

Development Issues and Media Attention in Regional Press: An Evaluation of Eastern Himalaya Newspapers with a Special Focus on Coverage of Development Stories in Sikkim

Mahendra Prasad Gurung

Abstract

The role of the newspaper in introducing a democratic corner of discussion in societies whether developing or developed is well established. The ability of newspapers in pointing fingers at the lopsided developmental process as well as the uneven distribution of developmental resources is well recognized in a liberal society with democratic norms firmly in place. While the role of newspapers in societal development is firmly entrenched in the collective discourse, the discursive role of print media in development through information supply or cultivating appropriate attitudes towards development is yet to take a concrete shape in many developing societies. Therefore this work tried to explore the role of the press in the Eastern Himalayan region of India in situating development as a part of the societal narrative through an analysis of the contents of four major newspapers of the region with a primary focus on the coverage of development issues in Sikkim, the newest state of Indian Union and the eighth member of North Eastern Council. The study has adopted content analysis as a method and finds out that the newspapers of the region consider development as an also-run narrative, depend mostly on agencies or government sources for news collection, offer no editorial direction, and publish mostly event based stories with a pro-government orientation.

Keywords: *Issue salience, Editorial prominence, Sources of news, Slant in news stories, Orientation,*

This article is an outcome of an ongoing Ph.D. thesis on print media and development in Sikkim.

Introduction

There are multiple facets to the development of human society, as proponents of development have regarded many spheres to be improved for the overall development of society. The multi-faceted development also takes within its ambit the social, cultural, and political implications leading to a democratically governed multicultural society. While GDP or HDI are often considered the tangible aspects of development, the development and nurturing of a culturally diverse society without compromising its centuries-old ethos are difficult to measure. It can be felt in the tangible actions and the pattern of reaction of a given society.

Sikkim is a curious example of a society with multi-ethnic and religious pluralism that has retained and nurtured its Buddhist traditions while embracing Hinduism practiced by the majority of Nepali people. The amalgamation of religious values has helped to retain and allowed for the flourishing of a multicultural society that has no history of religious clashes or ethnic conflicts like many other states in the Northeast. The history of democracy in Sikkim is relatively new and its experience of democracy for four decades has been largely guided by its traditional ethnic communitarian and religious values and mostly lacks any history of violence.

This work explores the role of media in a developing society which has been largely restricted so far to understand if the measurable indices of development are flourishing or floundering. Development has been defined by different scholars in various different ways, however, the basic idea of development in a scientifically modern and developing society is to bring about a significant positive change in the life of an individual as well as the whole society. The development can be made in the areas of per capita income, education, health, skill development, and employment opportunities, to give them economic freedom, by building infrastructures such as transportation, irrigation, communication, etc., and making these facilities accessible to the poorest of its citizens. It has also been observed that several approaches can be adopted to improve measurable indicators of social changes like education or health services, especially in developing ones. Development, according to Rogers (1974) is "...a type of social change in which new ideas are introduced into a social system in order to produce higher per capita incomes and levels of living...". The development can also be seen as "...the acquisition of new knowledge and skills..." (Moemeka, 1994). In the process of achieving developmental goals, the role of communication has been well established, from the earliest development scholars like Rogers, Schramm, and many others have argued enough about its efficacies. The role of adequate and effective communication has been hailed, which will eventually help in sharing required knowledge among people who need it the most (Schramm, 1964). The print medium has been considered a powerful medium mostly because of its durability where readers can refer to it anytime they want (Moemeka, 1994).

Related Literature: In their effort to understand the media's role in a developing society, Gugsu, et al (2016) examined media coverage of three different developing countries of the world applying content analysis as a research technique. Their work was premised on the "United Nations Millennium Development Goal 5 (MDG 5)" which is directed toward improving maternal health. With the objective of examining the newspaper coverage of maternal health, the researchers "analyzed the leading national English-language newspapers from Bangladesh (The Daily Star), Rwanda (The New Times/The Sunday Times) and South Africa (Sunday Times/The Times)" and the selection of the newspapers were made on the basis of the highest circulated English newspaper and published both in print and on the internet. During the study period from "1 October 2010 to 31 March 2013 a total of 190 articles were collected." The 'constructed week' sampling technique was adopted for the selection of

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samples and with the help of quantitative content analysis, the researchers quantified the articles based on “the number and nature of articles, purpose, and regional focus of the articles, length, and types of articles such as news vs. editorial.”

The Daily Star with 61% of its news reports in the area of creating awareness in regard to maternal health published the highest. The other newspapers had a considerably low coverage of 39% suggesting similar awareness (p.7). On discussing MDG 5 in regard to maternal health, The Daily Star had 36% whereas only 9% of articles were found from Rwanda and no article from South Africa.

