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**Quality in Journalism:
Perceptions and Practice in an Indian context**

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*To Amma
My guru and my friend*

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the concept of quality in journalism from an Indian perspective with the aim of identifying its elements and the factors influencing it. It is framed in a mixed methods paradigm and uses 'surface structures' and 'story boxes' as tools to study the perceptions and practice of quality in Indian journalism. Qualitative semi-structured interviews with 22 Indian newspaper journalists and quantitative content analysis of 108 newspaper pages and 569 news items are used to identify the ideal-practice gap between journalists' perceptions of quality and the evidence of it in news content. The research methods are informed by normative assumptions of quality based on journalism's democratic role and functions.

Findings are derived using the principles of applied thematic analysis to identify core themes and sub-themes in qualitative data and from descriptive statistical analysis of quantitative data. This thesis identifies the core elements of quality, which are closely linked to and influenced by the shared professional values of Indian journalists, such as autonomy, objectivity and public service. The content analysis shows little evidence of idealistic perceptions of quality, with notions of quality at the journalists' level converging with content only in four minor aspects and differing in the six critical aspects of accuracy, balance, context, good writing and the informative and investigative roles of journalism.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

This thesis is grounded in the debates surrounding the ideal-practice gap in the understanding of journalism and its normative functions in a democratic society and how this knowledge forms the basis for what constitutes quality in journalism. Research into quality in journalism is as fragmented as the nature and understanding of journalism itself. It is an area of enquiry that has been, like journalism studies, approached from so many perspectives and prisms that its status provides no common framework (Zelizer, 2009; Shapiro, 2010). This fragmentation identifies the two critical ideations which this thesis has addressed in identifying and developing a research framework for quality in journalism. Firstly, two of the key terms for this study – ‘journalism’ and ‘quality’ – have many definitions, meanings and connotations in both academic debates and everyday use. Everyone who has set about defining journalism has agreed that meaning and expectations differ among various interest groups engaged in journalism, such as journalists, journalism scholars, audiences and other stakeholders. Secondly, and arguably as a result of the first point, quality in journalism is dependent on the conception of the relationship between journalism and the society in which it exists or functions. This relationship is complicated and varies according to national and cultural contexts.

In acknowledging contextual differences, this study seeks to understand quality in journalism by placing it in a country-specific context and identifying the practical frameworks within which journalists conceptualise quality in their work. Specifically, it aims to explore the concept of quality in journalism within an Indian context.

Various factors pose challenges to this endeavour. Firstly, Indian print journalism is in a stage of transition that is unique in many ways. When newspaper circulations across the world are decreasing, the Indian newspaper industry is growing and thriving (Rodrigues, 2009), despite competition from television and digital media for both audience and advertiser share. This growth is part of a broader trend in the Indian media industry, which is expected to become one of the leading media and entertainment industries in the world by 2021 (PricewaterhouseCooper (PwC) India, 2017). Secondly, as part of this growth, the Indian newspaper market has undergone many structural changes, with regional monopolies being broken and challenged by newspapers opening up new editions across the country. While this has created more jobs for journalists, these structural and market changes have also led to a critical re-evaluation of journalism and its role among practitioners and academics in the light of institutional policies oriented towards commercialisation (Ram, 2011; Rodrigues, 2009; Sonwalkar, 2014). Finally, although print journalism has been going through these changes, they have not been comprehensively addressed by journalism research in India; indeed, quality in these changing times has been discussed in only two previous studies.

Rodrigues (2009) engaged with the question of quality through the lens of the marketing strategies of newspapers in a competitive environment. Her interviews with many senior journalists and editors revealed that aggressive marketing has led to more coverage of glamour, fashion, sports and celebrity news that attracts young readers while serious reporting takes a backseat. For example, the concept of Page 3 news was introduced by *The Times of India* in Mumbai, with an entire page devoted to crime, violence, fashion and Bollywood. This prompted an advertisement in *The Hindu* stating

“We have Page 1, 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7” as a response to *The Times of India* opening an edition in the former’s geographical stronghold, the city of Chennai in Tamil Nadu state. According to Vipul Mudgal, Research Editor of the *Hindustan Times*, interviewed by Rodrigues (2009), in many smaller towns where newspapers are opening up editions, very few people are fluent in English. These papers dilute the quality of the English language in order to attract more readers. Other factors contributing to the quality of a newspaper, according to editors interviewed by Rodrigues (2009), include the level of education and critical-analytical skills of young journalists; the recent trend of newspapers to present one or two big stories on the front page to grab readers’ attention; the plague of ‘paid news’, whereby politicians pay publications for favourable coverage during election seasons; communally partisan coverage, especially during riots and wars; and the lack of coverage of Indian citizens who live below the poverty line.

In the only other account of quality in Indian journalism, Sonwalkar (2014) presented a critical review of the challenges facing Indian journalism today. Treating the diverse forms of Indian journalism as a single entity and basing his analysis on existing studies, he critiqued various national journalistic trends that affected quality. Specifically, he addressed issues such as commercialism in newspapers, soft news content on television channels and the practice of paid news, whereby content paid for by advertisers appeared as regular news stories (Sonwalkar, 2014, p.272). In print journalism, Sonwalkar (2014, p.272) described the market-friendly policies introduced by *The Times of India* soon after liberalisation and the entry of international players to illustrate the rapid growth of what he called an institutionalised ‘corporate culture’ in Indian newspapers. Some of the pioneering efforts of this largest circulating daily in

India to move towards corporatisation included advertorials, whereby advertisers could pay for editorial space; buying equity in the companies owned by their advertisers; and a focus on content targeted towards a young, urban readership. Other newspapers, Sonwalkar (2014) argued, were initially critical of these market-oriented policies yet were quick to follow, with the concept of paid news becoming a common trend and expanding to paid political news content during elections.

The current study differs considerably from Sonwalkar's (2014) analysis of quality Indian journalism as well as Rodrigues' (2009) interviews with Indian journalists. It departs from the former at a conceptual level by engaging with quality as an independent construct; from the latter, it differs in approach by comparing Indian journalists' responses with a content analysis of newspapers. Thus, it seeks to make contributions to theory and methodology in journalism studies by exploring quality in Indian journalism through the perceptions of Indian journalists and evidence of it in newspaper content.

1.1 Research questions and rationale

This thesis makes two claims to originality and contributes to theory in journalism studies through describing the elements that make up professional ideologies of Indian journalism and identifying an ideal-practice gap between perceptions and practice of quality in journalism.

A review of definitions by scholars engaged in research into quality in journalism shows few similarities or comparable frameworks among the various discussions. A comprehensive literature review on quality in journalism has shown that each work has

approached quality in its own unique way, using various ways and means to define and measure it. Some have addressed it using the medium, for example newspapers (Merrill 1968; Bogart, 1989) as a reference point, while others have used content as a measure (Lacy and Fico, 1991); some have used quality interchangeably with excellence (Gladney, 1990; 1996; Shapiro, 2010; Maguire and Shapiro, 2011) or performance (Stone, Stone and Trotter, 1981). Definitions of quality in journalism have also included different references to excellence or criteria for excellence (Shapiro, 2010), journalistic excellence (Maguire and Shapiro, 2011), 'good work' (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2007) and performance or editorial performance (Bogart, 1989; 2004). The way quality is used as a synonym for excellence and performance will be discussed in Chapter 4. Studies of each of the authors mentioned here have been considered critically as well. It is sufficient to say here that Shapiro (2010, p.145) gave a clear summary when he said that journalism quality has 'no common evaluative lexicon'.

The differences in approaches illustrate the challenges in defining and studying quality. Merriam-Webster Online (2018) defined quality as 'superior in kind' while giving an alternative definition as 'a high level of value or excellence'. Picard (2000, p.97) defined it as 'providing value for the money or time consumers spend on a product'. However, when it comes to quality in journalism, many scholars have had difficulty defining it (Lacy and Fico, 1991; Picard, 2000; Shapiro, 2010). Picard (2000, p.97) acknowledged that it is 'nearly impossible to articulate what elements make up' the concept of quality in journalism.

The current study aims to answer the main research question, *What is quality in journalism?*, by identifying the notions that make up the concept from the journalists'

point of view and by examining the evidence of quality in Indian newspapers. Thus, the two supplementary research questions *How do journalists articulate the concept of quality in journalism?* and *To what extent is quality evident in the practice of journalism?* will be answered through a mixed method research design using semi-structured interviews and newspaper content analysis. Both the supplementary research questions have subsidiary questions, which are formulated and answered in Chapters 6 and 7 respectively.

1.2 Organisation of the thesis

This thesis is organised in eight chapters. The first five chapters establish the context, rationale and methodology for the research questions; the fifth and sixth chapters present the findings of the thesis and a discussion of their implications; and the eighth chapter brings the findings together to answer the main and supplementary research questions schematically.

This introductory chapter, Chapter 1, locates the research problem in the broad context of academic debates around journalism and its quality and also provides an introduction to the Indian context. This chapter also introduces the research questions and the rationale behind their formulation.

Chapter 2 provides the Indian context by examining the historical development of the Indian press from the publication of the first newspaper in 1780 to the thriving, competitive industry that it has evolved into today. Through this historical overview, the chapter also examines the pluralistic and autonomous character of Indian journalism and the influence of libertarian values even among the earliest Indian journalists. This

influence continues today, but has also, today, evolved into concerns about commercialism and its effect on quality.

In Chapter 3, the broader context for this research is established by providing an operational definition for journalism and by examining the occupational standing and role of journalism in society. These broader considerations about journalism and its public role influence journalistic notions of quality at the individual, organisational and societal level, as evidenced in the literature reviewed in this chapter.

Chapter 4 is a comprehensive and critical review of existing normative and empirical literature on quality in journalism. It discusses the varied and fragmented approaches to studying quality and examines the similarities and differences of the quality indicators from previous studies. Towards the end of this chapter, these are grouped under five categories of organisational and content standards, highlighting the research gap of examining quality at the individual level.

Chapter 5 addresses methodology through a discussion of the research paradigm, justification of methods and data analysis strategies. This study uses a mixed methods model to develop a framework to answer the main and supplementary research questions. It also introduces the frameworks of surface structures and story boxes as devices by which concepts can be studied through their visible manifestations. Thus, these tools are used to examine quality through qualitative semi-structured interviews and quantitative content analysis.

The major themes that emerged from the qualitative interviews are presented in Chapter 6, with an interpretation of the findings given towards the end of the chapter. This chapter also introduces and answers the subsidiary question of how journalists

articulate the concept of quality in journalism, which relates to the perceptions of content quality among Indian journalists at the individual, organisational and societal levels. The findings of this chapter highlight the similar ways in which journalists talk about journalism and its quality and indicate a close relationship between journalists' professional ideologies and their notions of quality. Finally, this chapter introduces a framework for quality using the normative values represented in the findings.

The subsidiary research questions of the supplementary research question regarding the evidence of quality in news content are formulated and answered in Chapter 7. It presents the findings for the quantitative content analysis through a framework developed by adapting the works of Bogart (1989) and Anderson (2014). This chapter also presents the descriptive statistical analysis of numerous indicators of quality under the categories of accuracy, comprehensibility, comparativeness and context. The interpretation of the findings shows an ideal-practice gap between quality perceptions among journalists and performance in content, which is presented as a matrix towards the end of this chapter.

Chapter 8 brings together the findings of the thesis by schematically answering the main and supplementary research questions using the frameworks of surface structures and story boxes introduced in the methodology chapter. The concluding chapter also develops a framework for quality that provides for the ideal-practice gap identified in the content analysis chapter. Finally, the chapter concludes with suggestions for future research, which notably include the proposition for an Indian model of journalism using descriptive frameworks from the literature on Indian journalism and empirical findings of this study.

Chapter 2 The Indian context for quality in journalism

Reports from PwC India and Ernst and Young made headlines in India recently when they predicted an exponential growth rate in the Indian media and entertainment industry. The reports forecast an annual media and entertainment industry growth rate of 11.8% over the next five years, with India projected to become one of the top 10 entertainment and media markets in the world by 2021 (PwC India, 2017). While the exact share in this growing market of either journalism or the television news industry cannot be accurately predicted, it is a commonly acknowledged fact that the Indian newspaper industry is growing despite many challenges and contrary to global trends. For instance, a CNN report quoted figures from the Indian government's Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC) and the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers to the effect that circulation increased by 32% between 2013 and 2015 (Iyengar, 2017). According to the latest annual report from the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting of the Government of India, the country has 110,851 news publications, of which 16,136 are daily newspapers. The same report also recorded 892 satellite television channels for the country, of which almost half are news channels (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 2016-17). English language newspapers contribute upto 10% of the total number of newspapers, while English news channels account for approximately 50% of the total satellite news channels in the country. Online journalism is a growing field in India, but official statistics are not available for this sector. However, while most newspapers and television channels have online versions now, web-only English

language news outlets in India (for example, *The News Minute*, *First Post*) are few in number.

For such a proliferation of news outlets in a vast, diverse country, research in journalism is relatively scant, which could be a direct result of the nature and status of journalism education in India. Even though the first department for journalism was set up at Nagpur University in central India in the early 1950s, journalism education in India has been called stagnant (Murthy, 2011) because many of the first departments attached to government universities had curricula that did not cater to industry needs. Private journalism schools and departments are a phenomenon of the past 15 years, with a few dozen institutes offering postgraduate programmes in journalism to cater to the increasing demand for journalists in a post-1990s open market. In such a scenario, an exploratory study on quality in Indian journalism can not only contribute to the growing field of research in the country but also, at a broader level, help to guide industry-academia conversations around what journalism could be for the diverse Indian society.

This chapter provides a brief history of Indian journalism, the current challenges facing it and the state of journalism research in India as a way of giving the Indian context for quality in journalism. Section 2.1 traces the history and development of Indian newspapers from the first publication in 1780 to the pluralistic and diverse landscape that has evolved in the 21st century. Section 2.2 looks at the socio-political and national trends that have influenced Indian journalism and highlights some of the challenges of a free press in the large and complex Indian democracy. This chapter concludes with a brief discussion of the relevance of the Indian context in the current study on quality.

2.1 Journalism in India: beginnings and development

The history and development of the newspaper industry in India can be traced back to the late 18th century when India was still under the rule of the British East India Company. The industry was shaped by its role in the nationalist movement of the 19th and 20th centuries for independence from British rule and the quest for social reform and emancipation (Ram, 2007). Hence, any study of the Indian newspaper industry will be incomplete without an analysis of the political history of the country and its impact on the print media.

This section traces the development of Indian newspapers, from the first published in Calcutta in 1780 to the thriving industry of today. Muppidi (2008) divided the history of Indian journalism into two periods: pre-independence and post-independence. The pre-independence press was primarily used to encourage Indians to participate in the struggle for freedom while, after independence, the Indian press took on the role of the 'fourth estate' in a democracy and also focused on nation-building (Muppidi, 2008). Though Murthy (2010) divided Indian journalism into four periods – pre-independence, pre-emergency, post-emergency and post-liberalisation – Muppidi's (2008) two-part division can remain the broad perspective within which the development of Indian journalism can be studied since it encompasses the periods covered by Murthy's (2010) classification. The purpose of Murthy's (2010) classification was to study the Indian media landscape according to the socio-political and market structures prevailing in each period. A detailed history of Indian journalism according to Murthy's (2010) classification calls for the inclusion of other media like television, radio

and the digital media and, as such, is beyond the purview of this chapter. However, this chapter uses a combination of these two approaches as a useful way of examining the history and development of Indian newspapers.

2.1.1 Indian newspapers 1780-1947

It must be acknowledged that this early history is presented here from the perspectives of Indian scholars, who considered the Indian fight for independence from British rule as an integral part of the early development of the press. According to many Indian scholars (Raghavan, 1994; Ram, 2011; Sonwalkar, 2002; Muppidi, 2008) newspapers in India before 1947 served two sides of an ideological divide. On the one hand, some newspapers supported the struggle for freedom and were run by leaders of the independence movement (including luminaries such as Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru) while, on the other hand, a few papers argued for a continuation of the status quo.

Nevertheless, there is disagreement among scholars on how to view the advent of journalism in the country. India's first newspaper was published while the country was still under British rule. Saptrishi (2005) inferred that the advent of the press in India was a direct benefit of British rule. According to her, it was an unforeseen consequence of European missionaries' importing of printing presses to spread Christianity. Raghavan (1994) agreed partially but argued that the press in India was also a product of the nationalist movement and that it acted as a stimulant for national regeneration. P. Sainath, former Rural Affairs Editor of *The Hindu*, re-iterated this view in an email

interview with Eric Loo in 2009, in which he stated that the Indian press was the offspring of the nationalist movement (Loo, 2009; p.43).

This chapter stands on the shoulders of scholars who have argued that Indian journalism was an integral part of the independence movement and looks at the history of Indian newspapers in the pre-independence era through the prism of that movement. The purpose of presenting this point of view is to highlight two aspects of the early press that are still to be found in Indian journalism: the diverse, yet polarised, nature of journalism today; and the importance of the adversarial role in the psyche of Indian journalists.

The first newspapers

India's first newspaper, the *Bengal Gazette* or *Calcutta General Advertiser*, was published in 1780 from Calcutta, a city that Saptrishi (2005) referred to as the birthplace of Indian journalism. The Irish editor of the first newspaper, James Augustus Hicky, filled it with gossip about local Englishmen and women, whom he referred to by nicknames (Aikat, 2004b). He invited the displeasure of the Governor General at the time, Warren Hastings, and was imprisoned and eventually deported. Some scholars invoke Hicky as the pioneer of adversarial journalism in India, because he declared his newspaper to be 'open to all parties, influenced by none' and bravely published it even from prison (Aikat, 2004b; p.12; Saptrishi, 2005).

After the *Bengal Gazette*, the number of newspapers in the Indian sub-continent grew steadily. Some notable names during this period were the *India Gazette*, *Calcutta Journal* and *Samachar Darpan*. Rammohun Roy published the first three Indian-owned

newspapers in 1821 as weeklies in three languages: Persian, Bengali and English. Many Indian-owned newspapers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were published to counter the Anglo-Indian publications at a local level (Chatterjee, 1929). One of the first examples was publications by Rammohun Roy, which he started mainly to counter the Serampore missionaries' perceived attacks on Indian culture and religious beliefs through their newspaper *Samachar Darpan* (Muniruddin, 2005). However, Roy also used his papers to spread his ideas on social reform and appealed to the government to put an end to social evils.

The Indian newspapers under British rule can be divided into two categories based on ownership, namely, the Anglo-Indian press and Indian-owned publications (Chatterjee, 1929; Saptrishi, 2005). During the early periods of Indian journalism and the independence movement, the Anglo-Indian press was in support of the policies of the ruling British, while the Indian-owned newspapers in English and other languages propagated the idea of self-government and criticised many colonial systems in India. This trend could be seen in almost all issues of public importance, such as the 1857 revolt by Indian soldiers, the Ilbert Bill of 1883 that sought to remove racial discrimination in the execution of justice, the Montague-Chelmsford reforms that aimed to introduce self-government gradually in India in 1919 and many others.

The result of this divide was a proliferation of newspapers and diversity of opinions in the public sphere (Das Gupta, 1977). It can be argued that journalism in the pre-independence period followed the libertarian model of mass media of communication espoused by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956) in their seminal book *Four Theories of the Press*. The libertarian theory was based on the assumption that humans are

rational beings capable of thinking for themselves. Libertarian theorists argued that the press in a democracy should be free from government control in any form to enable multiple voices – true and false – to reach the public and that citizens should be trusted to ferret out the truth from the barrage of information reaching them (Siebert, Peterson and Schramm, 1956). The mass media also had to be free from state control so that they could serve as a check on, and ensure the accountability of, governments. The Indian press during British rule was characterised by two core assumptions of the libertarian model: diversity of opinions figuring in the news media and a core belief in freedom from any form of government control.

Diverse views shaping public opinion

From 1780, when the first newspaper was published, and throughout India's fight for independence, the Indian public was exposed to many contending ideas regarding freedom and related issues through numerous publications that sprang up throughout the country. For instance, the *Indian Gazette* was published to counter the viewpoints in Hicky's *Bengal Gazette* and, as mentioned in the previous section, Rammohun Roy published his papers to give alternative views to those published in the *Samachar Darpan*. By the 1880s, there were more than 20 English dailies, owned by both British and Indian proprietors, as well as countless vernacular publications, with every region having at least one daily that was not in their regional language (Das Gupta, 1977). P. Sainath (to Loo, 2009; p. 43) declared that almost all prominent national leaders during the freedom struggle were also journalists.

Indians received diverse viewpoints about the struggle for freedom in three different ways: through the categorisation of Indian newspapers based on their ownership; through differences in opinion among various proprietors and their editors; and, as the struggle for freedom intensified, through the liberal and nationalist press that had different ideas on how to achieve independence. To a large extent, this ensured that the Indian press landscape was one of 'external pluralism', which Hallin and Mancini (2004: p.29) define as 'pluralism achieved at the level of the media system as a whole, through the existence of a range of media outlets or organisations reflecting the points of view of different groups or tendencies in society'.

It has already been mentioned that Indian newspapers could be classified according to their ownership, especially in the period between the 1880s and 1930s. There were Indian-owned and British-owned newspapers, both reporting on issues from their respective national perspectives. This does not, however, mean that all journalists from each side of the ideological spectrum expressed identical or even similar views. Indian journalists differed on how self-government could be achieved, with some arguing for co-operation with the government, while many British journalists remained critical of their government. According to Kaul (2006), many British journalists in India thought their loyalty was first to the empire, with journalism a close second. However, Anglo-Indian newspapers like the *Statesman* were highly critical of many of the policies of the imperial government in India (Kaul, 2006).

Secondly, differences in opinion between journalists on the same newspaper resulted in the starting of new periodicals, which also contributed to external pluralism. This phenomenon started from Rammohun Roy's publications that propagated social

reforms. Roy was a social reformer who advocated the eradication of common social practices like 'sati' (in which widows were forced to jump into the funeral pyres of their husbands). Roy's newspapers and several others which followed performed the dual roles of agents of societal reform and catalysts of the nationalist movement. Lord Bentinck's abolition of 'sati' can be cited as one of the best examples of the news media's role in social reform, as it came after Roy's relentless campaigning through his weekly *Sambad Kaumudi* in the years 1823-1829. However, even as Roy advocated social reforms such as widow remarriage, an alternative viewpoint was added by Bhowani Charan Banerjee, Roy's former editor, who started the *Samachar Chandrika* to challenge Roy's ideas on reforms.

Similar disagreements between journalists characterised Indian newspapers during the 'national awakening' in India in the 19th and 20th centuries, mostly around issues of social practice. Gopal Ganesh Agarkar split from his colleague Bal Gangadhar Tilak and gave up the editorship of *Kesari* and *Mahratta* because Tilak was a conservative who propagated political emancipation but stayed away from social reforms. Agarkar started a bilingual journal named *Sudharak* ('Reformer') as a result. In South India, G. Subramania Iyer, one of the founding editors of *The Hindu*, advocated social reforms and practised them in his life by arranging the marriage of his widowed daughter. He parted ways with *The Hindu's* co-founder and managing director M. Veeraraghavachariar, who felt newspapers were agents of political change and did not have to address issues of social reform.

A third aspect that contributed to diversity in the Indian press system was the different viewpoints of the Indian-owned newspapers on how freedom and self-

government could be achieved, which were reflected in the columns of the newspapers owned by the holders of those views (Raghavan, 1994). Thus, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi used his papers *Navjivan*, *Harijan* and *Young India* to propagate the civil disobedience and non-cooperation movement (Aikat, 2004a). Newspapers like the *Hindustan Times* and *National Herald* supported his message, campaigning for nothing less than complete self-government. Meanwhile, other prominent leaders of the struggle for freedom like Dr Annie Besant and Bal Gangadhar Tilak opposed lawbreaking and were in favour of responsive cooperation (Raghavan, 1994). *The Hindu* of Madras also adopted a more liberal viewpoint and, in many editorials, criticised Gandhi's call for non-cooperation and civil disobedience. An editorial on July 8, 1920 argued that Indians being elected to the local councils was one way of ultimately achieving complete self-governance, a viewpoint that was in direct contrast to those of the proponents of the civil disobedience movements.

The libertarian model argued that everyone who had the means, opportunity and inclination to start a mass media unit should have the right to do so (Siebert, Peterson and Schramm, 1956). The Indian mediascape in the 19th century exemplified this, with journalists, editors and proprietors of Indian newspapers becoming advocates of their own particular causes and creating an externally pluralistic media system in the process.

Reaction to authoritarian measures

The development of the press in India witnessed alternating periods of censorship and control and periods when newspapers were largely allowed to publish without any restrictions (Kaul, 2006). The colonial administration enacted laws and resorted to

various repressive measures whenever it felt that Indian-owned newspapers were becoming critical of it. Between 1823 and 1910, several laws enforced restrictions on the publication of news, but none was enforced for more than a few years. For their part, Indians reacted strongly to these rules that restricted their freedom of expression, especially from the late 19th century as the struggle for freedom intensified.

Raja Rammohun Roy was one of the first Indian journalists to protest against legal restrictions on the freedom of the press. Roy, whom some scholars have called the father of the Indian press (Raghavan, 1994; Sonwalkar, 2002), submitted a petition to the Supreme Court of India in response to the very first press laws passed in the country. This bill, the Regulation of the Press Ordinance of 1823, was enacted by the then Governor General, John Adam, and made it mandatory for all newspapers to obtain a license from the Chief Secretary of the Government. Roy called his petition the *Areopagitica of the Indian Press* – borrowing the term from the work of the pioneering seventeenth-century libertarian thinker, John Milton – and argued that unrestrained liberty was the only way for newspapers to spread knowledge among their readers.

More than a dozen laws were enforced after that of 1823 until India gained independence in 1947, some of which had an immediate effect on the publication of newspapers in different parts of the country. These included the Press Act of 1835, the Act of 1857 (often dubbed the Gagging Act), the Vernacular Press Act of 1878 and the Press Act of 1910. Many prominent journalists took legal recourse to protest against these acts. For example, when the Vernacular Press Act of 1878 was enforced, a group of Indians under the leadership of Sir Surendranath Banerjee, the proprietor of *Bengalee*, petitioned the Viceroy in Delhi even before it became law, but to no avail.

Under the 1878 act, publishers of all regional language newspapers had to agree to a bond that prevented them from publishing anything that amounted to sedition (Aikat, 2009).

Reactions to press censorship and restrictions intensified after the establishment of the Indian National Congress in 1885 and the increased momentum for independence in the late 19th and first half of the 20th century. It is to be noted that many journalists were members of the Indian National Congress. One instance of editors protesting against censorship was their reaction to the press restrictions imposed during the Second World War. Substantial financial securities were imposed for publishing papers and in 1940, newspapers were asked to submit all headlines relating to the war for scrutiny by the Secretary of Information Department. Jawaharlal Nehru's *National Herald* responded by publishing all war-related news without headlines for the six months that the order remained in place (Raghavan, 1994) while Mahatma Gandhi suspended his publications rather than comply with the government's demand to submit all items on the Quit India movement to pre-censorship (Saptrishi, 2005).

Censorship was imposed not only on Indian-owned newspapers but also on journalists from Great Britain and other nations working in India. One of the most common methods of controlling these journalists who used their papers to critique government policies was to deport them from India. The deportation of William Duane and James Silk Buckingham in the 19th century and B. G. Horniman in the 20th century were cases in point. William Duane, the editor of the *Bengal Journal*, was deported for publishing an article declaring Lord Cornwallis had been killed in the Maratha War while the latter was still alive. Though Duane issued a corrigendum in his paper, his residence

was raided twice and he was forced to cease publication of the *Bengal Journal* before his eventual deportation. Horniman, the editor of the *Bombay Chronicle* in 1919, was also deported following an inaccurate article on police use of soft-nosed bullets during the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre (Raghavan, 1994).

To conclude, two reasons have been given as to why the brief history of Indian journalism from 1780 to 1947 presented here has been recounted from an India-centric perspective. Firstly, Indian journalism retains the diversity and pluralism that characterised it during the early stages of press development. The number of newspapers and news channels alone stand testimony to that. However, Indian news media present a polarised, pluralist landscape. In many regions, political parties directly own regional-language television channels and newspapers. In English-language journalism, political and economic affiliations are not overtly stated, even though ownership patterns point towards subtle bias. The recently launched news channel *Republic* is partly owned by a member of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), while the owners of the news channel NDTV have family ties to top officials in the Communist Party of India.

Secondly, many Indian journalists still consider an adversarial role towards the government to be an essential part of their work. While speaking at a history conference, journalist and many times editor of *The Hindu*, N. Ram, talked about these two aspects and concluded that Indian news media still consider the 'critical-investigative-adversarial' function to be a crucial one (Ram, 2011; p.13).

There are challenges to the pluralism and adversarialism of Indian journalism today. Seneviratne (2008) argued that when newspaper owners and journalists seek

simultaneous careers in politics or become active participants in political lobbying, there are apparent conflicts of interest. One example of the political-media nexus is the case of Shobhna Bhartia, from the affluent Birla family, who was nominated to the Rajya Sabha, the upper house of the Indian parliament, by the ruling Indian National Congress (INC)-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government. She is also the chairperson of the HT Media Group, a media conglomerate that runs the English-language daily *Hindustan Times*, the business daily *Mint*, an FM radio channel and various websites. Her nomination to the Rajya Sabha raised concerns about conflicts of interest because of her close association with the then INC president Sonia Gandhi (*The Hindu*, 2006). An example of political lobbying by Indian journalists came to light when telephone conversations between famous journalists Burkha Dutt of NDTV and Vir Sanghvi of the HT Media group and political lobbyist Nira Radia were leaked (Chadha, 2012). The collection of taped telephone conversations, which is now popularly known as the Radia tapes, revealed the journalists' role in bringing A. Raja, the prime accused in the 2G spectrum scam (a corruption scandal that broke in India in 2009), to power as the telecommunications minister.

Thus, it can be argued that Indian news organisations have political and business connections, which could affect news decisions and create conflicts of interest. However, for many English language news outlets, this subjectivity, if present at all, is not openly declared. The sheer proliferation of news outlets, however, ensures that the tradition of external pluralism is maintained in the broader media landscape. Some of the challenges encountered by the Indian newspaper industry as it evolved from colonial beginnings to a thriving market structure will be discussed in sections 2.1.2 and 2.1.3.

2.1.2 Indian news media 1947 -1991

This section briefly outlines the main features of the Indian news media until the liberalisation of the Indian market in 1991, namely, the brief period of development journalism (1950s –'80s) and restrictive censorship during the internal emergency(1975-'77). When India became independent in 1947 and a republic in 1950, freedom of expression became a fundamental right. In the newly adopted constitution of the Republic of India, Article 19 (a) guaranteed the right to freedom of speech for all Indian citizens; freedom of the press was also guaranteed under this provision. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Indian Prime Minister, who had an impressive journalistic background as the editor of the *National Herald*, urged journalists of his newly formed country thus: "I would rather have a completely free press with all the dangers involved in the wrong use of that freedom than a suppressed or regulated press" (cited in Aggarwal and Gupta, 2001, p.168).

However, Indian newspapers had to decide between playing a supportive or an adversarial role vis-a-vis the government when the country became independent in 1947. Aikat (2009) argued that after India gained independence, the news media retained their influence by informing and educating the masses.

An example of a supportive role played by the news media in nation building is evidenced in the development journalism model that emerged during this period after independence. This involved the news media supporting and facilitating the government's agenda for national development. This did not, however, mean that journalism remained uncritical of powerful groups in society. On the contrary, it was expected to be objective and offer constructive criticism of the government (Aggarwal,

2006). Development journalism was expected to rely more on sources from rural areas and bring about change through reporting issues facing the poor rather than the elite (Kumar, 2000; Aggarwal, 2006). This model was prevalent among many newly independent nations in Asia, with India no exception (Xiaoge, 2009). The English language newspaper *Hindustan Times* experimented with development journalism; however most of the development-related experiments were with the government-run television channel *Doordarshan* in the period from when the channel was first launched in 1959 to liberalisation in 1991. In the post-liberalisation period, journalist P. Sainath of *The Hindu* produced a significant amount of development journalism through his coverage of farmer suicides in the state of Maharashtra. Many newspapers run development-oriented campaigns, but at least one study has found that such stories do not form a significant part of total news content (Murthy, 2000).

The Indian Press during the internal emergency (1975-77)

Even though commercialisation and objectivity in development journalism were critical concerns during this until 1991, Indian newspapers were independent of overarching government control and excessive dependence on advertisers, especially in contrast to the state-run television channel *Doordarshan*. The only period when the media were severely restricted was in 1975-77, when the then Prime Minister Mrs Indira Gandhi declared a state of emergency, which is often cited as an example of the dangers of a heavily censored news media in a democracy.

Many press historians (Raghavan, 1994; Saptrishi 2005; Muniruddin, 2005) maintained that the shift towards government control of the press in India started in September 1947, when Sadanand, editor of the *Free Press Journal*, was denied the lease

of teleprinter lines for a news agency after he published details about the movement of the Indian Army and Navy along the Gujarat coast. This trend has also been seen in indirect forms of governmental control, including that over imported newsprint and high taxes on the import of printing machinery (Rodrigues, 2009). However, the most restrictive period in the history of Indian journalism came during the state of internal emergency.

In June 1975, a single-member bench of the Allahabad High Court ruled that Indira Gandhi had been guilty of election malpractice in the 1971 national elections, at which Mrs Gandhi persuaded the then President of India, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, to proclaim a state of internal emergency.

Even before the emergency, Mrs Gandhi was intolerant of criticism of her policies. With the proclamation of the state of emergency, she imposed restrictions on the news media that some scholars felt went beyond even those imposed by colonial rulers (Raghavan, 1994). The night that the internal emergency was declared, the electric supply to all major newspapers in Delhi was cut off to prevent them publishing any news of the declaration or the events leading up to it. According to Singh (1980), Mrs Gandhi subsequently used three methods of suppressing the press during the period June 1975 to March 1977.

Since India's industries were mainly in the public sector at this time, one of the first and most effective methods of controlling the press was to bait owners and shareholders with lucrative government advertisements, which were a significant source of revenue for newspapers. Mrs Gandhi was not content with control of the press; she wanted to manipulate it to her advantage. A merger of the four news agencies functioning in India during that time was proposed, and editors of these organisations

were coerced into operating under the single umbrella of *Samachar* ('news') so that the government could effectively control the primary source of news for all newspapers. A third method, according to Singh (1980), was 'fear arousal techniques':

Such techniques were imposed by making false charges concerning tax arrears, possible reductions in newsprint quotas, imprisonment of publishers and their immediate families, threats of shutting down the press, and removal of government housing and other facilities for Delhi-based journalists (p.41).

Almost all newspapers succumbed to the censorship and suspended publication. Only the *Statesman* and *The Indian Express* fought against the restrictions and subsequently invited the wrath of the Indira Gandhi Government. The repercussions were severe. Ramnath Goenka of the *Indian Express* was asked to sell his paper to the government under threat to his family (although he managed to stay on as editor). Mrs Gandhi's supporter K.K. Birla was appointed Chairman of Board of Directors of the Indian Express Group. Finding Geonka undeterred in his criticism of government policies, all government advertisements to the *Indian Express* were stopped, resulting in losses for the newspaper (Singh, 1980).

A distinguishing feature of the restrictions imposed on the press during the state of emergency was that they were strongly opposed by many Members of Parliament (MPs). Members of different political parties voiced such opinions, especially against measures like the dissolution of the Press Council in 1975 and the repeal of the Parliamentary Proceedings (Protection of Publication) Act, also known as the Feroze Gandhi Act, in 1976. The bill that repealed reporting of parliamentary proceedings evoked the following strong response from Erasmo de Sequeira, a MP representing the political party Bharatiya Lok Dal: "This Bill is one in a series of measures that can end up

only in one direction, towards the destruction of democracy” (cited in Raghavan, 1994, p. 140). Dr K. Mathew Kurian, also a MP of the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) alleged that the Press Council had been dissolved because it was about to rule in favour of the *Hindustan Times* editor, B.G. Verghese, against its owner, K.K. Birla. An independent MP, P.G. Mavalankar, questioned the reason for repealing the Press Council and said that perhaps the government had found the Council did not agree to all the measures repressing press freedom (Raghavan, 1994).

2.1.3 Indian news media after liberalisation, 1991-present

If government control and censorship stifled journalists' freedom of expression during Mrs Gandhi's rule, Indian newspapers faced a more significant threat in the form of market competition and commercialism after the economy was opened to foreign direct investment (FDI) in 1991. According to some scholars, Indian newspapers, after liberalisation, moved away from their adversarial role and started acting like business enterprises. Commercialisation of the news media has been the topic of much debate and research (Picard, 2004; Hampton, 2010; McManus, 1992; Demers, 1999). Hampton (2010, p.6) defined commercialisation as the 'gradual shift away from financial dependence on political parties to dependence on circulation and advertising revenues'.

When India became a free market economy under the Congress-led Narasimha Rao Government in July 1991, journalism faced new challenges. When foreign investors started making their presence felt in the spheres of consumer goods and infrastructure, the response from the media industry was mostly positive (Sonwalkar, 2001). However, when the Ananda Bazaar Patrika (ABP) group put forward a proposal to the government for a joint venture with the London-based *Financial Times* (FT), instead of this move

being welcomed, as many newspapers in the West had anticipated, it invited widespread protest in the news media sector. Sonwalkar (2001) listed three groups of opinion that formed during the heated debate on liberalisation of the newspaper industry. The pro-liberalisation group argued that foreign entry would encourage more competition in the industry, which in turn would promote better professional standards. It also felt that the news media industry should not hold out when the market was opening up for many other sectors. The second group argued that FDI in newspapers would lead to cultural imperialism, while a third team was in favour of FDI as long as an Indian partner had the dominant share in any joint venture with a foreign organisation.

Many groups in the newspaper industry who opposed FDI in the media argued the constitutional guarantee gave freedom of expression only to Indian citizens and maintained that the entry of international players would endanger national sovereignty and invite cultural imperialism (Sonwalkar, 2001). Prominent among this group, which turned out so influential that the Rao government had to cancel FDI in newspapers, was the Editor-in-Chief of *The Hindu*, N. Ram. In an article in the *Economic and Political Weekly*, he expressed himself thus:

Those who argue 'yes' [to FDI] either do not know or do not care for our history, our politics and our constitutional-legal situation (Ram, 1994, p.2787).

However, in 2002, the Vajpayee government decided to allow 26% FDI in newspapers and other current affairs print media and 74% in technical and medical publications.

One of the first dailies to take advantage of this decision was the Mumbai-based *Business Standard*, which already had a syndicated relationship with the FT. The stake

of the London-based paper under the Pearson group in 2003 was 14%, and the partnership ended in 2008 when the Government of India, under Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, allowed Indian editions of foreign newspapers. Unlike the Indian newspaper industry, liberalisation saw a proliferation of private television channels in India, and the industry shifted from a government-owned public service broadcasting model to a pluralistic one.

The argument for and against FDI was one of quality. Indian news media were making a dramatic shift towards consumerism, and the content was becoming market-driven (Rao and Johal, 2006; Murthy, Ramakrishna and Melkote, 2010), especially after the state of emergency in the 1970s (Kohli-Khandekar, 2010). Many newspapers began producing content that appealed to the more affluent sections of the society to please advertisers who, in turn, were looking for readers with purchasing power (Saptrishi, 2005).

Many editors felt that an increasing focus on content that pleased advertisers had a severe impact on the quality of news. Other editors, who had worked closely on social issues, felt the growing commercialism keenly. P. Sainath mentioned in an interview that corporate intervention in news media threatened its democracy and diversity (Loo, 2009). He cited as an example the excessive coverage given to the Lakme Fashion Week in Mumbai in April 2006, when in the same state and during the same month, 400 farmers committed suicide because they could not repay their bank loans amounting to a few thousand rupees. In connection with this, he stated that the more journalism is corporatised, the more it will place profits above people and 'the more vacuous, banal and trivial it will get' (Loo, 2009, p. 47).

Another editor who vocalised the problems of market-driven journalism was a veteran of the Nehruvian years, B.G. Verghese, former editor of *The Times of India* and the *Hindustan Times*. He differentiated the focus of market-driven and public service journalism to Loo thus: 'Market caters to the consumer. Public interest demands that attention is paid to the citizen, especially when millions live on the fringe of subsistence and are basically beyond the pale of the market' (2009, p.56). Rodrigues (2009: p.4) quoted Vipul Mudgal, the Editor (Research) of the *Hindustan Times* to say that people selling newspapers today come from soft drink companies and treat papers as crisp, fresh products that are distributed over a vast area and have the shelf life of a day. These editors' views, coupled with comments from editors like N. Ram, mentioned earlier in the chapter, highlight the emphasis placed by Indian journalists on performing a public service role.

To conclude, this section has traced the development of Indian newspapers with a focus on its role in the independence movement and the public service, libertarian and adversarial role perceptions among Indian journalists dating back to the early 19th century. This section has also traced the evolution of the structural changes of the Indian newspaper market and has argued that, despite many political and economic changes, the Indian newspaper industry has remained pluralistic. Even though journalists, editors and scholars have expressed concerns about the commercialised nature of news content and the political-business-media nexus in a few instances, the large number of newspapers available in the market contributes to an externally pluralistic news media landscape (Hallin and Mancini, 2004). The next section presents some of the current issues in Indian journalism as it functions in a democracy that is contextually unique in many ways.

2.2 India as a nation and Indian journalism today: challenges

India is not termed the largest democracy in the world without cause. The distance from the capital, New Delhi, to Sri Nagar, the capital of the northernmost state, is approximately 400 miles; Itanagar and Chennai, the easternmost and southernmost capitals, are each 1300 miles away; and Gandhi Nagar, the westernmost capital, is 554 miles away. The country contributes 18% of the world population with its 1.3 billion people (United Nations (UN), 2017) and sees general elections every five years at the Panchayat, Municipal and Corporation (village, town and city) levels of governance, as well as state central level. India is a competitive democracy, with a multi-party system at the centre and many federal state governments alternating between two dominant political parties in power during alternate tenures (Dutta, 2011). In a competitive democracy, it is during elections that different political parties compete for the support of the electorate, which in turn translates into votes (Strömbäck, 2005). The powers vested in the legislative, executive and judiciary bodies are demarcated (Dutta, 2011) and yet, without clear political alternatives, the whole system could be undermined (Strömbäck, 2005).

India is also a land of contradictions and paradoxes: from opulent cities to famine-stricken villages, from luxury apartments to the poverty of slums, from billionaires to millions below the poverty line, from the illiterate to the highly educated, India's development is a paradox. A recent article in *LiveMint* revealed that while 53% of India's households had telephones, less than 50% had toilets (Bhattacharya, 2016). Former UN official and current MP Shashi Tharoor noted a few years ago that India boasted the largest number of cell phone users while there were still villagers in many Indian states

who walked miles to fetch drinking water (Tharoor, 2007). Despite many dams being built across rivers for the generation of electricity, many rural households do not have electricity. While institutes of higher education are churning out and exporting professionals in engineering, technology and medicine, primary education is under-funded (Banerjee, 2006). The challenges of reporting such diversity and paradox are multi-layered, and journalism has a unique role to play.

One has only to imagine India without its numerous news media outlets to realise how detrimental a non-democratic government would be to the country. If not for powerful exposés by the Indian media, people in rural Tamil Nadu would not have been able to record their electoral displeasure at the ruling Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) party, whose top politicians were involved in the undercharging of 2G spectrum telecom licenses. An Indian court acquitted these politicians in December 2017. However, when the scam was exposed in the late 2000s, the DMK lost to its closest contender in the next state elections, while the corruption scandal was listed second in *Time* magazine's 'Top 10 Abuses of Power', second only to the Watergate scandal in the United States. More recently, Indian journalists have been vocal critics of the economic policies of the Narendra Modi administration, including the currency demonetisation that overnight invalidated higher value notes.

The challenges facing journalism in India are many, according to Ram (2011, p.9):

Increasing concentration of ownership in some sectors; higher levels of manipulation of news, analysis, and comment to suit the owners' financial and political interests; the downgrading and devaluing of editorial functions and content in some leading newspaper organisations; systematic dumbing down, led by the nose by certain types of market research; the growing willingness within newspapers to tailor the editorial product to subserve advertising and marketing goals set by owners and senior management personnel; hyper-commercialization; price wars and aggressive practices in the home bases of other

newspapers to overwhelm and kill competition, raising fears about media monopoly; private treaties with corporates that undermine the independence and value of news; rogue practices like paid news (Press Council of India 2010) and bribe-taking for favourable coverage – these are deeply worrying tendencies.

Others have expressed similar views. Some have argued that economic liberalisation has created a new, affluent middle class in India, in which many news media houses find a lucrative audience (Seneviratne, 2008; Prasad, 2008). Justice Markandeya Katju, the current chairperson of the Press Council of India, criticised the Indian news media for diverting the attention of their audiences to trivial issues like Lady Gaga's visit to India and Kareena Kapoor's visit to Madame Tussaud's in London even as 80 percent of the people are living with poverty, unemployment and lack of healthcare. He opined that the Indian newspapers and news channels spent most of their time and space on the coverage of entertainment, promoted superstitions and were insensitive and discriminatory in their coverage of terrorist attacks. He also called for a regulatory body for the broadcast media, similar to the Press Council of India for newspapers (Katju, 2011).

Most newspapers have adopted market-oriented strategies that lead them to cover, as routine, subjects like electronics, cars, fashion and lifestyle that appeal to the purchasing power of the middle class and the upper middle class. When newspaper owners are conglomerates with diversified business interests, like the HT Media group, they not only give coverage to their sister concerns but also fail to investigate the business practices of big corporations (Prasad, 2008). Furthermore, the Indian news media are heavily reliant on official sources for information; privileges and favours

resulting from this could leave owners and journalists open to manipulation by the government and politicians and lead to self-censorship (Datta-Ray, 1998).

Changing market structures have also contributed to further challenges for Indian journalism, especially in the newspaper industry. Picard's (2004) observation that newspapers are seeking larger audiences, reducing prices and relying on ads seems to be apt for the Indian newspaper industry, as increasing literacy rates, more purchasing power and people's quest for information has resulted in higher circulation. Many newspapers have used this opportunity to enter new markets and break the strongholds enjoyed by other players (Rodrigues, 2009). The Indian newspaper scene in the last few years has mostly been characterised by the breaking down of long-standing media market structures across the country. The *Hindustan Times*, once a pre-dominantly New Delhi-based newspaper, launched in the Indian states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and Punjab¹, according to a report submitted to the Press Council of India by the CMS Academy in New Delhi about the state of the newspaper industry in 2007 (CMS Academy, 2008). The same report recorded that prior to these changes in market structures, most cities were dominated by one newspaper group that claimed more than 50 percent of the readership.

Today, each major newspaper group is present in four-five states in the country. For example, in Mumbai², the geographic stronghold of *The Times of India* and the *Hindustan Times*, the *Daily News and Analysis* (DNA) started its editions in 2005. *The Times of India*, in its turn, had already disrupted the long-standing monopoly of *The Deccan Herald* in Bangalore and also started a new edition in Chennai in April 2008.

¹ Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and Punjab are states in northern India.

² Mumbai is the capital city of the central Indian state of Maharashtra.

Chennai, the capital city of Tamil Nadu, has been home to *The Hindu* (since 1878), *The New Indian Express* (since 1932) and the Hyderabad-based *The Deccan Chronicle* (since 2005³). Chennai is the third largest newspaper market in India, after New Delhi and Mumbai, and is valued at 5 billion rupees (Puljal, 2008).

In the circulation wars that ensued in many cities as a direct result of these changing market structures, it was a question of who captured the most reader attention through prices and content. *The Times of India* became a pioneer in the price wars in India very early when its cover price was reduced from 4 annas to 1 anna in 1907, at a time when 16 annas made up one Indian rupee⁴. This ensured a five-fold increase in circulation (Pande, 2011; Times Group, 2012). When *The Times of India* opened an edition in New Delhi in 1994, the paper cut its cover price from ₹2.30 to ₹1.50. *The Hindustan Times*, which until then had had the monopoly of the Delhi market, had to follow suit and slashed its price to ₹1 per copy (Mitra, 1999). Following this pattern, any newspaper entering a new market has managed to keep its prices lower than its competitors. Hence, *The Deccan Chronicle*, when it launched in Chennai, was priced at ₹1.50, and *The Times of India* priced itself at ₹1 along with attractive gifts for long-term subscriptions. *The Hindu* was forced to bring down its price from ₹3.25 to ₹2.50 per copy, with an apparent disadvantage, compared to its competitors (Puljal, 2008; Chandran, 2011). The State of Newspapers Scene 2007, a report submitted to the Press Council of India by CMS, New Delhi, recorded the disproportionate increase in the cover prices of newspapers compared to the rates of inflation in the country (CMS Academy,

³ Bangalore, Chennai and Hyderabad are the capital cities of the South Indian states of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh respectively.

⁴ The anna was a unit of Indian currency until 1957.

2008). The average price is ₹ 2 per copy, whereas the production costs per copy are anywhere between seven and eight rupees, which meant that advertisers pay the rest. At the same time, the number of pages has increased significantly, resulting in disproportionate economies of scale.

Content also often plays a vital role in competition between newspapers, and the first-of-their-kind rival advertisement campaigns between *The Hindu* and *The Times of India* in 2012 serve as an excellent example of this. The television advertisements of the two papers show *The Times of India* ridiculing *The Hindu's* serious approach to news with a 'wake-up' call and *The Hindu* responding by asking readers to 'stay ahead of times' and move away from film and celebrity news (MovieFreak on Youtube, 2012).

A discussion is required of what kind of papers *The Hindu* and *The Times of India* are, the business models they function under and the perspectives of their owners to understand the significance of these advertisements and the battle they fought. *The Hindu* is a family-run newspaper and part of *The Hindu* group of publications that also publishes the daily business newspaper *The Business Line*, two magazines, annual surveys of Indian industry, agriculture, environment and cricket and e-books. It started out as a weekly paper in 1878, now has 13 centres across the country and is headquartered in the South Indian metropolitan city of Chennai. Jawaharlal Nehru has been quoted as describing *The Hindu* as 'an old maiden lady, very prim and proper, who is shocked if a naughty word is used in her presence' (Murari, 2004, p.56). It is known for its 'steady, staid and reliable coverage of news' (Ramachandran, 2012, p.1). Until recently, its editor-in-chief was N. Ram, a Columbia University graduate who is most noted for his investigative reporting that exposed the Rajiv Gandhi government's corruption in buying guns from the Swedish arms company Bofors. He is also known for

breaking tradition by appointing the paper's first non-family editor, Siddharth Varadarajan, in 2011.

