

# RESEARCH NOTE

## Media, Public Attitude and Mumbai Terror of 26/11

USHARANI NARAYANA  
PRITI KAPUR

**T**error struck Mumbai, India's financial capital, on 26 September 2008. The TV channels provided uninterrupted coverage of terrorists' seizure of Taj and Trident Hotel and Nariman House for more than 72 hours.

The TV channels faced an unprecedented task of reporting the terror attack and curiously, nobody wanted live TV on all three days. It was like covering the war live. Brian Jenkins' apt remarks, "terrorists want a lot of people watching, not a lot of people dead" (Giessmann, 2002) supports the theory that the perpetrators of terror seek to use the media as a tool of propagation. A study stated that "both the media and terrorists benefit from terrorist incidents", endorsing the popular belief that terrorists derive miles and miles of publicity and the media, in turn, earn more revenue with increase in the viewership (Joyner, 2006). Analysing the relationship between the media and terrorism helps us to understand the implications of the media like television advertently or inadvertently playing into the hands of the terrorists. "The 'theatrics' of terrorist attacks (Brian Jenkins), stage-managed by the media, forms a central, if not the vital, component in the perpetrator's communication calculus towards the targeted group and the general public" (Giessmann, 2002)

Obviously, in the live coverage running for three days, public interest was not served as there is little the public could do with the security operations. Ironically, the live TV became a liability for the security operations, obstructing and posing setbacks to the rescue operations by the army, police and fire personnel. The country's broadcasters were summoned by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to deal with charges that the live saturation coverage had helped the terrorists. The coverage was viewed as harmful by the government, which

used provisions of the Cable Television Networks Act to order a blackout of TV news channels. The government order claimed that "Transmission of various clippings/live relay/coverage of the actions being taken by the police against the terrorists in South Mumbai is causing impediment in the police action ... thereby endangering the lives of the police personnel as also of the hostages" (Frater, 2008). The order led to the blackout of TV channels for a few hours before it was revoked. Such reactions from the government to curb the freedom of the press are natural in times of unprecedented crisis. The Information and Broadcasting Ministry served the notice to India TV channel for broadcasting a conversation of a journalist with a terrorist holed up inside Nariman House in the city of Mumbai. The ministry convened a meeting of the media following deep concerns expressed by public against the role of the media in handling terrorists during those three days of terror operation. However, Rohit Bansal, COO, India TV, defended the action, "All across the globe, video/audio messages of Osama Bin Laden and interviews of self-styled commanders of Hizbul Mujahideen and Lashker-e-Taiba have been broadcast by the media. These stories have exposed the perpetrators of terror. The entire objective of India TV was similar" (Channels defends, 2008). "The fact that terrorism by definition tends to be dramatic and also pictorial through the terrorist acts which take place, makes the media vulnerable," says John Richard Thackrah (Thackrah, 2004), underscoring the need for TV journalists to observe restraint and not lend themselves to be misused by the terrorists.

Hues and shades of patriotism were displayed by the media on 26/11 with Indian television channels presuming that they are required to conduct media trial of Pakistan on behalf of the Indian government. Roy Peter Clark, an academic luminary, says, "it is tempting for journalists to surrender to the patriotic swell ... it would be undemocratic, unpatriotic—to imagine that it's the responsibility of the press or of commentators in general (to display) unequivocal patriotism. In fact, that would be a very dangerous state of affairs for democracy" (Roy Peter Clarke, cited by Chaudhary, 2002). The media that are required to promote and protect public interest will surrender their right for free speech if they display patriotism in the guise of national security.

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Usha Rani Narayana is Professor in the Department of Communication and Journalism in the University of Mysore, India, where she teaches writing for media, theories of communication and communication research methods to Master's students. Priti Kapur teaches photojournalism in the Institute of Visual Arts. She is also Executive Editor of *The Eye* magazine of the college.

