

THE GRIM FACE OF NEWSPAPERS

A study of negativity on the front pages of Nepal's national dailies

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HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Professional journalism in Nepal does not have a long history. The process of initiation of journalism started in 1851 with the arrival of a printing press and the publication of the first weekly newspaper *Gorkhapatra* in 1901 (IIDS:1996).

But in a true sense, the history of Nepali journalism began only after 1950 (Regmi & Kharel:2002) as for five decades from the publication of first weekly newspaper by the state, publication remained confined to literary magazines and souvenir issues.

Until the dawn of democracy in 1950, *Gorkhapatra* remained the lone frontier on journalism. But as a lone player which survived on blessings of rulers and news sent by state's post offices, probably *Gorkhapatra* even did not know what journalism was (Regmi & Kharel:2002).

Democratic system of governance also paved a path of development of journalism. Private newspapers came into existence after 1950, which means for full fifty years of Nepali people lived as a mono-medium society (IIDS:1996).

The change in guard also helped the state-owned newspaper to change itself. *Gorkhapatra*, which was synonym to newspaper in Nepal, was a government gazette until 1950 (Regmi & Kharel: 2002) that slowly began to become a newspaper after that.

However, during 10 years of democratic era lasting until 1961, a few newspapers began publication, published for a period of time and closed down. There was motivation of developing healthy journalism [by publication of newspapers] which was clamped down by the lack of readership, financial difficulties and problems faced by publishers (Regmi & Kharel: 2002).

King Mahendra's imposition of partyless Panchayat system disrupted the pace. Those newspapers which had continued publication were automatically shut down as the political parties were banned after the 1961's political change (Devkota: 1967).

While, the official media that continued to expand and grow (IIDS:1996), private Nepali newspapers and their editors who were critical of the King's regime were variously punished and several newspapers were banned for various periods of time (Article XIX: 2005).

The 1990 People's Movement helped re-establishment of democracy in the country and media was one of the biggest beneficiaries of the political transition. One of the sector in Nepal that has witnessed a spectacular growth since the Jana Andolan of 1990 is media (Onta:2006).

The demise of the Panchayat being the most significant, the media is the one sector that recorded massive growth during the decade of the 1990s (Article XIX: 2005).

The media growth is attributed to several factors as the Mass Media and Democratization (1996) pointed out:

Much has happened since 1990 on media front. Freedom of expression has become an established value. Censorship has been curtailed. Right to information has been recognized; seizure of press is

forbidden. News readership is up [...] Privatization has picked up. The stifling press laws has been curbed. Awareness movement has flowered up (IIDS: 1996).

In 1993, a new era in print journalism began with the launch of two private-sector broadsheet dailies, *Kantipur* and *The Kathmandu Post*. Their commercial success was crucial for development of Nepali journalism:

Kantipur's success created a foundation to lead the print journalism towards professionalism and attracting new generation to journalism. Then, there was a small wave of publishing broadsheet dailies. In 1995, five new broadsheet dailies – Himalaya Times, Lokpatra, Aajako Samacharpatra, Everest Herald and Shree Sagarmatha hit the market. Among them Aajako Samcharpatra is being published as Nepal Samacharpatra and Himalaya Times is dragging itself. Other three closed down with one-and-half years (Gautam & Humagain: 2004).

Even some of the dailies closed down, the publication of new dailies did not stop (Gautam & Humagain:2004). In 1997, Spacetime Dainik and Spacetime Today entered the market. The English-language Today was closed with a few years. The Nepali-language Spacetime Dainik was closed on August 2004 (KC:2009).

In 2001, Utsarga Publications began Rajdhani daily. Naya Sadak, a tabloid daily, also began the same year and closed down in two years after a big loss (Gautam & Humagain:2004).

The Himalayan Times and Annapurna Post was the latest entrants until Binod Gyawali, after splitting from Kantipur, began two broadsheet dailies. Nagarik and Republica began publication in April 2009 (KC:2009).

Although, other private sector dailies exist to make the daily news market fairly competitive, *Kantipur* remains the most widely read newspaper as of early 2010.