On the other hand, *The Times of India*, the largest circulating English-language daily (4.4 million) and the only English-language daily to figure in the top 10 publications in the Indian Readership Survey, is the flagship publication of the Times Group run by the Bennett, Coleman and Company Limited (BCCL). As a self-proclaimed media conglomerate, the group's history can be traced back to British ownership in 1838, changing hands many times until, in 1948, it was bought by the Sahu Jain Group which still retains ownership. Fifty years later, the Times Group has undergone many internal changes in structure, the most prominent of these being the abolition of the post of editor, who was replaced by the Executive Editor (Mahalingam, 1998; Prasad, 2008). The Executive Editor reported directly to the managing director of the group, Samir Jain, and had the authority to override editorial decisions made by journalists. Samir Jain, also the vice-chairperson of the board of directors, has been criticised for his market-oriented policies that treat newspapers like any other consumer goods. These business practices include cross-promotion of the group's own business interests, such as carrying front page 'news' on a wellness centre owned by the Times Group without revealing ownership (Sukumar, 2012) and entering into private treaties with other companies whereby the BCCL receives shares in return for advertisements and publicity campaigns (D'Rozario, 2008).

With these almost opposing approaches towards the running of the newspaper, the launch of *The Times of India* in Chennai, where *The Hindu* claimed more than 50% of the readership, contributed to a disruption in the market. The television advertisement

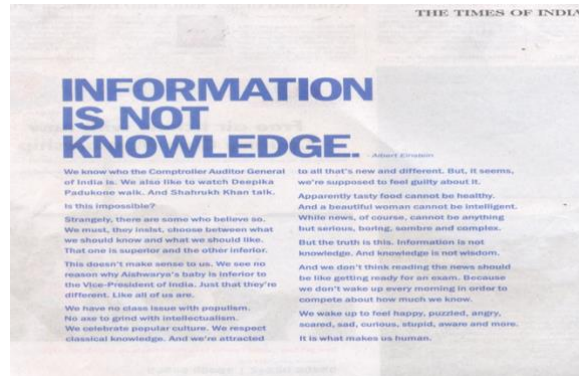


Figure 2.1 Example of an ad from *The Hindu* Figure 2.2 Example of an advertisement from *The Times of India*

for *The Times of India* showed a young man in traditional South Indian attire with a copy of *The Hindu* dozing while various events happened around him and ended with a snappy punch line asking the audience to wake up to *The Times of India*. *The Hindu's* reply through their television advertisements showed many young adults, apparently *The Times of India* readers, giving hilariously wrong answers to questions on current affairs and accurate replies to questions about celebrities. The advertisement concluded with the punch line: 'Stay ahead of the Times' (MovieFreak on Youtube, 2012).

Print advertisements in the two newspapers also showed blatant rivalry, with each trying to establish its approach to journalism as superior to the other's. By its own admission through the print advertisements, *The Hindu* focuses on political, economic and international news and claims to subject stories to serious treatment, while *The Times of India* is known to focus on celebrity news and more personalised coverage of different news stories. Figures 2.1 and 2.2 are examples.

These advertising campaigns serve as examples of the current dual challenges of competition and commercialisation in the Indian newspaper industry. As these examples illustrate, newspapers differentiate through content in direct response to market competition and the inevitable commercial orientation that comes with a quest for survival in a changing market environment. However, journalists and editors respond by reiterating their professional values of public service and a democratic role.

Considering the challenges facing Indian journalism, some of which have been outlined in this section, Indian journalism research is surprisingly under-developed. Research output is not prolific even though the first journalism department in India was set up in the academic year 1952-53 at Nagpur University (Murthy, 2011). The low research output could be attributed to the fact that only a handful of universities offer doctoral programmes in journalism (Karan, 2001). Murthy (2011) traced the development of the first departments set up in Indian public universities from the 1960s to the entry of private universities and journalism colleges after liberalisation in 1991. He argued that the dilemma of Indian journalism education concerned course content and that there was no universal standard that universities and colleges could follow to develop curricula. His study found that many universities had little or no research output (Murthy, 2011). In contrast, journalism studies in the UK is a sophisticated and well-developed discipline, even though the first successful diploma programmes were introduced only in the 1970s (Conboy, 2013).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter highlights some of the critical characteristics of Indian journalism as it has emerged and evolved over the years. Indian journalistic tradition, as

reiterated in most scholarly works, is influenced by its colonial history and is pluralistic in nature. Some of the problems in Indian journalism today, according to journalists and scholars, include the trends of commercialism and market-driven content, paid news and conflicts of interest for newspaper owners (Ram, 2007; Thussu, 2007; Sonwalkar, 2014). With price wars and new marketing strategies in the Indian news media, commercial goals are taking precedence over editorial functions. Despite these challenges, the last seven decades have seen few changes in journalism education and the research output is fragmented and under-developed. The previous sections have traced the economic, political and social conditions that have impacted the evolution of the Indian newspaper industry and briefly highlighted the lacunae in journalism research. They have also provided an overview of the changes in market structures that have influenced the way newspapers do business and how journalists behave in a highly competitive environment.

Chapter 3 Journalism and its democratic role: theoretical considerations

This chapter addresses the two issues that are integral to the research framework for this study – the definition of journalism and its role in society – to define some of the key terms used. In the first section of this chapter, the meaning of the word ‘journalism’ as understood by two groups of people who engage with it – journalists and scholars – will be discussed, followed by a definition of journalism as used in this study. The second section briefly addresses the occupational standing of journalism as a profession. The third section is a descriptive account of media system models; this section will also address several aspects of the role of journalism in a democracy and the larger society. The fourth section briefly discusses the implications of using Western frameworks in a non-Western media system and the current challenges of Indian journalism research. Where applicable, brief sub-sections will address the relevance of each section to the discussion on quality.

The purpose of these sections is to highlight the complex and varied nature of journalism in academic literature and to underline the fact that exploring the concept of quality in journalism is an equally complex task. Thus, the chapter will conclude that understanding quality involves defining the contours of journalism in order to frame the literature review for quality and inform the methodology for this study.

3.1 Journalism: different conceptions of the term

Academic literature has shown that all those who have engaged with journalism have talked about it in different ways and brought with them different expectations about what it is, does and should do. This section addresses some of these issues concerning the definitions and role of journalism.

Before examining the fragmented nature of the current understanding of the term 'journalism', it will be useful to take a bird's eye view of the literature through the hierarchy of influences model for gatekeeping. Shoemaker and Reese (1996; pp. 261-270), in their book *Mediating the Message: Influences on Mass Media Content*, argued that influences on journalistic content can be analysed at the levels of the individual, media routines, organisational, extra-media and ideological level. This is a meaningful framework for identifying the different groups in society that are engaged with journalism on a regular basis. Just like the influences on content, these influences at various levels can also be traced to journalists who work in newsrooms. It is argued here that journalism is defined and understood at different levels of engagement, by journalists, educators, scholars, news media owners, audiences and so on and so forth. It is also argued that journalists not only face but are influenced by pressures at various levels. Borrowing terminology used by Shoemaker and Reese, journalists' work is subject to influences at the individual, media-routine, organisational, extra-media and ideological level.

While tracing the history of journalism studies in universities and colleges in Western countries, many scholars have highlighted the differences in opinions among journalists, journalism educators and journalism scholars on what constitutes journalism

(Carey, 2000; Wahl-Jorgensen and Hanitzsch, 2009; Zelizer, 2004; 2009). The study of journalism is a relatively recent field in academia and scholars (Carey, 2000; Wahl-Jorgensen and Hanitzsch, 2009; Zelizer, 2004; 2009) have maintained that while the study of journalism is essential, there is no consensus on where journalism should be placed within broader academic disciplines. For example, the subject has been approached from the frameworks of other academic fields such as critical humanities and social sciences, a dichotomy that has been acknowledged by many scholars (Tumber and Prentoulis, 2005; Wahl-Jorgensen and Hanitzsch, 2009; Zelizer, 2009; Conboy, 2004). Zelizer (2004) in the US and later, Conboy (2013), in the UK, have traced the historical development of journalism studies as an academic field of enquiry in universities. A complete account of this history is not relevant here. However, it is necessary to acknowledge that initial studies in journalism were conducted by scholars from the two primary disciplines of humanities and social sciences before it evolved as an independent field of enquiry in the 1920s in the US and the 1970s in the UK. Zelizer (2004) argued that taking these disciplinary standpoints has had far-reaching implications for teaching journalism, with one stream concentrating on skills required to undertake it and the other stressing the importance of a solid intellectual and theoretical training for journalists.

Scholars have attempted to define journalism through the shared understandings of journalists (Zelizer, 2004; 2009; Deuze, 2005), journalism educators (Tumber and Prentoulis, 2009) and journalism scholars (Zelizer, 2009; Deuze, 2009; Wahl-Jorgensen and Hanitzsch, 2009). As far as can be ascertained, no studies have attempted to capture audience conceptualisation and understanding of journalism, which points to a gap in literature for a definition of journalism.

One of the more comprehensive attempts towards defining journalism can be found in the works of Barbie Zelizer (2004; 2009). She looked at the difference in understanding of journalism among its practitioners and scholars. In her book *Taking Journalism Seriously: News and the Academy* (2004), she gave examples of how two groups of people talk about journalism; these conceptions of journalism on the part of practitioners and scholars can be considered precedents to the different functions and roles of journalism in the literature, and ultimately, to the study of quality.

The first group of people – journalists – are known to have similar values and talk about journalism in similar ways (Zelizer, 2009; Deuze, 2005). They talk about their work in very much the same way as they talk about quality in their work; they know it when they see it (Zelizer, 2009; Kim and Meyer, 2005; Donsbach, 2010). That does not, however, mean that there are no shared understandings or patterns in their vocabulary. Zelizer (2009) treated journalism as a craft when giving examples of journalists' understandings and definitions. According to her, there are six ways in which those who practise the 'craft' talk about journalism: as an olfactory talent, a 'nose for news', whereby journalists instinctively recognize and report newsworthy events; as a 'container' that carries a comprehensive record of the day's events; as a 'mirror' of reality that gives an objective account of everyday; as the 'story' which is the product of newsgathering activities; as a 'child' that needs careful upbringing; and as a 'service' for the society and democracy (Zelizer, 2009, pp.68-72).

From Zelizer's (2009) account, it can be argued that journalists talk about their work in terms of conceptions of the journalistic role and that these resonate with many of the perceptions of that role that have been traditionally associated with journalism, such as purveyors of information, monitors of society and facilitators of democracy.

Previous studies have shown that journalists working in democratic societies have similar ideas about their work including 'public service, objectivity, autonomy, immediacy and ethics' (Deuze, 2005, p. 447).

Another attempt at defining journalism can be found in Kovach and Rosenstiel's (2007) book *Elements of Journalism*. When the authors interviewed American journalists about the most critical aspects of their work, a pattern emerged that points towards shared understandings of journalism among journalists. Calling them elements of journalism, the authors listed a set of criteria according to journalists; these included independence, truth-telling, comprehensive and conscientious coverage and serving as a monitor of power (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2007). It can be argued here that similar conceptions can be found in the works which have attempted to define journalism by analysing journalists' understandings. The next aspect to consider is whether such similarities exist among scholars in the field of journalism studies.

In academic scholarship, journalism has been defined as a set of functions provided by journalists (McNair, 2005) and a process of communication for contemporary events (Schudson, 2003; Conboy, 2013; McQuail, 2013; Shapiro, 2014). McNair (2005, p.28) argued that journalism has a duty to inform, educate and provide a platform for public life.

Many scholars have defined journalism as a prelude to their work, in much the same way as this thesis aims to do. Schudson (2003, p.14) defined journalism as 'information and commentary on contemporary affairs taken to be publicly important', thereby excluding other forms of journalism that provided recreational and entertainment functions. McQuail (2013, p.14) defined journalism as 'the construction and publication of accounts of contemporary events, persons or circumstances of public

significance or interests, based on information acquired from reliable sources'. He argued that news was the main product of journalism and is created through established procedures in a media organisation. Conboy (2013) agreed, while defining journalism as a factual, truthful account of the contemporary world, comprised of new information about it. He held that journalism is specialist information presented in a non-specialist way, 'articulated to its audience within a clearly defined idiom, meaning that is accepted as authentic by its audience because it speaks the same language' (Conboy, 2013, p.2).

Shapiro (2014, p.561) derived what he called a functional definition of journalism based on established principles like the timeliness and accuracy of subject matter, breadth of audience, independence from those they cover and originality in output. Thus 'journalism comprises the activities involved in an independent pursuit of accurate information about current or recent events and its original presentation for public edification' (Shapiro, 2014, p.561).

Many of these definitions, while they have similar characteristics, are provided by academic works that address distinct aspects of journalism studies: McNair (2005) and Schudson (2003) discussed sociological aspects of journalism and journalistic identities; McQuail (2013) and Shapiro (2014) engaged with the interrelations between journalism and democracy as public institutions; and Conboy (2013) defined journalism in his account of the development of journalism studies as an independent discipline in the UK.

Thus, an understanding of journalism in academic scholarship has many layers of complexity, but Zelizer (2009) consolidated the shared meanings of those who study journalism. According to her, scholarly literature in the field of journalism studies attempt to understand the term as a profession with its own ideologies and shared

routines; an institution with its own privileges and power struggles; 'text' that analyses the styles and formats of journalistic writing; 'people' who practise journalism; and a 'practice' that involves all newsgathering activities and its effects (Zelizer, 2009, pp. 74-75).

Implications for quality

So far, this section has discussed the fragmented nature of understanding of the term 'journalism'. What it goes on to show is that no single study can encompass the entire field of journalism. For the current study of quality in journalism in an Indian context, it is important to define contours and set boundaries of what journalism entails.

3.1.1 Defining journalism for this study

Before defining journalism, it is important to mention two more aspects to journalism that have added complexity to this study and whose contours must be established. These are the medium and form of journalism. Pre-internet research suggests that journalists identify themselves more with the occupation of journalism than with the medium that they work in (Russo, 1998), yet more recent research indicates that online journalism may have changed this (Singer, 2003). Secondly, if journalism is a range of communication styles (Conboy, 2013), then it can take the form of anything from news reports to blog posts, an aspect that Schudson (2003) eliminated from his field of enquiry but which others have acknowledged. For instance, in Bob Franklin's (2008) *Pulling Newspapers Apart: Analysing Print Journalism*, contributors talk about sections of newspapers that range from news and comments about contemporary events to cartoons, obituaries, horoscopes and advertisements. In the

broadcast medium, however, news and entertainment are usually in separate segments or on different channels. Since this study focuses on journalists working for newspapers, the definition given below reflects this choice of medium.

A working definition for journalism as it pertains to this study will become the starting point for all that follows in this thesis. This definition will guide the discussion of quality and will inform the methodology in the following chapters. The following definition of journalism was formulated for the purposes of this study after taking three factors into account: the exploratory nature of studying quality in Indian journalism; the fact that understanding of journalism is not uniform; and the admission by many scholars that no one study can encompass all there is to know about journalism.

Taking certain aspects from definitions formulated by Conboy (2013) and McQuail (2013), journalism for this study is defined as the process by which an audience is provided with a factual and truthful account of contemporary events that are of public interest, based on information acquired from reliable sources.

The pressing question with this definition – journalism to what end? – is left unanswered at this stage because it is one of the things that this study seeks to explore in an Indian context.

3.2 The occupational standing of journalism

In the introduction to this chapter, it was stated those who engage with journalism assign it different meanings and connotations. As Zelizer (2009, p.76) affirmed in her chapter on defining journalism: ‘No one definitional set has been capable of conveying all there is to know about journalism’ and ‘we cannot explain all of journalism's workings in one way at any given point in time’.

This section will look at the occupational standing of journalism and how it can influence a study on quality. There is a lack of consensus about the innate nature of journalism as an occupation. Is it art, craft or profession? The question of journalism as an art is not often explored in academic literature. Even less has been said about journalism as a craft, yet this is implicit in the works of many researchers who argue that journalism cannot be classified as a profession in the usual sense (for instance, see Aldridge and Evetts (2003) and Zelizer (2004)). While journalism does not qualify as a profession, most scholars agree that there is some professionalisation and professionalism in it, as will be examined in section 3.2.2. Many scholars have also highlighted the tensions surrounding journalism's place in the liberal arts, humanities and social sciences, as highlighted in section 3.1.

3.2.1 Journalism as a form of art

Researchers have not treated the question of journalism as an art form extensively. As far as can be ascertained, only three authors have considered the matter at any length. Nash (2016) argued for journalism's standing as an independent academic discipline as well as its conceptualisation as an art form. The other two authors – Kimball (1965) and Adam (1993), both American, and writing years apart from each other – examined the relevance of considering the occupation as art. If journalism were to be regarded as an art form, the nature of the enquiry into quality would be different from that if the occupation were to be treated as a profession.

Adam (1993) argued that journalism is indeed art, stating that it is a creation because of the creative elements associated with its production. His unique essay is concerned with a definition of journalism and a description of what he calls the

principles or elements of journalism. He defined journalism as 'an invention or a form of expression used to report and comment in the public media on the events and ideas of the here and now' (Adam, 1993, p. 11). It is the aspect of invention present in the definition that requires further examination. This aspect is based on the assumption that journalism is a product of what Adam (1993) called the 'Imagination':

I have used the term "Imagination" in two carefully blended senses. In the first sense, the Imagination is a property of individual human beings; it is, in short, their spontaneous consciousness-forming faculty. In the second sense, the Imagination is a property of culture. In this sense, it is made up of methods and practices established in the culture for framing experience and forming consciousness" (p.45).

What Adam (1993) calls 'Imagination' is very similar to Anderson's (2014) concept of mind boxes. Anderson (2014) described his concept of mind boxes thus:

The notion of mind boxes sees the mind "at the heart of the box" in a dynamic, often unpredictable interpretive role, trying to get to grips with a reality that is mediated frequently by inaccurate or incomplete information (p.16).

Both concepts deal with how human beings understand and process the world around them using preconditioned and already existing categories of 'reality within their own heads' (Anderson, 2014, p.16). In that sense, journalism is a form of expression of current events as perceived and framed by individual journalists. At a broader cultural level, journalism is a 'form of expression' (Adam, 1993, p. 20) that imagines and constructs consciousness for the society through news.

Furthering his cause for treating journalism as art, Adam (1993) argued that the process of creating reports of current events can be compared to elements of art forms, especially fiction. Each news story has a cast of characters, a plot, dialogues and narrative technique, much like any novel or work of fiction. The distinction, however, is

that while a work of fiction describes the minds and motivations of its characters, journalism is very much concerned with what is manifest in the society.

If this study is to consider journalism as an art in the way espoused by Adam (1993), quality will have to be approached using the principles of art appreciation. As he maintained, the question to be answered would thus be what journalism is, instead of what it does. However, the premise of the current study is that quality can be better understood by examining what journalism does as opposed to the more abstract contemplation of the 'imagination of the artist' (Adam, 1993, p. 46).

Kimball (1965), on the other hand, considered journalism as an art only in its aspects of writing. In his essay, written at a time when television was becoming a prominent medium, he argued that journalism is not a profession, but that some process of professionalisation was already happening in America. While discussing the qualities required to be journalists, he compared the latter to artists communicating to an audience about an experience. However, he placed journalism somewhere between a craft and a trade, which, in some respects, was being professionalised, claiming:

the journalist must finally write the story so as to capture the attention, interest and understanding of the reader. That of course is an art [...] the artistry...is in his ability to use a slice of life to illustrate the whole, to relate the reader to the event as if he himself were there, to unravel the complicated idea by some illuminating illustration" (Kimball, 1965, pp.251- 252).

3.2.2 Professionalism and professional ideologies in journalism

The occupational standing of journalism as a profession is undetermined in sociological debates (Tumber and Prentoulis, 2005; McNair, 2005). The crux of this argument is based on the reasons that journalism is not a profession, although almost

everyone agrees that journalism has undergone some professionalization over the years (Aldridge and Evetts, 2003; Deuze, 2005).

Earlier debates about professions revolved around criteria-based pre-qualifications (Greenwood, 1957; Christensen, 1994), which were specialised skills and knowledge, and the social acceptance and status accorded to professionals for their knowledge and ethical conduct (Greenwood, 1957). Examples of professions listed by Greenwood (1957) include medicine, engineering, law and social work. A few decades later, Christensen (1994), in his account of the origins of a profession, listed five criteria that must be fulfilled for an occupation to be considered as a profession. These were the complexity of language that requires expert interpretation, as in the case of lawyers, and, following from this criterion, the requirement for academic qualification, the exclusion of those without due training and competence, the presence of a code of conduct guiding the behaviour of professionals and the presence of a monitoring body for checks and balances (Christensen, 1994).

Many have argued that journalism does not display many of the characteristics of a profession such as those mentioned above. Journalism is often compared to the medical and legal professions and is found to fall short in terms of the length of training and depth of knowledge that is often associated with the other two (Tumber and Prentoulis, 2005). For instance, Aldridge and Evetts (2003) listed the features of the journalistic occupation that disqualified it as a profession. Journalism does not have a licensing body or code of behaviour that oversees entry into the profession and the conduct of its members; it does not mandate specific prior training or educational qualification; and it does not directly deal with its 'clients' like many in the medical or legal professions.

However, while Christensen (1994) listed criteria for a profession, Tumber and Prentoulis (2005, p.58) demonstrated that these criteria had not been uniformly defined in a 'sociology of professions'. They argued that since there is no consensus on the essential traits for a profession, sociologists have turned to the study of the process of the professionalisation of occupations and that the focus had been on the ways in which occupations evolve into professions. Journalism has undergone three developments in the last two centuries: the evolution of objectivity as a guiding principle of journalistic practice; the formation of associations for journalists in an Anglo-American context; and the emergence of journalism degrees provided by universities (Tumber and Prentoulis, 2005).

Some sociologists have also maintained that professionalism is more an occupational discourse and ideology than a set of 'traits' (Aldridge and Evetts, 2003; Deuze, 2005). Professionalism as a distinct ideology arose from the need to understand newer occupations such as journalism, accountancy and engineering, which did not fit into the criteria for professions such as medicine and law (Soloski, 1997). Aldridge and Evetts (2003) argued that employers at news organisations use professionalism as a means of enforcing changes to the work culture, and it is used by journalists themselves as a form of shared identity. From this perspective, professionalism is a way in which both practitioners and employers identify and give meaning to their work.

Professionalism in this sense has been defined as the relationship between employees and the organisations that employ them; it involves altruism and is entrenched in the ideal of service to society. These attitudes are encouraged in professionals by making education, training and esoteric knowledge exclusive to those who wish to enter the profession. In journalism, ideals of objectivity have been the

primary professional norm guiding professionalism, encouraging independence from outside interference and freedom for journalists to do their work (Soloski, 1997). Objectivity in this sense is more common to British and American journalists while European journalists believe in value judgements that will bring to the fore the more valid (of various different) viewpoints covered in a story (Donsbach and Klett, 1993). In the UK, the critical components of the professional ideology of objectivity are the dispassionate weighing of facts and evidence; detachment from news sources and topics; the acceptance of barely ethical methods of newsgathering; and an increase in expectations of workload and skills for journalists (Aldridge and Evetts, 2003).

Evetts (2014) delineated the three inter-related concepts described above – profession, professionalisation and professionalism – according to the chronology of academic debates surrounding these terms. While professions were determined based on specific criteria, professionalisation was the tendency of occupations to strive to become professions. Professionalism is an ideology and a discourse characterised by altruistic intent, the need to be worthy of client trust and use of esoteric knowledge in public service. In the third case, professionalism is comprised of normative values and ideological discourses that are used for the construction of professional identities by both professionals, to self-legitimise their work, and managements, to control and direct the behaviour of their employees. Other scholars are also in agreement that journalism's distinct professional ideology is used as a means – by both journalists and their employers – to bring authority and legitimacy to their work and to differentiate journalism from other forms of communication such as blogging and citizen journalism (Broersma and Peters, 2013; Bogaerts and Carpentier, 2013; Deuze, 2005; Singer, 2003).

Deuze (2005) considered journalism as an ideology to define how journalists give meaning to their newswork. He quoted Hallin (1992) and argued that journalism's professionalisation and the corresponding development of its occupational ideology contributed to a dominant view of what constitutes journalism, as well as to the validity and legitimacy associated with journalistic work. This ideology is a 'collection of values, strategies and formal codes characterising professional journalism and shared most widely by its members' (Deuze, 2005, pp. 445-446). Journalists identify as professionals through common values such as commitment to public service, autonomy, objectivity, immediacy, ethics, capabilities around news selection and management and membership of a professional elite (Deuze, 2005; Bogaerts and Carpentier, 2013; Carpentier, 2005).

These normative values are essential constituents of journalistic identity across national contexts (Deuze, 2005) even though their implementation and effectiveness are influenced by practical and contextual factors of real-time news work and contribute to an ideal-practice gap. A significant challenge to journalists' professional identities has come from digital media platforms that have not only impacted news production processes and contributed to more multi-media newsrooms (Witschge, 2013; Örnebring, 2010) but also disrupted traditional news consumption patterns (Bogaerts and Carpentier, 2013; Broersma and Peters, 2013; Donsbach, 2014).

The Indian context and implications for quality

In viewing journalism as an ideology, this study argues that its status as an art or profession depends upon how journalists' shared occupational values treat it. In an Indian context, journalism has seen a high degree of professionalisation with elements

of professionalism such as public service and objectivity forming an important part of the professional discourse, especially after Independence and the adoption of the Indian constitution that guaranteed the right to freedom of expression. News organisations enjoy extensive autonomy, especially from the state although not always from commercial considerations. Indian journalism's professional ideology is influenced by aspects of journalistic identity such as practitioners' perceptions of their democratic role, public service ideals and occupational values such as accuracy and impartiality (Ram, 2011; Katju, 2011).

The debate surrounding journalism's professional standing has also influenced how the subject is taught in higher education institutions, especially in the US and the UK. Journalism educators and journalists have not agreed upon what this should involve (Wahl-Jorgensen and Hanitzsch, 2009; Deuze, 2005; Tumber and Prentoulis, 2005). Journalism courses and departments can be found in the liberal arts curricula of some universities, while others align journalism with social sciences. This dichotomy is to be found in Indian journalism education as well. An increasing number of journalists have a degree or diploma from either universities that focus on critical thinking and knowledge building or from institutes that impart essential journalistic skills such as reporting and editing (Bharthur, 2017).

Exploring quality in this dichotomy can lead to very different research questions. If journalism is treated as art, quality would, as mentioned earlier, involve appreciating what journalism is. However, the current study aims to explore the concept of quality in relation to what journalism does. The concept of quality will be explored according to how journalists perceive it in their work or, in other words, through journalism as an ideology.

3.3 Models of news media systems and the role of journalism

Wiik (2010) in her doctoral thesis argued that perceptions of the journalistic role influence journalism as an ideology. A considerable amount of literature has been published on the role of journalism in society, and journalists' conceptions of their role. These have ranged from models of journalism and media systems to normative role conceptions and empirical role performances and a range of tasks and functions that journalism performs. In other words, it is an area of enquiry that is as fragmented as the understanding and definition of journalism itself, thus contributing another layer of complexity to quality. Since this study aims to explore the perceptions of the role of journalism in relation to its quality, a concise overview of some of the more comprehensive attempts at identifying and defining this role is provided in this section.

Normative assumptions about the role of journalism are based on the fundamental notion that democracy gives it legitimacy (for example, see McNair (2009) and McQuail (2006)). Some of the most prominent works on journalism's democratic role are based on Siebert, Peterson and Schramm's seminal work *Four Theories of the Press* (1956); later studies consider the legacy of the four theories as their point of departure (Christians et al., 2009; Hallin and Mancini, 2004).

Four Theories of the Press (1956) is one of the earliest attempts to classify media systems according to national contexts and forms of government, and it claimed a relationship between the degree of state control and the nature of journalism. Written at the height of the Cold War, the book analysed the mass media systems of the time to come to the conclusion that the press around the world could be divided into authoritarian, libertarian, social responsibility and Soviet communist models. The

models were differentiated based on various aspects of the press, such as its function in society, the nature of ownership and the guarantees of freedom in different national contexts. In the authoritarian (examples cited were of China and the then Yugoslavia) and Soviet communist (for example, the USSR at the time) models, the press served as a platform for government propaganda and was mainly tasked with publicising information from the ruling party. In the liberal (examples cited were the US and UK) and social responsibility (the US as the primary example) models, newspapers and broadcasters enjoyed autonomy, albeit with some responsibility towards truth-telling.

Since then, many scholars have analysed the characteristics of journalism across national and cultural contexts, often developing models that attempt to categorise journalism according to the nature of its role, type of government and degree of market-orientation. A basic analysis can be found in Schudson's (1999) three models and an in-depth one in Christians et al.'s (2009) comprehensive analysis of the various aspects of the role of journalism in democratic societies.

Schudson (1999) outlined three models of journalism – market, advocacy and trustee – that have been prevalent in America. This can be called a basic classification: it gives an overview of the role of journalism and parallels can be drawn between Schudson's three models and some of the other, more detailed models mentioned later in this section. Schudson (1999) argued that in the market model, journalism is concerned with producing content that advertisers think audiences want while in the advocacy model, the emphasis is on political communication. In contrast to the first two models, the trustee model requires journalistic principles to guide news decisions (Schudson, 1999).

Christians et al. (2009, p.30) analysed normative theories about the role of news media at philosophical, political and media systems levels and described four functions for journalism: 'monitorial, facilitative, radical and collaborative'. In its monitorial aspect, journalism's surveillance of the world results in reporting events and setting agendas. As a facilitating agent, journalism acts as the bridge between the government and citizens, aiding democracy by disseminating information in the public sphere. In its collaborative role, journalism cooperates with government and other agencies as and when societal circumstances demand it. The radical role requires journalism to take up specific causes and challenge authority (Christians et al., 2009).

McNair (2009) has also elaborated on the normative expectations of journalism in a democracy, which are similar to the functions outlined by Christians et al. (2009). Journalism is a source of information in a democracy, where citizens ideally process information rationally to make informed choices in governance. In this expectation, which could be compared the monitorial role of journalism, news media become a neutral reflection of the political reality of a country. In what could be categorised as the radical function, journalism also acts as a watchdog of democracy by critically scrutinising power groups and holding governments accountable for their actions. Journalism is also a platform that gives a voice to citizens, often acting as their representatives; this can be compared to the facilitative role. In a practice that calls for the separation of facts and opinions in the news media, journalism also acts as a participant in democracy, advocating causes and positions, an expectation that has been similarly outlined in the collaborative function (McNair, 2009).

Hallin and Mancini (2004) addressed what they saw as a significant flaw in Siebert et al.'s (1956) models, namely the lack of empirical evidence in the classification. They

did not claim that their classifications fit individual cases entirely but provided comparative variables for describing media systems in the western world. Thus, Hallin and Mancini's (2004) three models – the polarised pluralist (or Mediterranean) model, the democratic corporatist (or Northern European) model and the liberal (or North Atlantic) model – encompassed most European countries and the US. The finer characteristics of these models are comparable to Schudson's(1999) three models. The first two are similar to the advocacy model, with the polarised pluralist model having news organisations with strong affiliations to political parties. The democratic corporatist model has newspapers and broadcasters owned by political parties. The North Atlantic model can be compared to both the trustee model and the market model since neutral reporting is given precedence, yet ownership is private. Hallin and Mancini's (2004) classifications are based on characteristics such as the historical development of mass circulation newspapers, the extent and nature of political affiliations in news organisations, the degree of professionalism and the role of the state in controlling news media.

Strömbäck (2005) examined four different models of democracy and the role of journalism in each. He argued that the discussion and criticism of the role of journalism in a democracy often fall short because of a lack of clarity on the democratic standards that govern these assessments. In an attempt to address the latter, Strömbäck (2005) examined procedural, competitive, participatory and deliberative models of democracy, elements of all of which, he admits, are seen in all democracies in the world to varying degrees. A procedural democracy demands from its citizens, news media and politicians that they respect democratic procedures. Since this is a model of democracy that is most often found in newly democratic countries, the achievement of democracy itself is a

significant milestone. The focus in a competitive model of democracy is on the politicians, who have to win votes in competitive elections. Here, politicians act and citizens react by making sure the right people stay in power. For this, citizens are expected to have some knowledge, mostly provided by news media, about different political parties, their candidates' past actions and future promises and how society works. However, citizens are not required to engage in politics.

In sharp contrast to the competitive model, the participatory model focuses its attention on the citizens, who are required to take an active and continuous role in public life and 'develop democratically sound attitudes' (Strömbäck, 2005, p. 336). In this model, journalism provides all the necessary information that citizens need to engage in civic life actively. In a related model, the deliberative democracy expects its citizens to participate in the decision-making process of their country by careful deliberation through discussions 'committed to the values of rationality, impartiality, intellectual honesty and equality among participants' (Strömbäck, 2005, p.336). These discussions should ideally take place at all levels and between all groups in society. Journalism's ambitious role in this model of democracy is to motivate people and facilitate their engagement in public affairs and the decision-making process (Strömbäck, 2005).

3.3.1 Role of news media in a democracy: the Asian-Indian perspective

At least two Asian scholars (Gunaratne, 2005, 2007; Yin, 2008) have used the broad framework outlined by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956) to address the cultural nuances of Eastern media systems. Gunaratne's (2005; 2007) work has challenged the idea of journalism as a Western construct and argued for integrating the

Eastern philosophical frameworks of Buddhism and orientalism to define journalism. To this end, he proposed a 'humanocentric theory of communication outlets' that integrated the libertarian, authoritarian and social responsibility frameworks from the *Four Theories of the Press*, but also accounted for cultural differences by including sociocultural values (Gunaratne, 2005, p. 130).

Yin (2008), however, dismissed the authoritarian-libertarian dichotomy in journalism and democracy debates to develop an inclusive, Asia-centric model. This two-dimensional model analysed press systems through a freedom and responsibility continuum, based on the assumption that the unique challenges of developing countries required free and responsible press systems:

The proposed two-dimensional model, instead, has broadened the foundation of theory building to include a key Asian cultural emphasis on the concept of responsibility. The Asian emphasis on the concept of responsibility is not only a result of Confucian moral influence, but also a result of the socio-economic realities of Asia, where development journalism originated and is still being pursued and where guerrilla warfare or religious and ethnic rivalries can flare up as a result of provocative news articles (Yin, 2008, p.47).

Responsibility was measured by the presence of normative values of journalism, such as accuracy and balance, and culture-specific and audience-rated community standards. Thus, press systems were grouped as: free and responsible (for example, India and Pakistan); free and not responsible (for example, Taiwan and Indonesia); responsible, but not free (for example, Saudi Arabia); and not free and not responsible (for example, North Korea).

Influence of liberalism in Indian journalism studies

Conceptions of journalism's democratic role can be found in the implicit assumptions of many academic debates in Asian media studies and, more specifically, Indian journalism. Critical discourses on the role of journalism in India are based on assumptions taken from traditional liberal theory. The Indian media culture has its foundation in the classic liberal theories. A report submitted to the Press Council of India stressed the role of newspapers in functioning as a fourth estate and watchdog and attributed the privileges and status enjoyed by the news media to these functions that they perform. The report argued that news media need to go beyond market compulsions and cover stories that have a long-ranging public impact (Press Council of India, 2011). This is reminiscent of the fourth estate ideal of the press, in which free news media – which can educate citizens about issues of public concern and represent them by exposing scandals at high places – have been deemed essential for the creation of informed citizens in a democracy (Hampton, 2004). This concept of the role of the media in a democracy is a complex, multi-faceted one and emphasises the right to communicate political ideas for effective decision-making. Free exchange of ideas, resulting in a diversity of viewpoints, was considered an integral part of democratic deliberation and decision-making. In liberal democracies, the press was expected to take on an adversarial role against the government, provide a forum for public debate and bridge the gap between the state and its citizens (Bailey, 2004; Curran, 2005).

For the press to perform these roles in an Asian context, it was expected to be independent of the government and from any other forces that might render it inefficient in playing these roles (Abraham, 2008). Private ownership of the press, with

the preferences of the public measured through the market, was considered the ideal form of guarantee of press freedom in the liberal framework. A relatively independent press performing these functions could gradually build trust and loyalty among its readers (Ram, 2011). Derivatives of these functions include the media's role in educating the public about various matters relating to politics, economics, science, technology, and arts; in building and setting an agenda through conscientious reporting; and in providing a forum for exchange, discussion and analysis of ideas and opinions not unlike the 'educational ideal' described by Hampton (2010).

Ram (2011, p.13) described two functions that the Indian press has had in what he called modern and contemporary times in India: the 'credible-informational' and 'critical-investigative-adversarial'. These can be connected to the expectations of the press in liberal democracies and are closely intertwined functions that lend weight to each other, the former being a prerequisite of the latter. The second role especially allows the press to act as an adversary of the government to prevent undesirable policies by bringing to light problems at the grassroots level. This could also, in turn, lead to a 'hunger-related' discourse and policies that are favourable to the citizens and their lives (Ram, 2011, p.14).

One of the defining characteristics of Indian journalism studies is the implicit assumption that the public service role is the normative standard by which journalism can be evaluated. This is evidenced in the way most studies of Indian news media invariably start with a brief overview of its history while emphasising the political, adversarial and reformist roles played by early journalists such as Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and sometimes even Rammohun Roy. For example, both Thussu's (2005) study of journalists' perspectives on the impact of globalisation and Yadava's

(1991) examination of the Indian press started with a brief history of Indian newspapers. National history also finds a mention in Sonwalkar's (2014) description of the quality challenges facing Indian journalism today.

With the emphasis on journalism's public service role and the functions mentioned above, the market-oriented model of the press has come under criticism from many Asian scholars for the threats to independence that it poses in emerging media markets in Asia. The market-oriented approach also means that people's preferences are measured by their ability to pay (George, 2008). Any threat to profit motives would be perceived as threats to freedom, and the content will be dominated by entertainment (George, 2008). News media become non-controversial to attract the maximum audience and pander to the lowest common denominator, as found in many Southeast Asian media industries where the domination of market forces leads to a trivialization of news (Abraham, 2008). Economic liberalisation and lifting of restrictions on the news media, as was witnessed in the television industry in India in the 1990s (Sonwalkar, 2002; Thussu, 2007), led to structural biases in the market that gave big corporations unique advantages due to economies of scale. Scholars have argued that new players find it difficult to enter the market and small players find it difficult to survive. Concentration and consolidation of ownership in the hands of a few media houses have led to a lack of pluralism and the protection of their own vested interests and political affiliations. They have also succeeded in drowning out non-commodified, non-mainstream voices in society (George, 2008; Abraham, 2008; Seneviratne, 2008).

3.3.2 Journalism's role conceptions: relevance of the Lippmann-Dewey debate

Between these models (Siebert, Peterson and Scrhamm, 1956; Schudson, 1999; Hallin and Mancini, 2004; Strömbäck, 2005; Gunaratne, 2005; Yin, 2008; Christians et al., 2009; McNair, 2009) and their expectations, journalism is expected to perform a multitude of functions and tasks. It has to be an informer and facilitator, an adversary and also an objective observer, a forum for the exchange of ideas as well as a place for commentary and sound judgement based on news values. In fact, McQuail (2006, p.50) lists an extensive array of routine tasks for journalists that are likely to constitute the 'role of news media (including) 'information discovery and processing, monitoring of social scene, checking on economic or political power, providing a platform for diverse voices, opinion-forming by advocacy and interpretation, agenda-setting, servicing public communication needs of other social institutions, providing service to clients and advertisers, campaigning and gossiping, acting as a critic to government and other agencies, entertainment, supporting the culture of a nation'. In summary, journalism has to be an 'observer and informant, providing a channel and forum for other voices and playing a participant role in the society' (McQuail, 2006: p.51).

However, whether journalism can perform all these functions effectively so that it serves democracy has been questioned by many scholars. It forms the crux of the Lippmann-Dewey debate and the basis of arguments for the effectiveness of journalism in providing informed choices for citizens in a democracy (Zaller, 2003; Strömbäck, 2005; Schudson, 2008). Walter Lippmann challenged the very notion that journalism can provide citizens with all the information that they need to make informed political decisions. He claimed that newspapers were 'too frail to carry the whole burden of

popular sovereignty, to supply spontaneously the truth which democrats hoped was inborn. And when we expect it to supply such a body of truth we employ a misleading standard of judgment' (Lippmann, 1922; reprinted 2015, p.133). He observed that it was impractical and impossible for the public to know about and have an opinion on all issues surrounding them; it was also impossible for journalists to provide factual information about everything that was going on in the world. Lippmann (1922) called for the replacement of this system by a team of experts and organisations to carry out journalism's function of sifting through complicated, niche information, which would also influence policy on the citizens' behalf. Dewey (1927) dismissed Lippmann's notion of expert organisations acting on citizens' behalf and envisioned that the press could play a significant role in educating audiences and guiding them towards sound democratic decisions. Dewey's (1927) concern about experts turning into elites far removed from common interests prompted him to call for a reform in journalism that focused on not just factual information, but also on the meaning of facts gathered in a systematic and scientific way.

The debate about the exact nature of journalism's role is ongoing. Carey (2000) argued that free news media and democracy are prerequisites of each other; one cannot survive without the other. This relationship between the two constructs can be attributed to the fact that they share a common, turbulent history (McNair, 2009). For journalism to be something other than a propaganda tool for vested powers, a democratic government that ensures freedom of the press is required. Also, for a democracy to function correctly, information that the news media helps circulate is essential.

Strömbäck (2005), while calling this a romanticised version of the relation between journalism and democracy, agreed that journalism and democracy require each other: journalism needs democracy as the only form of government that guarantees freedom of expression while democracy depends on journalism for the flow of information in society. Schudson (2008) meanwhile rejected both these statements for what he assumed to be a more realistic one. While agreeing that journalism can contribute to democracy in a multitude of ways, he stated that journalism neither produces democracy nor is sufficient for it. In a democracy, it is believed that people will rule better if they are provided with good quality information about public affairs. However, he maintained that democracy does not guarantee journalism and vice versa; journalism can only contribute in many meaningful ways to sustaining a democracy if it is supported by a government upheld by constitutional law (Schudson, 2008).

Journalists' conceptions of their individual roles

While the studies mentioned above relate to the role of journalism at a societal level, this section examines how journalists conceive their role and the impact of their conceptions on their performance. Some studies have identified the role conceptions of print and online journalists (Cassidy, 2005) and of political journalists in different countries (Van Dalen, de Vreese and Albæk, 2012) while others have explored the relationship between role conceptions and performance of journalists (Mellado and Van Dalen, 2014). Weaver and Wilhoit (1996) surveyed journalists to identify four conceptions of their role: interpretive/investigative, adversarial, disseminator and populist mobiliser. The first role was a 'blending of three important roles: investigating government claims, analysing and interpreting complex problems and discussing public

policies in a timely way' (Weaver and Wilhoit, 1996, p. 137). The disseminator role involved functions such as getting information quickly to a broad audience and providing content that was entertaining. The adversarial role meant journalists had to be watchdogs on governments and businesses. The populist mobiliser role was more participatory, requiring news media to be a platform for citizens to express their views and motivate them to take an active interest in public affairs.

Nah and Chung (2012) demonstrated that role perceptions such as investigator, adversary and disseminator figure consistently in literature. They investigated audience perceptions of the journalistic role and found that online audiences considered disseminator, adversary and populist mobiliser roles important for journalists. More recently, Mellado (2015, pp. 603-608) isolated six aspects of the conceptions of journalists' roles: intervention, watchdog, loyal-facilitator, service, infotainment and civic. In an intervener's role, a journalist becomes an advocate and moves away from the more traditional, neutral reporting style. In news content, this function can be identified by the presence of journalist opinion and interpretation in news stories, use of adjectives and the first person in writing and proposals for changes to policies. The watchdog role involves the more traditional function of investigating those in power and exposing corruption. Some of Mellado's (2015) indicators for this function include evidence of investigation, questioning, criticism, denouncement and proof of conflict between journalists and those in power. As a loyal facilitator, a journalist may take on a nationalist role and support the government in its policies. In news content, this can be evidenced in the way journalists support the policies of the state and provide a positive national image through their reports.

While performing the service function, journalists provide content that has a direct impact on public life. In practice, this involves the presence of personal advice columns and articles that present solutions to problems people may face in their daily life. Mellado's (2015) examples of these functions range from reports on climate change to those on dealing with noisy neighbours. The infotainment function involves elements considered traditionally to be part of tabloid journalism or sensational journalism. The evidence of this role in news content can be found in the coverage of private life scandals, personalisation of news stories and other aspects of news stories that are traditionally associated with sensationalism. The civic role incorporates a participatory form of journalism, where citizens' preferences are taken into account. This includes publishing questions, opinions and comments from citizens on institutions and policies, enlightening them on their rights and responsibilities, giving coverage to citizen movements and providing a local impact and perspective (Mellado, 2015, pp. 603-608).

These role conceptions are not only closely related to theories on the role of journalism in democratic societies but can also be linked to models of media systems that are based on the role of journalism. Furthermore, they are closely related to journalists' perceptions of their work or, in other words, aspects of their occupational ideology such as autonomy, public service, ethics and objectivity (Deuze, 2005) and aspects of their identity including those of individual writer, professional or employee (Donsbach, 2010).

Hanitzsch and Vos (2016) gave an international perspective by developing roles for journalists in the domains of political and everyday life which, they argued, are applicable across national contexts. Roles classified as being in the domain of political life included informational-instructive for functions that provided citizens with

information for them to be active democratic participants; analytical-deliberative for those that involved journalists' intervention in 'political discourse'; critical-monitorial for those that integrated the fourth estate ideal and ensured journalism became a platform for 'holding powers to account'; advocative-radical for those relating to the distance between journalists and the powers in the society and involving both adversary and advocacy stances; developmental-educative for those that call upon journalists to be active participants in civic life and perform interventionist roles; and collaborative-facilitative for those that see journalists as supporting government policies for national development (Hanitzsch and Vos, 2016, p.9). In the domain of everyday life, there are three roles. As regards consumption, journalism becomes a marketer, providing content and advertisement for the purchase of audiences. As regards identity, it creates, sustains and gives expression to individual identities and as regards emotion, 'journalism can contribute to affect regulation by helping individuals regulate mood and arousal and can stimulate rewarding social and cognitive experiences that contribute to emotional well-being in more complex and sustainable ways' (Hanitzsch and Vos, 2016, p.13).

Implication for quality

The implication for quality is two-pronged. First, this section has highlighted the political and economic tensions that surround the discussion of journalism and democracy in contemporary scholarship and add a layer of complexity to the study of quality. As Bennett (1993) claimed, the research on this role, like journalism studies in general, has focused on abstract and fragmented pieces of the broad picture. Thus, there is no broad empirical or theoretical consensus though similarities can be drawn between the works of different scholars.

Second, perceptions of journalists about the normative and descriptive role of journalism is an essential part of this study. As has already been mentioned in the previous sections and as will be argued in the methodology chapter, perceptions of quality may be influenced by perceptions of the role. It can be argued that role conceptions and perceptions determine how journalists see their work.

3.4 Challenges to journalism research in an Indian context

So far, this chapter has focused mostly on Western and, in some instances, broader Asian models and definitions of journalism. One of the challenges facing this study is the relevance of these discussions for a study of Indian journalists and Indian newspapers.

At a theoretical level, some scholars have developed alternative, non-Western models for journalism (Yin, 2008; Gunaratne, 2007). At the epistemological level, however, there are a few issues concerning the de-Westernising of media and journalism research. Firstly, there are those who argue that 'media' and 'journalism' originated in the West and are typically Western constructs. Secondly, scholars have warned against the assumption of a homogenous Western media across nations and a binary West-and-East approach to media research (Wasserman and de Beer, 2009). Thirdly, researchers around the world have stressed the need to de-Westernise journalism studies and, in a broader context, media studies as well (Curran and Park, 2000; Wasserman and de Beer, 2009; Murthy, 2012). Some have argued that there is a Western bias in media and journalism research (Hanitzsch, 2007; 2009) while others have observed comparable patterns in international media research due to globalisation and digital communication (Thussu, 2009). Some attempts have also been made to map

media and journalism from a BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) perspective (Nordenstreng and Thussu, 2015; Pasti and Ramaprasad, 2017). However, the study of journalism in a globalised world 'remains a highly uneven and heterogeneous phenomenon' (Wasserman and de Beer, 2009, p. 428).

Even within the rapidly growing field of non-Western approaches to media research, Indian journalism is under-represented. One of the more comprehensive and widely cited works in this area is the edited volume *De-Westernising Media Studies* by James Curran and Myung-Jin Park (2000). Indian media are mentioned in this book in the form of an audience study of a popular television series based on the Hindu epic *Ramayana*. Thussu's (2009) edited book *Internationalizing Media Studies* includes a chapter on Asian media studies, but not on Indian journalism.

A compelling reason that Indian journalism is given only a rare mention in these discussions could be that journalism studies in India is not a well-developed area (Murthy, 2011). Research into Indian journalism is a gradually developing area, and this is one of the first studies to explore the question of quality in the Indian context. Peer-reviewed, academic publications focussing on various aspects of Indian news media started appearing in the late 1990s, with the research output steadily increasing after the turn of the millennium.

One of the first books about Indian mass media was D.S Mehta's *Mass Communication and Journalism in India*, published in 1979. As an effort at curating the Indian media landscape, the book may have been needed, but it offered no critical engagement with its subject. Many other books followed this pattern of providing a descriptive picture of the media landscape, the most notable and popular being Keval J

Kumar's *Mass Communication in India* (2000), the latest edition of which was published in 2012.

