).

CONCLUSIONS

Trade Area of Publication:

- The number of letters sent to the editor of a Local geographical region. They originated from the trade area of publication of the newspaper or out of the trade area of publication. 70 LTE were found to be related to a local area with 45 LTE originating from the trade area of publication and the other 25 LTE were related to the local region but were not published from the trade area of the newspaper.
- Maximum number of LTE (11) originated from the trade area of publication of newspaper in *Swatantra Vaartha* (Vishakhapatnam) followed by *Dainik Jagran*, Kangra (8), *Swatantra Vaartha*, Nizamavad (5) and *Dainik Purvoday*, Jorhat (4).
- The space devoted to LTE of a Local geographical region. They originated from the trade area of publication of the newspaper or out of the trade area of publication. 4446 cm^2 was devoted to local area with 3269 cm^2 space was devoted to LTE originating from the trade area of publication and about 1177 cm^2 space was allocated to the local region but not published from the trade area of the newspaper.
- Maximum space of 810 cm^2 was given in *Dainik Purvoday* (Jorhat) for letters to the editor originating from the trade area of publication of newspaper. Followed by *Swatantra Vaartha* (760 cm^2), *Dainik Purvoday*, Guwahati (502 cm^2) and *Swatantra Vaarta*, Nizamavad (417 cm^2).

Geographical Regions:

- 62.50% of the LTE were about the National stories with about 63.30% space being allocated to them. 32.40 % of the LTE was about the Local area with about 32.06% space devoted to it. This was followed by Regional (6%) and International (5%) coverage respectively.
- Regional and International LTE were given less importance in small Hindi newspapers.

Conclusion Regarding Development Content:

- The development-oriented LTE published in small Hindi Newspapers was dedicated to Cleanliness drive, De-addiction Center issue, Education, Farmer loans, Food bill, Girl's hostel, Health, Indian Space Research Development, Job policy, Literacy, Rickshaw, Road, and Tourism.
- 13 LTE on development issues were published in small Hindi Newspapers. The Maximum number of the LTE on development issues was 3 in *Dainik Jagran* (Jammu). Followed by *Swatantra Vaartha* 2 and *Dainik Jagran*, Bathinda 2.
- *Janabhumi Herald* (Surat), *Dainik Jagran* (Kangra) and *Dainik Jagran* (Patiala) did not give any space on development issues in the LTE.

- The maximum space given to LTE on developmental issue was in *Dainik Purvoday* (Jorhat) which gave 29% space in the newspaper. Followed by *Dainik Purvoday*, Guwahati (18.90%) and *Swatantra Vaartha*, Visakhapatnam (13.24%).

Conclusion Regarding Coverage of Beat/Topic

- The small Hindi newspaper carried maximum news LTE content 62 of political nature, covering 28.54% of space. However, the maximum space was given to Social-religion-cultural issues (covering 29.65%) and the lowest number of stories (2) was on Sports LTE content 1.11%. This was followed by crisis news content (28.11%), Development news content (7.78%), Legal (3.28%) and Economy & Business (1.53%).

REFERENCES

1. Berman, A. (2003). Turf war: copy desk vs. copycats. *Editor & Publisher*, 136 (6) , 4-5.
2. Cole, F. L. (1988). Content analysis: process and application. *Clinical Nurse Specialist*, 2(1) , 53-57.
3. Deacon, C. (2005, August 8). Letters to the editor in local and regional newspapers. (K. Wahl-Jorgensen, Interviewer)
4. Franklin, B. (1998). *Local Journalism and local media: Making the local news*. London: Routledge.
5. (2001). *Future of print media*. New Delhi: Press Council of India.
6. Grey, D. L. & Brown, T. R. (1970). Letters to the editor: hazy reflections of public opinion. *Journalism Quarterly*, 47, 450-456.
7. Gregory, L. & Hutchins, B. . (2004). Everyday editorial practices and the public sphere: analysing the letters to the editor page of a regional newspaper. *Media International, Australia* - 112, 186–200.
8. Hadwin, S. (1998). Real readers, real news: the work of a local newspaper editor. In B. Franklin, *Local journalism and local media: making the local news* (pp. 140-149). London: Routledge.
9. Hansford, C. (2005, September 1). Letters to the editor in local and regional newspapers. (K. Wahl-Jorgensen, Interviewer)
10. Hynds, E. C. (1991). Editorial page editors discuss the use of letters. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 13, 124–136.
11. John, D. (2005, July 29). Letters to the editor in local and regional newspapers. (K. Wahl-Jorgensen, Interviewer)
12. Jorgensen-Wahl, K. (2002). The normative-economic justification for public discourse: letters to the editor as a “wide open” forum. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 79 (1), 121-133.
13. Keighley, G. (2005, August 10). Letters to the editor in local and regional newspapers. (K. Wahl-Jorgensen, Interviewer)
14. Krippendorff, K. (2013). *Content Analysis: An introduction to its methodology* (3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage).
15. McCombs, M.E. & Shaw, D. L. . (1972). The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36, 176-187.
16. McNair, B. (2000). *Journalism and Democracy: An Evaluation of the Political Public Sphere*. London: Routledge.
17. Ogan, C. L. (1982). Development journalism/ communication: the status of the concept. *International communication gazette Vol.- 29*, 3-13.

18. PCI. (2001). *Future of Print Media: A Report*. New Delhi: Press Council of India.
19. Pharo, M. (2005, August 12). Letters to the editor in local and regional newspapers. (W. K. Jorgensen, Interviewer)
20. Rampal, K. R. (1984). Adversary Vs. Developmental journalism: Indian mass media at the crossroads. *International communication gazette Vol.- 34*, 3-20.
21. RNI. (2010). *Press in India*. New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.
22. Sharma, D. (2006). *Modern Journalism reporting and writing*. New Delhi: Deep and Deep Pvt Ltd.
23. Sigelman, K. & Walkosz, B. J. (1992). 'Letters to the editor as a public opinion thermometer: the Martin Luther King holiday vote in Arizona. *Social Science Quarterly*, 73, 938–946.
24. Sinha, A. K. (1986). Communication and rural development: the Indian scene. *International communication gazette Vol.- 38* , 59-70.
25. Skogerbo, Eli. & Winsvold, Marte. (2011). Audiences on the move? Use and assessment of local print and online newspapers. *European journal of communication vol.-26*, 214-229.
26. Stempel, G. H. (1952). Sample size for classifying subject matter in dailies. *Journalism Quarterly*. 29 (2) , 333-334.
27. Tunstall, J. (1977). Letters to the editor. In O. &.-U. Boyd Barrett, *Studies on the Press* (pp. 203–248). London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
28. Wahl-Jorgensen, K. (1998). Letters to the editor in local and regional newspapers: giving voice to the readers. In B. Franklin, *Local Journalism and local media: Making the local news* (pp. 219-231). London: Routledge.
29. Williams, R. (2005, September 1). Letters to the editor in local and regional newspapers. (K. W. Jorgensen, Interviewer)