The coverage of terror by television channels became controversial with the trauma rather than facts dictating news reporting. The public who could not convey their ire and anger against the TV channels used social media and succeeded in gaining national attention to the issues during the live running of the terror operation. For the first time in the history of press in independent India, social media became the voice of the voiceless against the mainstream media. Some of the celebrity anchors of NDTV—the high profile and much watched English 24-hour news channel—admitted over live TV to have received angry emails and blogs and promised to observe caution and restrain in their reporting on the third and final day of the live run.

It was felt that a better understanding of the impact of the media's presentation of terror attack would be of equally important value to discussions about terrorism and the media. This research examines the role of the media in shaping public understanding of terrorism. This study builds on other studies in this area in that it is the first to study how the Indian public reacted to the coverage of 26/11 by television channels. This study is unique in that it tries to examine the issue of television creating unrealistic fears in the minds of the public during the relentless coverage of terror.

## Literature review

There have been several studies published on terrorism and the media since the Sept 11 attack of terror on the US. Studies have analysed how the media tackled terrorism in different parts of the world. Terrorism has been defined as “the intentional use of, or threat to use violence against civilians or against civilian targets, in order to attain political aims” (Ganor, 2002). Reporting now appears to be marked by the conveying of emotions rather than objective analysis. Advanced technology has enabled the media to do their job at a fast pace. They need to pause for a while to reflect on how terror reporting has created a serious dent on the credibility and sanctity of news media in general and television in particular. There has been a paradigm shift in reporting after the live run of 9/11 terror massacre on TV. Analysing a fundamental shift in reporting war and terror, Krishnan states in his study that “though bad news sells, now, however, there needs to be a shift from the old agenda after the events of September 11, where the ‘how’ and ‘why’ part of journalistic inquires must be urgently explored” (Krishnan, 2002).

Graber identifies three stages in crisis reporting: “In the first stage media describe what has happened and help coordinate relief work. In the second, media's coverage of events focuses on making sense out of situation. The third stage overlaps the first two. To provide context, the media must place the crisis in a larger, longer-term perspective” (cited in Li and Izard, 2003).

One of the significant studies by Hess and Kalb, as cited by Champlin and Knoedler, argues that “the merging of the war on Iraq into the larger war on terror by the Bush administration was crucial to public support of the war. When the press adopted the official language and rhetoric,

it accepted, and ultimately promoted, the administration's worldview. In so doing, the press accepted a new role for itself as a recruit in this war” (2003). Study after study has vouched for the US media's failure in post-9/11 events leading to the war on Iraq. Champlin and Knoedler argue how the media changed the very perception of “public interest”: “The media have become a crucial part of this broader battle with Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya portrayed as purveyors of propaganda and CNN and the American media as engaged in responsible journalism in pursuit of ‘the truth’. In essence, the Bush administration's War on Terror has defined a new ‘public interest’ role for the media-fighting global terrorism by promoting ‘truth’ as defined and interpreted by government officials. To the extent the American media accepts this role, it cannot serve the broader public interest as defined by either Dewey or Lippman” (Champlain and Knoedler, 2006). Sensationalism driven by market forces is the major criticism levelled against the media for their coverage of terror attacks, 9/11 being no exception. “Obsessively repetitive imagery of United Flight 175 striking the South Tower on television and on the front page graphics of newspapers including the *L. A. Times* and the coverage of the anthrax bioterrorist incidents amplified public concern far above the actual numbers of people exposed, sickened, and killed by mailed anthrax, leading to pressure on physicians for wanton prescription (of medicines)” (Rodrigue, 2002).

Many studies support the contention that terrorists have manipulated the media to gain publicity. “Perpetrators and target groups of terrorist assaults lead a propaganda war through the media, which enables them to publicly legitimize their own actions. The media's critical distance in reflecting upon pictures and comments disappears with the proximity of time and space. Reporting now appears to be marked by the conveying of emotions rather than objective analysis. An inherent lack of quality of information opens the way to abusing the media for the manipulation of public opinion” (Giessmann, 2002).