While the government continues to publish two newspapers, their influence has vastly diminished in the face of stiff competition from other broadsheet dailies from the private sector (Article XIX: 2005).

Media passed through two critical phases since 1990. The first was the 10-year-long Maoist insurgency and second King Gyanendra's autocratic rule.

During the height of the Maoist's insurgency, media remained interpretive thus uncritical and 'soft' to both the Maoist and state:

Although our mainstream media does not believe in the sustainability of revolutions achieved under the barrel of the gun [...] the coverage slowly gave way to a more sympathetic reporting on the Maoists [...] The media felt safe to report on government inefficiency and appear soft on the Maoists (Onta: 2006).

When the State of Emergency was declared November 1, 2001 with suspension of a few fundamental rights including freedom of expression and rights to information, media largely supported the state:

In the editorial statements [...], there was no hint of a critical stance against the state of emergency [...] Instead newspapers conveyed the view that given the 'resumption of violence' the declaration of the state of emergency was inevitable [...] these newspapers have a resigned attitude toward this

declaration (Article XIX: 2006).

The media were largely free until February 2005, when King Gyanendra dismissed the prime minister and began ruling directly as chair of a council of minister (Bhattarai: 2006).

Some newspapers postponed publication, some cut down number of pages and some others escaped issues after censorship imposition and obstacles in communication service immediately after the Royal Proclamation (Paudel & Mainali: 2007)

People's Movement in April 2006 forced King Gyanendra to hand back the power. But before doing so, the royal government amended six laws and introduced new controls on both media content and ownership in October, 2006 (Bhattarai: 2006).

The hatred that the royal regime showed towards Nepali journalists was never seen in the history of Nepali journalism so far journalists received frequent threat and were warned of action in case news is publish/broadcast (Gaunle: 2006).

Media fought back direct censorship creating a foundation for the People's Movement. The Nepali media were part of all these transformations, advocating democracy and actively engaged in every movement since the 1960s (Press Council of Nepal: 2008).

MEDIA AND NEGATIVITY

Although, Nepali media has played a pivotal role in the social and political transition in the country, there have been criticisms, from scholars, political leaders and ordinary reader.

Even head of the state, President Dr Ram Baran Yadav (2009) criticized media:

Now, they are only writing what Congress, UML, Maoist and Madhesh-based parties did [...] Journalists who write that political parties are irresponsible should also be exemplary by being responsible themselves [...] We can not see media go to depth [of issues] (Press Council of Nepal: 2009).

Social responsibility should be the major motto of journalism but power centres, personal interests, commercial interest and organizational interest dominate media (KC: 2009).

Although Nepali media are criticized for lack of in-depth reporting, the tendency of being negative and prioritizing negative issues generates higher number of criticism.

Pathak (2006) analysed news published the weekly newspapers for their positive and negative notion and found that only 24 per cent of the first-pages news carried positive notion. As 76 per cent news published on the front-pages were of negative notion, the weekly newspaper were found to have prioritized negative type of news (Pathak:2006).

News are generally distorted and overstressed in definite tone and private media looked stressed in negative news (Pandey:2007). Unsocial and inhuman activities have been encouraged by publishing random thoughts and prioritizing their news on attack and crimes (Pandey: 2007).

The prioritization of negative issues, Pathak (2006) concluded, shows lack of ethical standards:

Especially, weekly newspapers were found to prioritize negative issues [...] similarly sometime they have given space to unnecessary issues while shadowing issues and subjects of importance. This shows they lack news sense and responsibility (Pathak:2006).

The representation of women in the media continues to perpetuate negative and negative news about women is given prominence over positive news about them or their achievements (Thapa: 2007).

The tendency to prioritize negativity is a global phenomenon and media stresses in negative news more on political coverage. A study by Center for Media and Public Affairs in 1995 found out that 70 per cent coverage of United States' Congress was negative. Media studies show that bad news far outweighs good news by as much as seventeen negative news reports for every one good news report (Williams: 2009).