With the objective of ascertaining the “role of regional print media in publishing development news”, Vani (2014) analyzed Eenadu, Deccan Chronicle, and Andhra Jyoti newspapers, and the data was collected between March to August 2013. Their work discussed the developmental news published in the three leading newspapers in major cities of Andhra Pradesh, India. Exposing the data to content analysis techniques, the study took news reports, editorials, and letters to the editor as units of analysis. A total of 52 stories qualified from all three newspapers during the study period of six months, wherein the data was collected randomly with three issues every month on the 4th, 14th, and 24th of each month for all the newspapers. Post analysis, it was understood that not much importance was given to development news by any of the newspapers under study. The result reflected that “very few editorials were published while not a single letter to the editor was found and the majority of the stories were published in the inside pages.” The photographs were fewer on developmental news. English newspapers were better in terms of coverage of developmental news than the language press. Instead of giving importance to development news, the newspapers concentrated on subjects like politics, economics, sports, arts, etc. Hence, it can be summed up that “the newspapers failed in helping to shape public opinion on issues of development.”

Moshrefzadeh, et. al. (2013) evaluated the coverage of the implementation of smoke-free bylaws in the city of Vancouver. The work attempted “to understand the potential influence of news media on public perception of the bylaw”, by their frequency, approach, and the slant of their stories. Their qualitative analysis of the media content reflected the “the coverage of the local newspapers was low considering only 90 stories were found over the period of two years from 1 January 2010 to 31 December 2011.” However, the majority of stories related to bylaws were presented with a positive slant with 38.9%, 30% neutral, and 22.2% negative. The slant analysis in two different categories of news articles and letters showed that half of the news articles held a positive slant and only 7.4% were negative. All the letters to the editor were negative towards the bylaws but considering the very low numbers of letters against the more positive slant of news articles, the researchers concluded that the “readers were left with an overall generally supportive slant towards the smoke-free bylaw.”

A.K. Singh (2011) looked into the trend of coverage of Government development programmes in a newspaper by analyzing the content through qualitative indicators. The 10

samples of the newspaper Hindustan (Hindi) from June and July 2010 were considered and randomly selected. The stories on subjects of Health, Education, Agriculture, Rural Development, Urban Development, and Environment have been considered developmental news. However, subjects like sports, business, and economics were excluded. After observing the contents, the researcher found that the newspaper had ignored the developmental news comprehensively, instead, the newspaper covered the topics like crime, accidents, forgery, strikes, and politics on most pages. Only during the time of controversies, the newspaper has given coverage to development stories.

Kayode and Adeniran, (2012) attempted to understand the media's role in achieving the Millennium Development Goals of Nigeria through the analysis of *The PUNCH*, and *The Guardian*, two national newspapers of Nigeria. The study period was from 1st January to 30th June 2008 wherein the contents of a total of 364 editions from two selected newspapers were analyzed for the study. The selected stories for the analysis were limited to stories on the MDGs only and all the other stories were excluded. They selected straight news, news analysis, features and opinions, and editorials published on the MDGs as units of analysis.

The study sought to answer the research question, "How do Nigerian newspapers acquire the information they publish on development issues?" They used 'source' as a variable "to examine whether reporters identify the source of the stories." The results showed that most of the news came from event coverages and happenings, which reflected the newspapers' reliance on events for the coverage. The investigative reports were lacking and no critical analysis of development reports was presented. The researchers summed up that "the Nigerian media failed to set an agenda for public discussion and failed to raise issues for both government and the public for a larger discussion of issues pertinent to the development of the country."

Shah (1990) examines, "the factors influencing the production of development news" with the help of three top newspapers published in New Delhi. All three sample newspapers were daily and they were; the Economic Times (English), The Hindustan Times (English), and Navbharat Times (Hindi). The samples were collected from the 1985 calendar year and randomly chosen days from each month were analyzed. Almost the entire published items in newspapers except for photographs, advertisements, weather forecasts, etc. were analyzed. The specific research question relevant to the current study addressed in his study were; "What are the characteristics of development news: the topics, actors, and setting most frequently covered, and sources most frequently used? What proportion of the total news content is development news?" Shah (1990). The results of the data showed that "from the 2,382 news stories, features, columns, editorials, and letters to the editor, there were only 378 (or about 16 percent) that fit the definition of development news" Shah (1990). On categorizing, "55% of the actors were from the established order (heads of state, legislators, members of the ruling party, ministers, ambassadors, members of the armed forces, police, and industry and corporate officials). Only three percent of the items covered actors belonging to political opposition groups" Shah (1990). The news sources too mostly were from the people in power.

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The coverage of the news reports revealed that only 11% of the items covered major developmental works from rural areas.