Empirical research on newspaper content, which started appearing in peer-reviewed publications from the 1990s, is not exhaustive. There are no statistics available on the number of peer-reviewed publications on Indian journalism, but it can be argued that they represent a small portion of non-Western journalism studies. Peer-reviewed academic journals on Indian journalism comparable to the *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* in the USA or *Journalism and Journalism Studies* in the UK are not available. Academic literature on Indian journalism spans a number of topics such as foreign news (Yadava, 1984), development news (Shah, 1990; Murthy, 2000), market influences on Indian newspapers (Sonwalker, 2002), the patterns in Indian television news (Thussu, 2007; Rai and Cottle, 2007), coverage of HIV/AIDS (De Souza, 2007), research news (Kumar Arya, 2007), journalism ethics (Wasserman and Rao, 2008), first page trends in content topics (Murthy, Ramakrishna and Melkote, 2010) and journalism education in India (Murthy, 2011).

From a methodological point of view, three studies have explored journalist perceptions through quantitative surveys and formal interviews for studies on journalist roles and development reporting (Shah, 1990) and the impact of globalisation (Thussu, 2005; Rao, 2008). There are also a few descriptive accounts of the changes in the Indian television industry post-liberalisation. Thussu (2007) has argued that television news in India had undergone what he called 'Murdochization', explaining that content now involves local versions of highly successful Western programmes and a shift in focus from serious news to sports and crime. This term was first applied to the Indian context by Sonwalkar (2002), who, however, did not fully explore it. An empirical study on

television audiences in India can be found in Manchanda's (1998) work, which concluded that despite the availability of many private channels, viewers expressed an affinity for the state-owned *Doordarshan* but wanted its content to be on par with that provided by other players.

Conclusion

The status of journalism research in India presents a lacuna for this study and is considered as an opportunity to address some of the problems of studying journalism in a non-Western context. Banerjee (2006 p.165) not only presented the challenges facing Asian media studies that include 'issues of language, a lack of available resources and infrastructure, overdependence on Western paradigms and models and the lack of a cultural scholarship' but also argued that if it were to mature as a field of enquiry or a discipline, Asian media studies had to focus on 'developing local perspectives and models rather than rejecting Western models and frameworks'. Though not all challenges apply to the Indian context, Banerjee's (2006) work certainly gives a broad framework for what can be done about Indian journalism research. Banerjee's (2006) solution of developing local models resonates with the emphasis on qualitative paradigms that some authors have argued for in global journalism research. Josephi (2005) mentioned the need for a more qualitative, as opposed to a quantitative, approach to journalism studies in a non-Western context, while according to Wasserman and de Beer (2009), inductive ethnographic research could be the solution.

By exploring quality in journalism through Indian journalists' perceptions, professional ideologies and means of giving meaning to their work, the current study aims to contribute to knowledge by providing an Indian model of journalism. Thus, apart

from being the first study on quality in an Indian context, this study contributes by developing an Indian model of journalism based on descriptive indicators gleaned from the previous literature and interviews.

The next chapter is a literature review of the descriptive, empirical and normative aspects of quality in journalism in a mostly Anglo-American context. The purpose of this critical review is to provide a foundation for and guide to the methodology in an Indian context.

Chapter 4 Normative and empirical frameworks of quality: a review of the literature

This chapter aims to engage with the concept of quality and critically examine its normative underpinnings and empirical indicators. It aims to highlight similar quality characteristics and bring them under one framework towards the end of the chapter. The chapter also aims to identify the research gap of understanding quality as a concept at the micro level of the individual journalist and in relation to the concepts introduced in chapter 3, namely the perceptions and conceptions of the democratic role of journalism.

The first section of this chapter addresses the normative values that inform quality studies, which have their foundations in journalism's democratic functions. Section 4.2 is a descriptive and critical engagement with the theoretical and methodological aspects of empirical studies of quality in journalism. A consolidated framework of quality indicators from existing studies is given in section 4.3, and the chapter concludes with a brief description of the research gap.

4.1 Normative underpinnings of journalism quality

Most normative assumptions surrounding quality in journalism arise from the descriptions and expectations of its role in a democratic society. The implicit assumption across studies has been that the news media and, consequently, journalism, are expected to perform informative and investigative functions for a fulfilment of their democratic roles. Most of the scholars who have tried to define quality have done so

from the perspective of journalism's role in a democracy and its function of creating an informed citizen. This trend can be called an extension of the extensive work done on the role of journalism in society and democracy, whereby the news media play an important role in providing information that facilitates self-governance. For many scholars, quality of journalism meant precisely this type of news that enabled democracy.

For example, Fenton (2011) argued that low-quality local news meant politically and economically influenced, entertainment-oriented and non-investigative content. According to Newman, Dutton and Blank (2012), quality in journalism is intertwined with its function of holding other institutions to account. In their work on quality for news and journalism, Besley and Chadwick used these expectations as premises for an examination of quality as a question of ethics (Besley and Chadwick, 1992). While discussing quality control for the press in Britain, their discussion outlined the characteristics of good and bad journalism, the arguments for which were centred on adherence to accuracy, fairness and a non-sensationalist approach in journalistic routines and processes (Besley and Chadwick, 1992). Arguing for a code of ethics as the means of achieving quality, they started with the question of whether 'the pursuit of profit or power is compatible with quality in the media' (Besley and Chadwick, 1992, p. 4). They argued that constitutional guarantee of a free press in a democracy were a pre-requisite for quality in journalism.

Such normative assumptions are commonly found in discussions of a decrease or lack of quality in news or journalism due to factors such as commercialism (Picard, 2004), the rise of and dependence on social media as an alternative platform for news (Newman, Dutton and Blank, 2012) and the impact of digital technology and the

resultant convergence of print, online and visual journalism (Fenton, 2011). As Picard (2004, p.60) has noted, quality is 'most exemplified by its absence'.

The expectations of the news media have undergone few changes in the last few decades, as is exemplified by what Zaller (2003) called the Full News Standard of News Quality. Narrating the political climate of the late 1800s to mid-1900s – the Progressive Era in the US – Zaller (2003) charted the evolution of the US news media from partisan, political-party-affiliated content to independent and fair journalism and claimed that each type of journalism – partisan or neutral – had its expectations of citizens. Thus, according to him, the Full News Standard of News Quality meant 'journalism that enabled citizens to form their own opinions about politics' (Zaller, 2003: p. 114). Arguing that the Full News Standard required too much from the citizen, Zaller (2003) proposed an alternative called the Burglar Alarm Standard. According to this model, the news media routinely acts like a burglar alarm, giving dramatic, frenzied coverage of events and issues that require citizens' attention and action. Zaller's (2003) argument in favour of this type of coverage was that it becomes more comfortable for citizens to monitor important events. However, the current study is in favour of the Full News Standard and its call for independent journalism. The Burglar Alarm Standard, as Zaller (2003) admitted, has to take special care to ensure accuracy, as it relies mostly on partisan outlets like political parties and interest groups for information. Without a set of practices that ensure accuracy and impartiality, such as sourcing and verification, the Burglar Alarm Standard could deteriorate into news content that spreads inaccuracies and falsehoods amongst its audience.

However, a significant point to note here is that, like Besley and Chadwick (1992), Zaller (2003) emphasised giving information to citizens to enable them to be self-

governing and outlined the practical challenges in producing and disseminating quality information for journalism to fulfil its potential and challenge the status quo.

Zaller's (2003) surmise about the capabilities of citizens to understand, process and act democratically on the information received from news media is reminiscent of the Lippmann-Dewey debate. The role that journalism was expected to play according to both Lippmann and Dewey has been briefly summarised in the previous chapter. Both scholars had strong opinions about what citizens were capable of doing in a democracy. Lippmann (1922) found the democratic demand that all citizens be equally informed about and have an opinion on all public affairs to be impractical. The crux of Lippmann's argument about newspaper readers was whether they should be treated as informed citizens or consumers of news. While journalism was expected to be the carrier of all public information and also the shaper of public opinion for an omnipotent citizen, the audiences were fickle in their loyalty to newspapers. Dewey (1925) disagreed with Lippmann on the informed, democratic role of citizens that the latter thought was impractical, arguing that democracy needed genuine public opinion, with every citizen continually educated about public affairs so that they could be self-governing.

In a critique of the Burglar Alarm Standard, Patterson (2003) argued in favour of the Full News Standard, suggesting it could alternatively be called the Social Responsibility model, as espoused by Siebert and colleagues (1956) in their seminal work on the four theories of the press. While agreeing with Zaller (2003) that many expectations of quality of journalism held by communication scholars make unrealistic demands on practitioners, Patterson (2003) put forward two main arguments for the Burglar Alarm Standard not being the answer. The first was that Zaller (2003) rested his standard on the assumption that citizens are naturally drawn towards soft news,

whereas Patterson (2003) quoted many studies that show audience preferences for hard news. Secondly, Zaller (2003) also assumed that citizens 'do not need large amounts of quality information', with which Patterson agreed (2003, p. 141). However, according to Patterson (2003), the quality and quantity of news are a reasonable indicator of whether the press is serving democracy's needs. Journalists themselves think so, Patterson (2003) argued, quoting the consolidation of interviews published as elements of journalism by Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007).

Kovach and Rosenstiel's work *Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect* (2007) is quoted not only by Patterson (2003) as a seminal work that addresses the issue of quality in journalism but is also referred to by Shapiro (2010) as the only work that addresses quality according to journalists' value systems. In Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007), references can be found pertaining to assumptions about freedom for citizens in a democratic culture and journalism's role in facilitating it.

Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007, p.12) argued that 'the primary purpose of journalism is to provide citizens with information that they need to be free and self-governing'. The authors conducted interviews with American journalists, which resulted in a set of values that both citizens and newspeople agreed to be the purpose of journalism and its functions. These include commitment to truth; loyalty to citizens; an adherence to the discipline of verification and independence from those whom journalists cover; serving as an independent monitor of power; acting as a forum for public criticism and compromise; attempting to make the significant interesting and relevant; ensuring comprehensive and proportionate coverage of news; exercising personal conscience; and giving consideration to citizens' rights and responsibilities when it comes to news

(Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2007, pp. 5-6). The authors believed that any subversion of what they named 'elements in journalism' would subvert the democratic culture of a society, as illustrated in the cases of the media in Nazi Germany and the self-censoring Singaporean media (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2007).

These normative discussions of quality in journalism have all been linked in one way or another to the assumption that its absence might affect the functioning of a free democracy. For example, Maguire's (2005) study of the impact of ownership on the quality of news coverage was based on both normative assumptions and content characteristics. Quality measures included in this study were those that claimed to measure the extent of journalistic aggressiveness and fulfilment of the watchdog role. Journalistic aggressiveness was taken to be represented by a higher ratio of 'enterprise stories' to 'event stories'. Fulfilment of the watchdog role was measured by the number of stories that focused on holding those in power accountable (Table 4.1). Also measured as quality indicators in this study were stories with a local focus and stories with staff bylines. The emphasis placed on investigative and accountability stories points to the fact that quality involves something more than routine, comprehensive and accurate coverage and presentation of contextual hard news and views.

Thus, quality in journalism could mean content and practices that ensure that such news gives citizens significant, accurate, contextual, proportionate and representative information about the democratic society around them. With this in view, a quality framework is developed towards the end of the chapter to bring the five themes under a few, manageable concepts.

Table 4.1 Quality of news coverage

Measuring the Quality of News Coverage	
Journalistic aggressiveness	Event story (scheduled events) Vs Enterprise story (Journalist's enterprise including investigations, news leaks, trends and profiles)
Watchdog Role	Accountability story (holding those in power accountable) Neutral reporting (that takes events and actions at face value) Promotional stories (celebrating achievements)

(Maguire, 2005, p.79)

The only extant study that acknowledges different models of democracy and the resultant media expectations in each model is Anderson's (2014) comparative study of the future of quality news journalism. Taking Strömbäck's (2005) typology of participatory democracy, Anderson (2014) defined good quality journalism to be that which provides a high degree of representative perspectives available for a particular story. According to Strömbäck (2005, p.336), the participatory model focuses its attention on the citizens, who are required to take an active and continuous role in public life and 'develop democratically sound attitudes'.

This most recent study of quality is by Anderson (2014) is a cross-continental analysis of the challenges facing quality hard news journalism. Anderson (2014) developed a framework for measuring quality of content in news organisations based on what he calls 'the five Cs and one A - Comprehensibility, Context, Causality, Comparativeness, Comprehensiveness and Accuracy'. Comprehensibility is ease of use and understanding; Context is the background and related information for a news story; and Causality includes all the factors contributing to a story. Comparativeness is the

diversity of viewpoints presented for a topic or subject at hand; Comprehensiveness is the thoroughness with which a story is covered; and Accuracy is measured by the presence of proper sourcing and verification (Anderson, 2014, pp. 24-26). The five Cs and one A do not add any new variables to the earlier studies on quality in journalism but are meant to measure individual stories in a newspaper rather than the practices and routines of a news organisation.

Picard's work on quality in journalism

Robert Picard has engaged with normative assumptions, definitions and the measurability of quality in journalism (Picard, 2000; 2004). As part of his edited work *Measuring Media Content, Quality and Diversity* (2000), he described the inherent difficulties of defining quality in journalism. He echoed Meyer and Kim's (2003) statement of knowing what quality is on perceiving it and maintained that while observers of news cannot always define good quality, they recognise bad quality.

Picard (2000, pp.101-102) argued that quality of journalism can be measured by time spent by journalists on journalistic activities such as interviews, press conferences, background reading, travelling for information gathering and gaining knowledge. His assumption was that the information gathering and processing activities of a journalist, combined with his/her knowledge and mental processes, would produce quality in journalism (Table 4.2). He pointed out that by measuring time spent on various journalistic activities, quality could be measured in terms of the ten characteristics of quality for communication organisations outlined by Sánchez-Taberner in 1998. However, apart from giving a few examples, Picard (2000) did not elaborate on how

each component described in Sánchez-Tabernero's (1998) study can be measured using time spent on journalistic activity.

Table 4.2 Measuring quality as activity

Measuring Quality as Time Spent on Journalistic Activity	
Accuracy	Time spent on interviews and information gathering
Completeness and breadth	Time spent on interviews, information gathering, background reading, reflection and personal attendance at events
Context for information	Time spent on background reading, reflection and preparation of information

(Picard, 2000, p.102)

These indicators are not easily measured due to the distinct challenges stated by Picard (2000) in terms of access to newsrooms and organisations for the success of this approach. Self-reporting mechanisms for journalists, instead of newsroom observations by researchers, would make the responses highly subjective. For example, journalists' responses on what constitutes enough time for reflection or background reading will vary depending on their experience and educational qualifications; they will also be impacted by deadline pressures that are routine in journalists' work culture.

Picard (2004) later argued that most often, journalism's quality is often noticed only when it is absent or in the presence of 'titillation, voyeurism and sales' (Picard, 2004, p. 61). However, factors that could be indicative of quality in a newspaper would include:

1. Commitment to values such as truth, accuracy and completeness
2. Code of conduct for journalists practising quality journalism
3. Amount and types of content
4. Self-produced information
5. Proportionate local, national and international information (Picard, 2004, pp. 60-61).

Picard (2004, p.61) also linked quality to the role journalism plays in democratic societies and defined it as 'the content and methods of journalism and information'. He argued that this information should produce understanding in a way that promotes journalism's social, political and cultural goals in democratic societies (Picard, 2000). Though Picard (2000; 2004) did not elaborate on what these roles require from journalism, he concluded that quality could be found in those newspapers to which readers turn for information in times of crises.

4.2 Empirical studies on quality in journalism

This section offers a critical review of the methods used and the indicators developed in scholarly works on quality in journalism. Quality in journalism is a complex entity that cannot easily be conceptualised. The main purpose of this section is to collate different definitions and indicators of quality available in the literature and to bring to light the ambiguity in most definitions and the gaps in various measurements.

A definition of journalism quality did not enter scholarship until the 1990s, and much of the scholarly engagement in this area belongs to the new millennium. As mentioned above, studies have approached quality from varied perspectives. Some studies discussed newspaper quality (Stone, Stone and Trotter, 1981; Lacy and Fico, 1990; 1991; Kim and Meyer, 2003), while others engaged with quality of journalism, quality of news and quality of coverage (Roberts and Dickson, 1984; Demers, 1999; Picard, 2000). Scholars have also described quality in terms of newspaper excellence (Gladney, 1990), standards of excellence in journalism (Gladney, 1996; Roberts and Dickson, 1984; Shapiro, Albanese and Doyle, 2006) and newspaper and journalistic performance (Becker, Beam and Russial, 1978; Bogart, 1984). While most of these

studies used the survey method to develop indicators for quality, excellence and performance, none has actively engaged with definitions of these terms. It was only in the early 1990s that scholars (Besley and Chadwick, 1992) began to normatively engage with what 'quality' could mean for journalism, with the most significant work on this being done since 2000 (Zaller, 2003; Patterson, 2003; Bogart, 2004; Picard, 2004; Porto, 2007).

4.2.1 Measuring quality: bringing evaluative frameworks under one umbrella

Newspaper quality has been termed a concept that is elusive, amorphous and problematic (Lacy and Fico, 1991; Picard, 2004). When news editors are asked what makes for quality in a newspaper, words like accuracy, balance and fairness invariably crop up (Picard, 2004; Bogart, 2004). Most empirical studies have engaged with journalists' perceptions of quality and these form a significant part of the literature on quality in journalism. A few studies have taken audience perceptions into account and, even though audience perceptions are beyond the scope of this study, existing studies in this area will be briefly discussed in the first part of this section because more recent studies have argued that such perceptions are critical to journalism quality.

Audience perceptions of quality

In one of the earliest works on audience notions of quality, Bogart (1984) studied various aspects of newspaper readership including reading patterns, demographics of readers, reasons for reading and topics that attract reader interest but did not explore the question of quality from the readers' perspective. One part of the study, which examines readers' rating of newspaper performance, used similar variables as those for

quality ratings by editors and other judges in other studies. In this study, readers were asked to rate parameters of performance given to them and were not consulted about their perceptions of good performance. Readability was rated highest, followed by how good the paper looked, quality of people working for it, value for money, coverage of issues that the public ought to know about, an interesting writing style, community interest, accuracy and fairness and impartiality (Table 4.3). Two further variables added as follow-up questions addressed the influence of editorial opinion on news coverage and the political leanings of the newspaper. However, a proper conceptual definition of what newspaper performance means is lacking.

Table 4. 3 Bogart's survey of reader perceptions

Reader perceptions of quality
1. Readability
2. How good it looks
3. Quality of people working for it
4. Value for money
5. Covering what public ought to know about
6. Interesting writing style
7. Accuracy
8. Community interest
9. Fairness and impartiality
10. Influence of editorial opinion on news coverage
11. Political leaning of the newspaper

(Bogart, 1984, p. 714)

Gladney (1990) asked readers and editors to rate eighteen standards of newspaper quality that he had developed from previous literature. A more detailed discussion of this study can be found in the next part of this section.

Two studies have argued for incorporating audience conceptions of quality into news production processes. Firstly, Meijer (2013) extensively studied quality of television news in a Dutch context using triangulation methods in terms of audience perceptions, journalist conceptions and evidence in content. While undertaking a

secondary analysis of data collected for her previous studies, she found that opinions of quality journalism were centred around conceptions about reliability, comprehensiveness and accuracy of information (Meijer, 2013). She found that audience opinions about quality and audience experience of quality were very different (Meijer, 1999; 2000; 2001; 2009); audiences valued journalism that was participatory, representative and involved good presentation of information (Meijer, 2013). According to audience members interviewed for her study, good journalism involved more participation by using the expertise of both ordinary and expert sources; representation of the reality of even marginal groups in society; and multi-layered, well-narrated and visually pleasing information (Meijer, 2013). It is to be noted here that Meijer (2013) used quality interchangeably with good journalism, standards, excellence and valuable journalism. She wove together different concepts such as audience experience of journalism, journalists' conceptions of journalism and experience of quality in journalism for both journalists and audiences, while arguing that a more dynamic relationship between journalists and their audiences can improve quality in journalism.

Secondly, a survey of Dutch audiences about their expectations of journalists and their roles found that audiences expected journalism to meet their informational and democratic needs and also represent the interests and desires of individual citizens (van der Wurff and Schoenbach, 2014). The study used quality journalism and good journalism interchangeably, but, like Meijer (2013), its authors argued that quality would be significantly improved if journalists took audience preferences more seriously (van der Wurff and Schoenbach, 2014).

Journalist perceptions of quality

One of the earliest works on quality is deemed to be John Merrill's (1968) book *The Elite Press: Great Newspapers of the World*. Later scholars used Merrill's (1968) work as a point of departure for their own work on quality (for example, see Stone, Stone and Trotter, 1981; Gladney, 1990). Merrill (1968) engaged with what he terms the 'elite press' – as opposed to the popular or mass press – that targets an educated audience and has more public affairs content than its more popular counterpart. The 'elite press', according to Merrill (1968), is read more by opinion leaders and is characterised by numerous value-oriented functions, expectations and descriptions, most of which are derived from Merrill's observations about newspapers around the world.

This classification is similar to normative discussions about quality in the UK that often address the divide between the quality and popular press. British newspapers are usually divided into quality and popular publications depending on their content and the audiences that they serve. Quality newspapers are known to provide the readers with serious news while popular or tabloid newspapers publish celebrity news and sensational news stories (Othman and Tiung, 2009). In the UK, quality debates are also centred on the dichotomy of hard and soft news and are sometimes framed around discussions of tabloidization. Tabloidization is the replacement of serious stories that help citizens in self-governance by news that provides entertainment to a large number of readers (Rooney, 1998). It is a decrease in hard news and an increase in soft news that focuses on the private lives of citizens and public figures (Uribe and Gunter, 2004). Esser (1999) quoted Kurtz (1993) to describe tabloidization as a decrease in journalistic standards characterised by a decrease in the proportion of hard news with a

corresponding increase in soft news and a change in what media define as information required for self-governance.

While conceding that there are two kinds of elite press in the world – in open and authoritarian societies, respectively – Merrill (1968, p.11) focused his attention on newspapers in an open society, which have ‘built a reputation for being well-informed and express serious, well-seasoned opinion of the nation concerned’. In contrast, the press in a closed or authoritarian society would be used as carriers of government propaganda. As examples of elite newspapers, Merrill names papers such as China's *Central Daily News* and the then Yugoslavia's *Politika*. Being contemporary to the seminal work on the press systems in the world *Four Theories of the Press* (1956), Merrill's classification of newspapers occupied two ends of the spectrum: libertarian and authoritarian. From this standpoint, Merrill's (1968) labelling of what quality newspapers should be and do is given below (Table 4.4). Since most of these observations are substantiated with examples, it could be assumed that Merrill (1968) had studied many newspapers around the world.

Table 4. 4 Merrill's indicators for elite newspapers

Marks of a Free Elite
1. Independence; financial stability; integrity; social concern; good writing and editing
2. Strong opinion and interpretive emphasis; world consciousness; non-sensationalism in articles and makeup
3. Emphasis on politics, international relations, economics, social welfare, cultural endeavours, education and science
4. Concern with getting, developing and keeping a large, intelligent, well-educated, articulate and technically proficient staff
5. Determination to serve and help expand a well-educated, intellectual readership at home and abroad; desire to appeal to and influence opinion leaders everywhere

(Merrill, 1968, pp. 30-31)

Merrill's (1968) classification and characterisation of newspapers has relevance to this study because of how he defined the functions of a quality newspaper in society, setting out high standards:

They are the reasonable journals, freely and courageously speaking out calmly above the din of party politics and nationalistic drum-beating. They are urging peoples to work together for the good of all, to consider all sides of complex issues, to refrain from emotional decisions, to cherish that which has proved good and discard that which has been detrimental to consider seriously the basic issues and problems that confront mankind (p. 17).

Merrill (1968) tested his observations through two surveys: one of American professors of communication and the other of editors around the world. The criteria for rating newspapers for quality that emerged from his surveys are given in Table 4.5. Measurability is a challenge in Merrill's 1968 descriptions of quality in newspapers as he neither engaged with it nor disclosed how his survey respondents judged whether a newspaper would meet one of their quality criteria or not.

A few years later, in 1979, Merrill further engaged with questions of quality and good journalism in *Media Messages and Men: New Perspectives in Communication*, co-authored by Ralph Lowenstein, claiming that journalists know instinctively what is 'good journalism' (Merrill and Lowenstein, 1979, p.139). While conceding that quality is often relative, contextual and comparative, the authors list certain 'common denominators' of criteria for quality that can be used across contexts, arguing that quality of journalism can be evaluated internally by good typography and makeup techniques; editing and proofreading care; correct spelling, punctuation and grammar; picture reproduction and printing excellence; balance in editorial/news material; concern with staff quality;

concern with editorial policy; and concern with self-evaluation and outside criticism (pp. (Merrill and Lowenstein, 1979, pp.142-145). They also listed audience-related, external criteria for quality such as ‘frequency of quotation and allusion, frequency of library subscriptions, reputation among journalists/historians, reputation in politics, government, diplomacy, and reputation in academic circles’ (Merrill and Lowenstein, 1979, pp.145-146).

Table 4. 5 Merrill's survey of professors

Professors' evaluation of quality
1. Emphasis on political, economic, cultural news and views
2. Long tradition of freedom and editorial courage
3. Political and economic independence
4. Strong editorial page for opinion and interpretation
5. Staff enterprise in obtaining and writing news and commentary
6. Large proportion of space given to world affairs
7. Lack of provincialism
8. Consistently good writing in all sections of the paper
9. High regard by opinion leaders and other serious publications
10. Large, well-educated staff
11. Typographic and printing excellence; general dignity of make-up
12. De-emphasis of sensational news and pictures
13. High overall quality of coverage on world, national and local levels
14. Active integrity
15. Consistent opposition to intolerance and unfairness
16. Active community leadership
17. Comprehensive news coverage in its pre-empted area
18. Influence with decision and policymakers at home and in other countries

(Merrill, 1968, p. 28-29)

Following Merrill’s (1968) categorisation of the world’s newspapers into free elite and controlled elite, Merrill and Lowenstein (1979) proposed evaluative criteria for free and controlled newspapers (Table 4.6).

Table 4. 6 Criteria for free and controlled newspapers

Criteria of evaluation for free newspapers	Criteria of evaluation for controlled newspapers
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Concern for people's right to know2. Concern for public service3. Pluralism in news and views4. Resistance to outside pressures5. Separation of news and views6. Headline accuracy7. Reliance on own staffers8. Economic stability	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Understanding and achieving of purpose or goal2. Homogeneity of staff3. Self-criticism and evaluation4. Dedication to staff improvement5. General media system cooperation6. Elimination of destabilising elements7. Staff dedication and dependability8. Use of "resource" persons (quotes in original)

(Merrill and Lowenstein, 1979, pp. 147-150)

Merrill's (1968) observations and his survey respondents' criteria and Merrill and Lowenstein's (1979) criteria for evaluating newspapers can be categorised broadly into five classifications for this study: Staff Enterprise, Contextual Hard News and Views, Editorial Integrity, Comprehensiveness and News Presentation. It will be later demonstrated that these five classifications are recurring themes in many further works on quality journalism.

The next prominent study on quality was by Leo Bogart (1989), whose pioneering work on editors' rating of quality has since been adapted in modified forms for many later studies. His survey of 746 editors from the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) and the America Press Managing Editors in 1977 became one of the most extensive studies on quality journalism at the time, and the '23 quality attributes' that editors were asked to rank have been referenced in almost all quality literature. Bogart's (1989) 23 criteria, in order of editors' rankings, are given in Table 4.7.

Table 4. 7 Bogart's quality indicators

Rank	Quality Indicators
1.	High ratio of staff-written copy to wire service and feature service copy
2.	Total amount of non-advertising content
3.	High ratio of news interpretations and backgrounders to spot news reports
4.	Number of letters to the editor per issue
5.	Diversity of political columnists
6.	High 'readability' score
7.	High ratio of illustrations to text
8.	High ratio of non-advertising content to advertising content
9.	High ratio of news to features
10.	Number of staff-bylined features
11.	High ratio of sports news and features to total news content (TNC)
12.	Presence of news summary
13.	Presence of an 'action line' column
14.	Number of editorials per issue
15.	Number of wire services carried
16.	High ratio of cultural news, reviews, features to TNC
17.	High ratio of homemaking news features to TNC
18.	High ratio of business news, features to TNC
19.	Number of political columnists
20.	Number of comic strips
21.	Length of average front page story
22.	Presence of an astrology column
23.	High ratio of state, national, world news to local news

(Bogart, 1989, p. 260)

If the main problem with Merrill's (1968) study was its measurability, Bogart's (1989) survey gave a superficial overview of the various ways to measure the content of a newspaper, with many being repetitive and often contradictory. For example, the ratio of non-advertising content to advertising content (Rank 8) and the total amount of non-ad content (Rank 2) did not offer distinctive insights into the quality of news content. This is also the case with the ratio of staff-written copy to wire and feature service copy (Rank 1), the number of staff-bylined features (Rank 10) and the number of wire services carried (Rank 15). Examples of attributes that contradict each other include a high ratio of news to features (Rank 9), that demanded priority of news content over features,

while a high ratio of cultural, business, sports and homemaking features to TNC assumed the opposite.

In addition to these indicators, Bogart (1989, p.258) also asked editors to rank seven subjective attributes that were associated with quality: accuracy, impartiality in reporting, investigative enterprise, specialised staff skills, individuality of character, civic-mindedness and literary style. Even though Bogart's (1989) quality indicators are marred by concerns around superficiality and measurability, most can be grouped under the five broad classifications introduced earlier in the section and described in detail in section 4.3.

Adaptations of the Bogart Survey

Stephen Lacy and Frederick Fico adapted Bogart's 24 indicators of news quality to many of their studies of newspaper competition and quality. In a 1990 study that rated group-owned newspapers according to quality, Lacy and Fico applied seven of Bogart's quality indicators to a sample of 114 newspapers in the US. They added an eighth indicator of quality that they stated would measure reporter workload: square inches of copy divided by the number of reporters listed with bylines (Lacy and Fico, 1990). Group ownership was increasing in the US at the time of the study, with Lacy and Fico assessing the share of circulation of group-owned newspapers to have risen from 10 percent in 1900 to 70 percent in 1986. However, if a newspaper did not give bylines to its reporters for routine coverage like press conferences, as is the practice in India, Lacy and Fico's (1990) indicator might not be an accurate measure of reporter workload. Table 4.8 lists the eight indicators.

Table 4. 8 Adaptation of Bogart's indicators

Assessing Quality: Indicators	
1.	Commitment to locally-produced copy
2.	Amount of non-advertising copy
3.	Ratio of non-advertising to advertising space
4.	Number of interpretative and in-depth stories
5.	Amount of graphics
6.	Number of wire services
7.	Story length – more depth; average length of a story
8.	Reporter workload

(Lacy and Fico, 1990, pp. 45-46)

Almost three decades after the initial survey of editors by Leo Bogart, Meyer and Kim (2003) recreated the survey with 568 editors and a 50 percent response rate. They used 13 high-ranking indicators from Bogart's index and added two indicators: the number of 'briefs' columns and the vigour of editorials. The measurement criteria for vigour of editorials were not explained in the study, but it could be assumed that at least two indicators – the number of editorials per issue and number of letters to the editor – formed part of the measurement for the same. Kim and Meyer (2003) found a high level of correlation in ranking with editors from Bogart's survey and used the newer rankings to conduct a factor analysis to group quality indicators under five themes: Ease of use, Localism, Editorial Vigour, News Quantity and Interpretation. Table 4.9 gives the full list of indicators that come under each of the five themes.

Table 4. 9 Meyer and Kim's themes for quality

Ease of use	Localism	Editorial vigour	Quantity of news	Interpretation
1.Number of comic strips	1.Number of staff by-lined stories	1.Vigour of editorials	1.High ratio of news to features	1.Diversity of political columnists
2.High readability score	2.High ratio of staff-written copy to wire service and feature service copy	2.Number of editorials per issue	2.High ratio of non-advertising content to advertising	2.High ratio of news interpretations and backgrounders to spot news reports
3.Number of 'briefs' columns		3.Number of letters to editor per issue	3.Number of wire services carried	
4.High ratio of art to text				

(Meyer and Kim, 2003, pp. 8-9)

Meyer and Kim's (2003) study is relevant to this chapter in that it aims to bring different indicators of quality into few logical themes. However, Meyer and Kim (2003) depended mostly on Bogart's (1989) study to elaborate their five factors for quality, while the current study aims to take other literature into consideration as well.

4.2.2 Quality, performance and excellence in journalism

A review of the literature showed that quality as a concept has often been used interchangeably in many studies with performance and excellence. The first of such studies (after Bogart's 1977 survey of news editors) was carried out in 1978 by Becker, Beam and Russial, who based their analysis on the 1973 study by Loren Ghiglione, who had used critiques of New England newspapers prepared by 13 journalists and former journalists. These 13 reviewers, in turn, based their evaluations on information from newspaper stories and interviews with management personnel, editors and newspaper staff. Becker, Beam and Russial (1978) used variables to measure newspaper performance, many of which have not figured in other studies on quality and

performance. These include the gender and race representation of staff and salary details of staff members (Table 4.10).

A gap in their study, however, is the lack of conceptual clarity on what newspaper performance is, whether financial, journalistic or any other type of performance.

Table 4. 10 Variables of newspaper performance

Newspaper performance	Organisational variables
1. News existence – presence of news stories	1. Full-time staff
2. News evaluation – thoroughness and balance	2. Part-time staff
3. Editorial page – diversity of columnists and quality of argumentation	3. Total staff hours
4. News presentation – writing, editing and design	4. Women on staff
	5. Women not on women’s page on staff
	6. Spanish and Blacks on staff
	7. Starting salary without experience
	8. Top salary
	9. Years to reach top salary
	10. Staff turnover
	11. Education and experience of recent employees
	12. Staff unionisation
	13. Audience survey in last five years
	14. Average size of news hole
	15. Type of ownership
	16. Publisher’s profitability estimate
	17. Advertising revenues
	18. Daily circulation
	19. Sunday edition published
	20. Expenditures on news-editorial operations
	21. Participation of the staff in professional organisations
Community variables	
1. Community size – census estimates	
2. Community growth – shift in population over three years	
3. Market growth – shifts in population in primary market over two years	
4. Retail sales in community	
5. Average school years completed by members	
6. Mean family income	
7. Religious diversity	
8. Newspaper competition	

(Becker, Beam and Russial, 1978, pp. 101-103)

Roberts and Dickson (1984) assessed quality in local television news in the US to develop indicators of quality that were similar to those seen while studying quality in

newspapers but which are also unique to the nature of the medium, for example the technical quality of a newscast. A summary of aspects of quality from this study includes:

1. Time devoted to news and features
2. Time devoted to different categories of news like local government, politics, sports, weather
3. Technical quality of a newscast
4. Importance given by audience to different categories of news and the actual time devoted to it
5. Perception of anchors of newscasts and desired attributes of anchors (p.394)

Roberts and Dickson (1984) felt that studies of the quality of television news placed undue emphasis on the audience ratings of different news networks and that the popularity of a network was taken as synonymous with its quality. Furthermore, they maintained the importance of the need to use journalistic standards of excellence to assess quality in television news, but these standards are not defined in the study.

George Gladney (1990; 1996) conducted two studies on standards of excellence for newspapers and the ratings of quality given, first by editors and then by readers. In these studies, it is interesting to note that Gladney (1990; 1996) interchanged standards of newspaper excellence with quality. The very titles of these studies are an indicator of the interchangeability of these words. In 1990, Gladney conducted a survey titled *Newspaper Excellence: How Editors of Small and Large Papers Judge Quality*, in which he used 17 'standards of excellence' derived from literature and a 'community press standard' that denoted a newspaper's commitment to covering community-related news. Classifying these 18 standards under 'organisational and content-related' standards, Gladney (1990) surveyed editors of small and large (circulation) newspapers to rank them according to importance (Table 4.11).

Table 4. 11 Gladney's survey of editors

Organisational standards	Content standards
1. Integrity	1. News interpretation
2. Staff enterprise	2. Lack of sensationalism
3. Community leadership	3. Strong local news coverage
4. Editorial independence	4. Visual appeal
5. Staff professionalism	5. Accuracy
6. Editorial courage	6. Strong editorial page
7. Decency	7. Community press (CP) standard
8. Influence	8. Comprehensive coverage
9. Impartiality	9. Good writing

(Gladney, 1990, pp. 65-66)

Gladney concluded that the editors of large newspapers gave higher ranking to staff enterprise, staff professionalism, news interpretation and comprehensive news coverage than those of small newspapers. Editors of small newspapers, in turn, gave higher ranking to local news coverage, community leadership and the CP standard than their counterparts from large newspapers.

In 1996, Gladney used the same standards to conclude that readers of small and large newspapers had similar quality perceptions as editors. While the title of the study specifically mentions the ratings by editors and readers of standards of newspaper *excellence*, the term is quite freely interchanged with standards of newspaper *quality*. This later study gave descriptions for both organisational and content standards (Tables 4.12 and 4.13).

Table 4. 12 Gladney's description of organisational standards

Organisational standards	Description
Integrity	Keen sense of professional ethics
Staff enterprise	Aggressive and original reporting
Community leadership	Willingness to take an active role in community welfare
Editorial independence	Freedom from outside pressure
Staff professionalism	Willingness to fight against wrong
Editorial courage	Willingness to fight against wrong
Decency	A sense of morals and cleanliness
Influence	High regard by opinion leaders
Impartiality	Fairness in gathering and reporting news

Table 4. 13 Gladney's description of content standards

Content standards	Description
News interpretation	Emphasis on interpretation, analysis and backgrounders
Lack of sensationalism	Not described
Strong local news coverage	Not described
Visual appeal	Effective and attractive presentation through visual tools
Accuracy	Not described
Strong editorial page	Not described
CP standard	Emphasis on news coverage that focuses on common community values
Comprehensive Coverage	Coverage from beyond the immediate distribution area
Good writing	Not described

(Gladney, 1996, p. 324)

In many studies that aim to measure quality as performance, there is a lack of clarity as to what performance means for a news organisation. Picard tried to fill this gap in his continuum and axis for 'Strategic Choices Involving Quality and Performance', in which he talked about two types of performance for a newspaper: profit maximization and company value maximization. The former involved keeping costs low and increasing profits, while the latter entailed efforts to maximise the reputation and image of a newspaper among its readers and in society.

Financial commitment as a measure of quality

Geoff Turner (1996) was the only scholar to approach the measuring of quality in newspapers through a mathematical formula. In a study that rejects many studies measuring quality via front-page content, newsprint and cover price and expert surveys, Turner (1996) argued that quality depends on the amount of money spent on newsgathering. He contended that expenditure for newsgathering, or 'editorial budget', is most visible and can be measured by the number of staff employed by a newspaper. He also argued that the number of editorial staff would have a direct impact on the circulation of a newspaper (Turner, 1996).

Demers (1999) engaged with vague notions of quality in newspapers in terms of the emphasis given to it in corporate newspapers, thus bringing an economic angle to his study. He argued that the corporatisation of newspapers – through group, chain or public ownership – increased their product quality. Demers' (1999) notions ranged from quality journalism to good journalism and product quality; he did not give specific definitions of these terms but argued that quality journalism involved activities that promoted social, economic and political equality, investigated elites and encouraged editorial vigour.

Lacy (1992) argued that when competition in a newspaper market increases, the amount of money spent to generate news content increases as a direct result of the need to attract and sustain readers. His financial commitment model argued that when there was more money allotted to content, a newspaper's quality, as defined by journalists, would increase (Lacy, 1992). However, there are no studies which have empirically tested this approach of financial commitment.

These expectations of quality journalism, especially in newspapers, have remarkable similarities to Merrill's (1968) criteria for judging the great newspapers of the world. Hence, they have the same limitation as Merrill's indicators – that of measurement.

In a departure from the common method of surveying journalists, Shapiro, Albanese and Doyle (2006, p.247) used ratings from judges of two Canadian award programmes to formulate what they called indicators of 'journalism excellence', which was defined as 'quality in abundance'. They argued that the 'most visible measure of excellence in journalism' can be found in prestigious journalism awards (Shapiro, Albanese and Doyle, 2006, p. 428). Also, the authors felt that this method could measure quality or excellence of individual stories, while most previous studies focused on quality of newspapers or news organisations as a whole (Shapiro, Albanese and Doyle, 2006). In this exploratory study, the authors asked the judges to rank a set of 12 criteria drawn from 'quality and excellence literature' and from criteria given in various award programmes (Shapiro, Albanese and Doyle, 2006). The highest ranking among these were writing style, reporting rigour and independence/fairness. The criteria used by judges of award programmes in judging stories nominated for awards are in Table 4.14.

Table 4. 14 Shapiro, Albanese and Doyle's survey of judges of award programmes

Judges' responses on criteria of excellence	
1.	Clarity to complicated subject
2.	Writing style
3.	Analysis
4.	Thorough context
5.	Reporting rigour
6.	Independence from and fairness of sources
7.	Originality of subject
8.	Technique
9.	Subject difficulty
10.	Benefit to society
11.	Transparency in method
12.	Breaking news

(Shapiro, Albanese and Doyle, 2006, p. 437)

Shapiro further developed this work on quality of journalism in two studies (Shapiro 2010; Maguire and Shapiro 2011). In the first study, Shapiro (2010) treated journalism as rhetoric and pitted tools of rhetorical analysis such as discovery, examination, interpretation, style and presentation against the practice of journalism. While the Shapiro, Albanese and Doyle (2006) survey of judges of journalism awards claimed that 'excellence was quality in abundance, in this second study, Shapiro (2010, p.155) defined quality as an 'attribute that can, at least in principle, be tested factually, even measurably, in order to answer a straightforward question: *does this work constitute quality journalism or not*. A criterion of excellence was defined to be highly contingent answers to an open-ended question of gradation: *how exemplary is this work of journalism*. A criterion of excellence purported to show how far a work of journalism exceeds minimum standards of quality' (italics in original).

For a work that starts out with the promise of an assessment framework that will be applicable to all stakeholders of journalism – journalists, teachers of journalism, judges in award programmes and researchers – Shapiro's application of rhetorical

analysis to journalism is a reiteration of previous studies which have described quality based on journalistic routines and functions. His research, however, is unique in providing a practical framework for examining quality in journalism. Shapiro (2010) has argued that these five themes could be further evolved into measurable indicators by either journalism teachers or newsroom managers (Table 4.15).

Table 4. 15 Rhetorical analysis for quality

	Standards of quality	Criterion of excellence
Discovery	Independent observers of events	Social importance of subject matter
Examination	Rigorous and clearly evident efforts to ensure accuracy	Undaunted reporting
Interpretation	Open to appraisal; transparency in method and attribution	Facts and opinions in context
Style	Journalism is edited	Journalism must engage in both approach and technique
Presentation	Journalism must be uncensored	Journalists must strive to be original in form

(Shapiro, 2010, pp.152-158)

In all the studies discussed so far, there is a conspicuous lack of clarity concerning the term ‘quality’. Maguire and Shapiro (2011) tried to address this by comparing the development of quality studies in journalism with that in management studies. They claimed that the concept of quality first appeared in management and business studies, and it involved providing what consumers wanted. However, for journalism, quality also included giving what audiences needed. They suggested that quality for journalism should include inputs and a ‘dynamic exchange and creative tensions between journalism’s participants (producers, subjects, sources and audiences)’ (Maguire and Shapiro, 2011, p.15).

4.3 The Quality Framework

This section aims to bring varied approaches, frameworks and indices of quality in journalism under one framework. Most of these studies tend to assume that 'quality' is something implicitly understood, and thus requiring no definition (Picard, 2004; Meyer, 2009), or is at least recognised by its absence (Picard, 2000; 2004; Merrill and Lowenstein, 1979). Thus, the normative engagement on the relationship between the role of journalism and quality, as discussed in the previous section, becomes crucial to the current study.

There is broad consensus on quality among different levels and ranks of newspaper personnel surveyed in studies spanning three decades. This is evident in the way the different approaches to quality and the various indicators can be categorised under the five broad themes mentioned in section 4.2.

The various quality indicators, borrowed from empirical studies, are classified into multiple indicators under five broad themes: Staff Enterprise, Contextual Hard News and Views, Editorial Integrity, News Presentation and Comprehensiveness. These five themes, in turn, can be grouped under Gladney 's (1990) organisational (Staff Enterprise and Editorial Integrity) and content (Contextual Hard News and Views, News Presentation and Comprehensiveness) standards.

Organisational Standard: Staff Enterprise

The size and competence levels of editorial staff have been important indicators of quality. For Merrill (1968), this meant a large, active and well-educated staff, while for Becker, Beam and Russial (1978) it meant the education levels and racial and gender

representation among journalists. In Bogart (1989), staff enterprise was measured by staff bylines and staff-written news stories; in Picard (2000), by various journalistic activities such as interviews and time spent on background reading; and in Lacy and Fico (1990), by reporter workload. For others, measures considered included staff enterprise journalistic routines that encouraged reporting rigour and transparency in method (Shapiro, Albanese and Doyle, 2006), journalistic aggressiveness (Maguire, 2005) and exercise of conscience and discipline of verification (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2007).

Similar to the indices from which these indicators of staff enterprise have been drawn, these journalistic activities point to a lack of consensus on quality expectations from journalists. However, the commonality among these indicators is the emphasis placed on individual journalists and their work in overall quality of journalism. Thus, staff enterprise can be summarised as having the following characteristics:

1. Education and experience level of journalists
2. Reporting rigour – time spent in journalistic activity; informal sources and stories
3. Journalists' workload
4. Journalists' freedom – code of ethics and autonomy

Organisational Standard: Editorial Integrity

Editorial practices have been described using terms like impartiality, independence, truthfulness, accuracy, balance and fairness. Authors have also defined expectations of editorial integrity like editorial courage (Merrill, 1968), diversity of columnists (Bogart, 1989; Becker, Beam and Russial, 1978), promotion of equality and social change (Merrill, 1968; Demers, 1999) and obligation to truth (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2007).

Thus, editorial integrity can be summed up as combining:

1. Commitment to truth and accuracy
2. Economic and political independence
3. Accountability to audience through investigative and enterprise stories
4. Diversity of columnists and stories

Content Standard: Contextual Hard News and Views

Tuchman (1973) defined hard news as being characterised by a high level of newsworthiness and demanding immediate publication, whereas soft news need not be as timely. Soft news is interesting, while hard news covers serious issues (Scott and Gobetz, 1992). Curran et al. (2009) defined hard news as focusing on politics, public administration, the economy and related topics.

Quality studies have also stressed the importance of giving news and analysis in context (Picard, 2000; Shapiro, Albanese and Doyle, 2006). Contextualised hard news and views have been deemed important indicators of quality in this study because of their high degree of importance and newsworthiness. The newsworthiness of a story is often decided according to news values such as frequency, threshold, unambiguity, ethnocentrism, cultural proximity, consonance, unexpectedness, continuity, composition, reference to elite nations and people, reference to events about specific people and reference to events that have a negative impact (Galtung and Ruge, 1965, pp. 66-68; Harcup and O'Neill, 2001; pp. 262-263). These news values have changed over the years and been adapted for newer media landscapes. Harcup and O'Neill (2001) analysed the content of British newspapers to add sub-categories for news values to account for entertainment-oriented stories in them. Brighton and Foy (2007, p.29) argued that a new set of values more suited to the modern news media were relevance, topicality, composition, expectation, unusualness, worth and external influences. Hard

news is newsworthy information which has to be published under any circumstances and can include covering what the public ought to know about (Bogart, 1989), commitment to locally produced copy (Lacy and Fico, 1990; 1991), a high ratio of news to advertisement (Bogart, 1989), news interpretation (Gladney, 1990) and contextual information (Picard, 2000). It has been summarised as containing the following indicators:

1. Number of local and community stories
2. Number of in-depth stories, interpretations and analysis
3. Number of investigative and enterprise stories
4. Clear separation of fact and opinion

Content Standard: News Presentation

This is a medium-specific indicator of quality and will vary from newspapers and television to online news portals. Since most of the studies mentioned here have been based on newspapers and have surveyed newspaper journalists, the summarisation given below leans heavily towards news presentation in the print media:

1. Visual appeal in the use of design and colour
2. Consistently good writing
3. Ease of use

Content Standard: Comprehensiveness

Anderson's (2014) work on quality news journalism defined comprehensiveness as the thoroughness with which a news item is sourced and covered. Comprehensiveness can also be found in news using indicators such as diversity of news topics and the extent to which content is representative of the audience it covers. From that perspective, comprehensiveness will include the following:

1. News from different categories such as politics, economics, culture, sports, local community, etc.
2. Representative stories from all sections of the audience
3. Presence of more enterprise stories than press releases and routine stories

4.3.1 Who Judges Quality?

This section gives an overview of those participants in journalism (to borrow a term from Maguire and Shapiro, 2011) who have been surveyed for the various studies described in this chapter.

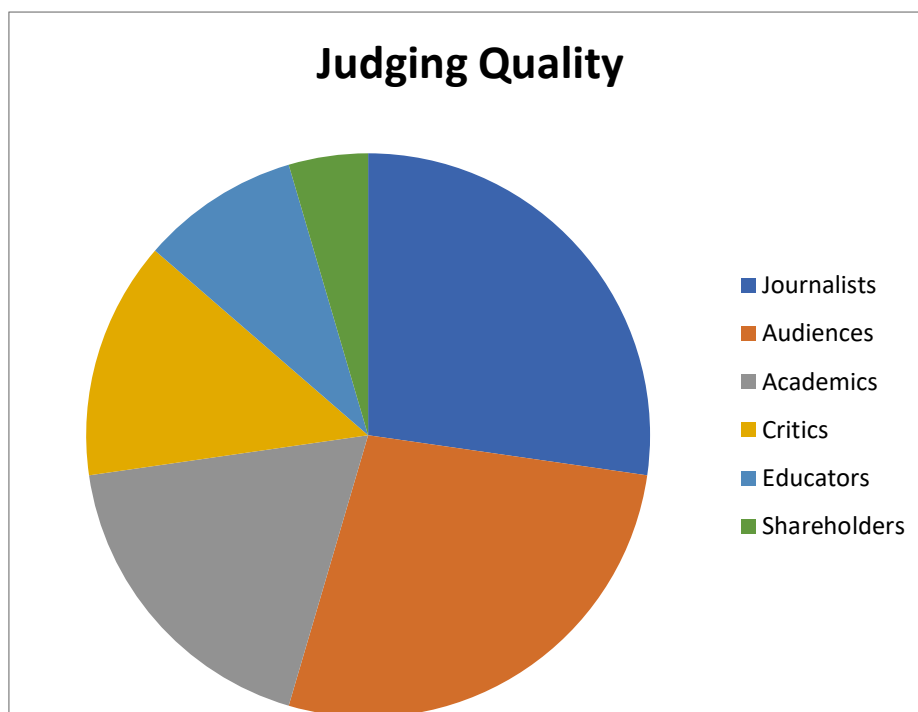


Figure 4.1 Graphic representation of different participants in journalism mentioned in quality studies

The review of literature of this chapter has shown that journalism is often judged by different groups of people who engage with it in one capacity or the other. However, it should also be noted that, barring a few studies, most scholars have surveyed or interviewed journalists and editors for ranking and rating of quality indicators. Almost

all scholars agree that the two most important groups judging quality in journalism are journalists and their audiences. Other groups referred to by scholars include academics, critics, educators, shareholders, retired correspondents and juries of journalism awards. A synopsis of different groups mentioned in the studies discussed so far is given in Figure 4.1.