And, prioritizing negative news is also prevalent across the media. Hargreaves (2005), in his book *Journalism: A Short Introduction*, added for the televisions violence and death are prime stories:

Today's television journalists shoot pictures in desert war-zones and beam them via satellite for transmission around the world. These stories get most prominence if the shots are visually exciting: violence is desirable, death a bonus. Less melodramatic, but more important stories, about education, health, diplomacy and community relations, get less coverage (Hargreaves:2005).

The prioritization of negative news is probably to increase the sales of the newspapers. Media owners concentrate on commercial benefits rather than professionalism and ethical journalism (KC: 2009).

The media has the power to encourage people to do good things, prevent bad things from happening, educate people and save the lives of people. But instead, we are using it to promote sex, violence, and sensationalism and to line the pockets of already wealthy media moguls (Hargreaves:2005).

Conflicts remain the integral part of the newspaper news. Considered from a general impression of the Nepali press, inter-party and intra-party squabbles, rifts and rivalry appear to figure as the dominant theme (IIDS:1996).

And in Nepali media, the coverage remains predominantly political (Kharel: 2001) as Nepali media has been obsessed with politics (Khanal: 1997). A total of 61 per cent of news on the front-pages of national dailies are political (Acharya: 2006).

On an average, political content bore as high as a ratio as 4 to 1 in all the daily newspapers (IIDS:1996).

At times, especially during the critical phases of politics, Nepali media tends to be extremists – both on negative and positive aspects or neutral. During the election of Constituent Assembly, the tone of coverage remained largely neutral towards all political parties (Adhikari & Pokharel: 2008).

Nepali media also favourably covered the peace process (Chhetri:2009).

According to Pandey (2007), media was at the other extreme during the People's Movement:

In the time of people's movement, newspaper has played active role to initiate revolution. Negative news has been diffused much during the People's Movement. Everything good or bad has been criticized. Newspapers often used bombarding words to oppose opposition's role. (Pandey: 2007)

Studies have found that news from the places outside the Kathmandu Valley that do not generally get front-page space is more likely to get priority if they are negative. Only violence, closure of schools and deaths of a considerable number of people due to diseases were given the front page spaces (Acharya:2006). Violence and news about crime alone amounted to 25 per cent of total front-page news (Acharya: 2006).

It's not uncommon for media to prioritize negative news. In general, and apart from a few carefully crafted exceptions, negative information receives more processing and contributes more strongly to the final impression than does positive information (Baumister, Bratslavsky, Vohs & Finkenauer: 2001).

As Williams (2009) pointed out why media prioritizes negative side:

[...] we care more about the threat of bad things than we do about the prospect of good things. Our negative brain tripwires are far more sensitive than our positive triggers. We tend to get more fearful than happy. (Williams: 2009)

DEFINING NEGATIVITY

For the purpose of the study, the definition of negativity was borrowed from psychology.

Roy F Baumister, Ellen Bratslavsky, Kathleen Vohs and Catrin Finkenauer (2001) defined positive as something that we understand desirable, beneficial, or pleasant outcomes including states or consequences while negative is the opposite: undesirable, harmful or unpleasant.

Although, good and bad are among the first concepts learned by children and most people can readily characterize almost any experience, emotion, or outcome as good or bad (Baumister, Bratslavsky, Vohs & Finkenauer: 2001), the strict implementation of the theoretical assumptions in the study was not easy.

In the study, all the news that provoke the negative feeling such as fear, rejection, disapproval, pessimism, dehumanization, insecurity, mockery, restriction, violation and regress and negative traits such as unsuccessful, not agreed, incomplete, unavailable, failed, bad, violence, death, accident, injury, war, clash, conflict, crime and disaster are considered to be negative news.

Though the study is more focused on negativity, it's also worthwhile to define positive news. All news provoking the positive traits such as success, agreement, completed, available, planned, awarded, rehabilitation and improvement are positive news. Those positive news along with some news that are not easily distinguishable as negative or positive and those news that may provoke different feelings among different groups of people, especially due to their political views, were considered 'not negative' for the study.