Many studies have corroborated to journalism gone wrong in dealing with violence and the most appalling act of distorted journalism is to manipulate news. “The temptation every reporter faces in the field is to paint the world in his or her own image, or the image we would like it to assume. But by failing to turn with equal ferocity on all sides, we distort these conflicts and discredit the values of tolerance and forbearance by ascribing them to people who do not, in fact, share them. It is not for us to decide what people should or should not know. This kind of manipulation is the work of advertisers” (Krishnan, 2002). There is worldwide condemnation of the American media covering the war in Iraq. BBC Director-General Greg Dyke, for example, says many US television networks abandoned neutrality during the war—one even calling US soldiers ‘heroes’ and ‘liberators’—and thus risked losing all credibility. “Personally,” he says, “I was shocked while in the United States by how unquestioning the broadcast news media were during this war. If Iraq proved anything, it was that the BBC could not afford

to mix patriotism and journalism. This is happening in the United States and, if it continues, will undermine the credibility of the US electronic news media. For the health of our democracy, it's vital we don't follow the path of many American networks" (Emil, 2003). So, besides market forces, emotions blur the objective reporting of terror attacks and journalists fail to defend public interest. In most of the studies, serious concerns have been expressed about the media falling in line with the government during such crises.

## Methodology

The following hypotheses were formulated to analyse how the public were influenced by the live coverage of terror for 72 hours by the Indian TV news channels.

- H1 *There is significant relationship between public opinion on regulatory mechanism and the media criticism.*
- H2 *The public express bias in the coverage of terror by the TV news channels.*
- H3 *The public felt that TV channels covering terror live posed danger to the operation by the security forces.*
- H4 *There is a significant relationship between very high coverage of Taj and Trident hotels and the influence of nationalist campaigns.*
- H5 *There is a significant relationship between live TV coverage and public perception of government and politicians.*
- H6 *There is a significant relationship between live TV coverage of terror and public perception of Pakistan.*

## Method of study

A survey using a sample of cable subscribers was conducted in the city of Mysore, India. Though there is no official list of cable subscribers available with the government, the list was generated by contacting local cable TV providers. In India, people receive television programmes through subscription either to cable TV operators or to direct-to-home services. However, the majority of viewers receive TV programmes through cable operators and their subscribers consist of people of all economic groups. Since the goal of the study is to analyse the impact of live coverage of terror attack on public attitudes, the study required those respondents who watched the event on television. In this particular study, the live coverage was run by major TV networks in general and English channels in particular. Therefore, cable subscribers of middle class residential layouts were chosen as the study required respondents who have watched English TV channels. A total of 325 households were listed alphabetically by residential layouts, keeping the sample characteristics in mind. Around 81 households were selected in each region after dividing the city into four regions of north, south, and east and west using

simple random sampling technique. The subscribers' list of cable networks of Mysore city was obtained and households were selected. A total of 325 households were selected and one person, who has seen television coverage of Mumbai terror live either in the English or Hindi language, from each household was selected for this study. The unit of analysis was each respondent. The data for the study was collected in January 2009 and the researchers got back 295 questionnaires out of 325 that were distributed. A decision was taken to reject 42 incomplete questionnaires and the total sample of 283 respondents was considered for analysis. Respondents were asked to fill out the questionnaires. There were 37 questions and almost all questions were close-ended. About half of the questions used a 5-point Likert scale from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree". The textual answers in the text field will be reported along with the statistics to illustrate and explain the quantitative findings. All questionnaires went through pilot tests. This research was conducted in the city of Mysore in India.

## Findings and discussion

### The socio demographic and economic profile

The sample consisted of 25 per cent respondents in the age group of 35–44 years and 23 per cent in the age group of 25–34 years. 19.4 per cent were 45 years and above and 18.7 per cent were 55 years and above. The youngest group of 24 years and below constituted 13.4 per cent. Gender representation shows that there were 73.1 per cent males and 26.9 per cent females. The sample consisted of more postgraduates (56.2%) followed by graduates (35%). A small segment (6.7%) never went to the college. People of different professions like teachers (17.7%) and engineers (15.9%) were represented. Scientists and doctors were in equal measure (11.7%). Lawyers (1.8%) formed the smallest segment compared to students (9.9%), business persons (6.4%) and the homemakers (4.9%). Religion obviously had a higher Hindu group (86.2%), with Muslims (6.7%) and Christians (5.3%) in small groups, that being proportionate to their representation in the population. The income indicates that 56.6 per cent in higher income group earned over 25,000 INR and 36 per cent less than that. The smallest group (5.7%) of lower middle class earned less than 8,000 INR per month.