However, when it came to actual surveys for the ranking of variables for quality, almost all scholars recruited editors and journalists as participants. Exceptions were Stone, Stone and Trotter (1981), Bogart (1984) and Shapiro, Albanese and Doyle (2006), who used newspaper managers, readers and award judges respectively in their studies. Certain other studies also surveyed audiences in addition to editors (Roberts and Dickson, 1984; Gladney, 1996). Merrill (1968) used professors for his analysis of the great newspapers of the world. Figure 4.2 gives the proportions of the various groups of people surveyed for quality.

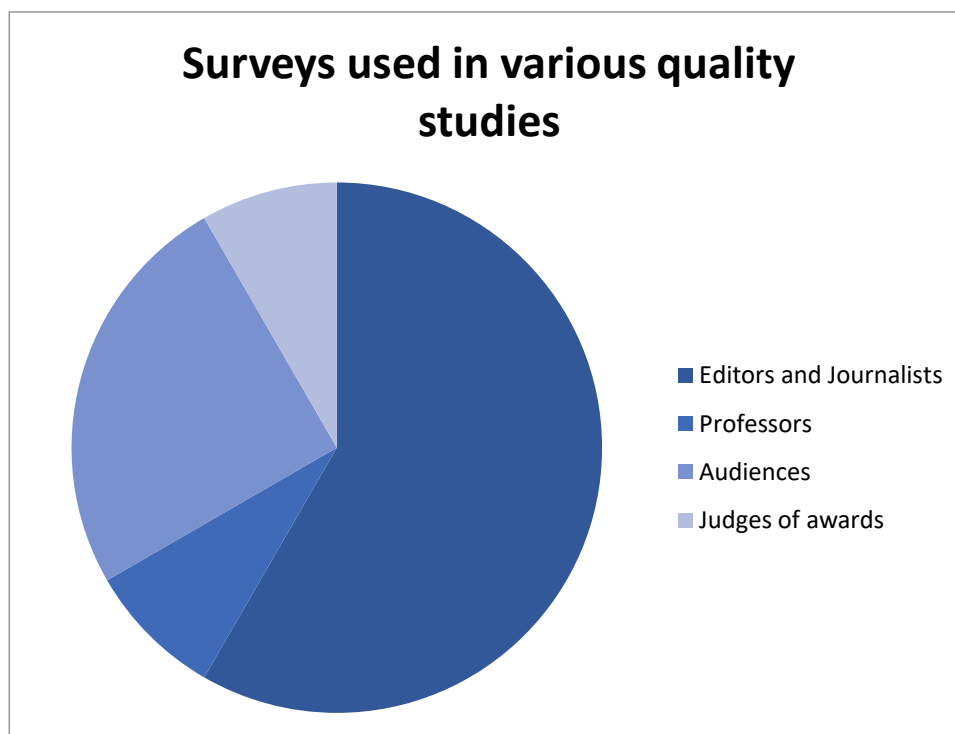


Figure 4.2 Groups surveyed for quality perceptions

Conclusion

After an extensive literature review on the meaning of journalism, role perceptions and role conceptions and quality, the framework given in section 4.3 has demonstrated that quality in journalism has not been studied at the micro level and through the experiences and perceptions of individual journalists. While organisational and content standards have been gleaned from interviews with journalists, none of the previous studies has looked at quality through how journalists give meaning to their work and how this affects both organisational and content standards.

In adopting this approach, the present study also addresses three other areas. Firstly, most studies on quality have used quantitative surveys based on previous literature to understand journalists' perceptions. Secondly, there are currently no studies exploring the concept in an Asian or Indian context. Thirdly, even though role perceptions and role conceptions are implicit in many studies on quality, few studies examine the relationship between the two concepts. The current study aims to explore quality in an Indian context in an attempt to address these research gaps through journalists' perceptions and the correlation between these perceptions and news content. The detailed methodology and research design will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 5 Methodology

This chapter provides a comprehensive account of the methodological framework employed in this study and the strategies for data collection and analysis. Section 5.1 introduces the research problem, develops the research questions and provides a pragmatic, mixed methods approach to methodology. In section 5.2, qualitative data collection and analysis strategies will be discussed, while section 5.3 covers the quantitative aspects of the methodological framework.

5.1 Locating the research problem and framing the research design

The approaches, meanings, definitions and measures of quality in journalism in academic literature are fragmented at best. Almost all studies on quality of journalism make assumptions about journalism's democratic role (Bogart, 1989; Gladney, 1996; McQuail, 2006; Shapiro, 2010). Some measure quality on the basis of assumptions of journalistic functions such as holding governments accountable (Merrill, 1968), editorial integrity (Bogart, 1989), providing complete and accurate accounts of events (Lacy and Fico, 1991) and facilitating public governance (Meyer and Kim, 2003). Others argue that quality in journalism should be measured by its attempt to expose injustices and lessen inequalities (Demers, 1999), to enable citizens to form opinions about politics (Zaller, 2003) and to give information to citizens so that they can be self-governing (Besley and Chadwick, 1992). Others, like Picard (2004) and Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007), have argued that journalism is an essential part of democracy.

It follows logically that journalists' perceptions of quality in journalism could be influenced by the perceptions of their role in society. As demonstrated in section 4.2,

different scholars have approached the concept of quality in different ways and have mostly used quantitative, survey-based approaches to understand journalists' conceptions of quality. Normative engagement with what constitutes quality is implicit, and most scholars have assumed social or democratic roles for journalism from which they begin their discourse on quality.

While conceding that quality in journalism is a concept that is not easily articulated because of the fragmented nature of its shared understandings, this study argues that the task need not be impossible. As Merrill and Lowenstein (1979) argued, a concept is made up of elements such as purpose, social aim and objective. Two approaches to studying a concept – meaning and surface structures (Jaccard and Jacoby, 2010) and story boxes and mind boxes (Anderson, 2014) – are used to study the concept of quality in this study. These concepts are illustrated by using a simile presented by Philip Meyer, who, in his 2009 book *The Vanishing Newspaper: Saving Journalism in the Information Age*, stated that measuring quality in journalism is like measuring love. Love can be measured indirectly through its visible manifestations, and journalism quality can be measured similarly (Meyer, 2009, p.151).

In an attempt to describe how the human mind understands experiences and communicates them to others, Jaccard and Jacoby (2010) differentiated between concepts that are formed in the human mind and the external observable expressions that are used to communicate these concepts. The authors used the terms '*meaning structure*' to designate the thoughts and concepts that exist in the minds of individuals and '*surface structure*' to designate the symbols that are the externally visible expressions of these thoughts' (Jaccard and Jacoby, 2010, p.17). Meyer's (2009) example of measuring love can be used to demonstrate the usefulness of meaning and surface

structures. Everyone will have unique concepts of love based on personal experiences and cultural backgrounds. It is possible that in some people's minds this concept has a positive connotation, for instance in those of children raised by loving parents or a loving couple. Love could also be described in a diametrically opposite way by someone who suffered abuse in childhood and subsequently lived a lonely life. Such a person may even believe that love does not exist.

To illustrate the practicality of measuring a concept using meaning and surface structures, they are applied here to the concept of love, based on how a person experiences it or expresses it. Meyer's (2009) claim that love could be measured indirectly through its visible manifestations can be compared to surface structure, denoting the visible expressions of the concepts of love. For instance, one way of measuring this could be an individual's response to being hugged or counting the number of times they hug their family or friends. In simple empirical terms, love may be measured as the number of times a person hugs his or her child. It may also be a study on how an individual chooses to talk about love – the words, body language and facial expressions.

This study argues that quality in journalism has both a meaning and surface structure and agrees with Meyer that it is indeed very much like measuring love. Almost everyone engaged with it – journalists, editors, academics, publishers, audiences and even non-audiences – have an idea of what quality in journalism should be. The concept of quality and the ideas associated with it in the minds of these stakeholders can be called the meaning structure for quality in journalism. In other words, the internal mental representations of quality become its meaning structure. However, all those engaged with journalism will have shared notions of what quality is and should be, which

makes up the surface structure of journalism, which they articulate using similar terms and within shared ideologies. The evidence of these notions of quality can only be truly measured in journalistic output, which, in this case, is the content of newspapers. In justifying the use of content as a measure of quality, Lacy and Fico (1991) argued that it forms the basis of almost all evaluations of quality in newspapers, including those by judges of award panels, experts and even journalists. It is argued here that content is the final manifestation of other aspects of quality, such as editorial cultures, role perceptions, journalistic activities and news decisions. Thus, the surface structure of quality can also include evidence of quality in newspaper content.

This study will engage with the concept of quality in journalism through the way journalists choose to articulate it, comparing this with the prevalence of quality indicators in newspaper content. In other words, the objective of this study is to discover the perceptions of journalists about quality in their work and to discover to what extent these ideals match with actual content quality.

While articulating the concept of quality, it is expected that various factors or dimensions that influence quality may come up. These may include factors or dimensions such as organisational news culture, reporting and newsroom practices, professional training levels of journalists and the role of journalism in society. It is argued here that a commitment to journalistic values at the individual and organisational level will lead to quality in journalism, and that these values will vary according to the role perceptions of journalists. It is also argued that the extent of commitment to these values will be reflected in all other aspects of journalism, such as editorial culture, content and journalistic activity. As the logical next step to the above argument, this study will also examine the evidence of quality in news media through a content analysis

to understand the extent to which quality is practised according to the articulations of the concept (Figure 5.1).

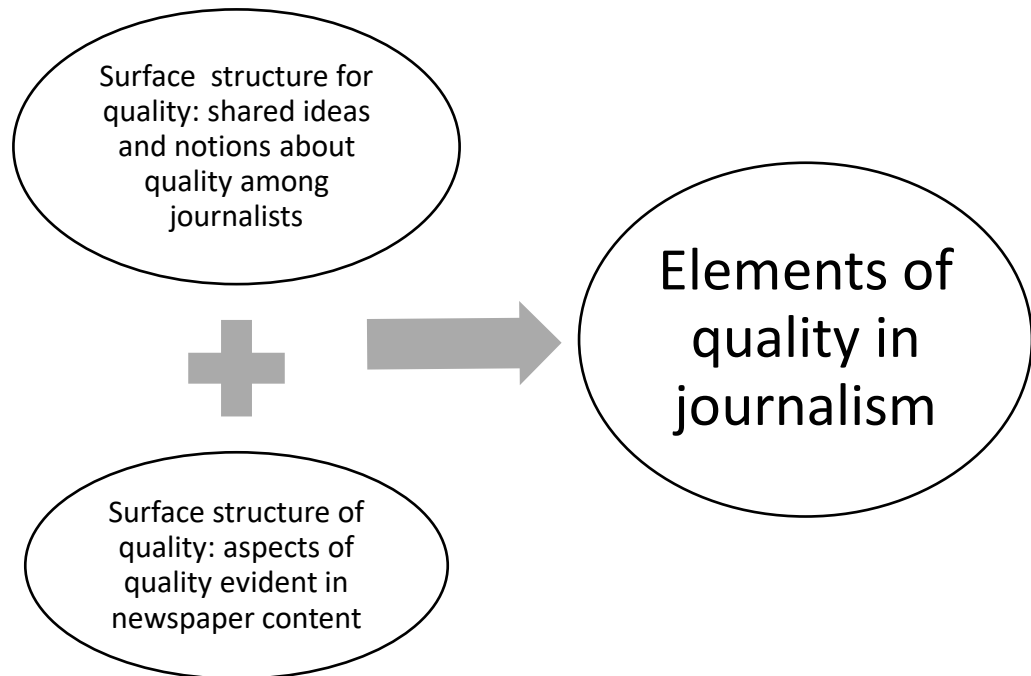


Figure 5. 1 Surface structure of quality

It is to aid in these pursuits that the second approach to understanding a concept is introduced. With specific reference to the news selection process, Anderson (2014) introduced the tools of 'story boxes' and 'mind boxes' as useful methods to examine the factors that influence the way information is stored, understood and presented in a mediated world. Story boxes are used to denote the way in which information is selected and presented to the audience, while mind boxes denote the way in which the individual who consumes it processes this information. Mind boxes are also applicable to journalists and the way in which the news selection process is influenced by the way they see the world and select information for presentation. While studying news quality,

Anderson (2014) argued that the process of ‘boxing’, or selecting, stories and the factors that affect this process will influence the quality of journalism produced. These factors could be technological, ideological and budgetary; they could also be the personal demographic characteristics of journalists, such as education, gender and culture.

While Anderson (2014) talked about quality in a participatory democracy, it can be applied to all forms of journalism because values such as objectivity, impartiality, fairness and balance also form the basic tenets of journalism in most democracies with a free media culture.

5.1.1 Research questions

This study uses the approaches put forth by Jaccard and Jacoby (2010) as well as Anderson (2014) to understand what quality means in journalism. It aims to explore the elements that make up the concept of quality in journalism through journalists’ perceptions and through the evidence of quality in content to identify the extent of an ideal-practice gap in quality. Thus, the study is largely explorative, since few studies have compared journalists’ notions of quality to the actual content of newspapers. The following broad research question was derived to guide the explorative nature of this study.

RQ: What is quality in journalism?

Two supplementary research questions were formulated to operationalise and answer the main research question.

RQ1: How do journalists articulate the concept of quality in journalism?

RQ2: To what extent is quality evident in the practice of journalism?

With these research questions guiding the methodology, this study uses a two-pronged methodology of semi-structured interviews and content analysis; these methodological choices have their foundations in the mixed methods research paradigm.

5.1.2 Mixed methods research design

This research follows a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods in answering the research questions developed in the previous section. This type of research, namely mixed methods research or mixed research (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner, 2007), is a combining of qualitative and quantitative research methods with the objective of enhancing the scope of the research and giving a better understanding of the research problem.

Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner (2007) considered mixed methods to be an important research paradigm, along with the more traditional quantitative and qualitative paradigms. Creswell (2014) has argued that mixed methods research involves steps that are not confined to the collection of quantitative and qualitative data. He defined it as 'an approach to research in the social, behavioural, and health sciences in which the investigator gathers both quantitative (close-ended) and qualitative (open-ended) data, integrates the two, and then draws interpretations based on the combined strengths of both sets of data to understand research problems' (Creswell, 2014, p.2).

Thus, for this study, an integration of data from qualitative interviews and quantitative content analysis will be used to understand quality in Indian journalism (Figure 5.2). Results can be integrated at the discussion stage by interpreting and comparing findings from both methods. This approach draws on the work of Creswell

and Plano Clark (2007) and the mixed method triangulation research design proposed by them.

The underlying justification for this approach is that quality in journalism cannot be completely understood through either one of the methods proposed here. On the one hand, academic debates about the professional identities of journalists as well as empirical studies about journalists' perceptions have demonstrated an ideal-practice gap that is dependent on national and cultural contexts (Deuze, 2005; Wiik, 2010; Mellado and Van Dalen, 2014). On the other hand, even though the content is the eventual manifestation of various factors influencing the news production processes

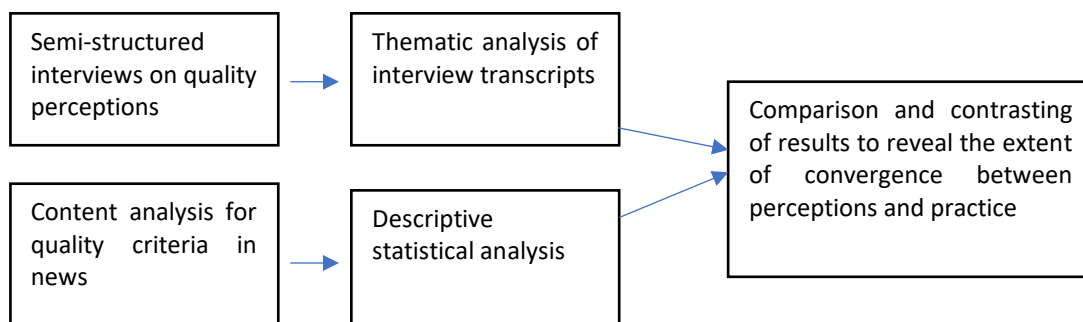


Figure 5.2 Mixed methods research design

(Lacy and Fico, 1991; Shoemaker and Reese, 1996), analysing it in isolation is highly likely to give an incomplete picture of quality in journalism. After considering these factors, the research design was formulated to answer the main research question on quality in journalism through interviews with journalists and by comparing their perceptions with the actual evidence of quality in newspaper content.

Comparing the perspectives of journalists with content analysis is a usual practice in journalism and mass communication research. Deacon, Bryman and Fenton (1998)

combined quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews and content analysis while studying the representation of social science research in British news media. Meijer (1999; 2000) conducted several studies that triangulated results from interviews, focus groups and content analysis. Thurman (2018) has demonstrated the usefulness of mixed methods research in exploratory studies of online journalism in Britain; over a period of seven years, he studied various aspects of British online journalism and most frequently used semi-structured interviews and content analysis.

Creswell's (2014) definition, given earlier in this section, encompasses the three stages of a mixed-methods research design – data collection, data integration and interpretation – each of which comes with its own set of challenges and requires rigorous procedures. The remaining part of this section will describe some of these challenges and explain how this study has chosen to address them.

In the first stage, Creswell (2014) argues that rigorous data collection procedures must be followed, and that mixed methods research designs can either gather qualitative and quantitative data simultaneously (parallel studies) or consecutively (sequential studies). These designs include resolving issues around sampling, access and reliability and validity. This study has therefore followed established procedures in sampling for both qualitative interviews and quantitative content analysis, followed university-approved methods of informed consent for participant interviews, paid for access to online versions of newspapers and conducted method-specific reliability and validity procedures for both types of data.

The second stage of a mixed methods research design involves the integration of qualitative and quantitative data and there are many ways of doing this. For example, Bryman (2004) described many ways in which qualitative and quantitative data can be

combined, while Greene, Caracelli and Graham (1989) stated that results can be integrated for triangulation, complementarity, development, initiation and expansion. Triangulation aims to enhance construct validity by checking the results of one method against another; complementarity seeks to capitalise on the strengths of both methods while minimising their weaknesses; development uses the results of one method to guide the other; initiation seeks paradoxes and contradictions; and expansion seeks to extend the scope of the research problem by employing different methods (Greene, Caracelli and Graham, 1989). The current study seeks to integrate the results from qualitative interviews and quantitative content analysis at the interpretation stage of the analysis. Others have validated this approach by arguing that mixed methods research can enhance the understanding of a research problem through the collection of rich data from which meaningful interpretations can be developed (Collins, Onwuegbuzie and Sutton, 2006).

At the data interpretation stage, Mason (2002) argued that mixed research can enhance qualitative logic and explanations of the data. This stage is grounded in the research design and is guided by the purpose and rationale of choosing a mixed methods research design (Onwuegbuzie and Combs, 2010). For this study, through what Greene Caracelli and Graham (1989) have called expansion, the content analysis is expected to enhance understanding of the concept of quality, as perceived and articulated by journalists through semi-structured interviews and data comparison.

5.1.3 Epistemological considerations for the study

Pragmatism has been considered the most prominent epistemology in mixed methods research (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2010; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004;

Greene, 2008) and is based on the notion that research questions should decide the research methods. Leading scholars in mixed methods research offer pragmatism as a philosophical framework and an alternative to the paradigmatic dichotomy between qualitative and quantitative approaches and the incompatibility thesis (Johnson and Onwugbuzie, 2004). People who oppose mixed methods research designs are of the opinion that the philosophical and methodological foundations of the two paradigms are too different to be mixed at any stage of the research process, pointing out that the quantitative paradigm is objective and positivist, while the qualitative is interpretive and constructionist (Johnson and Onwugbuzie, 2004).

Pragmatism is an epistemological framework that seeks to eliminate the objective-subjective divide by arguing that knowledge is possible through transactions, experiences and consequences in the social world (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2010). Pragmatism was a term introduced by Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914), who argued methods of knowledge gaining can be only as useful as their practical consequences. His famous pragmatic maxim argues that an object has meaning in its practical actions and consequences: 'Consider what effects, that might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object' (Peirce, cited in Murphy, 1990, p.27). William James (1842-1910) further expanded the practical aspect of pragmatism to argue that concepts and notions have philosophical validity only to the extent to which they are practically useful.

What difference would it practically make to anyone if this notion rather than that notion were true? If no practical difference whatever can be traced, then the alternatives mean practically the same thing, and all dispute is idle. Whenever a dispute is serious, we ought to be able to show

some practical difference must follow from one side or the other's being right (James, 1907).

John Dewey (1859-1942) further argued that knowledge should be constructed around human experiences and actions.

Knowledge is intimately and necessarily connected with action because—and this is the most crucial point in Dewey's theory of knowing—the discovery of the conditions and consequences of experience can take place only by modifying the given qualities in such ways that relations become manifest (Dewey, 1929, cited in Biesta, 2010, p. 18 of 27).

Thus, an object does not have a reality beyond its practical usefulness, and social meanings depend on the practical effects. As an epistemic stance that either provides philosophical support for mixed methods (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2010) or forms the philosophical foundation for the mixed methods paradigm (Johnson and Onwugbuzie, 2004; Johnson and Gray, 2010), pragmatism is often presented as a philosophical framework that is entrenched in finding practical solutions to problems (Johnson and Onwugbuzie, 2004).

Pragmatism as it informs this study is based on many aspects of the composite pragmatism (Johnson and Gray, 2010) developed within the mixed methods research paradigm set out by Johnson and Onwugbuzie (2004) and combines tenets of the philosophy as entrenched in the works of Pierce, James and Dewey. For mixed methods, composite pragmatism recognises that different theories, methods and perspectives are all practical tools for understanding the human experience. This epistemic stance recognizes that reality is informed and influenced by 'human experience in action' (Johnson and Onwugbuzie, 2004, p. 18), and knowledge is constructed and based on the interaction between human actors and their environments. Claims of generalisability

are not made, but research is justified by warranted assertions, whereby the processes of inquiry determine truths.

5.2 Qualitative semi-structured interviews

Social researchers have used qualitative enquiry to understand the experiences, perceptions and meanings constructed by people in and of the world that they inhabit. Flick (2007) characterised qualitative research as a way of using text to understand the perspectives, practices and knowledge of participants about a particular issue. Qualitative research is 'characteristically exploratory, fluid and flexible, data-driven and context-sensitive (Mason, 2002, p.24). The topic under study will drive the methodology (Flick, 2007) and a qualitative framework that is best suited to answer *RQ1: How do journalists articulate the concept of quality in journalism?*

Interviews are a ubiquitous form of qualitative research. Semi-structured interviews are based on a pre-defined set of themes or topics, and yet the conduct of them will be informal, and the structure will be flexible (Mason, 2002). Data were collected using 22 semi-structured interviews, and the methodology was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Sheffield. Most of the participants agreed to sign consent forms, while the others gave their consent on the audio recordings of the interviews.

Mason (2002) argued that qualitative research does not begin with a complete blueprint of the research process and strategy; instead, it stays close to the data and evolves from them. The design and strategy decisions are not *a priori*; instead, qualitative researchers must have a broad framework and research design to start with, which they develop and evolve as they progress in research (Mason, 2002).

Following these guidelines, the current study started with a broad framework of quality that emerged from previous literature and theoretical perspectives. However, the study has always remained open to 'new' insights that emerge from the data. Staying 'grounded' in data has helped to inform decisions on design and analytic strategy throughout this study.

As suggested in Mason's (2002) description of qualitative research, the researcher went into the field with a broad framework of questions but let the participants determine the flow of conversation. Interviews required extensive probing of the more taciturn participants but yielded very rich and detailed data from the more conversational ones.

5.2.1 Theoretical standpoints for the interviews

A combination of three theoretical standpoints informs the operationalisation of *RQ1: How do journalists articulate the concept of quality in journalism?* These are Donsbach's (2010) classification of journalist roles, Picard's (2000) measurement of quality as journalistic activity and the 'elements of journalism' outlined by Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007). The three theoretical assumptions have been represented in Figures 5.3 and 5.4.

Donsbach (2010) offers a useful framework for examining this role through an analysis of three traditions of journalism: the subjective tradition, the public service tradition and the economic tradition. Each of these traditions has expectations of the role that an individual journalist plays as an individual writer, professional and employee, respectively. The subjective tradition places the journalist as an individual pursuing goals that lead to self-actualisation, while the public service tradition requires

the journalist to supply information to society. In the commercial tradition, the journalist is just an employee supplying the audience with what it likes. Each of these traditions requires journalists to have competencies for constructing and asserting their professional identity, such as general competence, subject competence, process competence, journalistic skills and professional values.

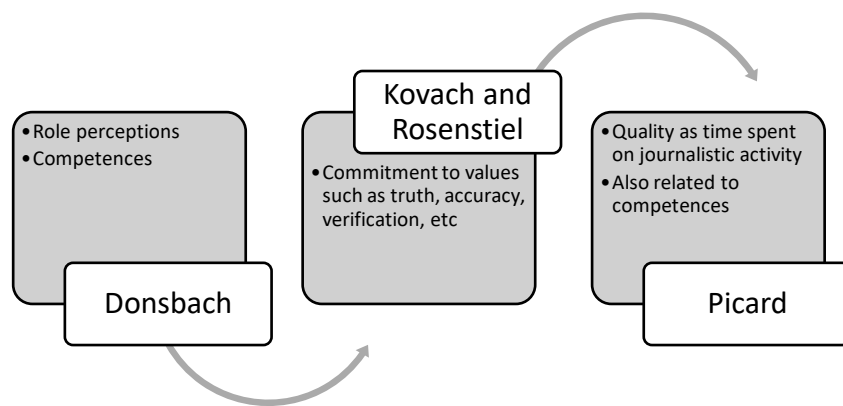


Figure 5.3 Theoretical assumptions for qualitative framework

Thus, quality may be informed by considerations of role perceptions, commitment to values and journalist activity.

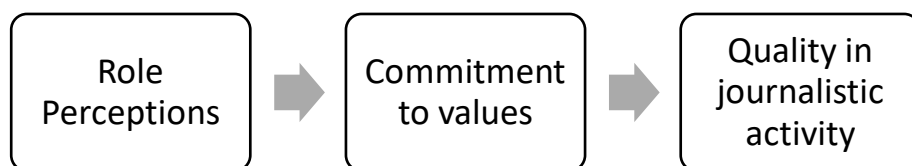


Figure 5.4 Informing quality framework

However, the above three theoretical considerations and the proposed model have been adapted to fit the practical considerations of data collection and analysis. Thus, the category of role perceptions for this study is operationalised as the kind of role journalists envision for themselves and their profession in the society. It also includes the factors that may influence or have influenced these perceptions, such as education, training, organisation and experiences, all of which could contribute to the construction of the professional identity of Indian journalists. The results from the interviews are likely to fall into Donsbach's (2010) categorisation, but the study, in its exploratory nature, is open to new roles and professional identities that may emerge from interviews. The five competencies listed by Donsbach (2010) form the next two parts of the framework and are developed through the frameworks provided by Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007) and Picard (2000).

Kovach and Rosenstiel's (2007) elements of journalism and Picard's (2000) measurement of journalistic activity can be found in section 4.1. 'Commitment to values' means the extent to which a journalist would like to and can practise values such as those articulated by Kovach and Rosenstiel; in particular, for this study, these are commitment to accuracy, verification and the extent of independence from the subjects of news stories.

'Quality in journalistic activity' engages in issues of journalistic competence. As Picard (2004) has detailed, this includes time spent on activities that increase the knowledge and skills of journalists, such as background reading, interviewing and follow-up of stories. Picard's index is repeated in Table 5.1.

Table 5. 1 Picard's conception of quality as journalistic activity

Measuring Quality as Time Spent on Journalistic Activity	
Accuracy	Time spent on interviews and information gathering
Completeness and breadth	Time spent on interviews, information gathering, background reading, reflection and personal attendance at events
Context for information	Time spent on background reading, reflection and preparation of information

(Picard, 2004, p.102)

5.2.2 Strategies for sampling

Through the interviews, this study aims to explore the surface structure of quality in journalism through the experiences and perceptions of journalists. In thus defining the contours of the study, audiences have been excluded due to practical considerations. Different sections of the audience peruse different types of news, and to include them would mean an elaborate selection process for focus groups based on geographic location, gender, age, type of news consumed, titles of newspapers and education levels. The varied demographics of audiences of newspapers go well beyond the scope of the current project.

The study used purposive snowball sampling to interview journalists who work in Indian newspapers. Journalists known to the researcher during her career in India as a university lecturer in journalism were first approached for the study. These included friends, acquaintances and, in some cases, former students. These journalists were then asked to suggest their colleagues and friends to be considered for the interviews. In most cases, they spoke to their colleagues for consent before sharing contact details with the researcher. Through this method, more than 30 journalists were contacted and 23 journalists were interviewed. However, only 22 interviews have been used for the

analysis. One interview could not be completed as the journalist in question was called away on a breaking news story.

Print is chosen over other media for its growth trend in South Indian states. In the last five years, many dailies have opened up new bureaus and started publishing new editions in new towns and cities, which has opened up new job opportunities. For this reason, journalists working in English-language dailies are more likely to have similar value systems and identities since their mobility is not restricted by language.

The study has chosen English-language dailies over regional-language dailies in an attempt to limit its scope. States in India are linguistically divided, with each having at least two major newspapers in the regional language. Journalistic culture, reporting practices and ownership structures of newspapers vary from state to state. To include Indian journalism in its regional-language forms would be like trying to bring journalism in all European languages within the scope of one PhD thesis. Hence, the study has been limited to English-language dailies.

Demographics of participants

Both junior and senior journalists (with 5-10 years and more than 10 years of experience) from English-language dailies circulating in South India were interviewed. Some of the journalists interviewed had more than 30 years of experience and were holding senior positions in their respective organisations. However, others had been in the profession for only a few years. Only four female journalists were interviewed, though a few more were contacted. Some were not willing to participate in the study, while two interviews had to be cancelled due to circumstances outside the researcher's control such as childcare issues for the journalists in question.

The designations of the journalists included reporters, chief reporters, sub-editors, senior sub-editors, chief sub-editors, news editors, resident editors, chief of bureau and executive editor. A brief note on the organisational structure of Indian newsrooms is in order, with information derived from informal conversations before or after the semi-structured interviews. Reporters' and chief reporters' duties involve mainly newsgathering and writing stories. However, in any news bureau, the chief reporter has the additional role of planning and supervising stories for the day. Sub-editors, senior sub-editors and chief sub-editors engage in editing, proofreading and preparing pages for the newspaper. News editors are in charge of the smooth functioning of newsrooms and the overall planning of stories and their placement on newspaper pages. Resident editors oversee regional editions and coordinate the flow of news from different cities. A chief of bureau is in charge of a particular office of a newspaper in a town or city and is mainly responsible for coordinating the newsgathering activities for that town or city. The executive editor is a managerial position usually held by reporters with many years of experience. To summarise, the news editors and sub-editors are mostly at the desk while all the other journalists have been reporters at some point in their careers.

Table 5. 2 Demographic details of the journalists interviewed for the study

	Newspaper	Experience in years	City	Designation
Journalist 01	<i>The Hindu</i>	15	Kochi	Reporter
Journalist 02	<i>The Deccan Chronicle</i>	4	Kochi	Reporter
Journalist 03	<i>The Times of India</i>	20	Chennai	Deputy Resident Editor
Journalist 04	<i>The New Indian Express</i>	28	Chennai	Deputy Resident Editor
Journalist 05	<i>The Deccan Chronicle</i>	35	Chennai	Senior Editorial-managerial position
Journalist 06	<i>The Deccan Chronicle</i>	24	Chennai	News Editor
Journalist 07	<i>Economic Times</i>	6	Bangalore	Reporter
Journalist 08	<i>The Deccan Chronicle</i>	7	Kochi	Reporter
Journalist 09	<i>The New Indian Express</i>	11	Coimbatore	Reporter
Journalist 10	<i>The Hindu</i>	26	Kochi	Chief sub-editor
Journalist 11	<i>The New Indian Express</i>	5	Coimbatore	Reporter
Journalist 12	<i>The New Indian Express</i>	9	Chennai	Chief sub-editor
Journalist 13	<i>The Hindu</i>	27	Bangalore	News Editor
Journalist 14	<i>The Times of India</i>	23	Kozhikode	Head of a bureau
Journalist 15	<i>Statesman</i>	55	Chennai	Reporter
Journalist 16	<i>The Deccan Chronicle</i>	28	Kochi	Head of a bureau
Journalist 17	<i>The Hindu</i>	11	Kochi	Senior sub-editor
Journalist 18	<i>Deccan Herald</i>	27	Bangalore	News Editor
Journalist 19	<i>The Hindu</i>	17	Coimbatore	Reporter
Journalist 20	<i>The Hindu</i>	22	Kochi	Reporter
Journalist 21	<i>The New Indian Express</i>	19	Chennai	Deputy Resident Editor
Journalist 22	<i>The New Indian Express</i>	19	Bangalore	News Editor

Eight reporters, one chief reporter, one senior sub-editor, two chief sub-editors, two chiefs of bureaus, three news editors, four resident editors and one executive editor were interviewed for this study. India has 29 states and seven union territories and is often divided, in common parlance, into loosely defined regions of north, northeast, east, west and south. At the time of this study, South India comprised of four states, namely Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala, and the three union territories of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep and Puducherry. In June 2014, Telangana split from Andhra Pradesh to form a new state. Journalists interviewed for

this study worked for newspapers in the South Indian cities of Chennai, Bangalore, Coimbatore, Kochi and Kozhikode. Of these, Chennai and Bangalore are the capital cities of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, respectively, while Coimbatore, Kochi and Kozhikode are tier-2 cities of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Participants worked for *The Times of India* (n=2), *The New Indian Express* (n=8), *The Deccan Chronicle* (n=5), *The Hindu* (n=4), the *Economic Times* (n=1), the *Statesman* (n=1) and the *Deccan Herald* (n=1). Table 5.2 gives the details of the participants, while Figure 5.5 gives the geographical representation of South India.

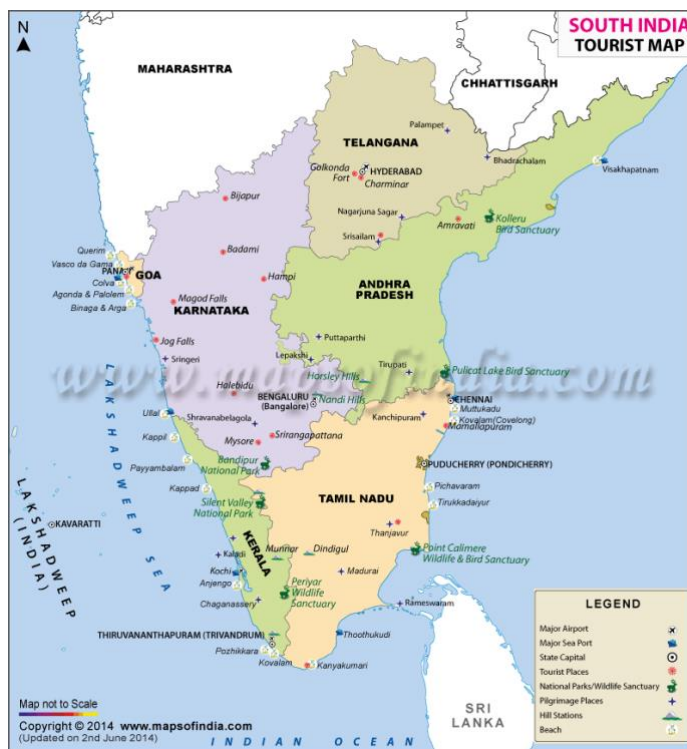


Figure 5.5 Map of South India (Map source: [mapsofindia.com/https://www.mapsofindia.com/tourism/south_india_travel.gif](http://www.mapsofindia.com/tourism/south_india_travel.gif))

5.2.3 Strategies for Data Analysis

Data analysis for this study involved several stages. The first stage involved transcribing all 22 interviews; the second stage involved three types of open coding; the third involved coding according to the principles of applied thematic analysis (ATA); and the fourth and final stage involved data reduction techniques to bring themes under a few manageable concepts.

Transcription

An online paid platform called Wreally (transcribe.wreally.com) was used to transcribe most of the documents, as it has many functions that aided the process. The audio file can be uploaded on to the platform, and the speed of the audio file can be manually adjusted to match typing speeds. There are keyboard shortcut keys for moving the audio forward or backwards and for inserting time stamps into the transcript.

Kowal and O'Connell (2013, p.5) have called transcription 'a universally indispensable step in research'. They have listed the pitfalls that can occur in transcription and have argued that the process can never be a sufficiently accurate representation of the original conversation. However, McLellan, MacQueen and Neidig (2003) have detailed transcription protocols for qualitative data analysis: interview and conversation transcripts need to be verbatim, with every segment identified by speech markers, and the natural flow of conversation must be preserved as much as possible.

Transcripts for the semi-structured interviews conducted for this study closely followed McLellan, MacQueen and Neidig's (2003) protocols. The speaking styles of individual participants were reproduced. However, some aspects of their speeches, such as the use of words like 'you know', were sometimes excluded from the transcripts since

it was clear that those words were just a mode of speech. There were instances of literal translations from participants' native language to English, which were reproduced in the transcripts. Ellipses were used to denote a break in the flow of a sentence. Examples for both are given below.

Example 1: Use of filler words

Journalist 22: That is a...they say objective is like you know...I was a student of history. So, my history professor used to say that history is ...we will say that has to be objective. But there is no...

Example 2 Literal translation

Journalist 16: Of course, radio was there, radio was...radio news listening was there. But more than radio, newspaper became a kind of an authenticity...the feel, the touch and all these things

After transcribing on the online platform, the final transcript was saved as a Microsoft Word document, with the name of the participant as the file name. Paragraphs were marked and labelled according to the speaker in the audio and with the timestamp. A typical transcript looked like this, even though in the original the initials of the journalist was used:

[00:03:20] **SP:** And in your experience, what kind of role have you played?
[00:03:24] **Journalist 19:** I have primarily concentrated on, in the initial stages of my career, I have done a lot of things...I have done a lot of art related stories. At some stage, I have covered a lot of self-help groups in Coimbatore when they were just coming up. So that was a huge learning experience going from village to village, seeing how women kind of coped with their situations and tried to beat them. And then also learnt to be money managers...and to...difference in their lives by doing things that were not regular.

Thematic analysis and the stage of open coding

Thematic analysis is one of the most commonly used approaches to analysing qualitative data. It is an essential step in understanding and interpreting raw data (Ryan

and Bernard, 2003) and its primary assumption – staying close to the data and making a data-led interpretation – is derived from grounded theory. Glaser and Strauss first developed grounded theory as a methodology in 1967, and it has been further developed by Charmaz (2006). Coding in qualitative data analysis is an analytical process whereby text is segmented and assigned a label that represents what the text means in a broader research context (Charmaz, 2006).

Open coding is an inductive approach that helps the researcher identify the most 'frequent, dominant or significant themes in raw data' (Thomas, 2006, p.238). This practice is common in the grounded theory approach, where it is called initial coding and involves analysing the text and creating codes that closely represent the data. Sometimes, these initial codes use words and phrases from the data itself (Charmaz, 2006). All versions of thematic analysis share a few common characteristics and involve the following steps.

- 1) Open coding of data: Themes and codes are developed with words used by the participants by staying as close to the data as possible. This process has been given many names, such as 'initial coding' and 'in vivo coding' (Charmaz, 2006), 'description' (Dey, 1993) or 'inductive coding' (Miles and Huberman, 1994).
- 2) Developing themes: At this stage of data analysis, the open codes are further developed into themes that give more scope for interpretation. This involves analysing the data further to explore relationships between themes and concepts. This step has been called 'data reduction' (Miles and Huberman, 1994) and 'focused coding' (Charmaz, 2006).
- 3) Hierarchising themes and sub-themes: Once all the data have been coded, the most frequent and/or significant themes are classified into categories and sub-

categories. In grounded theory, this stage of analysis is called ‘axial coding’ and is designed to build ‘a dense texture of relationships’ (Strauss, 1987, p.64). Others have called this stage ‘data reduction’ (Guest, MacQueen and Namey, 2012; Miles and Huberman, 1994) or the ‘connecting stage’ (Dey, 1993).

- 4) Linking to theory: If the previous stage in the analysis is an indication of the relationships between categories and sub-categories, this stage involves interpretations and descriptions of the relationships between categories. In grounded theory, this stage is called ‘theoretical coding’ and ‘conceptualise(s) how your substantive codes are related, and move(s) your analytic story in a theoretical direction’ (Charmaz, 2006, p 63).

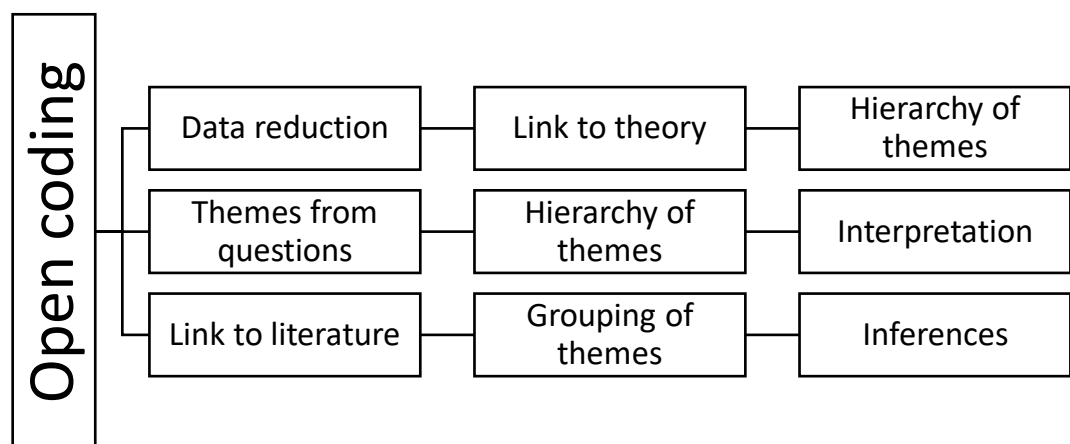


Figure 5.6 Initial strategies for data analysis

To summarise, different scholars have approached the process in a variety of ways, creating a rich, interwoven fabric of qualitative analysis. Interview transcripts gathered as part of the study of quality in journalism were analysed using a combination

of techniques outlined by the authors mentioned above. Before coding began on the interviews, the model given in Figure 5.6 was drawn up as an initial guide for analysis.

As a first step, five interviews were coded exhaustively for themes while staying as close to the data as possible to generate descriptive codes. In this search for 'open codes', for example, Journalist 3 said

"I am all for colourful reporting. I am all for readable reports rather than academic reports". This was coded as '*Colourful Reporting*'.

Again, when Journalist 20 said

"I see it as a reflective glory because you know, they treat this newspaper, *The Hindu*, as one of the most respected papers", it was coded as '*Attitude towards organisation*'.

This process generated more than 100 codes for five interviews. Later, these were grouped into categories that were, at face value, related to each other. For example, descriptive codes 'colourful reporting', 'unconventional intros', 'good language' and 'clean copy' were merged to form the code 'writing styles'. This process resulted in eight major categories, each with scores of sub-categories.

This stage of open coding involved loading raw data into the qualitative data analysis software Nvivo 11, reading each transcript multiple times and segmenting text for themes in the data that seemed frequent and significant. Nvivo makes it possible to draw inferences from the data and perform various comparison exercises to understand patterns across different participant groups and different themes. The use of software like Nvivo in qualitative research is often referred to as Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS). According to Welsh (2002), scholars have argued that computer-assisted analysis will create distance between researcher and the data, while

also creating homogeneity in the analysis in the qualitative research paradigm. However, using computer software can help the researcher investigate and explore data at various levels, as explained above, aiding in the validation of subjective impressions. Computers cannot assist with questions of reliability and validity in qualitative data (Welsh, 2002, but these have been established through techniques described in the applied thematic analysis protocol.

Before coding, the researcher checked each transcript for accuracy by re-reading it while listening to the audio recording. After this, each transcript was read at least thrice: an initial reading without coding, coding in Nvivo and coding on paper. In the first instance, many themes emerged for each participant.

The following classifications emerged in the first stage of inductive coding (codes are not exhaustive but indicative only).

- 1) Role of journalism: Media as watchdog, localism or city focus, stories affecting people, to influence decision-making, catering to different audiences, highlighting issues and challenges, agenda setting, representing people, campaigning for issues, touching readers' lives, raising awareness, shaping society, deepening democracy, recording changes, shaping opinions, keeping politicians' track record, course-correcting society, influencing political change, preventing sensationalism, holding society/powers accountable
- 2) Quality: Preventing sensationalism, balancing reporter-driven and editor-driven news, dynamic newsroom, training and mentoring in newsroom, value addition and exclusivity in stories, layers/levels of gatekeeping, approach to journalism, ideological distance in the newsroom, non-tabloid approach, accuracy, relevance, peer-review, touching readers' lives, personal integrity

and excellence, depth, thoroughness and variety in content, engaging readers, staying away from vested interests, credibility, good language, good quotes, empathy, balance of story subjects, objectivity, truth, public interest, no pre-conceived ideas about a story, idealism, no opinion

- 3) Organisational factors: newsroom structure, planning process in newsroom, hierarchy in newsroom, approach to journalism, readers' editor, freedom to follow up stories, reputation of newspaper, newsroom culture, reactive and proactive stories, credibility, different levels of gatekeeping, bottom-line, selling the paper, attitude of and towards the management, advertisements in exchange of coverage, crumbling of walls, marketing encroachment in newsroom, brand value, publicity drive, diplomacy, running a paper, survival, pleasing powers that be, credibility, balancing stakeholders
- 4) Personal factors: Experience, specialisation, reporters' unique contribution to story, dealing with pressure, knowledge, importance of reading, training in newsroom, source management, distance from the story, freedom, self-esteem, upbringing, legwork, making a difference, passion, openness, dealing with change, risking lives, reporters' decision on stories
- 5) Accuracy and verification: Mechanisms to ensure accuracy, cross-checking facts, different levels of gatekeeping, critical reading of stories, covering different points of view, readers' editor, not getting into corrections column, using language to ensure accuracy, influence of location on accuracy, dependence on sources, practical difficulties, expert sources, personal in-built filtering process, newsroom policy, thoroughness

- 6) Stories and content: Stories affecting people, colourful stories, follow-up, depth, dramatic language, preventing sensationalism, editorials vs advertorials, exclusivity through drive to excel, relevance, language and visuals as value addition, depth
- 7) Sources: Keeping notes, documentary evidence, expert sources, second opinion, rapport with sources, access to information, going on record, quotes, confidentiality, respect from sources, good relations over the years, eyewitness accounts, dependence on sources for accuracy, militants as sources: getting conflict stories, police as inaccurate/unreliable source
- 8) Writing styles: 5Ws and H, influence of other media, dramatic but not sensational, unconventional intros, passion, empathy, language for accuracy, no fluff, simple language, long-form journalism, colourful reporting
- 9) Influences and interferences:

Influences: Location, other media, digital technology, changes in news dissemination, consumption, market, changes in profiles of readers and young journalists, changes in aptitude of young journalists, PR material, reader engagement, social indifference

Interferences: Censorship and punishment, pressure from advertisers, marketing department, playing to the wealthy class, interference from politicians and government, defamation cases, government dictating terms, holding back government advertisements

From the nine classifications above, and from theoretical assumptions outlined in the methodological chapter, themes were built using some of the techniques outlined

by Ryan and Bernard (2003). The initial codes were checked for repetitions, similarities and differences and theory-related material and categorised for the two main theoretical assumptions outlined in the methodology chapter: role of journalism and quality (Table 5.3). A Nvivo screenshot, in Figure 5.7, shows a few of the codes developed initially.

Table 5. 3 Initial categories of themes

Role of journalism	Quality
Watchdog role	Best practices
Agenda setting	Newsroom culture
Balancing stakeholders	Content characteristics
Idealism	Personal excellence
Empathetic journalism	Journalistic values
Record-keeping	Journalism of public interest
Spotlight journalism	Editorial integrity
	Non-sensational approach

However, at this stage of open coding and thematic analysis for five interviews, there was no way of identifying the link between the role of journalism and quality. Questions about role perceptions were a major and recurring theme that guided semi-structured interviews, and it was essential to understand the context in which journalists talked about them. The principles of ATA were employed in the second stage of the analysis to link themes to corresponding questions and to understand how journalists' perceptions of quality were linked to their perceptions of the role of journalism.