METHODOLOGY & LIMITATIONS

The study is conducted on the front-page news of all national broadsheet dailies published from the Kathmandu Valley. This include seven Nepali newspapers – *Kantipur*, *Nagarik*, *Annapurna Post*, *Gorkhapatra*, *Rajdhani*, *Nepal Samacharpatra* and *Himalaya Times*; and four English-language newspapers – *Republica*, *The Kathmandu Post*, *The Himalayan Times* and *The Rising Nepal*.

Headline and lead or the first paragraph of all the news, except those published under explicitly labelled brief section, for a period of a fortnight, from December 1 to 15, 2009 were analyzed for negativity – both for the negativity and use of negative words and sentences.

The news stories were categorized into three types on the basis of headline's literal meaning: a) positive (news that we understand desirable, beneficial, or pleasant outcomes including states or consequences) b) negative (news that we understand undesirable, harmful or unpleasant) c) indistinguishable (news difficult to identify positive or negative)

The news stories were reviewed in terms lead's notion to see if they were negative or positive while describing the subject matter or issue. The stories had also been assessed in terms of position, news beat and diversity of subject. When the news were about violence, it was noted down.

The dailies outside the valley were excluded from the study due to limited resources for research. Similarly, the tabloid dailies were also excluded from the study because they were not comparable with broadsheet dailies in terms of coverage and presentation of news.

Two of the researchers themselves collected the data while the third researcher was verified the collected data and coding in an attempt to minimize the margin of errors. While in doubt, all three researchers discussed and either reached a consensus or classified the headline or lead sentence as 'indistinguishable'.

In general, content analysis of media has wide scope and dimensions; however, no single analysis is complete and reflects a complete picture.

A total of 761 news published in 11 national dailies of Kathmandu were analysed by processing the collected data using computer software SPSS 17.

OBJECTIVES & SCOPE

The general objective of this study is to evaluate the front-page news of national broadsheet daily newspapers for their positive and negative notion.

The study was carried out to:

- find out the level and intensity of negativity in the headlines and lead of the news
- comparatively analyse the ratio of negative and positive news on front-pages of the broadsheet dailies
- assess the priority of the newspapers in publication of negative and positive news
- qualitatively analyse if the news editors are inclined to sensationalism

This study will help to understand if the perennial accusation to media of being inclined towards negative issues is true, and if true, the exact situation of the inclination. This will help the media to self-assess and self-correct themselves if necessary.

In larger context, the researchers believe that the study will help improvement in overall media by understanding the shortcomings of their publications thus helping them to become more socially responsible and ethically standard.

ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATIONS

The quantity of negative news is analysed using two variables: negativity in the headline and negative notion in the sentences of the lead.

Negativity in headlines

Almost half of the news, 49.5 per cent, published on the front-pages of the daily newspapers have negative headlines. The remaining headlines comprised of positive (42.7 per cent) and indistinguishable (7.8 per cent). The figures establish the fact that the news was pre-dominantly negative.

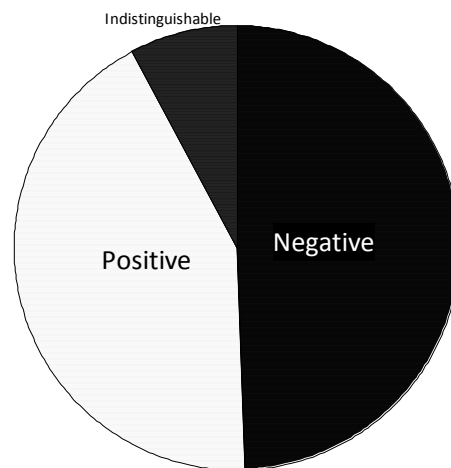


Chart 1: Headlines on front-pages of broadsheet dailies

It's also notable that only 7.2 per cent of the total news published on the front-pages were about violence while 92.8 per cent of the news were not in any way related to violent activities.

News about violence or violent activities along with news on disaster or accident and crime are understandably negative in nature. But despite lack of considerable number of the violence related news, the high number of negative headlines indicates an inclination towards negatively among the newspapers.

All news relating to disasters or accidents carried negative headlines while 81.5 per cent of news on crime had negative headlines. The positive headlines of news of crime were 18.5 per cent which was more or less relating to the police's success in arresting the accused. This is not a surprising result.