Media access at home reveals that the majority of the surveyed have access to television (97.9%) and half of them to radio (55.1%). The increase in newspaper circulation in India is corroborated by the high rate of access to newspaper (94.3%) and magazines (59.4%). Perhaps computer users (65.7%) are greater in number than radio and magazine users. More people have access to the Internet at home (61.5%) than at office (49.5%).

Media habits signify that a large section reads newspapers (84.5%) daily and the TV (75.6%) too has significant daily viewership. However, daily Internet users (40.6%) outnumber daily radio listeners (18.7%). TV viewership is very high in the age group of 55+ years (90.6%) and is significantly high in the age groups of 45–54 years (76.4%) and 35–44 years (74.6%). Interestingly, TV viewership is

comparatively less among young people (55.3%). Overall, young ones below 25 years of age fall behind older people in the daily consumption of print and broadcast media whereas in the use of Internet (47.4%), the trend is reverse among the young respondents. The majority (80.6%) of the people surveyed use mobile phones.

The day when terrorists struck Mumbai on 26 November 2008, mainstream media like television scrapped regular programmes and news stories and went through with their extensive live coverage of the gruesome incident. So, how did the people learn about this news and what was their first source of information? The study shows that the majority of the respondents came to know of the attacks from television (76.7 %) whereas very few people (7.4 %) from relatives and friends. In the age of the new media, very few people found out from Internet (5.7 %) and still less from mobile phones (4.6 %). Perhaps, comparatively, a greater percentage of people learnt about the attack from newspapers (4.2%) than from the radio (1.4%). Radio is not considered to be a major source of information by the respondents though radio listenership has reached a saturation level. In India, the private FM radio channels which have revolutionised broadcasting enjoy high listenership but are not allowed to broadcast news by the Telecoms Regulatory Authority of India. That could be one of the reasons why more people got the news from TV than FM radio.

The amount of time spent by the respondents reveals that more people (66.5%) watched the live run for more than 3–4 hours per day on all three days of broadcast. Very few people (6.4%) watched for more than 72 hours.

There is significant difference in the preference of TV channels. Of the top four national English TV channels in India, NDTV 24/7 (69.6 %) enjoys high viewership followed by CNN IBN (43.8%), Times Now (30.4%) and Headlines Today (18.4%). The regional language channel, TV9 Karnataka (24.7%) enjoys better viewership than the national public television—the DD News (9.2%).

*H1: There is a significant relationship between public opinion on regulatory mechanism and media criticism ( $\chi^2 = 40.58, df 20, p < 0.01$ ).*

During the three days of live coverage, the social media on the Internet blamed the TV news channels for crossing the

limits of journalism. There was widespread condemnation of the bias and lack of professionalism in the coverage by the news channels by the public. If so, where did TV news channels fall short of public expectations in their coverage of terror? Surprisingly, the respondents have not opposed the live run of terror attack. The question on whether the public did not like the live broadcast of terror attack has generated a response (53.4%) approving the live run. Nevertheless, the majority of the respondents have favoured live coverage but with some control (48.4%) and half of them have suggested that the media should observe self-control (21.2%) and behave responsibly during national crisis ( $\chi^2 = 40.58, df 20, p < 0.01$ ).

*H1a: There is a significant relationship between the duration of viewing live telecast and public opinion on the regulatory mechanism.*

The study shows that the time spent by the respondents watching the live TV event is related to the way the public has recommended regulatory mechanism. That means those who have watched consistently for 3–4 hours on all three days of live broadcast not only favoured media self-control and also supported live but regulated coverage ( $\chi^2 = 24.01, df 12, p < 0.05$ ).