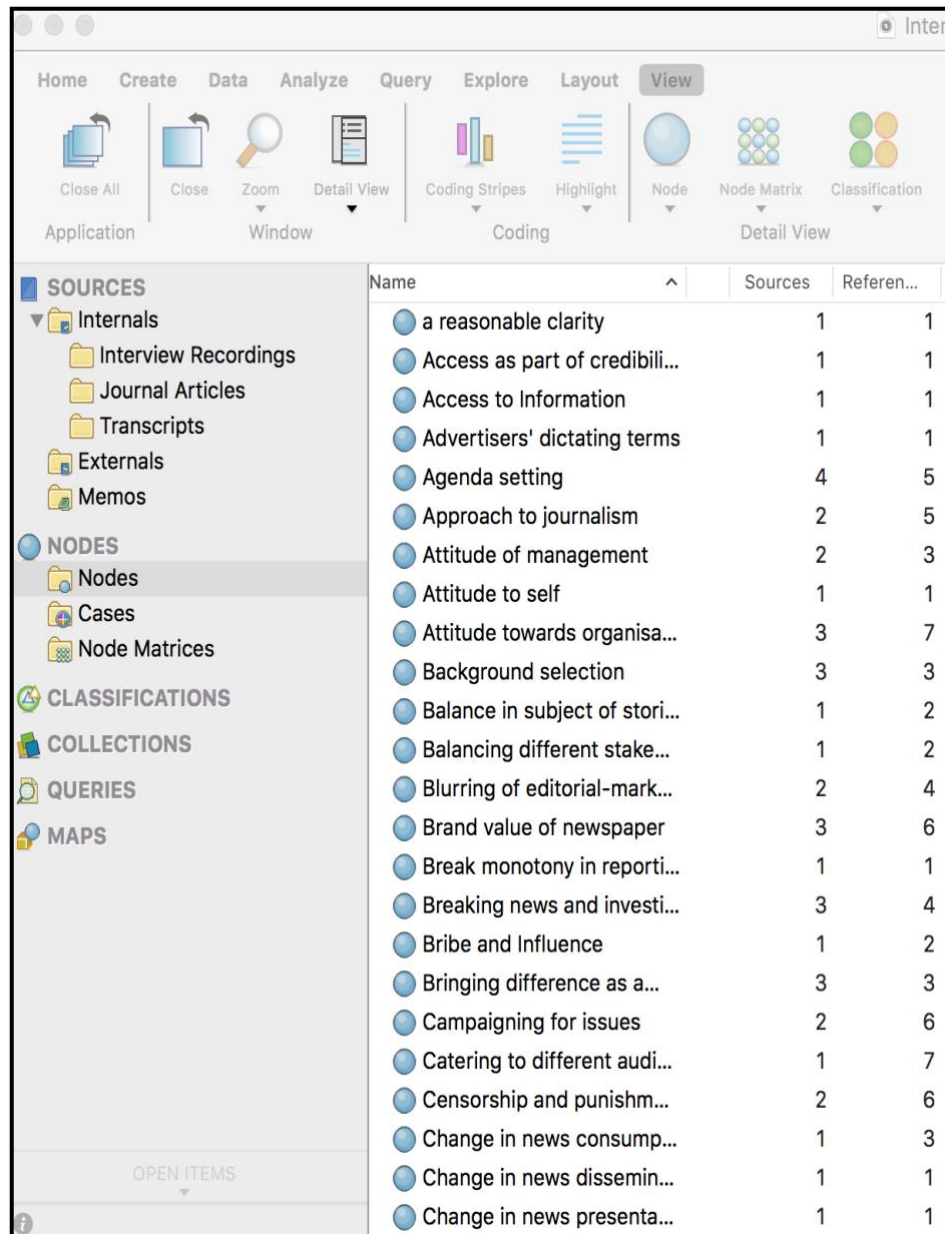


Figure 5.7 Nvivo screenshot for initial codes

Applied Thematic Analysis

After transcribing 22 interviews, the next step was making sense of the text, which amounted to a little more than 160,000 words. The principles of ATA were applied in the second phase. ATA was developed by Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2012) and adopts and adapts principles from other, more prominent methods of qualitative data

analyses such as grounded theory and phenomenology, as well as from the paradigms of interpretivism and positivism. Two important considerations about the data guided the choice of ATA for the second and more comprehensive phase of analysis of semi-structured interviews. Firstly, even though the method was developed for large datasets and multiple researchers, it was selected for this study because it gives a meaningful platform to explore the relationship between themes in a study of this nature. Primarily, ATA recognises that the data organise themselves according to the questions asked by the researcher and that even in the most inductive inquiry, there is 'a structure imposed on the qualitative data set by the research questions and design' (Guest, MacQueen and Namey, 2012, 11).

For this study, this structure means that questions that were drawn from the literature on quality, the role perceptions of journalism, journalistic values and elements of journalism introduced a pre-set thematic direction for the analysis. As set out in the literature review and reiterated throughout this thesis, the understanding of elements that make up the concept of quality is complex. The objective of the interviews was to discover areas and levels of agreement on what constitutes quality across different participant demographics. Keeping this in view, the questions asked during the semi-structured interviews spanned a range of topics including perceptions on quality, the role of journalism in society, the methods of accuracy and verification, personal characteristics and values of journalists and the importance of building subject knowledge. Secondly, because ATA was developed to aid the analysis of large qualitative data sets, it relies on a certain amount of quantification to reduce the data to manageable categories in the analysis stage. This can aid in making meaningful connections between the interviews and the content analysis of newspapers.

ATA recommends two stages of code development that can be used in studies conducted by multiple researchers and uses a structured set of open-ended questions that are put to all participants. For both stages, it involves the use of segmenting sections of text – in this case, interview transcripts – under inductive themes. The first stage of coding is structural and involves segmenting sections of text according to the questions asked during the interview and the responses elicited. Structural coding helps the researcher understand the patterns of questions and answers across participants and interviews. Interviews were conducted in a semi-formal manner, with some time spent ensuring the participant was comfortable before moving on to questions that formed the core of the research study.

The second stage of coding involved the development of content codes that were further developed into thematic categories. As Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2012, p.7 of 44) insist, 'segmenting text, identifying themes and content coding are not distinct processes. This stage involves a cyclical, iterative process of identifying 'an instance of meaning in text', segmenting it and attaching a code to that segment (Guest, MacQueen and Namey 2012, p.7 of 44). ATA recommends the rigorous and systematic development of a codebook, with detailed descriptions of what codes mean, when to use them and even when not to use them. The codebook is continuously revised across different stages of the analytic process, thus enhancing reliability. A detailed account of how the codes and themes were developed is given later in this chapter.

The principles laid out in ATA and the systematic development of a codebook paved the way for a sophisticated and nuanced understanding of the data, helped discover relationships between themes and generated theoretical models for the concept of quality. The qualitative data analysis software Nvivo 11 was used for both

coding and data analysis. Nvivo 11 allows the same content to be coded at different levels. For example, it allows one segment of text to be coded for structural codes; more than one content code; and as a 'case', a category that allows for the demographic information of participants, with comparison at the core of qualitative research (Guest, MacQueen and Namey, 2012).

Structural codes

For a small study like this one, with 22 participants and a semi-structured nature, structural coding gave a picture of the three main themes explored during the interviews: quality in journalism, the role of journalism and commitment to accuracy and verification. Questions related to quality were asked during all 22 interviews, while questions about the role of journalism and accuracy and verification were asked during 21 interviews. Questions on the core characteristics of journalists needed for quality in journalism were asked during 14 interviews, while questions about the knowledge-building activities of journalists were asked in nine interviews.

Structural coding segmented participant responses according to the questions asked during the interview. These questions were developed as structural codes and included in the codebook according to the guidelines of ATA. Thus, each structural code has a code name, a brief description, a full description, and instructions on when to use and when not to use. These details for each structural code were systematically developed and added to the codebook (Figure 5.8 and Appendix A).

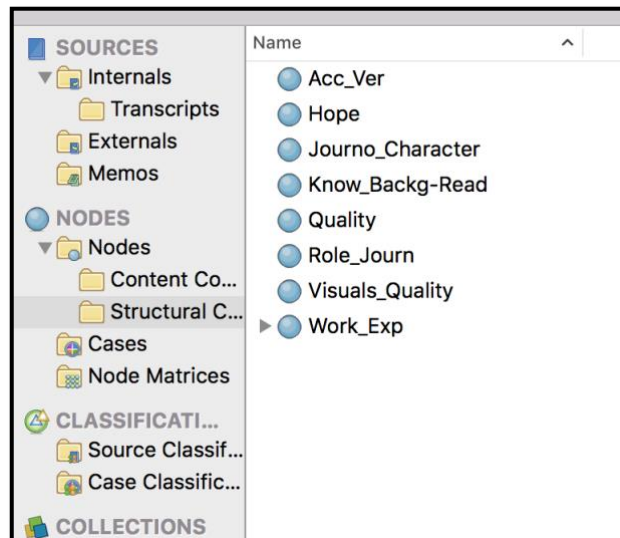


Figure 5.8 List of structural codes

Content Codes

Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2012) stress the importance of bounding a segment of text in a manner that allows for the full representation of its thematic features. At the first stage of open coding, these boundaries were not defined, and rightfully so. The first stage was an attempt to let the data guide the coding. However, in the next stage, it was necessary to find a balance between noticeable themes and noteworthy themes – what Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2012) called the Lumper-Splitter issue. If every small detail of text is coded, thereby generating a codebook with hundreds of codes, these types of codes are called ‘splitters’, while lumper codes involve large amounts of text coded to form relatively few high-level codes. A balance had to be struck and segmentation of text had to be carried out in a manner in which the context of the theme was evident when a segment was examined alone.

Thus, Ryan and Bernard's (2003) techniques were used at this stage of ATA to identify themes in the data. The most frequently used technique was that of repetition,

which Ryan and Bernard described as 'topics that occur and reoccur' (Ryan and Bernard, 2003, p.89). The next technique was for identifying themes that might be conspicuous by their absence. Thus, Missing Data was used as a theme to encompass the aspect of visuals and photographs for quality. Most participants failed to mention the visual element of quality unless a question was posed to them. Even when such as question was posed, most participants felt it was not a significant element of quality.

Several content codes were developed for each structural code and organised hierarchically in the codebook. These content codes were analytic and indicated the relationship between the themes as well (Appendix A).

While developing content codes, only questions relevant to the research topic and associated probes were used for analysis. Introductory or warm-up questions intended to break the ice and make the participant comfortable were grouped into structural codes but not used for analysis. Parts of the transcript that deviated from the research topic into random conversations about other subjects and mutual acquaintances were not coded or used for analysis. When the conversation was interrupted by telephone calls or people walking into the room, they were marked as 'Telephone call' or 'Random conversation' in the transcripts, with relevant time stamps. Random conversations about tea, which happened quite frequently, were not transcribed.

By taking cues from the initial stage of open coding and from the review of literature and the research design, a series of content codes was developed for each structural code (Appendix A). Detailed descriptions of each code were written down and compared to the transcripts after each interview was analysed. Every transcript was analysed at least twice, with a few days between each analysis to check the reliability of the codebook and code descriptions. Codes were revised continuously as new data were

coded, but after analysis of half of the interviews, not many new themes were generated; revisions to the codebook also decreased after the half-way mark.

Name	Sources	References
▼ ● Accuracy and Verification	17	43
▶ ● Mechanisms to ensure...	16	39
● Practical problems	3	4
● Changes over the years	7	11
● Follow-ups	2	3
▶ ● Individual characteristics a...	16	35
▶ ● Knowledge, background a...	13	39
▼ ● Quality	22	352
▶ ● Catering to readers	19	102
▶ ● Content characteristics	18	81
▶ ● Independence in the n...	18	70
● Newsroom Culture	16	47
● Non-sensational appro...	11	22
● Quality as comparison	1	2
● Strive to excel; persona...	9	22
● Time as a factor affecti...	4	6
▼ ● Role of Journalism	21	113
● Agenda Setting	8	18
● Bringing issues to the...	17	31
● Making a difference an...	7	10
● Record-keeping	1	1
● Representing people's...	11	19
● Telling the truth	7	10
● Watchdog journalism	12	24
● Visuals for quality	8	13

Figure 5.9 List of content codes

A note on fractured coding

In ATA, it is recognised that participants' answers may not be strictly relevant to the questions posed to them, especially if different parts of the interview are conceptually related to one another. The researcher is also likely to deviate from the interview guide because of the very 'dynamic and flexible' nature of qualitative interviews (Guest, MacQueen and Namey, 2012, p. 20 of 44). Fractured coding refers to the strategies of coding when themes pertinent to one particular structural code appear under a different structural code. Such segments of data can be coded as the original structural code, or as an independent content code for the thematically related structural code. For example, the theme 'bringing issues to public attention' comes under the structural code for the role of journalism, but participants may talk about it under the structural code for 'quality' as well. The two strategies for coding are then, firstly, coding the segment appearing in 'quality' under the structural code for 'role of journalism'; or, secondly, coding the segment as the content code 'bringing issues to public attention'. Since the two structural codes represent closely related concepts, the second approach was adopted for the entirety of the analytical process. Code co-occurrences between structural and content codes were then used to explore relationships between different themes.

Data reduction techniques

Developing codes and themes formed only one part of the data analysis. Thematic analysis can be data-driven or driven by theory (Namey et al., 2008) and can serve different purposes, depending on the research question and the amount of data

collected. In the applied thematic context, two techniques for data reduction apply to all qualitative data sets, regardless of their size (Guest, MacQueen and Namey, 2012; Namey et al., 2008). These include code frequencies and code co-occurrences. Other techniques in this context, such as similarity matrices and cluster analysis, which are used for large qualitative data sets and multiple researchers, are not relevant in this context.

Determining code frequencies involves analysing the most frequently occurring themes to determine their relevance for the analysis. Namey et al. (2008, p.144) argued that this process helps in 'managing data and revising codebooks'. Codes that occur too often or too rarely may need to be refined and revised. A code that appears too frequently may be too general and could indicate the need to identify sub-themes. Similarly, a code that occurs only a few times may warrant merging with another theme or, sometimes, elimination from the codebook.

Code co-occurrences involve identifying codes that occur most commonly and frequently together in the data (Guest, MacQueen and Namey, 2012). With code co-occurrences, many relationships in the data can be explored and the codebook can be revised. For example, if two codes occur as a pair very frequently, they may be merged to form a single theme. Thus, this is a useful technique that gives the researcher insight into the patterns in the data and allows her to draw meaningful comparisons.

It is essential at this point to note that codes do not constitute data. They are only representations of data and can always be connected back to the data in terms of quotes and excerpts from the data that are used illustrate themes.

Nvivo 11 was used to run queries on code frequencies and code co-occurrences in the data. By going back and forth between the data, the codes and the code frequencies,

several revisions were made to the codebook. This process resulted in ten core themes that were used for final analysis under five core categories: quality, the role of journalism, accuracy and verification, personal competencies and visuals for quality. The first five core themes form part of 'quality', while core themes 6 and 7 come under the 'role of journalism'. Core theme 8 is for the core category of 'accuracy and verification' while the last two themes form part of 'personal competencies' and 'visuals for quality', respectively. The final set of themes are given below.

1. Catering to Readers
 - 1.1 Reader interest
 - 1.2 Credibility
2. Content Characteristics
3. Independence in the newsroom
 - 3.1 Pressure from advertisers
 - 3.2 Management policies
4. Newsroom culture
5. Non-sensational approach
6. Newspaper as a public forum
7. Exposing wrongdoing in government and social institutions
8. Discipline of verification
9. Competencies
10. Visuals for quality

During the process of data reduction, some codes were merged while others were expanded. Many sub-themes emerged during this process and provided insight into how various participants talked about particular themes.

Once the codebook was fully developed, code co-occurrences queries were run on Nvivo 11 to explore relationships between participant demographics and also between different themes such as, role of journalism and quality. Results of these queries will be expanded in the next chapter.

Reliability in Applied Thematic Analysis

Arguing that, in qualitative research, validity is more important than reliability, and that if the data are valid, they are also reliable, Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2012) have described several strategies that can enhance the reliability and validity of the coding and thematic analysis procedures at various stages of the research process. Many of the methods described by the authors were meant for a research team with many members, but most of those applicable to single researchers were carefully followed to establish the reliability and validity of the thematic analysis protocol for this study.

At the research design stage, Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2012) suggest using data collected from multiple sources as a technique for enhancing validity and reliability. The current study has supplemented qualitative semi-structured interviews with quantitative content analysis of newspapers, with the approach serving two purposes. First, it adds to the validity of the research by investigating *RQ: What is quality in journalism?* of two data sets: journalists and newspaper articles. Secondly, the approach offers a comparative perspective by exploring the link between perceptions of quality and the evidence of it in practice.

Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2012) have described two ways (for individual researchers) in which data can be checked for reliability and validity: monitoring data as they come in to improve quality of data and consistency; and asking participants for feedback about what they said. After each interview, some time was spent listening to the tapes and reflecting upon what could be improved for the next interview. This elicited some changes to the questions and the order in which they were asked in a few of the initial interviews. After the first few interviews, however, the interview structure followed a similar pattern. Participants' feedback was elicited both during and after the

interview to eliminate ambiguity and also to give participants the chance to review their answers.

During the data analysis stage, a few of the techniques described by Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2012) were employed for reliability and validity. The first and most important of these was the development of a detailed and precise codebook according to the protocol set out by the authors. Each structural code and content code was defined, with descriptions on how and when each was to be used. Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2012) argued that this process would address reliability issues that could arise from different interpretations of texts and codes. The second technique at this stage was following a transcription protocol, which has already been described as a separate section in this chapter. At both the data analysis and writing stages, codes were supported with direct quotes from the participants, which is yet another technique that improves validity.

5.3 Content Analysis

Content analysis is an approach by which media content is studied systematically, and the use of quantitative methods was developed as a formal research method in the 1950s (Wimmer and Dominick, 2006). Its purpose is to 'identify and count the occurrence of specified characteristics or dimensions of text, and through this, to be able to say something about the messages, images, representations of such texts and their wider social significance' (Hansen, 1998, p. 95). Specifically, for measuring quality, content was used as a measure in Lacy and Fico's (1991) study of the relationship between content quality and circulation.

For the operationalisation of RQ2: *To what extent is quality evident in the practice of journalism?*, this study uses two indices of quality found in literature and adapts them to suit the purposes of this study: Bogart's (1989) indicators for assessing the quality of newspaper pages, developed from interviews with editors; and Anderson's (2014) scoring of individual news stories for quality based on measurable aspects of content quality.

Bogart (1989) surveyed more than 700 editors to identify 23 indicators of newspaper quality, most of which were rated as significant by editors who participated in a later study (Meyer and Kim, 2003). These included numerical indicators such as the number of news stories, features, opinions and editorials on a single newspaper page. More recently, Anderson (2014) explored the possibility of analysing individual news stories for their quality. He developed a subjective, colour-coded numerical analysis of news stories to understand the extent to which they are of high quality, using six themes, termed the 5Cs and one A: Comprehensibility, Context, Comparativeness, Causality, Comprehensiveness and Accuracy. They bear a remarkable similarity to Picard's (2000) measurement of quality as journalistic activity, as can be seen from the definitions of these concepts. Comprehensibility is ease of use and understanding; context is the background and related information for a news story; and causality includes all the factors contributing to a story. Comparativeness is the diversity of viewpoints presented for a topic or subject at hand; comprehensiveness is the thoroughness with which a story is covered; and accuracy, of course, is a commitment to accuracy through proper sourcing and verification. However, in the last instance, accuracy has also been measured in other studies through objective variables such as

errors in names, titles, dates, numbers and quotes and subjective misrepresentations such as sensationalism, distortion of quotes and understatements (Maier, 2005, p. 541).

Eliminating specific indicators that are repetitive from a data analysis perspective and concentrating only on news and feature stories, Bogart's (1989) index has been adapted for this study to include the following in a newspaper page:

1. No. of news stories
2. No. of features
3. No. of in-depth stories
4. No. of opinion stories
5. No. of event-based stories (spontaneous events, press conferences and press releases)
6. No. of enterprise stories (stories that describe and explain existing situations)
7. No. of staff-bylined stories
8. No. of agency stories
9. No. of stories with newspaper bylines

Since the method developed by Anderson (2014) involves subjective scoring of news stories on the extent to which each of the 5Cs and one A is present in them, these categories had to be adapted for this study as more objective measurable content categories. For this, the comprehensiveness and causality aspects of the framework were merged into context, with elements of all three included in the categories developed for content analysis. To that effect, individual news stories were analysed for accuracy, comprehensibility, context and comparativeness. Accuracy was also measured through manifest variables such as evidence of errors in numbers, names, spellings and facts (Appendix B).

5.3.1 Sampling for content analysis

Sampling for content analysis is a three-stage process: selecting the medium and titles, selecting the period and selecting the content. Three English-language dailies in South India – *The Hindu*, *The Times of India* and *The New Indian Express* – were studied to examine the extent to which quality is evident in Indian newspapers.

The Hindu was first published in 1878 and is one of the most widely-read English-language newspapers in the country. It is a family-owned newspaper, headquartered in Chennai, Tamil Nadu and has sister publications such as *The Hindu Business Line* and a magazine named *Frontline*. It is the second largest circulating English-language daily, with a circulation of 1.4 million copies according to Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC) figures in 2016, the largest being *The Times of India* with a circulation of 3.1 million copies (ABC, 2016). *The Times of India* was launched in 1838 from the Indian city of Bombay (now Mumbai), where it still has its headquarters. Its ownership has changed many times, but the Jain family today runs it under the banner of Bennet and Coleman. *The Deccan Chronicle* is headquartered in Hyderabad in the state of Telangana and has a self-reported circulation of 1.45 million (*The Deccan Chronicle*, 2017). It was launched in 1938 and is also a family-owned newspaper. Each of these dailies has circulations, editions and bureaus in more than two states, and the first two are among the highest circulation newspapers in the country, according to the Audit Bureau of Circulation. *The Deccan Chronicle* could not be chosen even though it was the only newspaper with editions in more than two states to figure in the top ten English language dailies in India for circulation. This paper did not provide access to back editions, and so *The New Indian Express* was chosen for analysis instead. *The New Indian Express* was first published under as *The Indian Express* in 1932 from Chennai by a

member of Indian National Congress, and bought by a journalist named S.Sadanand in 1934. The newspaper further changed hands to the acclaimed journalist Ramnath Goenka, but after his demise, the ownership was split among members of the family. Thus, the current *The New Indian Express* is part of Express Publications and owned by Goenka's grandson Manoj Kumar Sonthalia.

In a country like India, where the regional-language media are thriving, there is a good reason that newspapers in regional languages have not been included in the study. The geographical contours of the study are restricted to South India, which until recently had four states, with four different languages being spoken in each of these states. Recently, the state of Andhra Pradesh was split into two, but the language spoken in these two new states is the same. The ownership patterns, reporting culture and newsroom practices vary extensively from one state to another. Again, to cover all these differences is beyond the scope of this study. In choosing English-language dailies, the study ensures comparable journalism cultures between organisations.

The newspaper editions used in the content analysis spanned a period of six months, from January 2015 to June 2015. This cross-section was used in an attempt to draw correlations, if any, between the journalists' interviews and content analysis on quality. It is likely that journalists would refer to their more recent experiences as a reference point in their answers. It is possible that studying newspaper editions published around the same period as the interviews may throw some light on the dynamics between perceptions and practice of quality in journalism.

Two constructed weeks in the six-month period were analysed for the study. Constructed week sampling for newspapers was found to be one of the most effective for content analysis of daily newspapers (Riffe, Aust and Lacy, 1993). The content

analysis began on January 1, 2015, which is a Thursday. The next sample was the Friday of the succeeding week, January 9, 2015, then the Saturday of the week after that. The sampling thus proceeded until two constructed weeks of 14 issues had been analysed. Stempel (1952) found that 12 days spanning two constructed weeks were representative of the entire year and that increasing this number would not be statistically significant. Most content analyses still follow this principle (Riffe, Aust and Lacy, 1993).

The front page, local pages and editorial pages of each newspaper were analysed. Again, in an attempt to link perceptions and practice, these pages were selected for analysis as those most likely to be contributed to by journalists at the local level. Thus, a total of 569 news items from 108 newspaper pages were analysed for the study.

Reliability in content analysis

For content analysis, reliability is defined as the extent to which coders agree about categories of content (Riffe, Lacy and Fico, 2014). As a crucial step in content analysis, reliability is a test of the robustness of the coding protocol and its conceptual and operational definitions. Thus, reliability is a multi-step process in content analysis, starting with the development of a rigorous protocol, appropriate training for the coders and inter-coder reliability tests (Riffe, Lacy and Fico, 2014).

For this study, a detailed coding protocol was developed to address the conceptual definitions and operationalisation for all the content categories. Variables were defined, with instructions on how to identify and when to use them given for each. More than half the variables involved latent content, while categories such as 'Name of newspaper', or 'Origin of stories' dealt with manifest content. Two coders analysed 49

news stories to test reliability. The first session of coder training was not appropriately rigorous, resulting in confusion and latent categories such as 'inverted pyramid' in writing structure and identifying 'transparent methods of verification for all sources mentioned'. A second, more detailed training session addressed these issues and also enabled the modification of the coding protocol to deal with ambiguity in categories, where applicable. For instance, a news item was classified as inverted pyramid if four of the traditional 5Ws and H were present in the first paragraph (also known as the lead).

An inter-coder reliability test checked all variables for the percentage of agreement and Krippendorff's alpha, for which Krippendorff's acceptable level of agreement between variables is $\alpha = .667$. The *Recal2* and the *ReCalOIR* software were used to calculate reliability for nominal and ratio variables respectively (ReCal website, 2017). Most variables had an alpha value of more than .667 and a percentage agreement of more than 70%. However, for some variables, despite there being a percentage of agreement of more than 95%, the alpha values were low or negative.

This paradox of high percentage agreement and low reliability coefficients has been addressed in many works over the last 25 years (Cicchetti and Feinstein, 1990; Potter and Levine-Donnerstein, 1999; Gwet, 2008; Zhao, Lin and Deng, 2013). The debate concerns the way in which chance agreement is taken into consideration while computing the coefficients. Zhao, Liu and Deng (2013) described this paradox in detail and outlined issues around chance agreement where large samples and high percentage agreement as well as honest coding produce low reliability, especially in the case of α . They addressed what they called abnormalities in the alpha value, where, when a variable is absent in the content, the α assumes that no honest coding has taken place (Zhao, Liu and Deng, 2013). For example, in this study, for the proportion of the sample

using reliability, the variable 'Reference to previous articles' was coded at '0=No' for all news items, indicating that none of the news items referred to previous articles on the same issue. However, the α was not computed at all because it assumes that the coding was flawed. Krippendorff (2004) argued that in such cases, when there is no variation, there cannot be reliability. However, Zhao, Liu and Ding (2013) challenged this explanation and argued that it does not take into consideration the absence of a variable and, hence, is not adequate.

This study, while admitting and presenting these paradoxes in reliability coefficients that take chance agreement into consideration, nonetheless went ahead with the content analysis protocol developed for it for two reasons. The primary reason was that the content analysis is inherently subjective and was developed for an exploratory study that sought to compare journalists' perceptions of quality with the practice of it in content. The second reason was that the second coder was used for the purposes of reliability, and the researcher coded and scored the entire content and used these scores in the final analysis.

The statistical analysis software SPSS was used to enter coded data and to perform analyses. In keeping with the aim of content analysis to supplement information provided by the interviews, variables were analysed for frequencies and percentages. Where applicable, cross-tabulations were also performed to identify patterns between variables and across newspapers

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an in-depth discussion of the research problem and research design for this study. It has located the research gap and outlined the methodology for sampling, data collection and analysis.

As explained comprehensively in the chapter, the study justifies the rationale behind the research problem and choice of methodology. In doing so, it also defines the contours of this study. Thus, the study is mainly interpretative, with the content analysis only supplementing the research questions on quality. The study, therefore, tries to explore the concept of quality in the context of the Indian print media. The premise behind addressing quality from the print media perspective is that it is the most traditional form of news dissemination, and most of the principles that govern journalism thus have their foundations in the practice of journalism in the print media. It does not, however, make generalisations about the Indian media as a whole and over a period; nor does it account for the influence of digital media in print. As an exploratory study of quality in journalism, this study is just a start and could be used as a point of departure for future studies.

Chapter 6 Perceptions of quality among Indian journalists

This chapter presents the results of the thematic analysis conducted according to the principles elaborated in Chapter 5. The first section provides the research questions relevant to this chapter, while section 6.2 presents the themes that have emerged from questions on quality and section 6.3 does the same for themes emerging from questions about the role of journalism. The fourth section presents the findings of the supplementary analysis of Key Words in Context (KWIC) and section 6.5 categorises themes from the previous sections to individual, organisational, societal and content levels of analysis. Section 6.6 provides an interpretation of the findings and gives a conclusion to the chapter.

6.1 Perceptions of quality

This section discusses the main research questions pertaining to this chapter. As mentioned in the Methodology chapter, semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis were used to answer the question relating to journalists' perceptions of quality in journalism. Thus, the main research question in this chapter is:

RQ1: How do journalists articulate the concept of quality in journalism?

In order to answer this question, the following sub-questions were formulated:

RQ1.1: What elements do journalists associate with quality in journalism?

RQ1.2: What are journalists' perceptions of the role of journalism in society?

The rest of this chapter addresses these questions by presenting the findings of the thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews. The themes were divided into structural codes and core themes, in keeping with the principles of ATA.

6.2 Themes for quality

Indian journalists interviewed for this study used concepts and terms similar to those used by their counterparts in other countries while discussing their perceptions of quality journalism and have considered accuracy, autonomy, impartiality and good writing to be important attributes.

6.2.1 Perceptions of reader expectations and behaviour

Discussions of quality in journalism invariably involved perceptions of journalistic output that catered to newspaper readers and served the public interest, to a large extent. Catering to readers was one of the most frequently occurring themes, with 20 of 22 journalists describing it as an important factor determining quality in their work. Journalists interviewed for this study talked about various policies and routines adopted at the individual and organisational level for developing and retaining a faithful group of readers. However, many of them believed that they had a duty to serve readers' needs as citizens in a democracy, creating a conflict of interest at the individual level between catering aggressively to the audience's wants and acting in the public interest.

According to Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007), one element of journalism is journalists' loyalty to citizens, which many Indian journalists agreed to be their top priority, arguing that this also involves aspects of credibility. In an Indian context, quality in journalism involved routines and output that were intrinsically linked to perceptions of reader expectations. Journalists perceived their readers' loyalty to be dependent on journalistic effort at truth-telling and strove to tailor news content according to specified target audiences, indicating a struggle to balance the journalistic value of public service with the economic necessity of retaining readership. Facts were considered sacred, and

the only way to ensure that the competition did not steal a loyal reader base. These perceptions brought to light not only the underlying fear among journalists of losing their readers but also the notion that journalism is judged every day by the people who consume news.

If I carry a false or wrong or factually wrong story, there are a large number of readers who are much much more informed than me. Once they read and feel "what rubbish he has written", from that moment onwards, they will never touch my story. [...] So it is every day, every hour business to keep the faith of the reader.

- Journalist 20, reporter, The Hindu

First thing is that you should keep the reader in your mind. [...] I have always believed that there are people who are more intelligent than me, more informed. So, I am writing for them. Tomorrow, they may ask me a question. Then, it may not...It may not affect your career. They are not going to complain you against to your bosses. Nothing. They will simply ask a question. And then, you will be...you will stand before them naked. You are exposed.

- Journalist 14, head of a bureau, The Times of India

The reader is the ultimate god. The moment you dish out half-cooked stories, unconfirmed reports, loaded with commercial interests, he will turn away from you. And once the reader turns away from you, he will not come back. It will be very difficult for you to win him back. It is very easy to lose the reader, very difficult to win him back.

- Journalist 05, senior editorial-managerial position

Newsroom decisions according to reader expectations

At the organisational level, many newspapers tailor their news content to attract a certain type of target audience based on socio-economic factors such as age, class or region. Strategies for retaining readership included targeting particular groups of readers, running awareness campaigns, organisational positioning of newspapers using terms like 'humanitarian view of social issues' (**Journalist 01, reporter, The Hindu**) and 'market-oriented journalism' (**Journalist 21, deputy resident editor, The New Indian Express**).

For example, **Journalist 03, a deputy resident editor at The Times of India**, repeatedly mentioned that the focus of his newspaper was on local, city stories. He claimed that covering stories about national and international issues is 'being pretentious' about changing national policies, even while admitting that his statements may not be politically correct.

I talk a bit about *The Times of India* - because you know, our stand has been...our focus is clearly city. That is why we have more pages, more people, more energy, more time, more resources, everything on city. And it has been our USP across the country. We will be much more interested in pothole on Chamiers Road⁵ than a strife in Bolivia or Syria. May not be politically correct, but that is the truth.

- Journalist 03, deputy resident editor, The Times of India

Another journalist claimed that her newspaper caters to a young audience and newsroom decisions are taken with this audience in mind.

We like to position ourselves as a young paper, a paper meant for the techie group. So, we have a certain parameter like that. We do not highlight...we think of them as reader - core readers. The young...the young readers are our core readers. As a core reader, there are certain things they would be interested in, which we think they would be interested in, and which they will not be interested in. So, this might sound a little snobbish, we do not tend to look at corporation schools, government colleges, what is happening in the lower middle-class families. That is why I have told you it will sound a little snobbish because we think that they are not our readers. They wouldn't buy our paper to know about a certain thing.

- Journalist 06, news editor, The Deccan Chronicle

Almost all the journalists interviewed for this study said that their newspapers have taken to running regular awareness campaigns to attract and retain readership.

Journalist 20, a reporter at The Hindu, said he ran a series of stories on the need to preserve the ecosystem of an important mountain range in southern India called the

⁵ Chamiers Road is a street in the city of Chennai

Western Ghats. He talked about the support and encouragement he received from his editors.

I brought the story of Western Ghats being declared as a world heritage site. It was through me that the world came to know about the Gadgil Report. And we...I wrote 19...almost 19, 20 days we had exclusive reports on Western Ghats based on Madhav Gadgil's panel report. I am sure that those reports have played a significant role in making the people aware of the need for the conservation of Western Ghats. [...] *The Hindu* has a history of standing by these conservation campaigns. When it comes to Western Ghats, the paper magnanimously carried all my reports prominently on its national pages, and the paper wrote two brilliant editorials highlighting the need for protecting the Western Ghats⁶.

- **Journalist 20, reporter, *The Hindu***

A news editor from Bangalore described newspaper campaigns about waste disposal and management in that city and how they motivated citizens to take a more active part in responsible waste management.

Now people have become very aware because of this newspaper campaigns...all the papers had [...] several campaigns on this garbage. Garbage is the biggest issue here. Many of them had run several issues regarding this campaign. People have lot of awareness...even if you go on road, you can see people picking up and putting the cups or anything in this thing...people walking on the road and they see...I have seen people taking and putting in the wastebasket. So, awareness is there. I think media is one of the reasons.

- **Journalist 18, news editor, *The Deccan Herald***

Journalist 05, at a senior editorial managerial position, talked about campaigns from a newspaper brand-management perspective. He has conducted essay competitions in schools about environment preservation and talked about how he roped in local retailers to be sponsors for the competitions.

⁶ More information about the Gadgil report can be found at:
<http://www.moef.nic.in/downloads/public-information/wg-23052012.pdf>
<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/environment/developmental-issues/Gadgil-committee-recommendations-on-Western-Ghats-ideal-practical-Experts/articleshow/41136674.cms>

Sometimes I take on some projects that would help the brand building my *Deccan Chronicle* newspaper. Like I organize student competitions [...] recently we had one in Coimbatore on environment. I got the children of 9,10,11,12 classes to write essays on environment. [...] I also...I didn't want to trouble my newspaper with budgets [...] So I told this bicycle company [...] that it would be a win-win. I would be talking about the importance of getting bicycles back on the road, the Indian roads...through the kids...the school students and college students. Catch them young. And they will be able to sell more bicycles by giving me six bicycles as prizes. And they were happy too. And it was a big hit.

- ***Journalist 05, at a senior editorial managerial position***

Attempts at the individual level to attract and retain readership

Nevertheless, at the individual level, for most journalists, the only way to develop and retain a faithful group of readers was to be vigilant about the accuracy of the information they gathered. This meant that journalists were also looking for ways to establish credibility and accountability in their day-to-day work, even as they conformed to policies at the organisational level. For example, ***Journalist 05, working at a senior editorial-managerial position***, while arguing that 'reader was the ultimate god' also proudly recalled instances where he broke important stories at great personal risk.

And at that time, journalists from India, particularly Tamil Nadu, they were not given visas so easily to go to Sri Lanka. And even if a visa was given, access to the north where the action was happening was completely denied. So, I asked the militant groups here, because they were using the boats to cross you know from the southern coast of Tamil Nadu to cross into the northern coast of Sri Lanka where the war was happening. Their camps were there [...]

TELO was a group...Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation...just like the LTTE...TELO leader said okay, I will organise. And then from Rameswaram, he agreed to take me. His boat...this was in 1985. My editor in *Week* magazine, he was worried when I said I would want to do this. *Week* was then one year old. And we needed a big story and I also wanted to show that I can do something that others were not going to do. And I was also pursuing "truth". You are very romantic when you are a bit younger. So I said I want to do it. [...]

Fairly safe except for about half an hour or 45 minutes. When we are crossing the sea, we keep to the shallow waters because that will prevent the Sri Lankan boats...they can't manage the shallow waters. And then we

have to dash across a particular stretch where the water is deep, where they could hit us. But you know it is a...50-50 there. [...] I had a nice trip, 10 days I went around, met people...miserable conditions, no power, uncertainty of life...a child, a son goes to school, mom waits at the gate not knowing whether the son would come back. If he doesn't come back, has the army taken him away or has he joined a militant group and crossed over to Tamil Nadu? So much...took pictures. Then, on the way back, our boat was attacked by the navy. It was about 1 o'clock or so in the night. Almost about an hour and a half of chase, with bullets flying all over. And the boy sitting next to me got the bullet and he died in my lap, vomiting blood. That was the cover story for the *Week*.

Journalist 07, a reporter with the *Economic Times*, effectively described the conflict of interests between journalism's public service duties and audiences' preferences using a food metaphor.

You could call...see it's like this...some papers have their readers' interest very strongly in their minds and they very aggressively cater to that audience. Like *Times of India* or the *Economic Times*. Now the reader may not always want great stories or great quality stuff. They want junk food. Some papers give it to them. But the journalists within also make sure that you give them some protein and some nutrition. Like you give them some good stories, you break some scams, you work towards so-called public service angle of journalism. So that's the thing. When it comes online, you can isolate you know a particular story and say hey this ...'shame on this *CNN IBN*⁷ or shame on this'...it's not that *CNN IBN* is always doing only that kind of stories. They are doing other stuff ...great stuff.

-Journalist 07, reporter, *The Economic Times*

Perceptions of reader interest also centred on the importance of meeting readers' expectations while journalists went about their daily routines, arguably motivated by the desire to retain a loyal base. It was important for many journalists that their stories served the public interest while meeting perceived expectations. Almost all journalists had something to say about how this could be achieved but they differed significantly in

⁷ An Indian news channel

their opinions. For example, **Journalist 02, a reporter with The Deccan Chronicle**, believed that a newspaper could not let the reader down.

So, we had to ensure quality in the sense...we cannot miss something that happened. Because the next day, there is a reader who gets two papers, let's say *Malayala Manorama*⁸ and *Deccan Chronicle* at his home. He sees 2-2 and 1/2 pages in *Malayala Manorama* and 1 page in *The Deccan Chronicle*. But he will not be dissatisfied if he sees that almost everything that here given extensively is given in a capsule format in *The Deccan Chronicle*, this paper one page, he will be fine with that.

On the other hand, **Journalist 06, a news editor at The Deccan Chronicle**, simply said, "we have to give the reader what the reader wants". Some other journalists said that meeting the expectations of the reader meant giving a variety of news items that they would use according to their interests.

"...people use forms of journalism to get themselves informed about various things. There is something on politics, there is something on sports, there is something on business, something on technology, something on books. Anything...it could be anything. They use that part of journalism to inform themselves or increase their knowledge levels or awareness levels about anything".

- Journalist 13, news editor, The Hindu

First and foremost thing we have to keep in mind is the general reader. But today, what the practice is...we think of a particular section of the readers whom we cater to. And the news would be selected based on that. So, which is not a very healthy practice I feel.

-Journalist 12, chief sub-editor, The New Indian Express

Apart from fears of losing credibility, journalists also felt that the burden of responsibility fell on them if a carelessly written news item could have a negative impact on the readers, and for some journalists, this included the content of advertisements also.

⁸ *Malayala Manorama* is a daily newspaper in Malayalam, a language spoken in the state of Kerala

So the readers attached too much value to even an advertisement in a credible newspaper. And therefore, when you report something, you have to be extra cautious. I have seen while covering education that a lot of people who enrol their kids in the X college or Y college primarily because some newspaper has said that they are good institutions. Or even in the end all the kids in a particular college because of Abdul Kalam⁹ has gone there as a chief guest. And the media has reported it. Ultimately somebody is not only wasting his money, hard earned money by educating his son or her daughter, in an engineering college because you wrote about it but the child's future comes into question [...] You become responsible for it.

- **Journalist 22, deputy news editor, The New Indian Express**

It is noteworthy here that the only participant in a **senior managerial position**, **Journalist 05**, expressed his disappointment at the lack of reader response to the stories in his newspaper. He was the only participant to mention this point.

You know we take such great trouble in going after a story, doing a story. Here, in India, particularly in Tamil Nadu, the reader, you know he thinks this is part of his breakfast, part of his morning coffee. If you are talking of a huge scam of high corruption, he will tell his wife "Yeah, you see, I have known this all along. These wretched fellows"...and the newspaper, an honest, decent newspaper, is the biggest victim of this social indifference. The reader indifference...which gives you no satisfaction that you have done something.

- **Journalist 05, senior editorial-managerial position in The Deccan Chronicle**

Indian journalists talked about quality in terms of catering to readers and covering stories that were in the public interest. Even while acting according to journalists' perceptions of readers' wants, a public interest element comes into play. This was evident in the way some journalists described their efforts to 'bring the truth to the reader' and find a public service angle to even trivial stories.

[...] quality means for me, one is, in my view, any story that you write has to have a general interest. Public interest. I don't mind writing about the opening of the boutique provided that helps the women in the

⁹ Eleventh President of India

neighbourhood prevent a long travel and scout for dresses. If I can do that, if they see my report and then say "okay, I don't have to go to T Nagar¹⁰, I can buy it here", then it is good.

-Journalist 04, deputy resident editor, The New Indian Express

The primary role of the newspaper is to inform. That we always have to keep in mind. Inform, with the aim of reaching, taking the truth to the reader. That is the primary aim. These are secondary, I would say - entertainment and this thing. But all the same, they have to be...depending upon your target audience. And catering to society as a whole, and not one section.

- Journalist 10, chief sub-editor, The Hindu

6.2.2 Perceptions of content characteristics of quality journalism

Elements of writing and aspects of attribution and verification were considered to be important factors influencing good quality newspaper content. This theme represents the characteristics of news media content that journalists perceived to be an important aspect of quality in journalism and was mentioned by 19 of the 22 journalists interviewed. The theme included the qualities of the content of a newspaper in its entirety as well as characteristics of a good story, suggesting a close relationship between journalistic routines and their impact on newspaper content. For instance, while attribution in news stories is intertwined with routines of accuracy and verification, it shows how these routines can have a direct impact on journalistic output in newspapers.

Secondly, writing is one of the most integral parts of producing newspaper content and figured in many discussions about good quality content. Many journalists were preoccupied with the quality of English language used in Indian newspapers these days. However, few went into detail, except to say that good

¹⁰ A neighbourhood in the city of Chennai

language was a necessary ingredient of good content. They talked about the impact of visual and digital media on newspaper content and how the writing styles need to change, and have changed, to adapt to the newer media. Journalists from *The Times of India* were very vocal in this regard and espoused a dramatic way of writing stories to catch the audience imagination. For example, **Journalist 03, a news editor at The Times of India**, illustrated this in great detail. Another participant also talked about the challenges of writing for print media at a time when digital media is increasingly prominent.

Crime stories...As I told you, I love to write unconventional intros. [...] Today, we had a story which [...] It was about a man, an 80-year old man who died after...you know, he flipped his cigarette, and he just underwent a heart surgery, and he was still smoking. He didn't die of that. He flipped a cigarette, but it hit the windowpane and came back and the cot he was laying caught fire. This man was slightly debilitated, probably he couldn't move. He died [...] he was a fireman actually [...] of course, the reporter, what they filed was an 80-year old, retired fire officer [...] died after his cot caught fire. We tweaked the story [...] we say that for 38 years, he battled fire accidents and rescued people. On Friday, a cigarette butt killed him. It is more dramatic, but it is not sensational. [...] This is being smart writing, rather than sensational writing.

- Journalist 03, deputy resident editor, The Times of India

I come from the print media, but I am afraid this is the time I have to talk about other media. Because they directly affect what is being printed. You get instant news on the TV, instant news on the net, they have minute-by-minute updation. [...] So, what happens is if you are watching, say the Peshawar - I will just take the example of the Peshawar school attack, okay, and so many children getting butchered - by the time my paper is out the next day, the whole world knows what has happened. That kind of influences my...how I am going to present that news item. People have read on the net, people have seen it on TV, now what more can I give for them? So then, I have to give an analytical piece. Because I have to draw them into reading that item.

-Journalist 06, News Editor, Deccan Chronicle

Some journalists also mentioned a commitment to factual reporting as a necessity for quality in journalism. **Journalist 17, a senior sub-editor with The Hindu**, illustrated

this with an instance of his newspaper holding back a story because it could not confirm it.

If you write something...especially about politics. Then communal issues and all that, we double-check. We ask the reporter. Then... a colleague of mine...recent...that story didn't went actually. So...there was a news which actually we got in the initial stage that is...conversions, mass conversions are going to happen even in Kerala. That was the news... Gharwapsi¹¹. But then we hold it back because since it was a controversial...may trigger even violent protests. So if there was...there is no credible source, no credible source, we won't publish the news.

- **Journalist 17, senior sub-editor, *The Hindu***

Perceptions of good writing also depended on aspects such as the newspaper a journalist worked for and whether they were feature writers or regular reporters. For example, the two feature writers interviewed for this study claimed that good writing needed to engage with their readers uniquely. Giving a recent example of his work, **Journalist 11, a reporter for *The New Indian Express***, illustrated this point.

[...]Thiruchengode¹² may be a town now, but Thiruchengode itself...Godu means mountaintop. So it's a red mountaintop. So I titled, headlined that story as...and Perumal Murugan¹³ says it is that...it is at that temple...what the novel says that the childless women...they had their consensual sex with strangers in order to beget children. [...] That is the controversy. It is that which opened the controversy. So I wanted to include that...Simply you know that a story written on Thiruchengode, it may not interest others. Since, since the hills...since the hill, the mountain, the hill shrine is related with Perumal Murugan's novel, I wanted to bring it at the headline itself. And I headlined it as 'The Holy Red Mountain Peak of Madhurubagan'. That was the title.

- **Journalist 11, reporter, *The New Indian Express***

¹¹ A term coined to denote the organised campaigns for conversion of non-Hindus to Hindus in India

¹² A town in Tamil Nadu state

¹³ A Tamil-language author whose book *Madhurubagan* (One Part Woman) garnered controversy for its depiction of certain temple rituals. A summary of the case can be found here: <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/perumal-murugan-book-controversy-and-madras-high-court/article14476037.ece>

The Times of India also placed a lot of emphasis on creativity in presenting their stories, according to journalists from that newspaper who were interviewed for this study. An example quoted earlier by **Journalist 03, a deputy resident editor for *The Times of India***, is a case in point. Another journalist from the same paper echoed similar ideas.

One quality is quality of writing. That is very important. As I told you in the beginning itself, the end or the middle...wherever we are...language is what matters. If I am writing like a schoolboy's composition, factually correct. It has everything - 10 persons were killed, next day, it is seven persons were killed - we are just filling the blanks. Third day, your readers won't read it. So I will slightly bring in some dramatic element into it. So, language is a quality.

- Journalist 14, head of a bureau, *The Times of India*

Lack of sensationalism is a theme recurrent in many surveys of journalists. In Gladney's (1990) study, it is ranked second in content attributes of quality and is implicit in Bogart's (1989) survey of American editors and subsequent index that showed a higher ratio of editorial content as a high-ranking indicator of quality. Fifty percent of journalists interviewed mentioned sensationalism and argued that it was the bane of quality news content.

There is a kind of vanity about trivial news. I'm not saying they're not news. Even I write, I read, I oversee them. Even I do ask for stories from my reporters about colourful things, but there is a limit to...is it so important? What goes on in private lives of celebrities. We deal with celebrities in another way. We see an actress in the film. We want to know about her, what she does, where she studied, whom she is dating, all those things. But there has to be a limit. Even she has...we have to stop somewhere. But most of the time, the media, the other media wants to push the news. And those news, are in social media. So what happens? These people get interested in that.

- Journalist 04, Deputy Resident Editor, *The New Indian Express*

We focus on the issue, not the persons. And they also have a life. So, we don't whether they are innocent or not. Still, till they are found guilty, we don't publish personal things about them. That is I think...I think that is ensuring the quality in journalism.

- Journalist 17, Senior sub-editor, The Hindu

I try and keep a non-tabloid approach while writing about anything. And some actors have even gone on Twitter to say that you know that it was refreshing talking to someone who had non-tabloid approach to writing.

- Journalist 19, Reporter, The Hindu

Even though half the journalists interviewed believed in non-sensational reporting, only five could articulate what sensationalism means to them. All five said that sensationalism involved probing into and publicising the private lives of celebrities, and how such items do not constitute news.

I don't want to know who Mahindra Singh Dhoni is dating. [...] I don't want to know what clothes Katrina Kaif wore to some party¹⁴.

- Journalist 07, a reporter at the Economic Times

Journalist 17, a senior sub-editor at The Hindu, echoed the same sentiments and insisted that quality journalism is all about separating the personal and professional lives of their story subjects. Sensationalism was mentioned during discussions about quality, suggesting that the nature of content was an essential aspect of quality.

6.2.3 Perceptions of independence and autonomy as functional criteria for quality

When journalists talked about the need for independence in the newsroom, it meant that they needed to be allowed to do newsworthy stories. The lack of independence and autonomy were common themes occurring throughout the

¹⁴ Mahindra Singh Dhoni is an Indian cricketer and Katrina Kaif is an Indian actress known for her roles in Hindi language films

interviews, but these perceptions were more common among senior journalists. By extension, journalists talked about the factors that influence or curtail this freedom to do stories – pressure from advertisers, which include governments at the state level, policies of the newspaper management and, sometimes, tactics used by the government or local administrative authorities to make sure newspaper managements toe the line. These perceptions can be viewed at the organisational level and include perceived and real external influences that restrict editorial autonomy.

A majority of journalists (18 of 22) talked about the hindrances they faced while trying to perform their role as journalists. The importance journalists placed on autonomy was directly linked to their perceptions of the role that they were expected to play in society and the challenges faced while trying to perform their duties as journalists.