But the surprising result is that news on business and economy are most likely to be featured on front-pages for their negative aspects. Among news on business and economy, 63 per cent of the headlines were negative.

All the daily newspapers studied have one or more separate page dedicated for business news and when the news on business appears on the front-pages, they are pulled out on the front-page because they are thought to be of importance and given priority.

This is also true to sports news stories though only half of the sports stories on the front-pages were carrying negative headlines.

News on water resources or electricity carried no positive headlines with 66.9 per cent negative headlines and rest indistinguishable.

Politics, which covers 41 per cent of total news on the front-pages, too are covered more negatively as 54.8 per cent of the headlines on political news were negative. Only 37.2 per cent of political news stories were given positive headlines. Politics is most widely read topic and, is more likely to affect most of the readers than any other topic. Since politicians criticise other parties and leaders using harsh words, the newspaper are in love with making headlines out of such quotes.

Even news on health (52 per cent), education (50 per cent), agriculture (50 per cent) and foreign employment (50 per cent) are predominantly negative further supporting the fact that news from beat other than politics make front-pages for their negative aspects rather than for positive aspects.

News on development, tourism, judiciary, are less likely to be negative. News on science and technology and religion and culture all carried positive headlines. But these five beats, collectively, constitute only 7.5 per cent of total front-page news and, that means, such news remains normally unseen.

Interestingly, only 40 per cent of the headlines on news on corruption were negative, same numbers of headlines were positive, while 20 per cent carried indifferent headlines.

Same is true for news coming in from outside the Kathmandu Valley. A total of 58.6 per cent of headlines for news originating from outside the valley were negative while only 39.1 per cent were positive.

Nepali-language newspaper put more negative headlines than English-language newspapers. A total of 52.6 per cent of headlines in Nepali-language newspapers were negative while the per cent was 48 in English-language newspapers.

Newspaper-wise, *Annapurna Post* gave more priority to negative headlines as 70.6 per cent of the headlines published in the Nepali daily were negative. More than half of the headlines published in *Rajdhani* (58.6 per cent), *The Himalayan Times* (57.8 per cent), *Kantipur* (51.8 per cent) and *The Kathmandu Post* (50.8 per cent) were negative.

Government-owned newspapers, *The Rising Nepal* and *Gorkhapatra*, are at the bottom of the table.

Only 38.8 per cent of headlines on the English daily and 43.3 per cent of the Nepali daily were negative. Gorkhapatra gave neutral headlines to 14.4 per cent of news.

It was observed during the study that the state-owned media published less negative news for two reasons. First, they normally do not criticise on government activities or action and second, they publish a sizable number of news stories based on speeches given by ministers.

(in percentage)

Newspaper	Negative Headlines	Positive Headlines	Indistinguishable
Kantipur	51.8	33.9	14.3
Nagarik	48.2	48.2	3.6
Annapurna Post	70.6	25.5	3.9
Gorkhapatra	43.3	42.3	14.4
Nepal Samacharpatra	48.3	46.7	5.0
Rajdhani	58.6	37.9	3.4
Himalaya Times	47.1	47.1	5.8
Nepali Average	52.6	40.2	7.2
Republica	44.6	46.4	8.9
The Himalayan Times	57.8	39.1	3.1
The Kathmandu Post	50.8	34.4	14.8
The Rising Nepal	38.8	55.1	6.1
English Average	48	43.8	8.2
AVERAGE	49.5	42.7	7.8

Table 1: Negative headlines in newspapers

Positional analysis show that prominently displayed news are more negative in nature. Among main news, 55.4 per cent headlines were negative while 41 per cent were positive.

For example, on Dec 11, *Nagarik* daily published a three-column main news about a bus accident that killed a tenth grade female student under the headline: School bus accident on highway pit. On the same day, there were four other news on the front-pages, three of which were carried negative headlines: Major Basnet oust, Bista still critical and Rukum journalists terrified. The lone positive news – under the title Muslims constructing temple was placed at anchor position.

Hard news, generally those news based on events, are more likely to be covered on negative tone than the feature news. It's evident from the percentage of positive news positioned at anchor, a position that is generally given to feature news, which is 49.4. Only 42.9 per cent of anchor news had negative headlines.