*H2: The public express bias in the coverage of terror by the TV news channels.*

The study shows there is a positive relationship between public opinion and the degree of importance given to the terror attack on the Taj & Trident hotels and CST Railway Station by the TV channels ( $\chi^2 = 66.54, df 15, significant at 1% level$ ). A large percentage of the respondents felt that the Taj & Trident luxury hotels received moderate to very high coverage. Further, the public felt that the terror attack at CST—Chatrapati Shivaji Terminus Railway Station—received low to very low coverage.

An overwhelming percentage of respondents (90.8%) felt that Taj and Trident received “very heavy coverage” compared to other places of terror attack, this despite the heavy death toll of victims belonging to middle and lower income groups in places other than Taj and Trident. Only 6.4 per cent have opined that CST railway station got “very high coverage” compared to Taj and Trident

TABLE 1  
Comparison of coverage on Taj & Trident and CST

Public opinion about coverage	Taj & Trident		CST		Proportion test significance level
	No.	%	No.	%	
No response	3	1.1	14	4.9	—
No coverage	1	.4	17	6.0	—
Very low coverage	0	0	54	19.1	1 %
Low coverage	0	0	92	32.5	1 %
Moderate coverage	22	7.8	88	31.1	1 %
Very high coverage	257	90.8	18	6.4	1%

(90.8%). The findings of the study corroborate the anguish expressed by the public in the social media like Facebook, Arkut, Twitter, Flickr and others against the bias in the coverage of terrorist attack live by the news channels. The day of 26/11 saw terrorists attacking Mumbai's landmark Taj and Trident hotels, Nariman House, CST Railway station and the Cama Hospital where hundreds were killed, spreading panic among the unsuspecting public. The news channels were criticised for giving extensive coverage to the luxury hotels of Taj and Trident, which are patronised by the rich and famous, and virtually ignoring the other places of terror strike.

Half the respondents (57.6%) felt that Chatrpati Shivaji Terminus (CST), the railway station located in the heart of the city that is said to have resembled a graveyard with bodies strewn all over the place, received "very low coverage" compared to the Taj and Trident hotels. A majority (75.3%) of the respondents felt that Cama Hospital where the top ranking police officers were gunned down also received "very low coverage" compared to the Taj and Trident hotels. The analysis supports the widespread condemnation of the television's obsession with Taj and Trident hotels on all three days and the low coverage for poor victims in the CST railway station and Cama Hospital, demonstrating media bias in the coverage of human tragedy where rich and famous victims got more airtime than poor people. The media's discrimination between rich and poor victims shocked the Indian viewers. Perhaps one can also assume that but for the attack on Taj and Trident, TV news channels would not have resorted to live run for over 72 hours, a move that ensured more than adequate visibility to the rich and famous class and led to an increase in viewership. The public believes that the media coverage of terror attack was market driven. Bordered on sensationalism, the images of a burning Taj Hotel monopolised the TV channels, reducing the human tragedy into a soap opera.

The allegation by the public in the social network of media bias prompted NDTV's celebrated TV news editor and anchor Barkha Dutt to respond to the queries. She wrote,

Could we have been more aware of the suffering and tragedy of those killed in the first hours at the CST railway station and not got singularly focused on the two hotels? On this one point, I would concede that perhaps, this was a balance we lost and needed to redress earlier on during the coverage. But, mostly our attention was on the hotels, because they were the sites of the live encounters, and not because of some deliberate socio economic prejudice. Still when many emails poured in on how important it was to correct this imbalance, most of us, stood up, took notice and tried to make amends for an unwitting lack of balance in air time (Basu, 2008).

*H2a: There is a significant relationship between the duration of watching terror live on TV and the public criticism of media bias.*

The study shows a significant relationship between the duration of viewing and the public criticising the TV channels for giving "very high coverage" to the Taj and Trident hotels. People who have spent more time watching live terror have felt media bias in its coverage of all four places of terror attack ( $\chi^2 = 21.74$ ,  $df 12$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

*H2b: People with higher income tend to watch live TV for longer duration than lower income groups.*

The study shows that the higher income groups have spent more time watching live TV on all three days than the lower income groups ( $\chi^2 = 33.02$ ,  $df 20$ , significant at 5% level), denoting significant relation between family income and the duration of viewing.