There was a collective belief among journalists, especially reporters, about their ability to carry out good journalism if they were free from interferences from all quarters.

But at the ground level, at the field level, at the working level, what I can say is so long as there is no intervention, I mean...positive or negative, there is no intervention when it comes to an item, when it comes to an issue concerning the society, if there's no intervention on the part of the company and the journalist is left to take his call on the merit of the issue, then that is good journalism.

- Journalist 01, reporter, The Hindu

Although I had offers from practically every newspaper, I decided to stay on for the simple reason it was a quality newspaper, and it allowed the editorial staff freedom. Freedom, of course, freedom within the parameters laid down by the constitution and the law of the country. Within that, we were free to write anything.

-Journalist 15, reporter, Statesman

A newspaper must give you the liberty to follow up certain stories. My newspaper has been very very kind that way. We have gone to so many

distant places to cover stories that really really made an impact. The self-help groups stories that I was talking about...60-70 of them travelled all over southern, western Tamil Nadu...my office never said 'no, don't do that'. We have travelled very frequently to the Nilgiris¹⁵...do some interesting stories, and the office must give you that kind of space to write it. We have always been given that kind of space.

-Journalist 19, reporter, The Hindu

Participants described many significant factors that influence news decisions. Most of these, as described by journalists interviewed for this study, were organisational factors such as the political and economic orientations of the proprietors, resulting in pressures in the newsroom to provide favourable coverage to advertisers and parties that were unofficially backed by different newspapers. In many instances, when government advertisements formed a major part of the revenue for newspapers, it led to more complications, according to many journalists interviewed for this study. Even though one participant described what he does to get around these factors, most journalists talked about how valuable it was to have the freedom to follow stories that they wished to do.

Before moving on to salient themes that emerged during discussions on editorial autonomy, it is worth adding here that some journalists also claimed that they enjoyed complete freedom to cover any type of stories.

Honestly, till this moment, no one has asked me not to do a story. No one has asked me to do a particular story in a particular way. No one has asked me not to cover those things. No one has asked me to cover things. I think this is one of the newspapers, few newspapers, where a reporter can work with his self-esteem. Because we go by a reporter's judgement.

- Journalist 20, Reporter, The Hindu

But I will not write things that I don't want to write. That I have...that freedom you have. Nobody will push you to write. I can very well say that I will not write. I don't think no newspaper will force you to write. Because

¹⁵ A hill range in Tamil Nadu

they can ask some others to do it. They are willing...too willing to do such things.

- Journalist 14, Head of a Bureau, The Times of India

[...] in most of the cases, organisation as such doesn't interfere. It is more of the editor or the guys you immediately report to. Am sure there are battles being fought.

- Journalist 7, Reporter, The Economic Times

Pressure from advertisers influencing journalistic routines and newspaper content

The general perception was that when newspapers are dependent on advertisements, journalists are coerced into writing favourable coverage for the advertisers or reduce negative coverage for the advertisers' products and organisations. Most journalists (11 of 18) felt that pressure from advertisers was a real threat to their independent working.

If some...some X or Y gives advertisement, then the news which affects them will be...sometime may not appear, sometime it will be a smaller news. It will not get the space it requires.

- Journalist 09, reporter, The New Indian Express

Now those advertisements matter. Now, any advertiser, cheapshot fellow...if he's an advertiser he will come and dictate terms. He will come through the marketing people, and many invitations now come only through the marketing people. It is a quid pro quo. Here is the advertisement, here is the invitation. Give me coverage. If he comes to me like that, I will throw him out. [...] But when he comes with these people, and if I do that to the marketing fellows, first they will come and cry to me. "Sir, last advertisement, you have to do something". Even if I am more adamant, they will go to the management, they will make it an issue, they will speak to the general manager, and the general manager speak to the VP. And then the VP to the chairman, and it goes up saying that the editorial is not cooperating. It comes back from the management as a dictate. So to avoid that, we succumb at this level. So that it remains within our control.

- Journalist 04, a news editor with The New Indian Express

An interesting point to note here is that for many of these newspapers, the national and state governments are major advertisers, and these government advertisements form a large part of their revenue. Some argued that potential sources of revenue other than government advertisements would see a decrease in interference from the government.

Now you started giving priority to the advertiser, your other interests. And the advertiser includes the government too. Because government is a big advertiser. So, there is a kind of nationalism in a different form taking place at the moment. Because you get maximum DAVP¹⁶ advertisement from the government. And that's a constant source of advertisement for you.

- Journalist 01, a reporter at The Hindu

We have to give the reader what the reader wants and at the same time, not offend the people we are not supposed to offend. Because we are in some kind of a financial crunch. If that were set right, then we don't have to worry about government ads.

- Journalist 06, a news editor at The Deccan Chronicle

Journalist 04, a deputy resident editor at The New Indian Express, also said that it was imperative that the newspaper did not let these considerations get in the way of journalism.

Then, another one is, stories, if you take social issues: if you write a story about anything that is social, there will be somebody...somebody will be antagonised. You will be brushing somebody on the wrong side. For example, if you say the roads are not done, you are blaming the corporation. Indirectly. Even if you don't say...I mean it starts at that level. When you talk about bigger issues like child labour, or insensitivity in police stations to a woman who comes and complains, you are pointing the finger at somebody. Somewhere, somebody is being blamed. Though the story may look like...how much freedom a newspaper gives for you to do this is the most important thing.

- Journalist 04, deputy resident editor, The New Indian Express

¹⁶ Directorate of Visual and Advertising Publicity, Government of India

The fear of antagonising or offending someone was a theme common to many journalists from Chennai, the capital city of Tamil Nadu, and, by their own admission, can be attributed to the political climate in the city. It is the capital city of the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu and was, at the time of the interviews, ruled by a Chief Minister who, by all accounts, tried to keep the media on a tight rein.

Journalist 05, at the senior editorial-managerial position, admitted that it was a real challenge and sums up the predicament that most journalists face. However, he admits that he finds ways around the problem very often by trying to appease the influencers. Again, this is a perspective offered by only the most senior editor, who has the managerial freedom to call the shots in the newsroom.

And once you know a particular Chief Minister, we merely said, along with a friend went to a temple. The Chief Minister decided to stop the advertisements for us because of that. [...] Government advertisements are very important. [...] I am also exposing wherever it is possible, without damaging too much, my...my...my balance sheet. I will tell you a trick. I write something against you...you have done a mistake, you have done a wrong. You are the ruler; you are the Chief Minister or the government. I talk about it, you are very angry. It happened very recently also. I tell ...sometimes, I am a liar. A very unscrupulous criminal. I tell the guy "Oh my god, it happened. I didn't see the paper this morning. Last evening, I left a little early. I think it must be the sub-editor. The poor sub-editor. Don't worry, next time you do something, you let me know. I will put it up prominently. I will make up. I shouldn't be doing it. I shouldn't be doing it, because I should tell him...to his face, you made a mistake. You did wrong, and I was right in writing about it. And you have no right to ask me. But unfortunately, not just me and my paper, all the newspapers all over the world are in this situation where they are now depending so much on the advertisers. Because the readers are letting them down. So you do the balancing.

- Journalist 05, senior editorial-managerial position

The Times of India reportedly has enough private advertisements to remain relatively unaffected by both the political climate in the state of Tamil Nadu and the pressure that comes with being dependent on government advertisements, giving it more newsroom autonomy. The only evidence in this study for this assessment of *The Times of India's* advertising revenues comes from the remarks of two journalists who work for the *Times* group of publications, ie, *The Times of India* and *The Economic Times*.

The only thing that the government can do is stop advertisements. Once you go through that patch, what is the big deal? And reporters never come to know of these pressures. If you have a good buffer system that is. [...] Indian journalism is robust because, at the highest levels, we have enough independence to do journalism than be bothered about other things. Other things, of course, the money part, the circulation part, they have others. Journalists don't have to be bothered about that. We do our job. And I can see that there is no such pressure for journalists by and large. To do anything else than journalism.

- **Journalist 03, a deputy resident editor of *The Times of India***

Yeah, so in most of the cases, organisation as such doesn't interfere. It is more of the editor or the guys you immediately report to. Am sure there are battles being fought.

- **Journalist 07, a reporter with *The Economic Times***

Even those journalists whose newspapers were perceived to be dependent on government advertisements felt that it was, in **Journalist 04's** words, 'unfair to stop a story' and that they should fight pressures in the newsroom so that good journalism could happen.

Organisations like *Times of India* will not allow you to do certain things. For example, if there is...this is not being quoted...there is a huge agitation happening against Malabar Gold for they are setting up an ornament manufacturing factory right in the middle of a food park, food processing unit. They are using sulphuric acid, potassium cyanide everything. [...] No media covered. We took a decision, personally, I took a decision...that this is an agitation going on...it is not my this thing. I gave a story, and hell broke out because they are giving us advertisements worth Rs. 10 crore¹⁷. So they decided not to give us that, to cancel that advertisements.

¹⁷ Crore is an Indian numbering system that denotes 10 million

Fortunately, whatever we had written were [...]Factually correct. [...] And when the auditors, when the news auditor asked me, I said: "this is what is happening". So, that is the individual decision.

- Journalist 14, head of a bureau, The Times of India

Organisational policies and their influence on newsroom autonomy

A closely related factor to advertiser pressure in the newsroom affecting independence is the ideological, economic and political stance of the newspaper management. This percolates to the newsrooms, affecting newsgathering and decision-making. Ten participants cited this as one of the reasons for the lack of newsroom autonomy and independent decision making.

Each one has a different reason. Either they subscribe to that party's politics, policies...or they depend on the party for government advertisements because they don't get enough private advertisements, so they depend on government advertisements. Then you have to toe the government line.

-Journalist 06, news editor, The Deccan Chronicle

Around the time the interviews were conducted, the then Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, who has since passed away, was convicted in a corruption case and had to step down from office. Journalists at *The New Indian Express* used this incident as an example to highlight a combination of political leanings and interference prevalent at her newspaper and even tried to defend this decision in some ways before finally admitting that politicians influenced newsroom decisions there.

So now that the interference has become more. True, the interference will always be there. Somebody owns a paper; he will have his own interest. But to what level interference goes? I can give you one example. Our paper didn't carry Jayalalithaa's conviction in page 1.

- Journalist 04, a deputy resident editor at The New Indian Express

Say, for example, what happened with Jayalalithaa case...different papers had their own perceptions. But we decided to keep a low profile. So that was the editorial decision. And we only reported the facts of that ...related to the case. We didn't go for sensationalism [...] The history...the

background history of all the cases... some interviews they included...we just ended it up with a couple of reports [...] Partly because of the management decision. They are very close to the chief minister. In one way it is good, and at the same time, it's being a little bit of partial I feel.

- Journalist 12, chief sub-editor, The New Indian Express

Legal intimidation and other government tactics that influence journalistic decisions

Indian journalists discussed many contextual aspects that could affect quality and independence. The Indian news media and political culture is steeped in one of these aspects, which centres on government means of controlling unfavourable coverage.

According to senior journalists, it is a common practice in India for politicians to file criminal defamation cases against journalists for unfavourable coverage. In fact, ***Journalist 14, a reporter for the Statesman*** with more than 50 years of experience, claimed he has had hundreds of such cases filed against him by politicians in four South Indian states and pointed out that journalistic routines for accuracy and verification can ensure success in court.

Unfortunately, in India, this is criminal defamation and not civil, which means the editor, the printer-publisher, plus the author of the piece have to appear before court. And so, politicians find it as a very easy means to harass, but they wouldn't want to pursue the case because we write only after checking, cross-checking, verifying every detail. So, we are all on the safe grounds. So we would like the complainant to come and cross-examine, but that they will not do. For instance, Jayalalithaa¹⁸ has filed close to 30 cases against me; not one she would pursue to the logical end.

- Journalist 14, reporter, Statesman

Other journalists described similar experiences or commented on the general trend in the country towards defamation cases. Journalist 03, a deputy resident editor

¹⁸ Aforementioned Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, who had multiple tenures, and died in December 2016

at *The Times of India*, said such instances required unconditional support from newspaper publishers and owners.

You write anything, and you get a defamation. That was the case between 2000 and 2005. So, all these cases were like, not even...of course, it was uncharitable about Jayalalithaa. She got all kinds of people file defamation against me, including the Commissioner of Police. There were all kinds of threats you face. It is outside the legal purview. That you can't help. But how such defamations work - I didn't have a problem because I had a free hand. Both Aron Puri¹⁹ and Prabhu Chawla²⁰, who was the editor, they were...they never stopped me from writing, even after getting these six cases.

However, it is important to note that only journalists with more than 15 years of experience and who have undertaken political journalism describe this trend. More importantly, all journalists who talked about defamation cases were from Chennai in Tamil Nadu, where the political climate, as already mentioned, is not very conducive to independent journalism.

6.2.4 Accuracy and objectivity as factors ensuring quality journalism

Journalists interviewed for this study described newsgathering and disseminating routines which not only ensured that they produced good output but also contributed to quality journalism at a broader level. The foundation of these routines was ideals of accuracy and objectivity, with systemic and individual routines oriented towards producing error- and bias-free journalistic output. Thus, these ideals can be seen to be reflected in the participants' perceptions of good quality newspaper content.

¹⁹ Publisher and former editor-in-chief of *India Today* magazine

²⁰ A former editor of *India Today* magazine

Journalistic routines towards accuracy and fact-checking in news stories

As one of the three main themes that spanned the 22 interviews, questions on accuracy and verification produced almost identical answers from most participants. They claimed that each story went through various stages of cross-checking and verification, starting from the reporter and going through various editors and sub-editors. At the organisational level, this aspect of quality involves the layers of systematic gatekeeping established in a newsroom. When combined with the discipline of verification at an individual level, checking news reports for accuracy at different levels becomes an important indicator of quality. Participants gave identical descriptions of the processes and the different layers of verification put in place for ensuring accuracy.

Here is a system of check and balances. One thing, the first thing is the responsibility cast on the reporter himself. The reporter must report only the truth. That is only if he is...if he double checks. [...] Then it comes to the news editor first. News editor counter-checks the copy, see if it is logical, error-free...is there anything unethical? Then it is passed on to the desk. At the desk level, the chief-sub or the sub-editor who deals with copy again goes through. For example, if something is not really proper or is jarring or doesn't sound right, he will call up the reporter. We always do that.

- Journalist 10, chief sub-editor, The New Indian Express

Initially, it is done by the reporters. When the reporters file the copy, the reporter ensures that all the facts that are correct. So he cross-checks, he has to cross-check, he has to verify with independent sources or with authorities about facts so that there are no mistakes. Facts are authenticated properly. Or it is credited to some source...somebody saying something, or to some data yearbook or a data resource or something, documentary this thing that is attributed. So to that extent, those things are taken care of. [...] But in case you have some doubt, then we cross-check ourselves. Or we get back to the reporter saying that there is something amiss in this or it doesn't look like it is correct. [...] "Can you just call back your source or you know just verify with somebody else if it is right or wrong?"

- Journalist 13, news editor, The Hindu

Thus, according to most journalists, a story goes through many levels of checking and cross-checking before it is finally approved for publication. Many participants also stressed the importance of attributing each piece of information that they print and acknowledging the source. However, such practices were not always followed diligently, with many journalists interviewed for this study describing various instances where verification was considered either unnecessary or impossible. On the one hand, information from official sources was reported without further cross-checking in some instances and in some newspapers; on the other hand, however, instances were described in which unconfirmed information meant losing an exclusive story for some journalists.

If it comes from an official, who is authorised to say that, like if it's the Vice Chancellor who is saying that, then we report as it is. Because he is the person who is authorised to give the news in...about...he knows the exact position. If he...if the university gets some five crores from UGC²¹, if he says then we have got five crores, then he can't lie. He has to go through...the university syndicate...they have the accounting system, they have the finance committee, so he can't lie. If otherwise, if some lower level, some departmental professor says, some HoD²² says we got some funding, then we have to cross-check with the Registrar.

- Journalist 10, chief reporter, The New Indian Express

If it is a crime story, for example, they get it from the police. The police is the source. The police don't give the entire thing; we can't do anything about it...But we try to...we tell our reporter to be more careful, verify the facts independently. But I will say that it doesn't happen fully because there is no time for that. Because take a place like Villupuram²³ for example, it is one big district. We have two reporters - two correspondents there. If it happens at one end of the district, there is no way of verifying it personally. It will take one day for the reporter to go and come back.

- Journalist 04, deputy resident editor, The New Indian Express

²¹ University Grants Commission, the governing body for public and private universities in India

²² Head of Department

²³ A district in the state of Tamil Nadu

You can't corroborate an information because information, first of all, it's hard to come by because it...it involves...I am sorry...quite a few agencies or countries. I mean the complexity of the sea medium is there in the complexity of information that we get about it. So it's at times it's pretty difficult to corroborate a given information.

- Journalist 01, reporter, The Hindu

Recently, I had a very very bitter experience, but not bitter experience I say... "Ghar wapsi" is the...what do you call, it is going on. Some time back, last month, I got the story that they are planning to do it in this state in a big way. In Kerala. And unfortunately, no one was willing to come on record. And I had that story verified, cross-checked at all possible levels. But as a matter of policy, my newspaper or persons in the control that day insisted that we need to get a quote. [...] I agreed, and we waited for 2-3 days, and no one was willing to come on record. [...] After five days of my filing the story, channels broke that story. And it was a big miss for us. But I take solace in the fact that it is because of the policy of the newspaper that you should have a credible information.

- Journalist 20, reporter, The Hindu

The instances described above suggest that apparent lapses in verification are circumstantial to a large extent, depend on the nature of the story and are not considered a regular occurrence. On a routine day-to-day basis, most journalists admit that they follow a strict verification discipline.

We have several layers of sieving and clearing in place, or there are these gates we have in place. Reporter, or whoever it is, however senior, we have somebody equally senior or more senior going through it, correcting, adhering it to style, looking if it is okay - there is no such inadvertent problems, no adjectives which are not needed. We have a system in place, and there is somebody else who sees it on the page, the final corrections.

- Journalist 03, Deputy Resident Editor, The Times of India

Objective and impartial journalism as attributes of a journalist's work culture

Apart from providing accurate information, most journalists interviewed for this study argued for the need to be objective and unbiased in journalism. Journalism as a mirror involves activities that provide an objective account of the events of the day.

Zelizer (2004) quoted an American reporter who reinforces this view: 'reporters were to report the news as it happened, like machines, without prejudice, colour, or style' (Steffens 1931: p. 171, in Zelizer, 2004, p.39). This notion of objectivity and reflection can be found in the way Indian journalists talked about quality.

Quality for me in journalism would be something that is credible. Something that is free of very loaded bias. Something that can be used as reference material. Because that is most important.

- Journalist 21, Deputy Resident Editor, The New Indian Express

One of the most common perceptions of good quality content – whether for an individual story or for the entire newspaper – was the importance of providing alternative viewpoints and bringing balance to news stories. **Journalist 09, a reporter from The New Indian Express**, argued that it was necessary to talk to all parties involved in a story and to get as many details as possible. **Journalist 08, a reporter with The Deccan Chronicle**, echoed this viewpoint but gave an example of an allegation against the mayor of his city and the need to highlight the response of the mayor as well in the story. Another journalist went a step further and explained how a story is killed if it is one-sided.

It could be a document, letter saying that the government has written to the University on something asking the Vice Chancellor to stop appointment. We insist on seeing the document, which the government has given. Or if not, a quote from an official. Or if the official wants to remain anonymous, the quote has to be in a manner where it has to be credible. Then you give the opposite party a chance to respond to the charges against him or her. And that is incorporated. And if the opposite party is able to convincingly explain that there is no misappropriation involved or no corruption involved in a particular deal, then I think we will have to kill the story. We have to kill the story.

- Journalist 21, a deputy resident editor with The New Indian Express

Gladney's (1990) survey of editors also ranked impartiality as an indicator of quality, a notion that has been echoed by Kovach and Rosenstiel's (2007, p.6) interviews with American journalists who felt that they should keep a distance from those they cover and 'exercise personal conscience'. An impartial and bias-free approach to stories was essential to quality, many journalists felt.

It is an objective perspective without being influenced by your personal prerogatives or personal priorities. So that's not a...it's a learned opinion, but it is not an influenced opinion. So that is good journalism.

- Journalist 01, Reporter, The Hindu

I don't want to give my subjectivity to a certain news item to which I am not connected. If I were writing an analytical piece on something that has happened, say we are having an analysis of a controversy going on within one party itself, then I can give my own views on that. I can editorialise, definitely. But not when I present the news.

- Journalist 06, News Editor, The Deccan Chronicle

Some of the participants also talked about the need to keep an open mind and not let personal preferences cloud their professional judgment or personal affiliations influence the way a news story is covered.

But then this also calls for a lot of integrity on the part of the journalist in doing so. Because it's always easy to take sides especially if you are a local correspondent covering a local issue, you tend to be either the affected or the aggressor. Because that's how things happen...you want to rub your shoulders with the powerful, with the cultural tsars, with the literati...so if a film actor happens to be your friend, you tend to promote him. [...] When you practise city-level reporting, these things really matter because these things can really influence your decision making.

- Journalist 01, reporter, The Hindu

Political bias, it would be there. It will be there in selecting your stories, it will be there in your approach to the story, the way you write. I felt that very badly when my party, CPM, killed my former colleague T.P. Chandrasekharan. My party...even though we say that we didn't, we did. So, how should I write the story is a question. You can't defend the CPM - I can't do that, I am a reporter. So, I wrote the worst kind of stories against CPM. So, there, you become a professional. [...] Political...you cannot wish away political bias. You can very easily say that...that's why I

openly said that I belong to a political party. There are many ways of concealing it, but there is no point. So, that will not come in your writing. It should not come in your writing. It is a very difficult process.

- Journalist 14, head of a bureau, *The Times of India*

For at least one journalist, objectivity also meant identifying and engaging with personal biases at a much deeper level, as evidenced by the description below.

From my perception, like for example, say we are discussing about this author named Perumal Murugan, the *One Part Woman* author who was forced to commit "literal suicide". Now I as a journalist, as an individual and as a journalist, I strongly oppose the manner in which this man was throttled. You know his freedom was throttled. So when I write, I bring in my bias. I may be right, that is different. But I knew right from people from a platform where other people think on the same lines. What about the opposite camp? The opposite camp says that now he has offended our sensitivities. Our women have been portrayed in poor light and all those things. I'm not even giving them a space. I'm only condemning them saying that these guys are right-leaning people, these are narrow-minded. So from my point of view, Perumal Murugan is my hero. So he has to win. And I introduce that bias. So now, how do you see the truth in it? What I'm saying is fact, but as a journalist, whether I am giving the other person a say in that particular copy. Even if I give a say to the other person, to the other camp, am I giving equal proportion of say in that copy? Like my report will be 1000 words in which I will write 750 words quoting various people justifying why Perumal Murugan's book should not be banned, why his novel should not be banned, why he should continue writing...the state must protect him and how the state has failed to protect him and all those things. And maybe a 100-150 words I give to those groups saying, "no, no, no, we don't agree" kind of a thing. And still, in the conclusion, I will again put it irrespective of these things, there is a view that I did it because I am a journalist who believes in freedom.

- Journalist 21, Deputy Resident Editor, *The New Indian Express*

6.2.5 Perceptions of personal factors that affect quality of journalism

Integrity and building journalistic expertise through practical experience and acquiring knowledge and skills meant quality of newsgathering and reporting through training at the organisational level and upgrading knowledge and skills through personal efforts.

Integrity, by definition, means honesty and fairness (Merriam Webster Online, 2017). At the individual level, integrity was viewed as an essential quality in itself; a necessary precondition to producing accurate news stories. For some journalists, this integrity went much deeper than the professional level and also meant not being affected by temptation or greed.

One, he has to be truthful to himself. [...] That is most important. The other thing is that he or she, the person...should have a fascination for quality journalism in the first place. And willing to work 24/7. Because your quality comes there, quality comes from your interest, personal interest, from your the amount of time you begin to spend on your copy, the kind of effort you're willing to put into our particular story.

- Journalist 21, deputy resident editor, *The New Indian Express*

I think it is a question of your upbringing. More than a journalist, it is a question of your upbringing as an individual. If you are a gullible person, if you are a person who can be purchased, you can be a bad individual.

- Journalist 20, reporter, *The Hindu*

You must have a team of dedicated journalists. They are not looking for goodies, freebies and all of that. That is why, in this training, ethical journalism...my training programme is built on that. Drilled into them from the very beginning. There will be temptations, and you have to make your choice. If you really want to uphold journalistic traditions.

- Journalist 15, reporter, *Statesman*

Having many years of experience as a reporter or an editor gave journalists an advantage in navigating their tasks. For many journalists, skills such as knowing how to cultivate sources, where to go for information, how to appease influential people in the society and having local knowledge allowed them to produce quality output. Having years of experience also helped journalists cope with pressures of time and workload. Some journalists interviewed for this study felt that deadline pressures and a race against time could result in a decrease in quality, but they still had to work around these pressures.

The subject you are going to interview is not going to take you seriously if you are going to make mistakes. So if people you know, being from a tier-2 city especially, if I managed to get all these interviews with big stars and big directors, it's only because of the credibility the paper has. Two, they know that you will not ask them stupid questions. That you read your stuff. You know what you are talking about.

- Journalist 19, reporter, The Hindu

I try to learn from people who I think are knowledgeable. And so, I try to listen to people, get some information from people. Let's say, as a journalist, even though I have restrictions in doing that, for example if I want to take an opinion in a certain thing, a general issue, if people let's say if it's about athletics, everyone goes on to PT Usha²⁴. Or a quote from her. I believe that PT Usha is not the right person. And I might pick someone who is less popular, but I think is better to answer that. So, that's something that seniors have taught me, or I have learnt from others. So, I think, well, I try to keep myself updated.

- Journalist 02, reporter, The Deccan Chronicle

See, it's like this. See, lot of us are doing simple things. Now, the deeper you go, and the more you know knowledge you gain out of it, the more you understand what is normal. The moment you see something which is abnormal, you will figure out, hey, this is my story. I need to chase this really hard.

- Journalist 07, reporter, Economic Times

Many senior journalists covering political stories in the state of Tamil Nadu described their experiences with government interference and control.

That is a very collective decision we take sometimes. You know that this is a potential defamation story. Why, because of the person involved. If it is Karunanidhi²⁵, he will not sue you. He will write another piece rubbishing you next day in Murasoli²⁶. He has called me a cranky chap and all the names he has called in his newspaper. It depends. If it is somebody...if it is Subramaniam Swamy²⁷, he will react this way, we know

²⁴ A famous Indian athlete who participated in the Olympic Games of 1980, 1984 and 1988

²⁵ M. Karunanidhi is a politician from Tamil Nadu who was Chief Minister for the state for five different tenures

²⁶ A Tamil language newspaper, owned by the political party Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), of which M. Karunanidhi is the leader

²⁷ An Indian politician who currently serves as a member of the upper house of the Parliament

it. If it is G K Vasan, he will react...if it is Maran, I know he will call me and tell me personally. So, you play accordingly²⁸.

- Journalist 03, deputy resident editor, The Times of India

Another aspect of quality that has not featured in surveys of British and American journalists is the impact of time and deadline on news production. Some journalists felt that deadline pressures and a race against time could result in a decrease in quality, but they still had to work around these pressures.

You know, after all these years, you learn to run...you don't walk certain days. Like whatever 200 words I wrote, I wrote in the five minutes before you came. So you learn to type fast. Type fast, you think, you process everything in your head, and just...and send it to them. [...] Quality for me means doing the best you can within the stipulated time, sticking to a deadline.

- Journalist 19, Reporter, The Hindu

Time! It is always a race between time and accuracy. Time is the biggest problem in every newsroom. Because you have to bring an edition out in so many hours.

- Journalist 03, Deputy Resident Editor, The Times of India

Yeah, sometimes they will face the deadlines...or each reporter since we have short of hands. Sometimes we will be in a hurry to...some reporter we may ask as a...as a chief reporter, I may ask him to file some at least three story in a day. Then it will affect the quality of that particular...quality of the story filed by that reporter. Because he ...he will not be getting time to work on a particular story.

- Journalist 09, Chief Reporter, The New Indian Express

Competencies for journalists spanned a variety of areas and included factors such as the importance of reading to keep up-to-date, building a network around one's beat for reporters and managing sources. Answering questions on background reading, all journalists expressed the belief that it was the cornerstone of their professional life.

²⁸ G. K. Vasan and Murasoli Maran are politicians from the state of Tamil Nadu

One journalist, with more than 20 years of experience, talked about his expectations in this regard and about how to gradually build expertise in his area.

Like, see, reading is part of your job. It's essential. You can't do without it. Only if you read, only if you know what is normal, you know what you want to write. Because you don't want to write something which everybody knows.

-Journalist 07, Reporter, The Economic Times

We may not be masters, but we should...as a reporter, as a general reporter, you should have a minimum understanding of what is happening around you, what are the things that you are going to cover, you should have a minimum understanding of the things. For that matter, let it be courts, socio-political events, history of the state, political background...these things, you know...you learn things as you grow up in the profession. You can't be a master of all these things in your lifetime. So, you will have minimum knowledge and at the same time, you should have contacts who can enrich your knowledge at the right point of time. That is very crucial.

- Journalist 20, a reporter at The Hindu

Skill development for journalists was achieved through ongoing training programmes in newsrooms to ensure quality. For instance, senior journalists explained how they impart training to their younger colleagues.

[...]That is something which should be an ongoing training newsrooms have to do. Which, I don't know how many newsrooms do. We definitely do. And it is not so institutionalized, I would say. It is not like, you know, we have a Wednesday meeting to discuss sensationalism. These are all...very rarely, I go to the whiteboard. Usually, we just sit here, we have brainstorm every day. We don't even sit here sometimes, we just hang around...so, our philosophy is...We do have a meeting. This comes out of a Monday meeting [*pointing to notes on a whiteboard in the room*] where I talk about language and other things.

- Journalist 03, a deputy resident editor at The Times of India

They tried to teach the newcomers a little bit. Like the seniors are told to take care of them. To teach them the style and basic grammar and all these things. We follow and what is our style. To a certain extent it helps, but it takes time.

- Journalist 12, chief sub-editor at The New Indian Express

6.2.6 Visuals for quality

This theme is conspicuous by its under-representation and by the almost arbitrary way in which participants talked about it. As a question, it was posed to only four participants, while five others, when answering other questions, talked about visual elements of a newspaper such as photographs, infographics, presentation and layout of stories. In answer to a direct question on the importance of visuals and photographs, journalists dismissed its importance. Two reporters from the *Economic Times* and *The New Indian Express* respectively (**Journalists 07 and 22**) claimed that photographs were not very important for their newspapers. Only one reporter talked about it as a necessary evil of changing times.

That...that things you call it as value addition that you bring to your story to enhance its visibility, to get the readers' attention. [...] In this era of television journalism and all that, you need to keep your readers engaged, and you need to tell that story in a more presentable way. Visually presentable way. So, it has to be done.

- Journalist 20, reporter, The Hindu

This sentiment was echoed by **Journalist 14, head of a bureau for The Times of India**, when he said that readers have become 'visually oriented whether we like it or not'.

6.3 Themes for role of journalism

Participants were drawn into a discussion of what the expected and actual role of journalism was in society. Two core themes formed a large part of the perceptions of how that role was being played.

6.3.1 Perceptions of role: newspapers as a public forum

As a study comprised entirely of journalists from the print media, it is unsurprising that participants talked about the roles and functions of a newspaper when they talked about the role of journalism. A majority of participants – 21 of 22 journalists – believed that it was the role of newspapers to act as a public forum or platform and perform a variety of functions within this role. There were four distinct ways in which journalists felt newspapers could act as a public forum: by representing people’s issues; by highlighting issues of interest to the people; by alerting authorities to civic and social issues; and by making a difference in the lives of underprivileged people.

Most journalists interviewed believed that one of the core functions of journalism was to provide information. Many talked about journalism as a mode of communication and a medium that is used to give people ‘a fairly good idea of things’ (*Journalist 12, a chief sub-editor at The New Indian Express*). Meanwhile, *Journalist 08, a reporter at The Deccan Chronicle*, said that from the standpoint of his beat, transportation, “I feel that journalism...that it can be informative to the common man. It should be a way of communicating”.

The general opinion was that newspapers had to give stories that are interesting and relevant to the readers. This also involves piquing readers’ interest and curiosity about things that are happening around them. A senior editor gave an example of journalism’s informative function by talking about a biennale in his hometown, Kochi.

When this biennale was introduced last time, nobody knew what it was. Especially Keralites²⁹ - no one had any idea about what is biennale. And we ran a small campaign. Lot of stories, lot of interviews and...this time, that reflection is there. People are going to the biennale. Kochi is becoming a...other media, even foreign media coming to...coming to the

²⁹ Term used to refer to residents of the state Kerala

city and covering it. So, such things are there. Making people interested in art...that part is there.

- **Journalist 17, senior sub-editor, *The Hindu***

Some journalists felt it was imperative that newspapers provide good stories because they felt it was a question of privilege and access. Journalists could go where their readers could not, and so it was their duty to report what they saw.

That means you have to tell your reader what you have seen, what you have experienced, what you know because those people are less privileged. You are privileged because you have access to different things, at the expense of our readers. [...] So, as a journalist, my ability should be to tell them exactly what I have seen.

- **Journalist 14, head of a bureau, *The Times of India***

I think it brings to life so many stories that the world would not know about. As journalists, you are a privileged class of people. You get access to stories and things that the rest of the world would never know but for you.

- **Journalist 19, reporter, *The Hindu***

By bringing such stories to light, journalists believed they were making a difference in someone's life. A news editor gave an example of this in one of the stories she had done.

I gave a full write-up on the background and about all the problems they faced. So it came to the rescue of a lot of freedom fighters who were fighting for their pensions. It brought to the government's notice that there were pensioners – people, *thyagis* – we call them *thyagis* – these freedom fighters who were fighting for their pension without any success. So, it helped quite a few of them.

- **Journalist 06, news editor, *The Deccan Chronicle***

Representing such problems faced by their readers seems also to form a part of the newspaper's function as a public forum. One of the reporters interviewed for this study described a whole gamut of problems faced by the people in his city and his paper's commitment to giving space to those issues, summing up what many other participants felt about representing people's issues in a newspaper.

Like any other Indian cities, we face issues of sewage treatment, garbage clearances, pest attacks like mosquitoes and other infectious things, water shortage...we need good roads and the issue of bad roads, urban development, infrastructure bottlenecks. These we cover on a day-to-day basis. It is of big importance because you know it affects people's lives on a day-to-day basis and we as a newspaper do focus on these things in a big way.

- Journalist 20, reporter, The Hindu

A few months ago, there was a 12-storey building which collapsed in Chennai. In Mauliwakam³⁰. It was the biggest story for a week or 10 days. It seems to have been forgotten. Probably, when I am talking to you, I remind myself of the story and probably, when I step out of this room I am going to tell the reporter to look at it. So to be very frank, honest I didn't think about this for the last few days. There are several stories like that. At the heat of the moment, we play up. We stay with the story.

- Journalist 03, deputy resident editor, The Times of India

By giving space to stories that involve the people in a town or city, many journalists also felt that they were alerting the relevant civic authorities and urging them to intervene.

Look, for underpass or flyover being planned in our neighbourhood, which threatened the general beauty and aesthetics of that area. In Bangalore. So, it is near that Ramakrishna ashram. And so people there who knew me, they knew I was working for newspaper. They got in touch with me and soon after we published that, that project was scrapped.

- Journalist 22, news editor, The New Indian Express

Unless people get to know that something like this is happening, there will be no solution. Even now, when there is a problem, people want the media to highlight the problem. They think that is the only way that the government is going to look at the problem. If they want to draw the attention of the government, they want the media to publicise it.

- Journalist 06, news editor, The Deccan Chronicle

³⁰ A neighbourhood in the city of Chennai

These four perspectives added an interesting dynamic to the overall picture in that they highlighted the interplay between three important stakeholders of journalism: the journalists, the readers and the authorities.

6.3.2 Journalism as a watchdog: Exposing wrongdoing in public institutions

Half the journalists interviewed felt that journalism has a significant role in exposing wrongdoing in society, which is traditionally a characteristic of investigative journalism.

For these journalists, it also meant they had to clash with powerful forces in the government and take on an anti-establishment or adversarial role against the dominant forces in the society. Thus, the success of the watchdog role is closely linked with editorial independence and autonomy.

Two examples from journalists interviewed for this study highlight the importance most journalists give to their role in exposing corruption or wrongdoing in government and among government employees. *Journalist 15, a reporter at the Statesman*, recounted one such experience in his career where his stories led to the resignation of a Chief Minister in the South Indian state of Kerala in the 1970s³¹.

You see, what happened during the emergency – in Kerala, there was a student at the regional engineering College, Trichur, close to your place – Rajan. He and another student called Joseph Charlie, these two students were picked up by the police suspecting that they had Naxalite leanings and tortured at a place called Kakkayam. And Rajan was a softy, and he couldn't withstand torture, and he died. And his body, do you know how they did it? When they were blacktopping a road, they put it there. Rajan's father was Eeachara Warriar, a friend of Karunakaran. And Karunakaran was the Home Minister when this happened. And the police

³¹ The characters and incidents referred to form part of an infamous case of the murder of a student while in police custody. Details of the case can be found at <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/crime/story/19770515-rajan-case-kerala-cm-karunakaran-resigns-823684-2014-08-08>

was directly under him. [...] Whereas Joseph Charlie was detained in the Kannur jail. So, he was alive. And emergency was on, and I wanted to interview...first of all, we had press censorship, and on top of that, emergency. But luckily, I knew the inspector general of prisons in Kerala, one Mr Menon. I told him, "Look, you must help me. I want to talk to this boy". Joseph Charlie. So he told me it is very difficult, but he can arrange something if I'm prepared to be locked up in the same jail for the night. I said I don't mind for a story, spending a night is...what should I do? I should be loitering in a place without any money. If you have more than Rs. 20, the police cannot pick you up as a vagabond or something. These little things I did not know. So he said, look maybe you can keep Rs. 10, that is okay. But not Rs. 20 or more because then the police cannot lock you up. So I will instruct the police that you are put in the same cell for the night. In the morning you come out.

I did that. And I got the complete story from him. But what Karunakaran did was...I mean, at that time, you cannot publish the story. I was only collecting the material. The moment the press censorship was lifted, I ran the story. It created a sensation. And in that 1977 elections, Karunakaran, – earlier, Achutha Menon was the Chief Minister, Karunakaran was the Home Minister – Karunakaran became the Chief Minister. But he filed in the Kochi High Court that he was completely unaware of the whole episode. Whereas Eeachara Warriar – I had met the father also – his mother went mad. A very sad story. The correspondence he showed to me between him and Karunakaran. Eeachara Warriar was a professor...you know that? They had a long correspondence apart from personal meetings. So I had copies of these, and filing a false affidavit is a serious crime in India. He could have been locked up for that. So, when the case came up, I produced these. Karunakaran...not one, a series of letters. He had to resign as Chief Minister on the spot.

- Journalist 15, reporter, Statesman

Though not a story of such political impact, another journalist narrated the details of a story he ran as part of his beat about the misuse of official privileges by a senior railway official.

So that was the Christmas vacation. He...first he came here along with his family. So he went to the backwaters of the Cochin³², having a nice day. Then also, then he used the same coach, I mean there is an AC³³ compartment specially for the DRM³⁴. It's called a car for top railway officials. They can use it for official duties, no problem. But to take your family along with you and you go for boating and all, and after that, you

³² Another name for the city of Kochi

³³ Air-conditioned

³⁴ Divisional Railway Manager

go to Kalamandalam³⁵ to have dance classes for your daughter, it's not...I mean it is out of the turn.

- *Journalist 08, reporter, The Deccan Chronicle*

While these examples give an idea about the assumptions journalists have about their role in society and the satisfaction they get in pursuing stories that have a public impact and trigger change, they also bring into sharp relief the frustration that many journalists experience when they are prevented from doing so by the various economic or political considerations of newspaper management.

6.4 Supplementary analysis: Keywords in Context

KWIC is a method of searching text for recurring phrases and the context in which they occur most commonly (Guest, MacQueen and Namey, 2012). For this study, this method was adapted to analyse the initial responses of participants for the structural code 'Quality'. This supplementary analysis was carried out to see if any important themes were missing from the main analysis. These first sentences are reflections of recurring themes that emerged from the ATA interviews. The most recurring theme among these first responses was that quality journalism meant good quality content characterised by language, writing and readability. Accuracy, credibility and truth-telling were also recurring themes, with many journalists expanding on them in their detailed answers to questions on quality. Table 6.1 lists the first sentences or phrases that journalists used during the interviews to answer the question 'What is quality in journalism?'

³⁵ A university for performing arts in the state of Kerala

Table 6. 1 Supplementary analysis

	First sentence or phrase
Journalist 01	No intervention; journalist left to take his/her call on the merit of an issue
Journalist 02	Quality is comparison
Journalist 03	Giving space to all kinds of stories
Journalist 04	Any story that you write in the public interest
Journalist 05	Quality is truth
Journalist 06	Being faithful to facts
Journalist 07	Well-written, widely-read story
Journalist 08	Story must be readable
Journalist 09	Give the truth
Journalist 10	Quality of language and quality of news
Journalist 11	Quality of the English language
Journalist 12	Accuracy of news
Journalist 13	Quality of writing
Journalist 14	<i>The Times of India</i> was a quality paper until the 1980s
Journalist 15	Good quality report
Journalist 16	Focusing on issue and telling the truth
Journalist 17	Objective part of quality can only be in terms of language or facts
Journalist 18	Quality as comparison with other newspapers
Journalist 19	Doing your best within stipulated time
Journalist 20	Quality is credible journalism
Journalist 21	Quality could be something that is credible
Journalist 22	Quality of language and credibility

6.5 Categorising themes into levels of analysis

This section presents a framework for understanding quality in journalism by categorising the findings into levels of analysis according to journalists' perceptions. Indian journalists' notions of quality can be understood at two distinct phases of the news production process: through journalistic routines and policies in the newsroom; and through journalistic output or news content. Influences in the newsroom can further be analysed at the individual, organisational and societal level. Thus, the themes and sub-themes described in the sections above can be grouped into categories to form four levels of analysis: individual, content, organisational and societal. This categorisation serves three purposes: at a methodological level, these levels of analysis weave together

themes occurring under different structural codes and bring them under one broad framework for quality. At a theoretical level, it provides a useful framework for understanding and potentially measuring quality in journalism. Finally, this framework paves the way for understanding the nuances of professional ideologies that inform the construction of journalistic identity in an Indian context and how ideology and identity inform Indian journalists' notions of quality.

Perceptions of quality at the individual level

Quality in journalism at the individual level involves objectivity, impartiality, integrity and a striving for personal excellence that comes through training and experience. At this level, journalists can be objective by following a rigorous process of verification of facts and by being committed to the inclusion of different voices as a matter of routine. Thus, every news story goes through multiple levels of cross-checking and includes quotes from all people involved in it. However, objectivity also involves an active seeking out of people whose opinions may differ from those of the journalists covering a news story. Thus, the ideal of objectivity at the individual level is closely tied to the notion of impartiality, with most journalists feeling that quality journalism involved putting their biases aside while reporting a story. For some journalists, impartiality simply meant a clear separation of facts and opinions and for others it involved recognising and eliminating personal biases arising from political, religious or cultural affiliations as well as personal relationships.

For many journalists, objectivity and impartiality were by-products of personal integrity, and it is noteworthy that, barring a few exceptions, only journalists with at least ten years of experience talked about aspects at the individual level of analysis. One

of the main aspects involving personal integrity for many journalists concerned developing and maintaining professional boundaries with news sources. Most journalists felt that having close friendships with their sources or accepting perks from those they cover hampered their ability to be objective and impartial.

Quality at the individual level also involved a striving for personal excellence through skill and knowledge development by means of practical experience and training. There was an implicit notion that many journalistic routines at the personal and organisational level become a matter of habit through years of experience. These routines can range from the straightforward to the complex: always seeking out the opinions of all people involved in a story and separating facts from opinions to identifying personal biases and evolving as an individual. Thus, with practical experience, journalists can develop a 'subjective objectivity' (Donsbach and Klett, 1993, p. 53) whereby they are objective in their newsgathering routines despite subjectivity in their political and other affiliations.

Perceptions of quality at the organisational level

At the organisational level, quality can be understood through newsroom routines geared towards producing accurate, tailored content aimed at developing and retaining a faithful readership. Journalists interviewed for this study also felt it was essential to have a newsroom culture that was free of external influences so that journalists could carry out independent journalism. These aspects have emerged from core themes such as the discipline of verification, newsroom culture and independence. Editorial autonomy is also closely linked with perceived influences of quality at the society level.

Newsroom culture involves having policies in place that decide target audiences for a newspaper and an emphasis on tailoring content to suit them. It becomes an important aspect of quality in an Indian context since criteria for story selection can differ from one target audience to another. Some papers cater to a youthful audience while others are more concerned with an elite English-speaking readership or only local news, with each of these decisions about readership affecting how quality could be understood. Target audiences notwithstanding, it is considered a matter of routine to have a strict discipline of verification and a balance of viewpoints at multiple stages of news production. For many journalists, editorial autonomy and a newsroom free of non-journalistic considerations were also important indicators of quality.

Perceptions of quality at the societal level

However, the political culture of a nation or federal state, revenue models of individual newspapers and civic sensibilities of the readers and local administration all contribute to how quality can be understood at the society level. Some of these aspects can be linked to perceptions of the role of journalism, such as newspapers acting as a public forum for the exchange of ideas and as a platform for exposing wrongdoing in government and among people in power.

In an Indian context, where each state government has considerable federal power, the nature of the said government and the personalities of influential political figures in the state contribute to the political culture and the relationship between newspapers and the government. It was pointed out by many senior journalists in the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu that political parties in power and

their leaders resorted to various means of intimidation to keep negative news coverage about themselves from being published. When newspapers are dependent on revenue from advertisements, which include those placed by the government, political control over news decisions tends to veer towards the absolute. Dependence on advertisements will also invite advertisers into the newsrooms, demanding favourable news stories and taking news decisions away from reporters and editors. Thus, external influences on news decisions become essential in understanding quality at this level.

However, the positive aspect of quality at this level can be seen in the role newspapers can play in bringing relevant issues of the day to public attention, thus bringing about policy change in local policy and administration. There is a notion among Indian journalists that readers (who include influential policymakers) expect newspapers to inform and educate them on important civic matters. Thus, this aspect involves news stories influencing actions and policy at both regional and national levels, with journalists acting as facilitators between the government and the governed. In the highly contextualised setting of Indian cities, this could mean that readers approach journalists regarding specific problems in their neighbourhood, university or workplace and expect news coverage about these issues as a means of exerting pressure on those with the power to bring solutions. It could also mean that newspapers take on the role of educators, running awareness campaigns on a wide variety of issues, such as the environment and health. Journalists also believe that it is their responsibility to hold powerful sections of society accountable through investigative news reports, although instances of this were few among the journalists interviewed. However, the fact that at least some

journalists consider this an important aspect of their job indicates that investigative journalism is an attribute of quality at this level.

Perceptions of quality at the content level

News content is the most tangible manifestation of quality attributes at the individual, organisational and societal level, and all influences and perceptions of quality lead ultimately to quality in journalistic output. The most significant aspect of content is the use of correct language and attractive writing styles. While the former spans all news content, the latter is influenced by newspaper policies as well as competition from other media.

In conclusion, this section has presented the different levels of analysis for perceptions of quality. They are visually represented in Figure 6.1

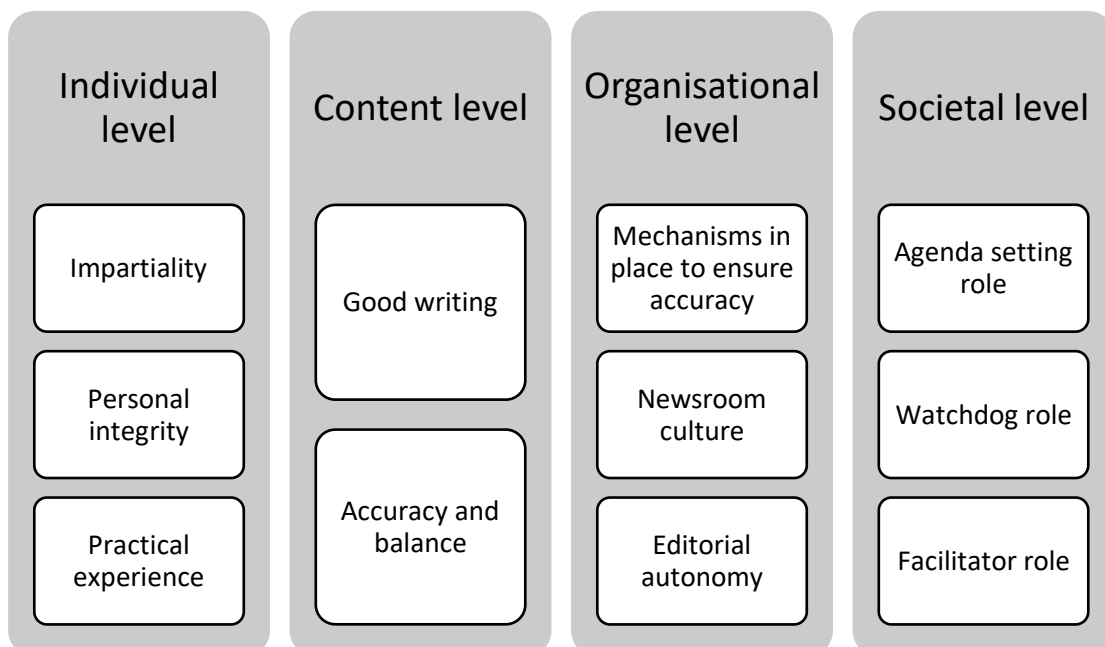


Figure 6.1 Levels of analysis

6.6 Discussion and conclusion to the chapter

The findings from the qualitative interviews bring into sharp relief the various attributes, values and belief systems around which the professional identity of Indian journalists is constructed and provides a new way of looking at quality in journalism through the professional identities and ideologies of Indian journalists.