News positioned between main news and anchor matched with the total average of the negative news. 49.4 per cent of news positioned on space other than main news and anchor of the front-pages carried negative headlines. This also indicates that the flow of news from top-to-bottom of the page is negative to positive, which consolidates that the main news is more likely to carry negative headlines.

Case study

A cursory look at all headlines published on particular days gives how much negativity can engulf the front-pages and priorities of the newspapers towards negative news.

On December 2, *The Kathmandu Post* published three news stories on the front-page. All the headlines used verbs or preposition of negative nature: Maoist autonomy agenda worries president; Governance, electoral model still unresolved and ICJ urges PM against Toran promotion.

On the same day, *The Kathmandu Post*'s sister-publication Kantipur published four news stories – three of them were not published in the English daily's front-page and all of them carried headlines with verbs of negative nature. The headlines were: President worried; London college closed down, Nepali students stranded; Maoist brigade commander arrested and Sorry, the service is not available.

Similarly, on December 6, *Annapurna Post* published four news stories on front-page and three of them having negative headlines: Tension continues in Kailali, 2,500 huts destroyed; Leaving Constituent meeting for allowance-earning meeting; Nepali women facing hard lives in Korea and corruption can be controlled.

The front-page of the state-owned *Gorkhapatra* on December 10 was full of headlines with words of negative nature. Among seven news published on the day, five carried headlines with negative meaning: No new Nepal with agenda of power gain; Maoists promote violence; Parties' conditions issue of dispute and Cruel attack on journalist Bista.

On December 12, *Nagarik* published four news and three of them having headlines with negative connotation: Tax invaded in Nepal Oil Corporation's help; 700 thousands paid but [abducted boy] not released and pollution in [each and] every drop.

Lead analysis

Lead is the first paragraph of any news story and normally the summary of the whole news. It's also the heart of the story for it is second component after headline to draw people's attention.

It was assessed that majority of the lead, 61.5 per cent, consisted of a single sentence. The two-sentence lead was found in 29.3 per cent of the news while 6.2 per cent of lead had three sentences and the rest more than three sentences.

If the leads are longer, then they are more likely to be negative in notion. Among single-sentence lead, 47.2 per cent were found to have negative notion sentence.

Among leads consisting of two sentences, 37.7 per cent consisted of all negative notion sentences while 18.8 per cent has one negative notion sentence. Overall, 56.5 per cent of two-sentence leads had at least one negative sentence.

In three-sentence leads, 59.6 per cent news had one, two or all negative notion sentence. Only, 40.4 per cent of the news had no negative notion sentence among three-sentence leads.

Since the lead represents the headline, it was expected results.

An interesting result is that there was sizeable number of news that had a positive lead but a negative headline. Among the news stories which carried negative headlines, 19.3 per cent had no negative notion sentence in the lead.

This shows the newspapers' priority for negativity as they journalists are giving negative headlines for the news stories that were more possibly positive stories. This is alarming because this not only shows the inclination towards negativity but also that the journalists are more likely to prioritize negative aspects of a news story in expense of positive aspects.

It is also notable here that only 12.8 per cent news with dominantly negative lead came with positive headline. Although this shows that the combination of negative headline – positive lead and positive headline – negative is happening, there is also another point: if the journalists are not inclined with negativity, even news with negative tone can have positive or neutral headlines.

Among that news with positive headlines, 87.2 per cent consisted of all positive sentences the lead.

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

It is easy to talk on media contents, both for and against it. Based on the perennial criticism that media contents are mostly negative and that media's focus has been more on destructive than constructive role, the researchers began this study with an assumption that media are highly negative.

Since there had not been much researches and studies on this particular issues, the negativity of media was a mostly a speculation and based on cursory media experience. Right could be considered wrong and wrong could be right on the absence of researches.

This content analysis was carried out to know the exact situation of media so to avoid speculation and estimation. It shows the situation of negativity in Nepal's daily newspapers with an analysis of all broadsheet daily newspaper published from the Kathmandu Valley.