The findings also show that the public (31.4%) felt that TV channels conducted more interviews with celebrities than with common people and projected the former's views as public opinion.

*H3: The public felt that TV channels covering terror live posed danger to the operation by the security forces ( $\chi^2 = 88.16$ ,  $df 28$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).*

TV channels were blamed for not only overshooting their periphery but also inadvertently compromising national security and helping the terrorists. Curiously, the Indian media themselves were in the news for the most controversial reporting of a national crisis ever reported since the advent of TV in India. Respondents felt that the action of one of the channels, India TV, repeatedly asking the terrorists holed up in Nariman House to surrender and appealing to them to release the hostages, crossed the limits of journalism (24%) and affected the security operations (18%). The respondents have not approved the way India TV channel asked terrorists to surrender at Nariman House and have felt that TV channels should have been more responsible ( $\chi^2 = 88.16$ ,  $df 28$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). On a 7-point Likert scale, more people (31.3%) agree and others (23.3%) strongly agree that TV channels helped terrorists as the state-of-art cameras could meticulously capture the microscopic details of the action posing threat to security operations.

*H3a: The positioning of cameras revealed more details of terror operation, affecting overall operation ( $\chi^2 = 52.74$ ,  $df 28$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).*

On a 5-point Likert scale, more people "agree" (48.4%) and "strongly agree" (23%) that television cameras revealed more details of the operation due to their positioning near the place of action, thus obstructing security operations.

*H3b: There is a significant relationship between the public condemnation of the positioning of the cameras and the public wanting the media to behave more responsibly ( $\chi^2 = 125.18$ ,  $df 16$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).*

Reporting terrorism in an exceptionally difficult time calls for distinguishing between news and propaganda. The public blamed the media for the irresponsible way

it positioned the sophisticated equipment like powerful TV cameras that came in the way of security operations. "I want to make sure we are not used as a propaganda platform," said Walter Isaacson of CNN about covering US military operations in Afghanistan (Isaacson, 2001). The observation, "television is no longer simple reporting about the story, but has become part of the story", (Thackrah, 2004) came true with Indian TV channels.

**H4: There is a significant relationship between very high coverage of the Taj and Trident hotels and the influence of nationalist campaigns ( $\chi^2 = 31.494$ ,  $df 18$ , significant at 5% level).**

There is a significant relationship between very high coverage of Taj and Trident hotels and the influence of nationalist campaigns ( $\chi^2 = 31.494$ ,  $df 18$ , significant at 5% level). The respondents who felt that TV channels gave "very high coverage" to Taj and Trident have admitted to being influenced by patriotic campaigns. However, there is no significant relationship between the coverage of CST, Nariman House and Cama Hospital and the influence of campaigns, denoting that the campaigns launched by the TV channels were perceived in the context of loss caused to Taj and Trident hotels instead of other places of terror attack.

Objective and balanced reporting is the hallmark of a responsible media in the covering of human tragedies in terrorism. On 26/11, the terrorists committing the murderous attack were on a warpath but the journalists, deciding not to lag behind, developed war mood by instantaneously declaring a "war on terror" on live TV, thus creating panic, anxiety and trauma among the gullible public.

The TV channels came up with campaign packages bearing catchy labels. The NDTV, the premier news channel in English launched "Enough is Enough", CNN IBN—one more in the same brigade—called its campaign "India's 9/11 – War on Mumbai", Times Now, the other English channel of Times group came up with, "India Stands United" and Headlines Today, the TV channel of India Today publication group, came up with another catchy title, "Declare War on Terror".