Distinct aspects of Indian journalists' professional identity have emerged during the interviews and contribute to their notions of quality in their work. It is interesting, but not surprising, to note that there are no marked differences in the way journalists talk about journalism, its role and its quality. In fact, all these constructs are interlinked and inform one another in forming the building blocks for a professional ideology in journalism in an Indian context.

6.6.1 Articulating the concept of quality: journalistic identity and ideology

There are two arguments to be made from the findings presented in this chapter. Firstly, perceptions of quality in and the role of journalism among Indian journalists closely match the normative conceptions of quality shared by journalists in other parts of the world. Secondly, Indian journalists articulate quality using terms very similar to those used to define journalism by journalists and scholars at an international level, pointing towards a close conceptual link between journalism and its quality. These two implications from the findings suggest that Indian journalists' professional ideology, which is a shared occupational ideology of journalists across national contexts, informs their idealistic perceptions about quality in journalism.

Perceptions of quality and role: placing Indian journalists in an international context

Journalists from Indian newspapers who were interviewed for this study talked about quality using terms and constructs similar to those used by their counterparts in the UK and the USA. Prominent among common themes which concern Indian, British and American journalists are accuracy, independence and a non-sensational approach.

In one of the earliest journalist surveys on quality, political and economic independence was considered an important indicator (Merrill, 1968). Editorial independence was ranked 6 in Gladney's (1990) survey of American editors and became a common theme for journalists interviewed for this study also. As part of a project conducted by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, British journalists were interviewed about their perceptions of quality and defined it in a homogenous way (Raivio, 2011). Some of the attributes of quality that emerged from Raivio's (2011) study were 'well-written, interesting and visual' (p.28) and 'accurate, provides new information and provides context and background' (p.31) at the content level; 'double sourced, reporter has access to original sources and produced with professional integrity' (p. 33) at the news production level; and 'deals with subjects in the public interest, is done with a critical attitude and provides a watchdog function' (p. 34) at the normative level. A Pew Research Center survey of American journalists found journalists describing quality by its absence in news production and content (Pew Research Center, 2004). Some of the issues mentioned by journalists surveyed for the Pew Research Center study (2004) were inaccuracy, sensationalism and lack of balance and depth. Journalists also mentioned that increasing pressures from owners and advertisers was contributing to decreasing quality (Pew Research Center, 2004).

Indian journalists interviewed for this study have echoed many of these criteria for quality. Nineteen journalists perceived a commitment to accuracy to be a factor of quality, while 12 believed it was important to have balance in news stories. Indian journalists also claimed that exposing wrongdoing in government was an essential role for journalism, echoing the importance given to the watchdog function by British journalists.

The similarities in the way journalists articulate quality across national contexts point to validation of treating journalism as an ideology (Deuze, 2005). According to Deuze (2005, p.444), understanding journalism as an ideology means understanding how 'journalists give meaning to their newswork'. He demonstrated that several studies have found that journalists in different parts of the world share common values including a notion of public service, autonomy, objectivity, immediacy and ethics; these are values shared by Indian journalists also (Deuze, 2005). However, Indian participants of this study also mentioned contextual aspects that could affect quality and independence. One of these aspects strongly influenced the Indian news media and political culture and centred on government means of controlling unfavourable coverage. While aspiring for a work culture that prioritises journalistic skills and news judgement over external influences and control in the newsroom, as well as striving for objectivity and reader loyalty, Indian journalists had to navigate tensions at multiple stages of their daily work. Journalists face challenges regarding decisions about news selection based on management policies, blurring of editorial-advertising boundaries in news organisations, competition from other media and a perceived lack of reader interest. In all this, journalists also have to face increased workload and pressures of deadlines while adhering to routines for accuracy, verification and attribution. Though

not figuring in journalists' surveys as a factor affecting quality, at least one study has addressed increased workload among British journalists. Lewis, Williams, Franklin, James and Mosdell (2008) documented how, over the years, journalists in the UK have seen an increase in their workload, resulting in decreasing amounts of original content. They claimed that 'while the number of journalists in the national press has remained fairly static, they now produce three times as much copy as they did twenty years ago' (Lewis et al., 2008, p.3).

Journalism and quality: two interlinking concepts

Zelizer (2009, p.30) has argued that 'journalism refers to the actions that have come to be associated with news work'. If that were true, it is not surprising that there are similarities in the way journalists talk about their work and its quality. It would, however, mean that quality in journalism means doing a job well.

In this study, journalists have talked about quality as serving the reader interest. When journalists talk about journalism, they talk about service to society and holding up a mirror to society (Zelizer, 2009). The concept of service has also found mention in the personal role conceptions of journalists (Mellado, 2015). When journalists talk about journalism as a service, they mean news that caters to the public interest. According to Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007), one of the elements of journalism is journalists' loyalty to citizens. Loyalty to the readers also involves aspects of credibility, which many Indian journalists agree to be a priority.

Journalists interviewed for this study articulated quality in terms of personal integrity and excellence. They argued that it was important to be unbiased and detached while doing journalism. Many resented the pressure from advertisers and political

affiliations of the newspaper management that interfered in their work. They argued that a newsroom needs to be independent to carry out journalism. These aspects of independence, impartiality and personal integrity have already been discussed in the previous section. This further supports the idea that journalists share an occupational ideology and universal values such as autonomy and objectivity (Deuze, 2005).

Journalists' shared occupational ideology can also be found in the roles that they envisage for journalism. Journalists in this study who talked about journalism's role as a link between readers and authorities and as a platform to expose wrongdoing are saying nothing new. Journalists in the US have said that journalism must serve as a public forum (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2007). They also said that journalists should act as 'independent monitors of power' (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2007, p.5). Scholars have described these roles using terms such as 'monitorial' and 'facilitative' (Christians et al., 2009), 'adversarial' (Weaver and Wilhoit, 1996) and 'watchdog of democracy' (McNair, 2009). Indian journalists echoed a few of these notions when they talked about the role of quality in journalism. On the one hand, some journalists claimed that newspapers as public forums could set an agenda for local and national administrations, and even that readers expect this from journalists. On the other hand, journalism's role also involved educating the readers on issues concerning them. Many journalists felt this role was practically accomplished by focusing on the most relevant issues of the day and then moving on to others, much like a spotlight. This has important implications for this study. If no clear distinctions can be made between the way journalists talk about 'journalism' and 'quality', it is possible that the professional ideologies of journalism influence journalists' perceptions of quality.

Elements of Indian journalists' professional ideology

Journalistic ideals of public service, objectivity, impartiality, autonomy and representation of voices contribute to the construction of Indian journalistic identity. These ideals and values are similar to those of their counterparts in other parts of the world and influence professional ideology, but Indian journalists are also specifically concerned with their interpretation and practice in the Indian setting and context. Their identity in a national context is defined by the unique characteristics of Indian democracy, in which freedom of speech is guaranteed in the constitution but is restricted in practice through a combination of personal, organisational and societal factors. Indian journalists' ideals of public service and representation of voices come into conflict with institutional policies directed towards target audiences that are young, urban and affluent.

Indian journalism's professional ideology has been characterised by notions of exclusivity and autonomy. Journalists have argued that the right to decide the newsworthiness of story subjects rests solely with journalists as they are trained to act in the public interest and perform the role of advocates, educators for the public and adversaries to the government. In attaching importance to autonomy, journalists create boundaries for their profession by arguing for their right to make news decisions free of non-journalistic influences, not only from external political and economic power structures but also from internal departments that are concerned with running the business of news. Journalists see themselves as crusaders who navigate a complex web of censorship, self-censorship and intimidation that comes with personal and institutional political affiliations as well as revenue considerations and profit margins at a broader organisational level.

Accuracy and objectivity have formed the core ideals of Indian journalism, with both journalists' attitudes and journalistic routines oriented towards a fulfilment of these ideals. Facts came before opinions, and distance and detachment from news subjects and news sources took priority over other aspects of identity construction such as political affiliations, cultural backgrounds and gendered discourses. Journalists created boundaries for their work via these attitudes and routines, claiming professional expertise and exclusivity from other forms of journalistic work such as citizen journalism, as well as from those who do not belong to their professional community.

Journalistic professionalism in the Indian context is dominated by the professional-client contract of trust and confidentiality (Evetts, 2014), whereby it is the journalists' role to represent their readers' interest in a variety of ways. Journalists often assume the role of readers' advocates and consider it their job to demystify complex events by providing context and connections, highlight problems that plague the public to elicit a policy response and educate the public through proportionate coverage of news. In return, journalists are expected to earn their readers' trust, which, in turn, will translate into circulation and readership revenues.

Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007) used the term 'elements' to describe those aspects that journalists consider to be most important in their work. Similarly, 'elements' is the term used for those aspects that journalists describe as most important for quality in their work. Drawing from the findings and from the normative values that make up the professional ideologies of Indian journalism, journalists' notions of quality are comprised of four distinct aspects: public service, content characteristics, individual competencies and macro-level influences. Most of these elements are also to be found

in the previous literature on professional identity and ideologies of journalists (Deuze, 2005; Donsbach, 2010).

1) The *public service element* involves all such attitudes, processes and news decisions that result in the reader being provided with significant, accurate and relevant information. To incorporate the public service element, journalists need individual and editorial autonomy and an environment that encourages them to provide consistently factual information.

2) The *content element of quality* involves characteristics of content such as innovative writing styles, error-free language and meaningful engagement with target audiences through relevant content topics.

3) The *individual competence element of quality* involves all activities that help journalists build expertise, expand knowledge and develop personal integrity.

4) The *societal role and influences element of quality* involves the ideal, the real and the perceived role of journalism and the factors influencing the role.

Conclusion

This section has presented the findings of qualitative semi-structured interviews analysed using the principles of ATA. The findings suggest that professional journalistic values such as autonomy, objectivity and public service influence Indian journalists' notions of quality. The findings highlight the tensions surrounding the performance of these normative values in a practical newsroom environment that struggles to balance journalistic logic with market and political pressures.

Chapter 7 Evidence of quality in newspapers

This chapter presents the results of a content analysis derived from analysing 569 news items from three newspapers spanning a six-month period from January to June 2015. The first section of this chapter presents the research questions pertaining to this chapter and introduces the subsidiary research questions for *RQ2: To what extent is quality evident in the practice of journalism?* The second section, section 7.2, presents findings for content analysis of newspaper pages; section 7.3 provides the results of content analysis for news items. The last section, section 7.4, presents the discussion and conclusion to the chapter.

7.1 Research questions

The first part of this section presents the research questions relating to this chapter, while the second part provides an additional note on the quality news matrix developed by Anderson (2014). The main research question pertaining to this chapter is stated below.

RQ2: To what extent is quality evident in newspapers?

In order to answer this, quality indicators from two studies were adopted and adapted. For this study, these indicators have been developed in two phases for the purpose of analysing newspaper pages and individual news items. As explained in chapter 5, Bogart's (1989) index for news quality has been adapted as the indicator for the newspaper page, while Anderson's (2014) matrix has been adopted and adapted to measure quality for individual news items. Thus, for the newspaper page, the indicator is the numerical count for news, feature, opinion, in-depth and event versus enterprise

stories. Also included for measurement is the numerical count for stories based on their bylines. For individual news items, the indicators include accuracy, comprehensibility, context and comparativeness. Thus, the following sub-questions were formulated to answer RQ2 in more detail and to discover connections between the interviews and the content analysis. RQ addresses quality for the newspaper page and RQ 2.1 and RQ 2.2 quality for individual news items.

RQ 2.1: What aspects of quality are evident in news content?

RQ 2.2: To what extent can content quality be compared to perceptions of journalists?

When the unit of analysis is the newspaper page, individual news items are referred to as 'stories' (Anderson, 2014). While analysing individual news items, these are sometimes referred to as either 'stories' or 'news stories' to distinguish their identity as part of a particular newspaper instead of as a technical unit of analysis.

7.1.1 Quality news journalism matrix and its adaptation

Anderson's chapter on quality news journalism (Anderson, Williams and Ogola, 2014) argued that accuracy required a commitment to proper sourcing and verification; when breaking news and exclusivity take precedence over accuracy, credibility is the casualty. This sentiment was echoed by many of the journalists interviewed, who insisted that credibility was the edifice on which journalism was built. In Anderson's text, 'comprehensibility' involved those elements of story construction that make a news story easy to understand for the average reader (Anderson, Williams and Ogola, 2014). 'Context' included all aspects of a news story that ensure that a reader understands the political, economic, historical or other relevant backgrounds that make the issues raised

in a news story relevant, and ‘comparativeness’ represents the range of ideologies that a news story attempts to present regarding an issue.

For this study, accuracy was measured using Anderson’s (2014) parameters of sourcing and verification patterns evident in news items and the range of perspectives that news items strive to present. It was also measured by evidence of errors in names, numbers, spellings and facts. Comprehensibility was measured through the language and writing styles evident in the news items. Multiple variables were employed to measure the extent of context evident in these, which are given in detail in the coding schedule and protocol but can be divided into three sections: evidence of background information in news items; a comprehensive overview of information; and visuals accompanying the news items. Comparativeness was measured by checking the extent to which different ideologies are present in news items and whether the tone of a news item implies bias in any form or manner.

For each of these questions, news items were analysed for their frequencies and percentages, which were compared between newspapers and the pages in which they appeared. A more detailed explanation of the content categories and coding protocol is given in Appendix B.

7.2 Analysing newspaper pages: types of news stories

The first part of this section presents the demographic structure of the newspaper pages. The second part gives the distribution of the types of news items in newspaper pages, while the third and fourth parts present the same for in-depth stories and event versus enterprise stories. The final part of this section gives the outcomes for stories categorised according to bylines.

Demographics of the sample for the newspaper page

From a sample of two constructed weeks, spanning the six-month period from January to June 2015, a total of 108 newspaper pages were analysed. The analysis was two-fold: each page was examined as a whole for the types and origins of stories, and each story was analysed for various aspects of quality as operationalised in chapter 5. The total number of news items analysed was 569 (N=569). Since the main objective of this content analysis was to discover connections between journalists' perceptions of quality and the evidence of quality in newspapers, news items were analysed only for the presence or absence of the operationalised variables of quality. Before presenting the results, a summary is given of the demographics of the sample.

As a by-product of the constructive week sampling, newspaper pages (N=108) analysed were evenly spread across newspapers and across the front, local and editorial pages. Thus, 36 pages each were analysed from *The Hindu*, *The Times of India* and *The New Indian Express*. From each of these newspapers, 12 front pages, 12 local pages and 12 editorial pages were analysed.

For the evidence of quality in newspapers, they were analysed at two levels: the newspaper page and the news item. This section presents the findings of the former, which mainly comprises the types of news items that appear on newspaper pages. In the absence of a comparable framework for quality in an Indo-Asian setting, Bogart's (1989) indicators of newspaper quality were adapted for this study as these were developed from surveys of newspaper editors and found to be still relevant almost two decades later (Meyer and Kim, 2003). Thus, newspaper pages were analysed for the number of news, feature and opinion stories, in-depth stories, event versus enterprise

stories and staff-bylined, newspaper-bylined or agency by-lined news stories in each page.

Distribution of news, feature and opinion stories

The numerical count for the number of news, feature and opinion stories in each page was taken and entered into the SPSS software. Hence, in the analysis, the frequencies and percentages were tabulated as stories with 0,1,2...8 news, feature or opinion stories. However, for the sake of analysis, numerical values were further categorised into ranges in order to present the data in a cleaner and more comprehensible manner.

News stories made up the largest proportion of content in all the pages analysed. When all newspaper pages were combined, (N=108), there were 76 pages with at least one news story, as compared to 37 and 36 pages with at least one feature and opinion piece, respectively. Pages with news stories had a mean of 3.61, with pages with 0 news stories making up the largest single category. Values ranged from pages with 0 news stories (29.6%) to 11 news stories (.9%), showing a large variation in the distribution (SD = 3.120). However, only *The Times of India* had more than nine news stories on its pages, with two pages having ten and one page having 11 news stories.

When compared to news stories, the variation in distribution is not so significant in pages with feature stories and opinion pieces, with a mean of .57 (SD = .939) for feature stories and .94 (SD = 1.413) for opinion pieces.

There were no more than four feature stories and four opinion pieces in a newspaper page, with the only *The Times of India* having four feature stories in one of its local pages. However, both *The Times of India* and *The New Indian Express* had pages

with four opinion stories (11.1% and 16.7%, respectively), with all of them appearing on the editorial pages. It can be said that *The Times of India* has more stories per page than the other two newspapers.

Distribution of in-depth, event and enterprise stories

Stories with a word count of more than 1000 were classified as in-depth stories. These made up only a small percentage of the overall sample of newspaper pages (16.5%, N=108). All the stories across newspaper pages classified as 'in-depth' appeared on the editorial pages of the newspapers. *The Hindu* had the highest proportion of in-depth stories at 33.3%, while *The New Indian Express* made up the rest (16.7%). *The Times of India* did not have any stories that were more than 1000 words long.

Maguire (2005) described the presence of more enterprise stories as a characteristic of journalistic aggressiveness. For this study, however, they are measured in a similar way to the measuring of the distribution of staff-bylined stories, as both show enterprise on the part of the reporter in newsgathering. Thus, event stories are those that are based on scheduled and unscheduled spot events like press conferences and accidents. Enterprise stories are those that require and show a certain amount of initiative on the part of the reporter in generating story ideas. Pages that had event-based stories formed 63.9% of the total sample of newspaper pages, with a total of 291 news items spread across 69 pages. Enterprise stories constituted less than half that number, with just 143 news items spanning 60 newspaper pages. *The Times of India* had the highest number of enterprise stories, but the distribution of enterprise stories among the three newspapers does not show significant differences.

Pages with	<i>The Hindu</i> (n=36)				
	News	Feature	Opinion	Event	Enterprise
0-2 stories	12	33	35	14	27
3-5 stories	11	3	1	6	8
6-8 stories	11	0	0	6	1
9-11 stories	2	0	0	0	0
Total	36	36	36	36	36

Table 7. 1 Distribution of news stories on the pages of *The Hindu*

Pages with	<i>The Times of India</i> (n=36)				
	News	Feature	Opinion	Event	Enterprise
0-2 stories	17	33	24	18	27
3-5 stories	5	3	12	9	9
6-8 stories	9	0	0	9	0
9-11 stories	5	0	0	0	0
Total	36	36	36	36	36

Table 7. 2 Distribution of stories on the pages of *The Times of India*

Pages with	<i>The New Indian Express</i> (n=36)				
	News	Feature	Opinion	Event	Enterprise
0-2 stories	15	35	29	21	30
3-5 stories	17	1	7	14	5
6-8 stories	4	0	0	1	1
9-11 stories	0	0	0	0	0
Total	36	36	36	36	36

Table 7. 3 Distribution of stories on the pages of *The New Indian Express*

Distribution of stories according to their bylines

This part looks at the distribution of bylines across newspaper pages. Stories were classified as staff bylines, agency bylines and newspaper bylines. Staff bylines were the most frequent in the sample, with only five pages appearing without any stories carrying a reporter's name. The next most frequent were newspaper bylines, with less than 10% of pages appearing with no newspaper bylines; agency bylined copies, however, made up only 10% of the total sample of newspaper pages analysed. The highest occurrences for staff-written and news desk stories were eight and seven, respectively, with agency copy amounting to no more than two on a page. Table 7.4 shows the distribution by newspapers.

Table 7. 4 Distribution of bylines across newspaper pages

Pages with	<i>The Hindu</i> bylines			<i>The Times of India</i> bylines			<i>The New Indian Express</i> bylines		
	S	A	N*	S	A	N	S	A	N
0-2 stories	13	36	31	19	36	26	24	36	21
3-5 stories	16	0	5	12	0	7	12	0	14
6-8 stories	7	0	0	5	0	3	0	0	1

*S – Staff; A- Agency; N- Newspaper

7.3 Analysing news stories: news item characteristics

The first part of this section gives the demographics for the sample, and the other sections give the outcomes for variables for accuracy, comprehensibility, context and comparativeness.

Demographics of the sample

Of the 569 news items analysed (N=569), 34.3% were from *The Hindu*, 36.4% from *The Times of India* and 29.3% were from *The New Indian Express*. Table 7.6 shows the distribution of news items across newspapers.

Table 7. 5 Distribution of news stories across newspapers

	Frequency	Percentage
<i>The Hindu</i>	195	34.3 %
<i>The Times of India</i>	207	36.4 %
<i>The New Indian Express</i>	167	29.3 %
Total	569	100 %

Of the total sample, 226 news items were from front pages, 207 from local pages and 136 from editorial pages, with 306 stories having staff bylines, 233 news bylines and 14 agency bylines. For 16 stories, no bylines were mentioned. General news items made up most of the sample, with a count of 378 (66.4%), while opinion pieces and editorials together made up 23.2% of the sample. With regard to the geographical focus of the news items analysed, local and national news items made up 36.4% and 35% of the sample, respectively. Regional and international stories were given less prominence, with both categories making up only 13% each of the total sample. Table 7.7 shows the distribution.

One aspect of the demographics of the sample that did not significantly alter the results was the subject of news items. Politics formed the largest single topic for news items at 22.8%, while percentages for most other categories were in single digits. Justice and the judiciary was the only exception, at 11.6%, with uncategorised subjects forming

10.2% of the sample. With political stories taking such precedence over other categories, this variable did not significantly influence the outcome.

7.3.1 Accuracy in news items

This section looks at the variables of accuracy, including types and ranges of sources attributed in the news stories and presence of errors in facts, names, numbers and spellings. Accuracy, as an indicator of quality, is determined in an article by proper sourcing and verification in a news item and has to be measured not in numerical terms, but in the range of perspectives that a particular news item represents (Anderson, 2014). Thus, this section also looks at the range of perspectives covered in news stories by counting the number of viewpoints presented.

Range and types of sources

Sourcing patterns of news items were measured in terms of the number of sources quoted or mentioned in each news item and the types of sources used by each news item. For every news item, the number of sources quoted was counted, and these sources then classified as official, documentary, ordinary or other sources.

With regard to the number of sources, it is worth noting that in the total sample 83.3% of news items used at least one source. Of all the news items with one or more sources (n=474), 55 percent of news items quoted at least two sources. This distribution pattern also holds true for each of the three newspapers.

To explore the types of sources used in the news items, sources were classified and coded as official sources, documentary sources, ordinary people and other sources (Table 7.6). Other sources included information received from indirect sources such as

meetings, talks and calls that occurred in a private setting and without the presence of members of the news media . This category also includes first-person narratives. For the types of sources used, the frequency patterns of individual newspapers matched closely with the frequency pattern for the overall sample. Thus, of the total number of news items analysed, *The Hindu* had 122 stories with official sources (62.5%), 56 with documentary sources (28.7%), 27 with ordinary people quoted (13.8%) and 14 stories with other sources (7.1%). For *The Times of India*, the numbers are 124 (59.9%) for official sources, 64 (30.9%) for documentary sources, 21 (10.1%) for ordinary people quoted and 13 (6.2%) for other sources. Finally, *The New Indian Express* had 104 stories with official sources (62.2%), 62 stories with documentary sources (37.1%), 31 stories with ordinary sources (18.5%) and 13 stories with other sources (7.7%).

Table 7. 6 Types of stories for all sources

	Frequency (N=569)	Percentage
Stories with official sources	350	61.5 %
Stories with documentary sources	182	32 %
Stories with ordinary people quoted as sources	79	13.9 %
Stories with other sources (e.g. meetings and talks, first-person narratives etc.)	41	7.2 %

In Table 7.6, as the many stories which have more than one type of source are included more than once in the count, the total percentage exceeds one hundred.

The range and different types of sources were cross-tabulated with the types of news items and bylines for the news items to understand the sourcing practices of reporters and newspapers. More than half the news items (53.7%) analysed had bylines attributed to reporters or, in the case of editorial pages, guest columnists. These staff

bylines are given for stories with content that has an original contribution from the reporter. Bylines such as ‘Staff Reporter’, ‘Times News Network’ or ‘Express News Service’ were used by 40.9% of the total sample of news items. These bylines indicated that the news desk compiled such stories, but the content may not have a substantial original contribution from the journalist who wrote the story. An example of such stories would be edited press releases or reports on scheduled events that reporters were assigned to cover. Thus, 94.6% of the news items analysed were written or compiled by the newspaper staff. However, when it comes to sourcing, even those stories with staff bylines primarily used official sources and, as a result, relied on official versions of their stories.

Table 7.7 presents the frequencies for the types of sources and bylines for stories. Stories that were sourced from agency copy or those with no bylines are not included as their frequencies are too low to be significant for this study (n=14 and n=16, respectively).

Table 7. 7 Types of sources* types of bylines crosstabulation

	Staff bylines	Newspaper bylines
Official sources	199	133
Documentary sources	107	72
Ordinary people quoted	56	22
Other sources	30	8

Presence of errors in facts, names, numbers and spellings

All news items were analysed for obvious inaccuracies in factual information as well as those in the use of names, numbers and spellings. This aspect of accuracy was analysed on two variables that checked for the presence of inaccuracies in numbers,

names and spellings and the presence of obvious factual errors. On a binary scale of ‘yes’ and ‘no’ to the presence of errors, more than 98% of news items analysed were found to be error-free. Only nine news items were found to have problems with accuracy of names, numbers and spellings, and just three news items had information that was factually incorrect. *The Times of India* had the highest number of stories that contained both types of errors (with five and two stories, respectively, on the first and second variables mentioned earlier in this paragraph), while *The Hindu* scored the lowest on these variables (with just one story containing an error). The details are presented in Table 7.8.

Table 7. 8 Evidence of errors in news items across newspapers

Number of stories with		<i>The Hindu</i>	<i>The Times of India</i>	<i>The New Indian Express</i>
Presence of inaccuracies in names, numbers and spellings	Yes	1	5	3
	No	194	202	164
	Total	195	207	167
Presence of obvious factual errors	Yes	0	2	1
	No	195	205	166
	Total	195	207	167

Perspectives evident in the story

The third part of this section discusses the distribution patterns for the number of perspectives. Apart from sourcing practices, the range of perspectives given in a story is also presented as an indicator of accuracy (Anderson, 2014). A crosstabulation of the range of sources with a range of perspectives showed that stories that offered one perspective (76%) also used only one source.

Of the 433 news stories that had one perspective, 42.9% used only one source as well. However, for stories with more than one perspective, data were scattered. For example, only 15.1 percent of news stories represented more than two perspectives, and of those, 4.2 percent of stories did not use any source at all. The frequency distribution patterns for the total sample and individual newspapers are also similar and can be found in the appendix.

An important theme that emerged during interviews with Indian journalists was the need to verify every piece of information gathered for a particular story. Most journalists believed that a commitment to a discipline of verification was essential, a belief that was supported by evidence from the literature. When Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007) interviewed American journalists, they found that verification was one of the core elements of journalism. For this content analysis, news items were checked for evidence of a transparent method of verification for their sources. Sources in news items were analysed to check if they could be independently verified. The frequencies and percentages for the transparent methods of verification are given in Table 7.9.

Table 7. 9 Transparent methods of verification present in news items

	Frequency (Percentage)	<i>The Hindu</i>	<i>The Times of India</i>	<i>The New Indian Express</i>
Yes	327 (57.5%)	118	105	104
No	242 (42.5%)	77	102	63
Total	569 (100%)	195	207	167

The frequency distribution patterns are similar for news items analysed from *The Hindu*, *The Times of India* and *The New Indian Express*. However, only half the news items from *The Times of India* were coded 'Yes' (50.7%) for transparent methods of verification while *The Hindu* and *The New Indian Express* had, respectively, 60.5% and

62.2% stories coded 'Yes'. The crosstabulation is given in Table 7.10.

Table 7. 10 Name of newspaper*transparent methods of verification crosstabulation

	Transparent methods of verification present in the story for all sources mentioned		Total
	Yes	No	
<i>The Hindu</i>	118	77	195
<i>The Times of India</i>	105	102	207
<i>The New Indian Express</i>	104	63	167
Total	327	242	569

It was also found that news items classified as features present the largest number of stories with transparent methods of verification, with 42 of 58 feature stories showing evidence of the same. The crosstabulation can be found in the appendix.

7.3.2 Comprehensibility in news items

This section presents the frequencies and percentages for two characteristics of content quality: structure and language. Comprehensibility is the main indicator of quality in Anderson's (2014) work on quality news journalism and is defined as the ease with which audiences can understand and make sense of news items. Anderson (2014, p.23) argued that characteristics of news content such as writing style, structure and language should be of high quality, defined in terms of 'logical structure and clarity of exposition'. Journalists interviewed for this study also stressed that good language was indeed an important indicator of quality.

Structure of news items

The first category – the structure of news items – was measured using two variables. On the one hand, items were coded by classifying news stories by the way in which they were written. Thus, they were classified as Inverted Pyramid, Essay and Other. As described in the appendix for Coding Protocol, the inverted pyramid was a story that had at least 4 of the 5 Ws and H in its first paragraph. An essay was a story with a clear beginning, structure and conclusion. Any story that did not fall into either of these categories was coded Other. More than half the news items analysed for this study came under the category Other: 56.4 percent of stories from *The Hindu*, 60.8 percent from *The Times of India* and 58 percent from *The New Indian Express*. The next largest category was news items written in the inverted pyramid style, which formed a total of 37.3 percent across all three newspapers. For *The Hindu*, 38.9 percent of stories were written in the inverted pyramid style, while for *The Times of India*, this percentage was 36.2, and 35.9 percent of stories in *The New Indian Express* were coded in this category. Stories written in the essay style accounted for only 4.2 percent of the total number of news items, with nine, six and ten stories written in this style in *The Hindu*, *The Times of India* and *The New Indian Express*, respectively. Table 7.11 shows the crosstabulation between the newspaper page and structure of news items.

Table 7. 11 Newspaper page*structure of news items crosstabulation

	Structure of news items			Total
	Inverted pyramid	Essay	Other	
Front page	126	0	100	226
Local page	82	0	125	207
Editorial page	4	24	108	136
Total	212	24	333	569

Secondly, the structure of a news story was also measured for the use of transitions between different paragraphs and points. News stories that used words such as 'meanwhile' and 'however' were coded 'yes' for the use of transitions, as were those stories with sub-headings. In *The Hindu*, 34.3 percent of news items used transitions, while in *The Times of India*, 31.8 percent of stories were coded 'yes'. It is worth noting here that *The New Indian Express* used transitions most frequently. For the 167 news items analysed for the newspaper, 43.7 percent made use of transitions between paragraphs. The table showing the distribution can be found in the appendix. It shows no significant variation in how stories were used across newspaper pages and different newspapers themselves. The frequency distribution of the overall sample, thus, can be taken as representative of individual sub-groups in the sample.

Language of news stories

For the second part of this section, news items were analysed for their use of error-free language (Table 7.12). More than 90 percent of all news items were error-free, indicating a high quality in the use of language. Approximately 5 percent of news items in *The Hindu* showed evidence of grammatical errors, while the proportions for *The Times of India* and *The New Indian Express* were 3.3 percent and 7.1 percent, respectively. However, in those stories where grammatical errors were found, the distributions do not seem to follow any logical pattern. For example, items classified under General News exhibited the largest number of grammatical errors, but this may be because more than 60 percent of the news items analysed fell into that category. With regard to the geographical focus of news items, more local stories had grammatical

errors than any other category in the geographic focus variable. These distributions can be found in Appendix C.

Table 7. 12 Presence of grammatical errors

Presence of grammatical errors	Frequency (Percentage)	<i>The Hindu</i>	<i>The Times of India</i>	<i>The New Indian Express</i>
Yes	29(5.1%)	10	7	12
No	540(94.9%)	185	200	155
Total	569(100%)	195	207	167

7.3.3 Context in news items

This section presents the findings context in news stories, cited as one of the most important indicators of quality, not only in Anderson’s (2014) work but also in other literature that this study has used to build its theoretical assumptions. For example, Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007) listed two important elements fulfilling the purpose of journalism that point towards the importance of context: keeping news significant and relevant; and being comprehensive and proportionate.

Background information in news items

The first part of this section presents the findings of elements of context that make up quality in news content. The extent of background given in the news items analysed was measured by references to past events relevant to the story and previous articles on the same issue. The frequencies are given in Table 7.13.

Table 7. 13 Distribution for background in news items

		Frequency (Percentage)	<i>The Hindu</i>	<i>The Times of India</i>	<i>The New Indian Express</i>
Reference to past events (N=569)	Yes	367 (64.5 %)	124	136	107
	No	202 (35.5 %)	71	71	60
	Total	569 (100 %)	195	207	167
Reference to previous articles on the same topic (N=569)	Yes	12 (2.1 %)	6	4	2
	No	557 (97.9 %)	189	203	165
	Total	569 (100 %)	195	207	167

Editorial pages and articles classified as opinion pieces and editorials formed the largest subgroups for news items with reference to past events. Since there were very few news items with reference to previous articles, there was no significant impact on the different subgroups. The proportionate percentages for each subgroup are given in Table 7.14.

Table 7. 14 Distribution of news items with context across newspaper pages and types of news items

		Reference to past events	Reference to previous articles
Newspaper page	Front page	64 %	1 %
	Local page	54 %	2 %
	Editorial page	82 %	4 %
Type of news item	General news	60 %	2 %
	Features	57 %	0 %
	Opinion	83 %	4 %
	Investigative	50 %	0 %
	Editorial	81 %	4 %
	Other	83 %	17 %

News items in the editorial pages give background information regarding an issue more frequently than those appearing in the front or local pages. Only 25 stories from the editorial pages were found to have no reference to past events, and 22 stories had no mention of key factors influencing the story. The editorial page had the highest percentage (4 percent) of news stories mentioning previous articles in the same issue.

7.3.4 Comprehensiveness in news items

This section covers the comprehensiveness aspect of context, with news items analysed for the presence of key factors and key actors involved in a story, as well as an overview of the key factors and the timeline of a story. The timeline of a story, in this study, was defined as the chronology of events and processes that are associated with a news item. The overview of issues and/or people was defined as the summary of an issue pertaining to a news story. The key factors influencing the story could be economical, political, cultural and historical or others, and the key actors could be people, institutions or governments who or which are most relevant to the story.

While 539 of 569 news items provided an overview of the issues and/or people involved in the story, only 370 news items offered an overview of the timelines. With regard to the mention of key factors and key actors in a news story, 386 news items made a reference to the former, while 406 items were coded 'Yes' for the latter. The distributions are given in Table 7.15.

Table 7. 15 Distribution of elements of comprehensiveness

	<i>The Hindu</i>	<i>The Times of India</i>	<i>The New Indian Express</i>
Stories that give an overview of issues and/or people	177 (91%)	198 (96%)	164 (98%)
Stories that give an overview of timeline	131 (67%)	140 (68%)	99 (59%)
Stories with reference to key factors influencing the story	125 (64%)	131 (63%)	130 (78%)
Stories with reference to key actors in the story	139 (71%)	144 (70%)	123 (74%)

Continuing the pattern of variables concerning background information, news items classified as opinion pieces or editorials, as well as stories from editorial pages, displayed elements of comprehensiveness more frequently than other news items. This is significantly more evident in the overview of issues and/or people involved in the story, with 46 of 47 opinion pieces and 71 of 74 editorial stories coded 'Yes' for the variable. In the 136 news items analysed from editorial pages, 135 were coded 'Yes' for an overview of issues and/or people. Stories with reference to key factors involved in the story also appeared more often in editorial pages and among opinion pieces and editorials. Only four opinion stories and 12 editorials made no mention of key factors. Table 7.16 shows the distribution of comprehensiveness among the front, local and editorial pages for all the news items analysed.

Table 7. 16 Comprehensiveness across newspaper pages

	Front page	Local page	Editorial page
Overview of issues	94%	95%	96%
Overview of timeline	69%	65%	60%
Reference to key factors	58%	68%	84%
Reference to key actors	79%	65%	68%

For the reference to key factors variable, a combined total of 105 news items was coded 'Yes', with the number making up 87% of the total number of opinion pieces and editorials. Apparently, all investigative stories gave an overview of the issues and/or people, as did all feature stories. Since these two categories, by their very nature, require more in-depth newsgathering than regular news stories, it is not surprising that they gave more comprehensive coverage of issues. However, it is worth noting that investigative stories, while providing an overview of issues and/or people, do not fare well in other variables of comprehensiveness. Only half the small number of investigative stories in the sample gave an overview of the timeline, with reference to the key factors present in only 10% of investigative stories. Table 7.17 gives the distribution.

Table 7. 17 Comprehensiveness in type of news stories

	Overview of issues	Overview of timeline	Reference to key factors	Reference to key actors
General news	93%	71%	60%	72%
Features	100%	38%	81%	72%
Opinion	98%	57%	91%	68%
Investigative	100%	50%	10%	67%
Editorial	96%	62%	84%	68%
Other	83%	83%	17%	67%

Use of visuals

This section looks at the extent to which Indian newspapers use photographs and infographics in conjunction with their stories. Pictures that did not accompany a news item have not been included in the analysis because a simple recording of the presence or absence of standalone pictures in a page, without analysing the visual and news characteristics of the photographs themselves, would not add any specific value to the

research question. As a visual analysis is beyond the scope of the current study, standalone pictures have been eliminated from the analysis. Thus, the use of visuals includes infographics and photographs presented as part of news items. The frequencies and percentages for the use of photographs and infographics are given in Table 7.18.

Table 7. 18 Distribution of infographics and photographs in news stories

	<i>The Hindu</i>	<i>The Times of India</i>	<i>The New Indian Express</i>
Stories with infographics	63 (32%)	102 (49%)	76 (46%)
Stories with photographs	66 (34%)	79 (38%)	50 (30%)

Editorial pages used infographics most frequently and photographs least often, compared to other pages. Of the 136 news items analysed from editorial pages, 73 had infographics while only 13 had photographs. Given the fact that most opinion stories appear in the editorial pages, these stories had the highest number of infographics and the lowest number of photographs. Feature stories and staff-bylined stories used photographs more frequently than other types and bylines of stories (59 percent and 44 percent, respectively). Staff-bylined stories also used infographics most frequently (52 percent).

The Times of India had the highest number of stories with infographics in the editorial pages (88 percent), with most of them being used with editorials (95.4 percent). Also, of the 19 opinion stories analysed for *The Times of India*, 15 used infographics (79 percent). *The Hindu* and *The New Indian Express*, however, used no visual elements in their editorials. These two newspapers rarely used any photographs in their opinion pieces either; infographics were used most frequently in opinion stories.

7.3.5 Comparativeness in news items

This section presents the outcomes for the variables for comparativeness, which is the use of different ‘ideological prisms’ to present different issues of the day that make up the news cycle (Anderson, 2014). For this study, comparativeness was operationalised into three variables: the presence of a dominant ideology; an attempt at presenting different ideologies; and the tone of a news article. Ideology was defined as the use of strong adjectives and the evidence of an implied or explicit bias or argument.

Table 7. 19 Distribution of variables of comparativeness

		Frequency (Percentage)	<i>The Hindu</i>	<i>The Times of India</i>	<i>The New Indian Express</i>
Presence of a dominant ideology	Yes	52 (9.1%)	20	15	17
	No	517 (90.9%)	175	192	150
	Total	100%	195	207	167
Attempt at presenting different ideologies	Yes	15 (2.6%)	9	2	4
	No	554 (97.4%)	186	205	163
	Total	100%	195	207	167

Tone is described as the writer’s attitude towards a subject evident through the choice of words and sentences. Of the 569 news stories analysed, more than 90 percent did not present a dominant ideology and did not demonstrate any attempt to present different ideologies (Table 7.19). For those stories that had evidence of a dominant ideology, only 13 percent attempted to provide alternative ideologies.

Most of the news items also used a neutral tone, with only 20.7 percent of news items making up for all the other types of tones combined. Table 7.20 gives the

frequencies and percentages. Most stories with a personal tone had staff bylines and occurred on the editorial pages. Stories with judgmental and call to action tones were also found for the most part in editorial pages (67 percent and 93 percent of those categories, respectively).

Table 7.20 Distribution for tone in news stories

Tone	Frequency	Percentage
Neutral	451	79.3 %
Personal	10	1.8 %
Provocative	1	.2 %
Judgemental	33	5.8 %
Call to action	28	4.9 %
Funny/sarcastic	4	.7 %
Other	42	7.4 %
Total	569	100 %

7.4 Discussion and conclusion to the chapter

The findings of the content analysis, the results of which are presented in this chapter, show that quality is evident in only a few aspects of content. The results show that while quality is evident in newspaper pages as a whole, individual news items tell a different story.

This section discusses the findings to provide answers to the two supplementary research questions given in section 7.1 . The first part of this section provides the overall findings from the content analysis, while the second section answers the supplementary research question *RQ 2.1: What aspects of quality are evident in news content?* The final part of this section discusses the answer to *RQ 2.2: To what extent can content quality be compared to perceptions of journalists?*

7.4.1 Quality in newspaper content: homogeneity across the three newspapers

The content analysis found similar distribution patterns across all three newspapers for most variables of quality developed for this study. Except in three instances, there were no significant differences between aspects of content quality among *The Hindu*, *The Times of India* and *The New Indian Express*, all of which exhibited homogenous proportions for content quality aspects such as accuracy, comprehensiveness, comprehensibility, context and comparativeness.

Firstly, while *The Hindu* had stories with the maximum number of perspectives and also used a maximum six sources in its news items, it was the only newspaper that carried stories with no sources or perspectives. An example is the front-page news item about a hike in car prices on January 02, 2015, which did not mention any source or give the perspectives of any affected parties. However, this may be because it was followed up with another story in one of the inside pages, with the two stories combined as a full report in its online version. Secondly, *The New Indian Express* had more news items that used transitions than the other two newspapers. Finally, *The Times of India* had the highest number of stories with infographics in the editorial pages (88 percent), with most of these being used with editorials (95.4 percent). Also, of the 19 opinion stories analysed for *The Times of India*, 15 used infographics (79 percent). *The Hindu* and *The New Indian Express*, however, used no visual elements in their editorials. These two newspapers rarely used any photographs in their opinion pieces either; infographics were used most frequently in opinion stories.

Thus, the frequency distribution of the overall sample of 108 newspaper pages and 569 news items can be taken as representative of individual sub-groups across the

three newspapers analysed for this study. The discussion that follows in the next two sections and the answers to supplementary research questions are based on this homogeneity in distribution patterns.

7.4.2 Quality in the content of newspapers

The content of three newspapers was analysed at two levels for this study: newspaper pages and individual news items. While all three newspapers scored well on variables of quality for the newspaper pages, individual news items did not display elements of quality for most variables.

Evidence of quality in newspaper pages

Bogart (1989), whose index for quality was adapted for analysing newspaper pages in this study, argued that more news stories on a page as opposed to features or opinion pieces indicated content quality. In all three newspapers analysed for this study, news stories formed the largest proportion of content in newspaper pages. However, these results could be influenced by the way stories were grouped according to the pages in which they appeared. Feature stories were to be found most frequently in local pages, while editorials and opinion pieces were confined to the editorial pages. It could be that international pages may rely more on agency copy, and daily or weekly supplements such as *The Metro Plus* for *The Hindu* or *Indulge* for *The New Indian Express* could have more enterprise stories. It could also explain why proportionate coverage of a variety of subjects such as sports, environment, education, arts and culture and others was absent from the pages analysed. It may occur in other pages or special editions of

the paper. For example, *The Hindu* has a Friday supplement called *Friday Review* that is devoted to arts, music and films.

On two other aspects of quality at the level of newspaper page, the content analysis found that Indian newspapers did not perform well. On the one hand, many studies, including those by Bogart (1989), Gladney (1990) and Maguire (2005), have demonstrated that journalists value those stories that require significant newsgathering by reporters and a higher ratio of enterprise stories to event stories. On the other hand, journalists interviewed for this study also stressed the importance of investigative stories that would expose wrongdoing in society. The content analysis found that Indian newspaper content did not perform well on either of these aspects of quality. While staff bylines – which indicated reporters' contribution to story ideas and newsgathering – were found most frequently in the news items analysed, most of these were event-based stories. In-depth and investigative stories formed a very small proportion of the overall sample, while enterprise stories constituted only half the number of event stories across all the three newspapers.

Evidence of quality in news items

The findings from the content analysis show that news items from the three Indian newspapers revealed evidence of quality on only a few of these five variables. The rest of this section analyses the findings for all these variables, highlighting both the negative and positive evidence of quality in Indian newspaper content.

The first variable, accuracy, was measured using variables that checked not only for errors in facts and spellings, but also those that analysed the sources and

perspectives used in news items. Results showed that more than 95% of content across all three newspapers was written without evident factual errors. No evidence of errors was found in other objective elements of accuracy such as names, spellings and numbers, either. Accuracy was also measured in terms of the number of perspectives evident in a story and the number, range and types of sources used in news items, and the verifiability of these sources. A significantly large proportion of news items used only one source, with only 55 percent of news stories using more than two sources. As mentioned in the previous section, *The Hindu* ran a few stories that did not use any sources, but as an overall trend, more than 80 percent of news items analysed for this study used at least one source. However, only half these sources used transparent methods of verification, making it easy for the reader to understand how information was collected and presented in the news items. The news items analysed for this study also relied predominantly on one perspective, which was usually the official version of events. This was evident in the reliance on official and documentary sources for information, with these two types of sources found in at least 93 percent of news items analysed for this study. Thus, it can be argued that while most news items were based on facts, the information was derived from official versions of events.

Secondly, in terms of ease of use, language and structure of news items, measured under the variable comprehensibility, the results led to mixed interpretations. While it was immediately evident that less than six percent of news items had grammatical mistakes, only less than half the news items were written in either inverted pyramid or essay style. This pattern held true for the front, local and editorial pages analysed for this study. However, it is interesting to note that editorial pages did not have any stories

that were written in the classic inverted pyramid style; these mostly followed an essay structure, if any structure was followed at all. Even though many journalists interviewed for this study espoused incorporating dramatic elements into news writing style, this opinion was not reflected in newspaper content. While more than half the news items came under the category 'Other', for Indian newspapers, this meant that these stories did not follow any identifiable structure. In fact, most news items were written in no more than 300 words, and the emphasis seemed to be on giving as much information as possible in the space allotted to each of these stories on a newspaper page.

The outcome was positive for evidence of context and comprehensiveness in news items, which were the third and fourth aspects of quality analysed. More than half the news items analysed also mentioned past events connected to the subject of their stories, thus providing context to some extent. It was evident that news items exhibited a commitment to giving background information to their stories, except in the case of mentioning previous articles in the same issue. This may be because, in the print versions of Indian newspapers analysed, even if a news item is a follow-up story, it is treated as an independent new story. In terms of comprehensiveness, more than 90 percent of news items analysed gave overviews of issues and people involved in the topics covered in the stories. More than 60 percent of news items also showed evidence of other aspects of comprehensiveness, such as overview of timelines and reference to important points and people in the stories.

The use of visuals as an essential element of quality has been underplayed in scholarly discussions on quality in print journalism. Anderson (2014) mentioned visuals in passing while talking about comprehensibility among the 5Cs and one A of quality

news journalism. When journalists working in print media were interviewed for this study, only a few thought photographs and other visual elements were essential to quality. Even fewer brought up the importance of visuals without questioning or probing from the researcher. However, the use of visuals was an important indicator of comprehensiveness for this study, and the content analysis showed that only 30-40 percent of news items were accompanied by visual elements such as photographs or infographics.

Lastly, the outcomes of analysis for the variables of comparativeness show very little evidence of viewing and presenting news stories through more than one ideological prism. There was minimal variation between different subgroups for these variables, showing a high degree of homogeneity in content for purposes of comparison. Thus, it can be argued that although none of the newspapers analysed for this study showed evidence of ideological bias, nor did their content attempt to present different ideologies.

7.4.3 Journalists' perceptions and evidence of content quality

Indian newspapers have not performed well on most of the indicators of quality designed for this study based on a combination of frameworks from Bogart (1989) and Anderson (2014). For example, the number of enterprise stories that required an original contribution from reporters was half that of event-based stories. Not many news items referred back to previous articles that had appeared on the same item of news. Anderson (2014, p.23) defined comparativeness as the presentation of news

stories through different 'ideological prisms'. As a criterion for quality, this was found in stories that were written by guest columnists in the editorial pages.

The content analysis has also shown that Indian newspapers have not met the expectations of quality set by journalists working for these newspapers. If more than half the news items analysed scored positively with journalists' opinions, these were considered a positive match. Quality perceptions at the journalists' level and the practice of it in content converges only in four aspects, while it differs greatly in seven aspects (Table 7.21).

As one of the most important indicators of quality, accuracy is to be found in the range and types of sources used in the news items. Journalists interviewed for this study said that a commitment to facts is ensured by multiple layers of verification in the newsroom and recounted instances of exclusive stories losing their advantages because sources would not go on record or because some pieces of information could not be cross-checked. Contrary to this importance assigned by journalists to accuracy and verification and the detailed description of journalistic routines for the same, there were many news items with no sources quoted at all. On average, news items had one or two sources.

At a personal level, many journalists stressed the importance of objectivity and impartiality in their professional lives and argued that news stories had to carry different viewpoints and include the voices of all parties involved in a story. However, even for those stories that named multiple sources, it was rare to find more than one perspective or dominant ideology. Most staff-bylined stories also followed this trend, with more than half such stories using no more than two sources and many of them quoting no

sources. It can be argued that excessive reliance on official sources, combined with a higher ratio of event-based news stories, has resulted in little or no balance in representation of voices. Even though many journalists said that they tried to give different sides to a story, on average news items rarely had more than two sources and one perspective. This trend could be linked to the high reliance on event-based stories, which are typically sourced from press conferences and press releases.

At the content level, good language and attractive writing styles were considered by journalists to be important for quality. The findings suggest both positive and negative implications for the evidence of this aspect of quality. The positive aspect is that most stories were error-free and slang-free, while the negative aspect is that more than half the stories followed no clear, logical structure. Since the most important theme that emerged from the interview was service to the reader, it is surprising that this commitment is not evident in the content of newspapers. Many Indian journalists said that they believed in more creative ways of writing even news stories, and that they leaned towards a more dramatic presentation of available information as a way of holding their own with television and digital media content, which have the advantage of immediacy. Departure from neutral writing styles and longer periodicity for content are typically characteristic of feature stories, and yet feature stories made up only a little more than 10 percent of the total number of news items analysed. Additionally, as previously argued, news items followed no clear structure and often came with as much information as can be given in a few hundred words.