Results of the research indicated that the front-pages news and headlines are predominantly of negative tone and notion. Almost half of the headlines were used negativity and bombarding words for attracting people's attention. Editor's love for negative and/or bombarding words is understandable for they gave a melodramatic effects and, as psychology describes it, have a long-lasting effects.

Humans are much more likely to recall and be influenced by negative experiences of the past (Smith, Larsen, Chartrand, Cacioppo, Katatiasz & Moran: 2006). But the priority to negativity is not justifiable as this shows an inclination towards being sensational and lack of responsibility.

It's normal for news on disasters, accidents and crimes to carry negative tone. But presentation of such news, and proper headlines, can tone down intensity of negativity. For example, many newspapers used words like cruel and inhuman in the headlines of the news on attack on journalist Tika Bista during the study period. The attack can not be justified in any way, but use of words that intensified the fear in people could have been safely avoided.

The tone of business and economy news headline has 63 per cent negative. News on health, education, sports, agriculture and foreign employment were of negative notion. These news normally do not get front-page space but the study suggested that they are more likely to become a face of the newspaper if they are negative in nature.

Politics dominate the front-pages of daily newspapers, with 41 per cent news being politics, and political leaders' criticism to the each other or other parties make a juicy news. News like 'President worried' and 'Maoists promote violence' can attract attention but gives no good feeling to the readers.

Majority of Nepalis see Nepal as a failed state where nothing is going to happen. Liechty (2003) in *Suitably Modern* described his impression of Ramesh, an ordinary youth from Kathmandu:

Turning in disgust to politics, and the recently revived multiparty political scene, Ramesh went on to blame the country's condition and his won on the government: Why should Nepali people work hard? There is no hope. Nothing will ever change. (Lietcy: 2003)

Media could have de-escalated the feeling of hopelessness and despair but rather they helped in intensifying the feelings with all but negative news on politics.

Negative experience or fear of bad events has a far greater impact on people than do neutral experience or even positive experience (Smith, Larsen, Chartrand, Cacioppo, Katatiasz & Moran: 2006). And, with the reading more negative news and less positive news everyday, people are more likely take into consideration the negativity in decision making.

Studies have proved that undesirable (bad) events had more pervasive effects on subsequent mood than desirable (good) ones; and found that there are some evidence that affective consequences of negative information are stronger than those of good information (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer & Vohs: 2001).

The study found that news on development, tourism and judiciary are less negative while news on science and technology and religion and culture all carried positive headlines. But news of these five beats are rare on front-pages.

Many news stories originating outside the Kathmandu Valley are negative. A total of 58.6 per cent of headlines for news originating from outside the valley are negative which establishes that the Kathmandu-centric national dailies are more likely to portray those parts of nation negatively than positively.

The readership competition is tough among the Nepali-language dailies and for the commercial success of the newspaper; they are more inclined to negativity. Nepali-language newspaper put more negative headlines than English-language newspapers.

Positional analysis shows that prominently displayed news are more negative in nature. Among main news, 55.4 per cent headlines were negative remain are positive. Hard news, generally those news based on events, are more likely to be covered on negative tone than the feature news.

Similarly in lead, single sentence leads have more negative notion than two and three sentence leads. Negative notion sentences dominate the lead, sometime even true with the positive news.

It is notable that positive headlines have negative notion sentences in lead and negative headlines also have positive notion sentences in lead. But the alarming factor is the percentage of the negative headline-positive news combination. Nearly 20 per cent of positive news stories are given negative headings, unnecessarily for the inclination towards the negativity. The priority of newspapers, and journalists, for negativity aspect of news or negative headlines that draw attention of the people can lead to the ignorance to positive aspects of the issues.

Further researches can help in more precise understanding of the situation. Studies focused on impact of negative news on the lives, decision-making and other personal and social aspects of people can lead to better understanding if the media is on the wrong direction, as accused time and again.

Print media are for literate people; and they are more likely to distinguish between bad and good than illiterate people who are mainly exposed to broadcasting media. A similar study of the content of radio and television will not only help understand if the phenomena similar across different medium but also to assess the impact of negative content more effectively.

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