The study shows that over 30.7 per cent of respondents were not influenced by these power-packed patriotic campaigns whereas NDTV's "Enough is Enough" influenced 29.7 per cent, followed by Times Now's "India Stand United" (13.8%), CNNIBN's "India's 9/11 – War on Mumbai" (7.1%) and finally Headlines Today's "Declare War on Terror" (7.1%). The study points out that TV news channels exhibited patriotism and hyper nationalism and were emotional.

**H4a: Both pro- and anti-campaign respondents felt that the media should have displayed a greater degree of responsibility ( $\chi^2 = 46.589$ ,  $df 24$ , significant at 1% level).**

The respondents who felt media bias in the coverage of the terrorist attack were divided in their opinion on its influence in respect of patriotic campaigns launched by

the TV channels. However, both pro- and anti-campaign respondents unanimously felt that the media should have covered terror with greater responsibility.

**H4b: There is a significant association between the nationalist campaigns and the high coverage exerting pressure on the government and the public ( $\chi^2 = 30.473$ ,  $df 18$ , significant at 5% level).**

Patriotic slogans created an unwarranted war-like situation, giving rise to panic and anxiety among the public. The coverage which should have provided newsworthy information in a manner that would change people's understanding of the event transformed into a slogan-mongering ritual with no useful information for the public on the second and third days. It is shocking to note that TV channels resorted to instantaneous slogan-mongering campaigns at a time when the public was confused and concerned about its own safety during the major national crisis. Intriguingly, the TV channels wanted the public to join in the campaigns to evoke emotional reaction like "Enough is Enough", "India's 9/11 – War on Mumbai", "India Stands United" and "Declare War on Terror".

Mixing journalism and patriotism diminishes objectivity and balance in news reporting. "In several TV newsrooms across the country, anchors and reporters wore flag pins and patriotic ribbons for some time. American flag logos and such news slugs on TV channels as 'America Fights Back' sounds like patriotic slogans" says academician Chaudhary criticising the journalists caving into patriotism during the coverage of September 11 by US mainstream media (Chaudhary, 2002).

**H4c: Live TV coverage of terror did not motivate viewers to participate in the SMS campaign launched by the TV channels ( $\chi^2 = 9.85$ ,  $df 4$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).**

Though the majority of the respondents watched the terror live on an average of 3–4 hours per day on all three days, they were not motivated enough to send the SMS to TV channels in spite of the channels wanting them to participate in their campaigns ( $\chi^2 = 9.85$ ,  $df 4$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

**H5: There is a significant relationship between live TV coverage and public perception of government and politicians ( $\chi^2 = 64.74$ ,  $df 6$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).**

Respondents have felt that watching terror on TV channels changed their opinion about politicians and the government and they felt a sense of anger against the government ( $\chi^2 = 64.74$ ,  $df 6$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). The respondents felt that TV news created more tension (37.5%) and gave opinions instead of facts (34.3%). On a 5-point Likert scale, the respondents "agree" (46.3%) and "strongly agree" (34.3%) that TV journalists should have been more responsible in their coverage of terror. The study supports the contention that TV reacted emotionally and guided the public to react in a similar manner. The respondents agree that they did react to the TV news reporting and felt, "a sense of outrage against corrupt

politicians" (64.7%), "a sense of outrage against corrupt bureaucrats" (26.1%) and "a sense of outrage against communal forces" (22.6%). Those surveyed have admitted that they felt angry "definitely to great extent" (47.7%) and "to some extent" (38.9%) against the government after watching the live show. The respondents felt that the government was pressurised to issue statements against Pakistan (43.1%) and provoked the public to get angry against politicians and bureaucracy (33.6%) in the hour of crisis.

*H5a: There is a significant association between the duration of watching the live news and the change of public attitude towards politicians and the government ( $\chi^2 = 17.79$ ,  $df 8$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).*

People who watch the live terror for a longer duration tend to change their attitude towards politicians and the government, thus generating negative perception of the same.