Newspapers were looked upon by journalists as a platform for readers and those in the government to communicate with each other. Many journalists gave examples of

how their stories made tangible differences to their readers' lives and how journalists played an active role in giving a voice to the voiceless. In practice, this could mean proportionate coverage of a range of news subjects to account for the fragmented nature of readers' newspaper use. A few journalists showed an awareness of this reader behaviour and argued that it was important for the newspaper to cater to different types of readers. In the content analysis, however, political stories were the single largest category of stories, with judicial stories coming second and contributing to half the number of political stories.

Two aspects emerged from the interviews that pointed towards Indian journalists' commitment to investigative journalism: personal examples of having exposed scandals and cover-ups in state governments and examples of defamation cases filed against journalists by those affected unfavourably by news coverage. Investigative stories contributed a meagre 3 percent in the analysis and appeared in *The Times of India* and *The New Indian Express*.

Table 7.21 Comparison between journalists' perceptions and newspaper content

	Journalists' perceptions	Content standards
Accuracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Verification ▪ Attribution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ News stories with no attributed sources ▪ Transparent methods of verification (P)* ▪ An average of one to two sources per story
Balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Representation of voices ▪ Impartiality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Few stories with more than one perspective ▪ No attempt at presenting more than one ideology ▪ Neutrality in tone (P)*
Exposing wrongdoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stories of exposing scandals and cover-ups in state governments ▪ Personal examples of legal intimidation faced by journalists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Miniscule percentage of investigative stories
Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Good language ▪ Dramatic writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High percentage of grammatically error-free news items (P)* ▪ Short news items with no clear structure
Newspaper as a public forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Making a difference and highlighting relevant issues ▪ Proportionate coverage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Political stories as the single largest category of news subjects
Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Importance of background information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Comprehensive overview of story subjects ▪ No reference to previous articles or how stories have developed over time
Visuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No importance attached 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Less than half the stories had visual elements attached to them (P)*

* Positive match between journalist' perceptions and evidence in content

Most journalists agreed that background reading and development of knowledge were a crucial part of their job, but there was little discussion about how to translate this knowledge into journalistic output. This is reflected in the pattern of editorials, which gave more context than other news stories combined and were most often

written by guest authors. While most news stories gave a brief overview of past events affecting a story, follow-up stories and continuity were lacking in most of the news items analysed for all three newspapers.

Lastly, it is clear from both journalists' accounts and newspaper pages that visuals are not a strong point in Indian print journalism. Only five journalists talked about them, and even they did not consider them an essential part of quality journalism. In newspaper content, stories that contained a visual element constituted less than half of the total number of news items analysed.

Conclusion

The findings from the content analysis indicate a homogeneity in content distribution patterns across all three newspapers analysed for this study. The three newspapers did not show significantly positive results in most of the criteria adapted from Anderson's (2014) framework of the five Cs and one A (accuracy, comprehensibility, comprehensiveness, comparativeness, context and causality). However, for Bogart's (1989) index the predominance of news stories in *The Hindu*, *The Times of India* and *The New Indian Express* showed evidence of quality in newspaper pages based on type of stories.

All three newspapers followed a pattern of including as many news stories as possible on their pages and gave comprehensiveness priority over clarity in writing and identifiable writing structures. Most stories did not stretch beyond 300 words or follow a clear structure; they seldom cited more than two sources and did not attempt to present different perspectives or ideologies. The content analysis found that context

was the most prominent aspect of quality in most newspaper reports in the sample, while newspapers performed poorly on some of the more significant aspects of quality for journalists, such as accuracy and verification, proportionate coverage, good writing and investigative journalism. News items also relied on official perspectives to give relevant and comprehensive information.

The content analysis has also revealed an ideal-practice gap between the normative values associated with quality and their performance in a real-time news environment. Many of these findings are not comparable to aspects of quality mentioned by journalists interviewed for this study. The four aspects of quality in which Indian newspapers have converged with attitudes of journalists are the discipline of verification, comprehensiveness, the presence of visuals and the absence of grammatical errors. Journalists' notions of quality and their evidence in newspaper content differ vastly in matters of accuracy, balance, context, some aspects of writing and the two roles envisaged for newspapers of exposing wrongdoing and providing a public forum for readers.

In conclusion, it can be said that with respect to the main research question relating to this chapter, the results have not been conclusive. There is some evidence of quality when considering the page as a unit because of the large proportions of news stories, enterprise stories and staff-bylined stories, but when considering an individual news item as a unit, the analysis leaves much to be desired.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

This chapter brings the key findings of this thesis together to schematically answer the main research question and the supplementary research questions on perceptions of quality and evidence of it in the content of newspapers in a way that addresses the research gaps and contributes to knowledge.

The first section of this chapter will answer the main research question through the concepts of surface structures and story boxes, while section 8.2 discusses the main contributions to knowledge. The third section gives suggestions for future research, and the final section offers a few concluding remarks.

8.1 What is quality in journalism? Surface structures and story boxes

The main aim of this study was to understand what quality means for journalism in an Indian context. Two ideas were introduced in the methodology chapter to answer this research question and to guide methodology: Jaccard and Jacoby's (2010) surface structure as a way of understanding the visible manifestations of a concept (journalists' perceptions and newspaper content in this case); and Anderson's (2014) story boxes to examine Indian newspaper content and the factors that influence news decision processes. The dual frameworks of surface structures and story boxes can represent the dynamics between news production and content and the extent to which the two influence each other. While it has been proved that there are various levels of influences on news content (Shoemaker and Reese, 1991), structural changes in markets and institutions can also influence news production processes and newsroom decisions. At

the individual level, influences can include the gap between ideals and practice and how pressures in the newsroom can lead to non-ideal ways of newsgathering and publishing. Thus, the study was carried out in two parts: understanding the perceptions of Indian journalists and examining the content of Indian newspapers.

8.1.1 Perceptions of quality

In answering *RQ1: How do journalists articulate the concept of quality in journalism?*, it was seen that quality in journalism can be grouped into four elements based on journalists' perceptions. Thus, perceptions of quality in an Indian context could be studied through an examination of four aspects at the micro, meso and macro levels: public interest orientation, content characteristics, journalist expertise and societal influences.

For the first element, quality in journalism was primarily associated with service to the reader. Journalists talked about all other aspects of quality in terms of how well they could perform this function so that they could retain the faith of the reader and maintain credibility. It can be argued that the purpose of journalists' self-reported commitment to facts and the elaborate system of accuracy and verification are part of an idealistic attempt to build and maintain trust with the reader. Characteristics of quality content such as excellent writing, good language and proportionate representation of viewpoints in a story meant that readers would be offered the best. Most of the journalists interviewed for this study provided instances of having had to make news decisions based on the economic considerations and political affiliations of their organisation. They felt that such restrictions interfered in their ability to give the

reader what he/she needed and also impeded their efforts to play the role of adversary to powers in the society. This was called 'the public interest orientation for quality in journalism'.

Secondly, quality in journalism was associated with a newspaper's approach to its content. Many journalists emphasised the importance of having a non-sensational approach to news, combined with good writing and a commitment to facts as prerequisites for quality in news content. For them, sensationalism meant an undue emphasis on the private lives of celebrities. Some also explained that their newspapers targeted their content at specific audiences, mostly young ones. This was called the 'content characteristics element of quality'.

A third element associated with quality that emerged from the interview was at the micro level for individual journalists. This element is concerned with the whole gamut of competencies that Donsbach (2010) identified as general, process and subject competence, journalistic skills and professional values. Thus, this was called the 'individual competence element of quality'. Indian journalists described their efforts at identifying their own biases and explained the importance of being 'professional' and keeping a distance from their sources and stories. At the same time, they exhibited a commitment to fair and balanced journalism when they talked about giving proportionate coverage and alternative viewpoints in news stories. Thus, their professional identities as journalists took precedence over political and cultural affiliations but also resulted in journalistic training and routines that contributed to 'professionalism'.

Among the 22 journalists interviewed for this study, there was a common perception that the role played by journalism in society is a noble one. However, in several instances, it came into conflict with other practical aspects of news work that came with working as employees in a news organisation. While agreeing that journalism needed to inform and entertain, many journalists perceived its role to go beyond the basic functions. The roles described in the preceding chapters, such as providing a platform and investigating wrongdoing, are similar to those identified in previous studies (McQuail, 2006; Mellado, 2015), such as the investigative, facilitative, informative and educational functions of journalism. If examples given by journalists are to be taken into account, journalism is a two-way information bridge between authorities and the public, delivering comprehensive and proportional coverage of issues. It is also an adversary, exposing wrongdoing in government and other public institutions. The effectiveness of these ideal functions and the performance of these roles in a practical environment are challenged on a daily basis by the dynamics of journalism's relationship with political and market structures that govern its functioning. This becomes the 'societal role and influences element' of quality.

8.1.2 Evidence of quality

In answer to *RQ 2: To what extent is quality evident in the practice of journalism?*, it can be argued that there is some evidence of quality when considering the page as a unit because of the comparatively higher proportion of news stories and staff-bylined stories to other types of stories. However, when considering an individual news item as a unit, the evidence indicated that quality was not to be found in the comprehensive,

comparative, contextual details. The main conclusion that can be drawn from the content analysis is that it demonstrated no evidence of important aspects of quality such as accuracy, balance, representation of different voices or contextual details, which are the basics of quality in journalism identified not only in the literature but also by the journalists working at Indian newspapers who were interviewed for this study. This conclusion is strengthened by the fact that many aspects of quality analysed here are based on themes common to many previous studies (Bogart, 1989; Gladney, 1990; 1996; Picard, 2000; Shapiro et al., 2006; Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2007).

Two secondary interpretations can be drawn from the main conclusion, and both point to the evidence of an absence of quality in Indian newspapers. These interpretations are descriptive and indicate that all three newspapers gave a significant amount of space to news stories; however, not only are these stories based on official versions of scheduled events, but very few were in-depth articles.

Firstly, news stories made up most of the content for all three newspapers analysed for this study, as compared to feature stories or opinion pieces, making the content of these stories relevant for no more than a 24-hour news cycle. This point is further strengthened by the fact that all three newspapers relied on event-based stories such as press conferences or accidents, resulting in a predominance of stories that were very immediate in their newsworthiness and would quickly lose their news value. On the other hand, stories that required journalistic skills such as in-depth newsgathering and representation of many voices were given less importance.

Secondly, the trend among Indian newspapers to print on average at least five stories on a broadsheet-sized page, along with many advertisements, has resulted in

short and concise news items. In-depth stories of more than 1,000 words appeared only on the editorial pages and were mostly written by guest columnists. Surprisingly, on the front and local pages, stories were seldom longer than 250-300 words. The length of stories has an impact on the overall quality of content and led to a reduction in the number of sources quoted, the amount of context given and the breadth of perspectives presented. While many journalists who were interviewed for the study believed that stories should have factual information from identifiable sources, in practice, the emphasis was more on writing short pieces. For example, *The Times of India* sometimes had as many as nine short news items on one page and had more news content than both *The Hindu* and *The New Indian Express*.

Though news items were concise, they gave comprehensive information about day-to-day events, with the result that dense and cluttered pieces of writing were produced that had no clear, logical structure. In a few hundred words, news items managed to include an overview of all the relevant information, such as timelines, people and main issues of the story. This pattern of conveying comprehensive information through a few sentences has an impact on the writing structure. According to Anderson (2014), comprehensibility is ease of use for the reader in terms of language and writing. He has argued that clarity of exposition and logical structure are important for quality news content (Anderson, 2014). Most news items were written with no clear beginning or ending and jumped from one paragraph to another without the flow or structure that one can expect from a good piece of writing. This pattern holds true particularly for the editorial pages, where comprehensibility is paramount.

A plausible explanation for this pattern of writing could be that since neither the writers nor their readers are native speakers of English, their use of the language could have strong mother-tongue influences, which could affect the way in which the journalists structure and present information for their audiences. However, the more likely explanation is the preoccupation with giving extensive information within the limited space allotted on a newspaper page, which makes it difficult for stories to have a proper structure.

It can be argued that Anderson (2014) developed his framework for a subjective assessment of quality by experts in the field and not for an objective, quantitative analysis such as this study has carried out. However, as the literature review on quality has shown, the aspects of quality analysed here are based on themes common to many previous studies. The content analysis framework used in this study echoes Kovach and Rosenstiel's (2007) elements of journalism, in which they talk about the need for accurate, comprehensive and proportionate coverage of news. Gladney's (1990; 1996) work also indicated that originality in reporting, accuracy and comprehensiveness were essential for quality news content. Parallels can be drawn with the current framework and other standards for content quality classified in the literature review chapter. These measures include readability (Bogart, 1989), good writing (Gladney, 1990), context for information and completeness (Picard, 2000) originality, transparency and clarity (Shapiro et al., 2006), etc. Thus, the framework is representative of many aspects of quality and provides us with a broad picture of the nature of quality news content in Indian newspapers.

8.1.3. The concept of quality in journalism

Considering the ideal-practice gap in understanding quality in journalism, introduced towards the end of chapter 7 and described in sections 8.1.1. and 8.1.2, this section answers the main research question: *RQ What is quality in journalism?* using surface structures and story boxes as tools for understanding quality. Jaccard and Jacoby (2010, p.14) used the metaphor of a map in their attempt to explain the nature and purpose of 'conceptual systems' in theoretical understanding. Just as a paper map does not depict every shrub and tree along the way but still provides directions from A to B, conceptual systems are 'mental maps' that help us navigate the real world (Jaccard and Jacoby, 2010, p.15). The authors admitted that these concepts can take many forms in the real world, such as numbers, pictures or narratives, but they are still useful in understanding patterns presented there (Jacoby and Jacoby, 2010).

Their system of understanding concepts was introduced in the methodology chapter, where it was stated that the meaning structure of a concept denoted the ways in which people thought about it, and the surface structure was the symbols and words that they used to communicate their thoughts to others (Jacoby and Jacoby, 2010).

The main research question about quality in journalism has thus been answered through the symbols and words used by journalists. The findings of this research suggest that, for Indian journalists, the surface structure of quality in journalism is not very different from that of journalism itself. In other words, it has been found that journalists have similar ideas about journalism and its quality. From this perspective, quality means providing readers with accurate information while also striving for personal integrity. Quality also involves individual objectivity and editorial autonomy to meet the

informational needs of the reader. The definition provided in the previous chapter did not answer the question 'journalism to what end?' It can be argued that for Indian journalists, the answer to this question is that the purpose of journalism is to give readers accurate information. The definition of quality in journalism for this study, formulated in chapter 3, is rewritten after incorporating the findings. Thus, quality in journalism is defined as the process by which an audience is provided with factual and truthful accounts of contemporary events that are of public interest, based on information acquired from reliable sources for the information and public service needs of the society that journalism serves.

The four elements of quality, introduced in chapter 5 and described in detail in section 8.1.1, form the surface structure of quality for journalists. Anderson's (2014) concept of story boxes can be used to understand the ideal-practice gap between journalists' perceptions of quality and its evidence in newspaper content. While describing factors that influence news decision-making, Anderson (2014, p.12) argued that the walls of the story boxes include the practical elements that restrict and define the content of news such as:

All the factors that affect decisions on what to include and what to exclude within news stories, for example, changing technology, resources and ideology, including the way in which the limitations and opportunities of particular technological platforms, such as smartphones, affect the information selection and presentation process.

For Indian print journalism, quality is influenced by the perceived and real tensions faced by individual journalists at multiple levels in terms of individual bias and ideological considerations, pressure from advertisers and politicians, organisational

economic and political affiliations, market competition and local political climate and political pressure. However, editorial decisions and journalistic routines that are free of outside influences, such as patterns of news writing and presentation, also influence the quality of news content. A framework for quality in Indian journalism takes into consideration both perceptions at the micro level and the ideal-practice gap is proposed here.

Notions of quality at the individual level were influenced by the professional values of objectivity, autonomy and public service through the representation of voices; however, practical considerations while working in a highly competitive market and politically charged environment influenced content quality. Considerations of individual journalists' professional ideologies and their influences on content or the lack thereof both contribute to how the concept of quality in journalism can be understood. Figure 8.1 is a diagrammatic representation of the concept of quality that attempts to represent these values and their influences on content. Through the figure, it is argued that quality of newspaper content is influenced in three ways: at the individual or micro level, by the professional values of journalists such as public service orientation; at the meso level, by the political and economic considerations of the news organisation as well as the routines in place for the overall development of journalists working in it; and at the macro level by the market structures and political environment in which journalism functions.

Quality in Journalism: A framework



Figure 8.1 The Quality Framework

8.1.4 Quality in Indian journalism: perceptions and practice

The Indian news media industry, specifically the print media, is at a unique stage in its development because it has recorded high growth rates while global markets are on the decline. The ABC in India, a not-for-profit organisation that documents circulation figures of newspapers, recorded in 2017 that the circulation of paid-for dailies in India grew by 12 percent in 2015 while in the UK, Australian and US markets it declined by 12, 6 and 2 percent respectively (*The Indian Express*, 2017).

An examination of perceptions of quality at the individual level revealed a close connection between notions of journalism and ideas of quality for the research participants, prompting a discussion of the professional ideologies of Indian journalists in chapter 6. While journalists talked about quality in terms of personal excellence, good

content and service to the reader, they also argued for a conducive environment for quality journalism that was free from undue influences on editorial decisions in terms of individual preferences, organisational policies and external interferences. For Indian print journalism, quality is influenced by the economic and political factors that govern newspaper businesses and the corporate-political-media nexus that perpetuates a system of mutual dependency which affects the ability of news media to function as an independent check on society, as journalists believe they should..

The current study was conducted at a critical period of print media growth in southern India, where long-held English-language newspaper monopolies were shattered by the entry of new players in almost every major city or town in all the four states of South India. As described in section 2.2, this led to intense competition among newspapers, resulting not only in price wars but a concentrated attempt to differentiate through content. For journalists working for these newspapers, this not only meant more work opportunities but also a re-evaluation of their conceptions of journalistic values and professional ideologies. This was more prominent among senior journalists working for *The Hindu* and *The Times of India*, which are considered to have almost opposing values of what constitutes journalism (see section 2.2). At least a few of the journalists working for these newspapers and interviewed for the current study described their quality perceptions in relation to this apparent conflict of values between these two newspapers.

In a changing market environment that brought competition from other newspapers and other news media, journalists have struggled to redefine their professional identities and are constantly trying to balance their duties as journalists and

employees. As journalists, they see the commercial aspect of the newspaper business as far removed from journalism but, at the same time, are forced to acknowledge that, as employees, they are required to function in a framework that calls for compromises in their journalistic integrity. Thus, Donsbach's (2010) classification of journalists' role orientations of public service and commercialism was evidently in conflict for individual journalists in an Indian context as they were pulled in different directions, being required to maintain a loyal reader base for perceived economic reasons at the organisational level while also performing a democratic duty to citizens as responsible journalists at the individual level. This struggle was exacerbated for the more senior journalists by the blurring of the political and the commercial in a chaotic mix of institutional political affiliations, autocratic political figures and a dependence on government advertisements as their major source of revenue.

As journalists navigate apparent conflicts of values in newsrooms decisions of giving readers what they want and what they need, some of these tensions are reflected in the way content is selected and presented on newspaper pages. From the results of the content analysis, it can be argued that Indian newspaper content is oriented towards immediacy and focused on giving as many news items as possible on a page and as many details as possible in a news item. Many of the critical aspects of quality articulated by journalists interviewed for this study, such as accuracy, verification, context in content, representation of voices and proportionate coverage of relevant news topics, investigative enterprise from reporters and good writing, were not reflected in the content of the three newspapers analysed for this study (see Table 7.35).

In a specifically Indian context, this points to an ideal-practice gap in quality journalism. Journalists interviewed for this study, however, were not keenly aware of the ways in which political and economic tensions they faced at the individual level translated into poor quality content, pointing to a lack of reflective practice in newsrooms and among individual journalists. As workloads increase and deadlines become tighter, it becomes imperative that journalists reflect upon their professional ideologies and take an objective and detached look at how the profession is evolving in a growing and highly competitive market. Ironically, the very factors that contribute to this urgent need for reflection also become the reasons that journalists cannot find the time to do so. While neither the ideal-practice gap nor the time constraints on professional reflection are trends restricted to the Indian context (for instance, see Lewis et al., 2008), in other parts of the world this lacuna is filled, at least to some extent, by a well-established and growing body of scientific knowledge and an increasing number of professional journalists-turned-researchers contributing to the narrowing of the gulf between the ideal value and role conceptions and the real-world practice of journalism.

8.2 Contributions to knowledge

This study makes claims of originality in methodology and journalism theory. The theoretical standpoints that guided the mixed methods paradigm contribute to the former while an encapsulation of Indian journalism's professional ideology, a tentative Indian model of journalism and a quality framework contribute to the latter.

Methodological contributions

As far as can be ascertained, this study is the first of its kind on three levels. It is the first study of quality in journalism that uses qualitative semi-structured interviews and compares the findings from the interviews with the results of a content analysis. Thus, this study fills a methodological gap in the study of quality in journalism by asking open-ended questions to journalists about their perceptions of quality and comparing their answers with the evidence of quality in content. Secondly, this study has also used the mixed methods paradigm, comparing journalists' perceptions of quality to its evidence in practice. This is the first study to do so for quality in journalism, with the result of highlighting the gap between perceptions and practice and leading to a more holistic quality framework. Thirdly, for the content analysis, this study has adopted Anderson's (2014) matrix for analysing quality in newspaper content. The six dimensions of quality in news content were adapted and operationalised for this study to form nominal and ordinal variables for quality. This adapted framework will doubtless be much scrutinised, but there are some immediately relevant implications for methodology. This is the first objective framework for analysing quality news content since Bogart's list of indicators in 1989. Since Bogart (1989) focused on analysing newspaper pages for quality (some parts of which have been used in this study as well), the present study is highly likely to be the first to analyse individual news items for the presence of quality indicators.

Theoretical contributions

This study contributes to theory in two ways: through an examination of the professional ideologies of Indian journalism and by revealing the disparity in perceptions and practice of quality in journalism. Findings of this study have shown that Indian journalists share the professional ideologies of their Western counterparts and hold professional values of autonomy, objectivity and public service to be essential aspects of their work. These values influence their perceptions of quality, but journalists also put their ideals into practice in unique and context-specific ways. Thus, a significant finding of this study was that, for Indian journalists, while perceptions about quality and perceptions about journalism are closely intertwined, there is a significant ideal-practice gap in how professional notions of quality can be translated into performance in news content.

8.3 Limitations of the study and suggestions for future research

There are several limitations to this study, and it is necessary to address them at this stage because they pave the way for future research as well.

The first limitation of this study is that it does not seek to explore audience expectations and perceptions of quality in journalism. Newspaper readers and television viewers are also participants of journalism, and some audience studies have already found that taking their priorities into account will improve quality (Meijer, 2013 van der Wurff and Schoenbach, 2014). However, audience perceptions are beyond the scope of this study as investigating them would require a complex research design involving news consumption patterns, audience demographics, uses and gratifications for news and

geographical considerations. McQuail (2013, p.8) has described the dynamics of what he called 'motives for news attention', many of which are shared by this study. Audiences are motivated not only by their need to stay informed but also by their need to feel safe about the world and, sometimes, just as a matter of routine. Thus, their news consumption is fragmented. For this study, on a practical level, such research would involve choosing a representative sample of the audience based on its content preferences (politics, sports, business, etc.), location and education and social class. While the current study has focused specifically on journalists working for Indian newspapers, further studies can use similar frameworks to understand audience perceptions and expectations of quality.

Secondly, the concept of quality, for this study, is explored entirely from a print medium perspective. This choice excludes two important types of journalism: that in television and digital media and that of citizen journalism. Firstly, neither television news nor digital journalism has been included in this study. While this can be a point of critical debate, McQuail (2013) has argued that print still has an influence in setting an agenda for other media. It can also be argued that because the print medium was one of the earliest forms of journalism, it laid the foundation for journalistic practices for other news media as well. In fact, Deuze (2005) has argued that journalists' shared values are a more important part of their identity than medium-specific differences. Secondly, scholars have chronicled the disruptions to journalism and its professional ideologies because of the changes in news production and consumption patterns brought about by digital media platforms. This study does not include aspects of citizen journalism or those of news dissemination through social media. Given the choice not

to include citizen journalism, the contours of the study have been defined by the argument that audiences still need news media for comprehensive coverage of the day's events, especially in far-away locations. Many citizen journalism outlets and most social media news aggregators have to ultimately rely on traditional news media for news feed that is beyond their geographical purview. This does not, however, undermine the importance of future research on the impact of digital technology and social media as only this will shed light on the most contemporary issues facing quality in journalism; future research can also involve the dynamics of quality across other media.

Thirdly, those running a news organisation can have a different perspective on editorial autonomy and the means of achieving it. Quality perceptions of executive editors and owners of news organisations will add more dimensions to the quality discussions. It was a common theme across interviews that management policies interfered with editorial autonomy. However, the only journalist in a senior managerial position to be interviewed for this study described various ways in which he worked around such pressures. He could not afford to lose the goodwill of politicians and yet had to expose wrongdoing in the government and other bodies. He admitted that he would balance bad coverage with favourable coverage to keep influential people from stopping advertisements and impacting newspaper revenues. Other journalists in the newsroom seldom know such practical methods of navigating the practical realities of a newsroom (in this case, a sensitive political environment). Studies such as this one could direct journalists towards more knowledge-sharing in newsrooms.

Finally, while the main aim of this study was to understand quality in journalism in an Indian context, research in Indian journalism is heavily influenced by Western

paradigms, as has been discussed in the section in chapter 3 on de-Westernising journalism studies. The premise of this study has been based on European and North American conceptualisations of journalism and quality. When Indian journalists talk about quality, they echo concepts that are common in the Western context, including those of autonomy and objectivity. However, in practice, there was little evidence to show quality, which indicates the need for basing the discussion of quality on an Indian model of journalism, or at least a model of journalism that is rooted in more culturally relevant paradigms and takes into consideration the current status of Indian journalism.

This is not a new discussion. For example, Gunaratne (2007) has argued for including Eastern philosophies while developing Asian models of journalism. Yin (2008) has demonstrated the challenges in blindly importing Western models into Asian journalism. She used the book *Four Theories of the Press* (1956) as a point of departure and, using Buddhist and Confucian notions of humanity and society, proposed an Asian model of the press that incorporated both freedom and responsibility at the same time.

However, there has been no discussion of an Indian model of journalism and it is proposed there that future research could consider developing such a model, based on aspects of Indian news media that emerged from an examination of its history in chapter 2, models of news media in Chapter 3 and elements of professionalism and quality that emerged from the interviews and content analysis. Such a model could potentially stand on the shoulders of Hallin and Mancini (2004), who categorised Western media models using descriptive indicators of the press such as its historical development, the extent of political-news media affiliations, professionalism in journalism and journalistic independence from the state. Similarly, future research into an Indian print journalism

model can consider elements such as external pluralism with some elements of political parallelism and internal polarisation at the institutional level; commercial orientation with some elements of political affiliations in privately-owned newspapers; professionalism among journalists based on the values of loyalty to readers, accuracy, autonomy and objectivity, as emerged during the interviews conducted for this study; and the absence of overarching governmental or occupational regulatory bodies that guide or control the conduct of journalists and newspapers.

Concluding remarks

This study was developed to understand how a subjective construct such as quality in journalism can be framed in academic debates. The contours of the study were defined by choosing to explore quality of journalism in an Indian context through Indian journalists and Indian newspapers. The findings of this study suggest close links between journalism's professional ideology and journalists' perceptions of quality in an Indian context, with journalists' shared professional values of autonomy, objectivity and public service clashing with the disruptive forces of market logic and changing political climates in India.

Since this is the first study of quality in journalism in an Indian context, its results can have practical benefits for working journalists. Firstly, this study can pave the way for better communication between journalists and the senior officials of a news organisation and guide conversations towards what journalism means in an Indian context. A second practical benefit for this study, which would also involve future research, involves subjective and collective investigation of the factors influencing the

gap between perceptions and practice. After taking into consideration the gap between perceptions and practice, as found in this study and in the age of Facebook and Twitter, whereby politicians do not need to depend on traditional journalism channels to reach to the people, it can be argued that Indian journalism needs to reinvent itself. This can have implications for the study of quality in Indian journalism. This will depend on the role and functions that journalism will be expected to perform in such an Indian model of journalism. These factors specifically make up the 'walls of the boxes' (Anderson, 2014, p. 12) and influence news decisions. Discussions of quality can be more in-depth if these factors are identified and addressed and result in more quality content being produced.

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APPENDIX A: Applied Thematic Analysis Codebook

Part A: Structural Codes

Interview Topic	Structural Code	Short Definition	Full Definition	When to Use	When not to Use
Accuracy and Verification	Acc_Ver	Practices in place for accuracy and verification	Discussions of the practices followed at the individual and organisational level to check accuracy and verify information gathered for news stories	Use for and in responses to questions on accuracy and verification and all associated probes	Do not use this code when it occurs in response to other questions. Use relevant content codes
Hope for journalism	Hope	Hope for the future of quality journalism	When the participants' outlook is bleak, they were asked if there was hope for journalism	Use for and in response to the question and when asked about new business models	Do not use this code for any other question or for any other parts of the interview
Core characteristics of journalists	Journo_Character	Perceptions about personal values and characteristics	Perceptions about the core personal values or characteristics needed to produce quality journalism	Use for and in response to questions about core values and characteristics and all associated probes	Do not use this code when it occurs in response to other questions. Use relevant content codes

Knowledge and background reading	Know_Back_Read	Importance of being well-read and knowledgeable	Discussions on the importance of being well-read and up-to-date. Also regarding subject competence	Use for and in response to questions on background, reading, knowledge-gaining, homework and keeping up-to-date. All associated probes	Do not use this code when it occurs in response to other questions. Use relevant content codes
Quality	Quality	Perceptions about Quality	Participants' perceptions about quality journalism and the factors affecting quality	Use for and in response to questions on quality, sensationalism and all associated probes	Do not use this code when it occurs in response to other questions. Use relevant content codes
Role of journalism	Role_Journ	Role that journalism plays in society	Participants' perceptions of the role they think journalism plays in society. Also includes the match or mismatch between what role they think journalism should play and what role it actually plays	Use for and in response to questions about role of journalism, why the participant chose journalism as a career, and what journalism means for the participants	Do not use this code when it occurs in response to other questions. Use relevant content codes

Visuals for quality	Visuals_Quality	Visual elements as an aspect of quality in journalism	The need to recognize visuals and photographs as an important aspect of quality in journalism	Use for and in response to questions on photographs, infographics, visuals and all associated probes	Do not use this code when it occurs in response to other questions. Use relevant content codes
Intro question – experience and job profile	Work_Exp	Work Experience and job profile	Descriptions on the number of years as a journalist, organisations worked for, positions held and beats or specialisations covered	Use in response to the intro question and all associated probes	Do not use this code when it occurs in response to other questions. Use relevant content codes

Part B: Content Codes - First Phase

	Code	Description	Sources	References
	Quality			
1	Catering to the reader	Use this code for discussions on 1) giving readers truthful, credible and relevant information 2) reader response or lack of it 3) how newspapers orient themselves to target audiences 4) readers using newspapers for various purposes	19	102
2	Content Characteristics	Use this code for discussions and descriptions about what makes good quality news content like 1) characteristics of a good story including language, attributed sources, depth and details 2) variety of topics 3) accuracy of facts 4) issues of balance and 5) writing styles that work in the digital era	18	81
3	Independence in the newsroom	Use this code for discussions on 1) the importance of having freedom to do stories 2) influences and interferences that journalists face in the newsroom including advertiser pressure, government interference and management decisions 3) Blurring of editorial-marketing divide	18	70
4	Newsroom Culture	Use this code for discussions of 1) hierarchies in the newsroom, ongoing training in the newsroom, 2) newspaper focus and approach to story ideas 3) awareness campaigns run by newspapers and 4) newspapers giving readers what they want instead of what they should	18	56
5	Non-sensational approach	Use this code for 1) descriptions and definitions of sensationalism and 2) opinions on why sensationalism is undesirable, and ways to avoid sensationalism	11	22
6	Strive to excel; personal excellence	Use this code for perceptions of 1) personal attributes that drive a journalist and 2) discussions on what motivates them to excel	9	22
7	Time as a factor affecting quality	Use this code when participants say that time is one of the important factors that affect quality	4	6
	Role of journalism			

8	Agenda setting	Use this code when a participant thinks journalism should set an agenda for policy makers and influence decision-making by bringing issues of concern to the notice of relevant policymakers	8	18
9	Bringing issues to public attention	Use this code when a participant talks about the role of journalism as bringing various issues to the attention of their readers. Includes 1) doing stories that the world would not know about 2) news-decisions and follow-ups 3) shaping opinions 4) bringing truth to the reader 5) and readers using media to gain information and perspective	17	31
10	Making a difference	Use this code when participants think journalism should make a difference in the lives of ordinary people through their stories, especially bring change to the lives of underprivileged	7	10
11	Record-keeping	Use this code for the role of journalism as recording changes in society and/or keeping track of politicians' activities and achievements	1	1
12	Representing people's issues	Use this code for discussions on the need to give importance to stories that are affecting groups of people and society as a whole	11	19
13	Telling the truth	Use this code when journalists mention truth-telling as the primary or major role of journalism	7	10
14	Watchdog journalism	Use this code when participants feel it is important for journalism to expose wrongdoing in the society. Includes 1) bringing accountability in government 2) play the role of an adversary	12	24
Accuracy and verification				
15	Mechanisms to ensure accuracy	Use this code for discussions about the ways in which information is cross-checked and verified in a newsroom. Includes processes followed by reporters	16	39

16	Practical problems	Use this code for references to why sometimes it is impossible to confirm a piece of information gathered by a reporter. For example, if a single reporter is covering more than one town or city, he cannot independently verify all his stories and will have to take his sources at face value	3	4
Individual characteristics				
17	Distance from the story	Use this code for discussions on 1) the need to approach stories with an open mind and 2) to be detached from stories, subjects and sources	7	12
18	Individual writer	Use this code when participants describe writing abilities that set them apart from other journalists; includes examples of writing that they describe	5	9
19	Personal integrity	Use this code for discussions of personal integrity including 1) not letting friendships with sources come in the way of doing stories 2) staying away from vested interests and 3) not letting personal, ideological and political bias affect newsgathering and reporting	8	14
Knowledge, background and reading				
20	Importance of reading	Use this code when participants describe their reading habits and explain how this helps them keep up-to-date with their beat and build knowledge	10	11
21	Knowing your ground	Use this code for any instance when a participant describes a particular way of doing things that is unique to his/her work and organisation, beat or city	10	19
22	Source management	Use this code when participants mention relationships with their sources and how this ensures that they get accurate information. Includes discussions on how source management helps them in their beat	7	9
Visuals for quality				
23	Visuals	Use this code when participants describe the role visuals have in ensuring quality	8	13

Changes to journalism				
24	Changes over the years	Use this code when participants reminisce about 1) the changes that have happened to newsrooms over the years 2) how reporting and editing practices have evolved 3) how journalist profiles have changed and 4) the impact of these changes	7	11
25	Influence of digital and visual media	Use this code when participants describe the influence of digital and visual media over the way content for print is produced and disseminated	9	11

Part C: Content Codes – Second Phase

	Code	Description	Sources	References
1	Catering to readers	Use this code for discussions of catering to reader interest and ensuring credibility	19	102
1.1	Reader Interest	Use this code for mentions of trying to meet reader expectations. Includes mentions of 1) a target audience 2) enticing the reader to buy newspapers 3) giving readers what they want instead of what they need 4) lack of reader response	13	31
1.2	Credibility	Use this code for mentions of losing the reader because of various reasons, all of them underlining the belief that once a reader stops believing what is printed on a newspaper, he/she will stop being your reader	9	17
2	Content characteristics	Use this code for descriptions of what makes good quality content. Includes mentions of 1) giving different viewpoints in a story and ensuring balance and 2) writing styles that make content interesting for the reader	18	81
3	Independence in the newsroom	Use this code for discussions on 1) the importance of having freedom to do stories and 2) influences and interferences that journalists face in the newsroom	18	70

3.1	Pressure from advertisers	Use this code for discussions on 1) the influence of advertisers in news decisions 2) pressure to give favourable news coverage to advertisers 3) blurring of editorial-marketing divide when the marketing department dictates news decisions and 4) government as an advertiser	11	27
3.2	Management policies	Use this code for discussions on management policies dictate news decisions. Includes ideological stances, political affiliations, corporate interests and economic considerations of the management. Also includes 1) how journalists believe the management or editors can be convinced about the merits of a story and 2) how individual decisions have resulted in stories being 'smuggled in'	10	17
4	Newsroom Culture	Use this code for discussions of 1) hierarchies in the newsroom, ongoing training in the newsroom, 2) newspaper focus and approach to story ideas 3) awareness campaigns run by newspapers and 4) newspapers giving readers what they want instead of what they should	18	56
5	Non-sensational approach	Use this code for 1) descriptions and definitions of sensationalism and 2) opinions on why sensationalism is undesirable, and ways to avoid sensationalism	11	22
6	Newspaper as a public forum	Use this code for discussions of the role of newspaper as a public forum or platform for issues concerning the citizens of country or residents of a city or town. Includes mentions of 1) representing issues affecting people 2) highlighting relevant issues and bringing them to the attention of the readers 3) alerting civic authorities to problems in a city and 4) making a difference in the lives of under-privileged people in a city like slum-dwellers	20	76
7	Expose wrongdoing in government and public institutions	Use this code for discussions and examples of exposing wrongdoing in the government and other social institutions. Include mentions of anti-establishment role and adversary role of journalism	11	23

8	Discipline of verification	Use this code for description of processes through which news content is checked and verified for accuracy. Also include mentions of getting proof or evidence and examples of not using unconfirmed information in a story	18	57
9	Competencies	Use this code when participants describe 1) their daily activities that enhance skill development, build subject-expertise and develop specialisations and 2) personal attributes like integrity and the need to be independent from those they cover	20	82
10	Visuals for quality	Use this code when participants describe the role visuals have in ensuring quality	8	13

APPENDIX B: Content Analysis Codebook and Protocol

V1 Newspaper Name

The Hindu
The Times of India
The New Indian Express

V2 Day of publication

Monday
Tuesday
Wednesday
Thursday
Friday
Saturday

V3 Page

Front Page
Local Page
Editorial Page

Newspaper Page

The individual page of a newspaper is analysed as a unit

V4 No. of news stories

News stories are such stories for which the timeline and relevance are for not more than a day

V5 No. of features

Features could be serious or light (hard or soft) stories and their timeline and relevance could be a few days or even weeks

V6 No. of in-depth stories

Stories that are more than 1000 words; analytical or explanatory

V7 No. of opinion stories

Stories which express the authors' opinion, instead of just presenting the facts, like regular news stories

V8 No. of event-based stories (NOT RELEVANT FOR EDITORIAL PAGE; GIVE 0)

Spontaneous events like accidents or disasters, scheduled events, press conferences and press releases

V9 No. of enterprise stories (NOT RELEVANT FOR EDITORIAL PAGE; GIVE 0)

Stories that describe and explain existing situations. These stories have to be crafted from the reporters' newsgathering and are not immediately evident to a layman

V10 No. of staff-bylined stories

Stories that give credit to the reporter's name

V11 No. of agency stories

Stories that are sourced from news agencies

V12 No. of stories with newspaper bylines (editorials included)

Stories that are given bylines like Times News Network, Express News Service, Staff Correspondent, Special Correspondent etc

Individual news item**V13 Origin**

Staff Byline - *Reporter's name*

Newspaper Byline (Editorial included) - *Newspaper Name as byline*

News Agency

Unknown/Not mentioned

V14 Treatment of Story

General News - *News that is relevant for the day*

Feature - *News that could be relevant for more than a day, writing style may also be more relaxed*

Opinion - *That expresses the author's opinion*

Investigative - *Stories that investigate issues in public interest*

Editorials - *Stories that appear on the extreme left-hand side of editorial pages, usually with strong opinions expressed and published without any byline. This is where the newspaper takes a stand on the issues of the day*

Other - *Any story that doesn't fit into above categories*

V15 Geographic Focus

Local – *City- or town-specific stories*

State/ Regional - *Any state (like Tamil Nadu, Kerala or region in India like North, South etc. Delhi is not included in this as it is the national capital)*

National - *Stories that are relevant to the entire nation. New Delhi stories are included in this*

International - *Stories that are about other nations*

Other - *Any story that doesn't fit into above categories*

Political -Politicians -Elections -Parliament and Bills - State and national governance -Speeches by politicians	Economic -Finance -Stock market -Rural and Urban economics -Budgets and tax policies	Culture and Entertainment -Films -Drama -Books -Music -Trends -Fashion -Lifestyle -Celebrities
Sports -Matches -Records -Athletics -Sports and health	Crime and Police -Raids -Murders -Arrests -Thefts -Criminals -Police officials -Law and order -Law enforcement -Tax evasions -Protests	Social Issues -Social evils -Gender issues -Literacy issues -Rural issues with social relevance
Health and Safety -Hospitals -Diseases -Medicines -Pharmacology -Policies	Environment and Weather -Conservation -Problems -Activism -Law-breaking -Weather-related	Transport -Issues -Services -Information -Policies
Defence and National Security -Army issues -Policies -Deals -Diplomacy	Education -Issues -Admission -Students and teachers	Local Administration -Issues -Solutions
Accidents and Disasters -Natural disasters -Motor accidents -Regulations -Prevention -Policies -Disaster Management	Justice and Judiciary -Laws -Law-making -Cases -Decisions -Rulings	Science, Technology and social media -New tech -Tech companies -Inventions -Innovations -Social media trends
Conflict -Local -National -International	Other -Impact -Day-to-day life -Telecom	

Accuracy

V17 No. of Sources in the story

V18 No. of official sources in the story

Information attributed to sources with any authority on the subject of the story

V19 No. of documents mentioned in the story

Information attributed to Reports, books, articles, data from studies, websites, twitter feeds, Facebook posts, TV programmes, soundbites, etc

V20 No. of ordinary people quoted in the story

Information attributed to people who are affected by the story and have no authority to change things, but not official figures

V21 No. of other sources mentioned in the story, if any

Reference to talks, meetings, speeches and events that media did not have access to

V22 No. of perspectives mentioned in the story

A perspective here is described as a viewpoint from just one angle or one group of people

V23 Transparent methods of verification present in the story for all the sources mentioned

Yes

No

V24 Presence of inaccuracies in numbers, names and spellings

Yes

No

V25 Presence of obvious factual errors

Yes

No

Comprehensibility

V26 Writing style

Inverted pyramid (4 to 5 of the 5Ws and H in the lead)

Essay (with a definite structure, beginning and end)

Other

V27 Use of slang

Yes

No

V28 Presence of grammatical errors

Yes

No

V29 Use of transitions and connections between points and paragraphs, including sub-headings

Yes

No

Context

V30 Reference to past events

Yes

No

V31 Reference to previous articles in the same issue

Yes

No

V32 Overview of issues and/or people involved in the story

Yes

No

V33 Overview of the timeline of the story

Yes

No

V34 Presence of infographics

Yes

No

V35 Photographs in the story

Yes

No

V36 Mention of key factors influencing the story

Factors that have potential impact

Yes

No

V37 Mention of key actors in the story

With names and roles of people and places

Yes

No

Comparativeness

V38 Presence of a dominant ideology in the article

Ideology here can be identified in the use of strong adjectives, implied bias or expressed biased or argument in the story

Yes

No

V39 Attempt at presenting different ideologies

Yes

No

V40 Tone of the article

Neutral – *no sides taken*

Personal – *first person*

Provocative – *inciting offence*

Judgemental – *biased, critical, fault-finding, disapproving etc or needlessly adulatory, adoring or complimentary*

Call to action – *Asking the executive, legislature, judiciary or any particular person or group to do something; giving advice even*

Funny/ Sarcastic

Other – *That doesn't fit into above categories*

Notes

1. The bottom left story on the editorial page of *Times of India* is not included in the analysis as these are regular columns except on Saturdays, when this story is an opinion piece
2. Familiarity with the kind of stories and/or reporting and writing practices in these three newspapers may have affected coding categories. For example, I have not included personality stories or features as a category anywhere as these stories appear very rarely. I have found just one in my entire analysis and have included in the features category. Another example is not including 'personal observation' as a source in the accuracy section, since this is almost never attributed. Again, I found only one instance.
3. Front page for obvious reasons; local page as this is where reporters mostly get a chance to source their stories; editorial page to know the opinions and ideological stand of the newspapers. Local pages during Jayalalithaa's acquittal are especially interesting.
4. Very small box stories are not included unless they come with their own bylines, for example, box stories of 50 words or less.

APPENDIX C Complete List of Tables from Content Analysis

Distribution of types of stories across pages

	<i>The Hindu</i>	<i>The Times of India</i>	<i>The New Indian Express</i>
Pages with at least one news story (n=36)	24	24	27
Pages with at least one feature story (n=36)	8	15	14
Pages with at least one opinion piece (n=36)	12	12	14

Distribution of in-depth stories

	<i>The Hindu</i>	<i>The Times of India</i>	<i>The New Indian Express</i>
Pages with at least 0 in-depth stories (n=36)	24	36	30
Pages with at least one in-depth story (n=36)	12	0	6

Patterns for news items across newspapers

		<i>The Hindu</i>	<i>The Times of India</i>	<i>The New Indian Express</i>
Bylines	Staff	66%	51%	44%
	Newspaper	28%	44%	53%
	Agency	3%	2%	2%
	Not mentioned	4%	3%	1%
	Total	100%	100%	100%
Type of news	General	74%	67%	57%
	Feature	9%	12%	10%
	Opinion	6%	9%	10%
	Investigative	0%	1%	2%
	Editorial	11%	11%	18%
	Other	1%	0%	2%
	Total	100%	100%	100%
Geographical focus	Local	38%	36%	34%
	State/Regional	12%	13%	14%
	National	36%	39%	28%
	International	11%	9%	20%
	Other	2%	3%	4%
	Total	100%	100%	100%

Distribution for subject of news items

Subject	Frequency	Percentage
Politics	130	22.8 %
Economics	30	5.3 %
Culture and Entertainment	48	8.4 %
Sports	20	3.5 %
Crime and Police	52	9.1 %
Social Issues	21	3.7 %
Health and Safety	20	3.5 %
Environment and Weather	18	3.2 %
Transport	18	3.2 %
Defence and National Security	3	.5 %
Education	19	3.3 %
Local Administration	19	3.3 %
Accidents and Disasters	20	3.5 %
Justice and Judiciary	66	11.6 %
Science, Technology and Social Media	14	2.5 %
Conflict	13	2.3 %
Other	58	10.2 %
Total	569	100 %

Distribution patterns for sources in news items

News items with:	Frequency (Percentage)	<i>The Hindu</i>	<i>The Times of India</i>	<i>The New Indian Express</i>
No sources	94 (16.5%)	31	41	22
One source	210 (36.9%)	70	83	57
Two sources	135 (23.7%)	50	44	41
Three sources	60 (10.5%)	27	18	15
Four sources	39 (6.9%)	11	13	15
Five sources	15 (2.6%)	4	3	8
Six sources	11 (1.9%)	2	3	6
Seven sources	1 (.2%)	0	1	0
Eight sources	4 (.7%)	0	1	3
Total	569 (100%)	195	207	167

Range of sources* Types of bylines crosstabulation

	Staff Bylines	Newspaper Bylines
News items with no sources	41	47
News items with one source	92	101
News items with two sources	77	53
News items with three sources	42	17
News items with four sources	28	11
News items with five sources	12	3
News items with six sources	9	1
News items with seven sources	1	0
News items with eight sources	4	0
Total	306	233

Number of perspectives evident in news stories

	<i>The Hindu</i> (n= 195)	<i>The Times of India</i> (n=207)	<i>The New Indian Express</i> (n=167)
Stories with no perspective	4	0	0
Stories with one perspective	143	167	125
Stories with two perspectives	41	37	37
Stories with three perspectives*	6	3	3
Stories with five perspectives	0	0	2
Stories with six perspectives	1	0	0

*Note: There were no stories with four perspectives and the value '4' does not appear

Number of sources*number of perspectives crosstabulation

	Number of perspectives evident in the story*						
	0	1	2	3	5	6	Total
News items with no sources	2	78	11	3	1	0	95
News items with one source	2	186	20	1	0	0	209
News items with two sources	1	97	35	2	0	0	135
News items with three sources	0	31	26	3	0	0	60
News items with four sources	0	25	10	2	2	0	39
News items with five sources	0	9	6	0	0	0	15
News items with six sources	0	5	5	0	0	1	11
News items with seven sources	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
News items with 8 sources	0	1	2	1	0	0	4
Total	5	433	115	12	3	1	569

*There were no stories with four perspectives. Hence, the value '4' does not appear in the table under 'Number of perspectives'.

Treatment of story*transparent methods of verification

	Transparent Methods of verification present in the story for all sources mentioned		
	Yes	No	Total
General News	218	160	378
Feature	42	16	58
Opinion	23	24	47
Investigative	5	1	6
Editorial	36	38	74
Other	3	3	6
Total	327	242	569

Patterns of writing structure

Type of story structure	Frequency (Percentage)	<i>The Hindu</i>	<i>The Times of India</i>	<i>The New Indian Express</i>
Inverted Pyramid	212 (37.3%)	76	75	60
Essay	24 (4.2%)	9	6	10
Other	333 (58.5%)	110	126	97
Total	569 (100%)	195	207	167

Use of transitions between points and paragraphs

	Frequency (Percentage)	<i>The Hindu</i>	<i>The Times of India</i>	<i>The New Indian Express</i>
Yes	206 (36.2%)	67	66	73
No	363 (63.8%)	128	141	94
Total	569 (100%)	195	207	167

Types of news stories*number of stories with grammatical errors crosstabulation

	Number of stories with grammatical errors
General News	25
Features	1
Opinion	2
Investigative	0
Editorial	1
Other	0
Total	29

Geographical focus of news stories*
number of stories with grammatical errors
cross-tabulation

	Number of stories with grammatical errors
Local	17
State/Regional	2
National	6
International	4
Other	0
Total	29