*H5b: Live coverage of terror provoked people to perceive government negatively.*

The respondents admit that the live coverage of terror provoked them to the extent of getting them angry against the government, thus resulting in tension and anguish among the people ( $\chi^2 = 29.84$ ,  $df 12$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

*H5c: There is a significant relationship between watching live coverage and the public's perception of politicians ( $\chi^2 = 27.44$ ,  $df 8$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).*

The study shows that live TV coverage influenced the public to perceive politicians negatively and a high percentage of them hold politicians responsible for the terror (65.4%). Those who watched for a longer duration have held politicians responsible for terror, thus establishing a relationship between duration of viewing a live event and its influence on public attitude.

*H5d: There is a significant relationship between the duration of viewing and public criticism of the media.*

The majority of the respondents who have watched consistently for 3–4 hours on all three days have felt that the TV news channels should have behaved more responsibly in their coverage of terror ( $\chi^2 = 37.02$ ,  $df 24$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

*H6: There is a significant relationship between live TV coverage of terror and public perception of Pakistan ( $\chi^2 = 16.60$ ,  $df 8$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).*

The study shows that the TV reporting did not generate favourable attitude towards Pakistan and it compelled people to perceive Pakistan negatively. There is a significant relationship between TV coverage which reinforced the existing negative perception in the minds of the people against Pakistan and the public's opinion that the media should have been more responsible ( $\chi^2 = 16.60$ ,  $df 8$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The respondents felt that the

terror reporting has reinforced negative attitude "to some extent" (36.4%) and "to a great extent" (29.3%) towards Pakistan. 34.3 per cent of respondents stated that the negative standing on Pakistan has not changed anyway and they continue to perceive Pakistan negatively.

*H6a: There is a significant association between media opinion and public opinion in blaming Pakistan for the Mumbai terror.*

Both the TV news channels and public opinion blame Pakistan for the terrorist attack and to that extent, the media reflect public opinion. Interestingly, the public opined that the media did not blame Muslims for the terror attack and even the public held terrorists and not Muslims responsible ( $\chi^2 = 66.17$ , significant at 1% level). The public also agrees that the media blamed Pakistan (49.8%) and not Muslims (5.3%) for the terror attack. The public's negative perception of Pakistan finds greater expression when they hold Pakistan (35.3%) and not Muslims (5.7%) responsible for terror attack. Here, the public makes a clear distinction between Pakistan and Muslims as the latter are perceived as sympathisers of Pakistan.

*H6b: There is an association between the media advocating war with Pakistan and public criticism of the media ( $\chi^2 = 22.07$ ,  $df 8$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).*

*H6c: There is an association between live coverage exerting pressure on the government and public criticism of the media ( $\chi^2 = 25.63$ ,  $df 12$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).*

The study shows that the government was pressurised by the TV channels to issue statements against Pakistan and the public calling for more responsibility on the part of the media ( $\chi^2 = 25.63$ ,  $df 12$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

*H6d: There is a significant relationship between hyper nationalism in live TV and the perception of Pakistan ( $\chi^2 = 30.473$ ,  $df 18$ , significant at 5 % level).*

The study shows that the live coverage not only exhorted the government to issue statements against Pakistan to appease the Indian public but also influenced the public to perceive Pakistan negatively through the hyper nationalistic tone in their TV campaigns.

## Conclusion

The coverage of the terror attack on Mumbai on 26 September 2008 brought unprecedented challenges to the media in general and to television in particular. Television journalists in India with no experience of a similar kind to fall back on were caught unawares and therefore there was no sign of advanced preparedness.

The study corroborates the public criticism that television journalists failed to deliver during the most challenging news event. Patriotism and emotional fervor displayed by the media affected objectivity, accuracy and press freedom. Viewers were shocked to watch the horror of the terror attack that shook India on 26 November

2008. Nevertheless, more shocking was the manner in which the media in general and TV channels in particular sensationalised the event by its display of utter disregard to public sentiments.

The study shows that the public felt that there should have been some restraint placed on the information given out by the TV channels. One of the findings is that the public felt that the TV networks crossed the limits of journalism. By and large, the study builds up the theory that the media try to promote their own agenda with utter disregard to public interest even when reporting on human tragedy.

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