Contextual Issues: It becomes pertinent to explore the potential of print media to contribute to development discourse and in particular the role of the regional press in the Eastern Himalayan region of India which primarily is constituted by the state of Sikkim and the two hill districts, Kalimpong and Darjeeling of the neighboring state of West Bengal. The region is populated by a majority of Nepali language-speaking people though the official language of Sikkim is English as it is a state of multi-ethnicity as well as of multiple languages. The newspapers exclusive to the region including Sikkim have a history of more than fifty years but there has rarely been an attempt to interpret the role of the newspaper as a democratic institution with a stake in holistic development in the context of Sikkim. The history of democratic politics in the state is of recent origin and print media is considered generally a positive contributor to the process. But other than advancing the causes of democracy, the media also have a very serious role in outlining the contours of development as well as integrating the process with a larger democratic discourse. Therefore the current work has undertaken the study of the four highest circulated newspapers, namely, The Sikkim Express, and Himalayan Mirror, both English dailies, and two Nepali dailies, Samay Dainik and Hamro Prajashakti. Sikkim Express and Samay Dainik are published from Sikkim while Hamro Prajashakti and Himalayan Mirror are published from Siliguri and cater to the entire region with a special focus on Sikkim.

The following research questions have been framed to understand the extent and nature of coverage in select newspapers.

R. Q. 1. What are the most widely covered developmental issues in select newspapers in the context of Sikkim?

R. Q. 2. What percentage of sources and actors (individuals described in news stories) are represented in the Press in the context of the state of Sikkim?

R. Q. 3. What percentage of development stories in the selected newspapers is positive or encouraging, and what percentage is negative or neutral?

R. Q. 4. How is the developmental priority determined by the newspaper?

Method: The content analysis technique has been employed to analyze the contents of the newspapers. It is preferred as a research technique to analyze “texts, images, and expressions that are created to be seen, read, interpreted, and acted on for their meanings” (Krippendorff, 2004: 13). Replicability is one of the most important benefits offered by content analysis as a research technique (Berelson, 2000). The newspapers were chosen over a period of 12 months after constructing a week in every month randomly on the basis of each week starting on the next day of the preceding weekday of the previous month to eliminate bias

and provide the opportunity for equal representation of each day of the week in accordance with the method of systematic randomization. If the random week in January started on a Monday, the random week in February started on a Tuesday. The construction of the week was expected to be a collection of 84 issues of each newspaper though because of holidays and other geographical constraint-related issues, 299 newspapers could be collected and the collected newspapers published a total of 790 news stories excluding editorials. The unit of analysis is news stories and editorials. Editorials have been analyzed separately.

Health, education, women empowerment, employment opportunity, and sanitation and safe drinking water have been identified as parameters of development in the context of this article, and stories published in the select four newspapers in the context of Sikkim exclusively have been coded for the purpose of the current work. The coding of the sample was done by two coders. To assure reliability, the researcher has conducted inter-coder reliability. It was done using Holsti's method (1969), which counts up the decisions which are unanimous and these sum of unanimous decisions are then divided by the sum total of coding decisions made by the coders. Holsti's method (ibid) is considered appropriate for the percentage analysis of coding agreement between two coders assigned to code the units of analysis. Holsti's reliability index is $2M \div N1 + N2$ where $2M$ stands for the percentage of agreement between two coders. $N1$ and $N2$ are the numbers of two coders' consensus decisions, where 'M' stands for sum total of unanimous decisions, and $N1$ and $N2$ are the numbers of judgments the coders have made respectively. Coders were assigned to code mainly the total number of news published each day in the newspapers taken up for the study and the stories published that fit the parameters of development news. For ascertaining inter-coder reliability, both the coders interchanged the issues of four newspapers *Himalayan Mirror*, *Samay Dainik*, *Hamro Prajashakti*, and *Sikkim Express*. 68 copies of newspapers were coded which consisted of more than 20% of the total sample size of 299 issues of four newspapers together. Coding reliability is considered adequate if it is around 10% of the sample (Pamela J. Shoemaker et. al. 2003). Intercoder reliability agreement is important to understand "the extent to which independent coders evaluate a characteristic of a message or artifact and reach the same conclusion" (Lombard et al., 2002). Category reliability measures a researcher's ability to operationally define the categories to help independent coders to agree on coding decisions (Kassarjian, 1977).

The current work takes within its ambit the quantitative technique to measure the most widely covered category of developmental stories in the context of Sikkim exclusively to analyze 299 issues of four leading newspapers of the region and including two highest-selling English newspapers and two highest circulated Nepali newspapers as Nepali is one of the most important languages used in the region. Print space given to each category of development issues has been identified as the variable for quantitative analysis and total space devoted to five coded categories of developmental stories was exposed to multiple regression as well as qualitative variables like Source, Type, Slant, Orientation, and analysis of the editorial.

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The source refers to if the story has been collected by an employed reporter or correspondent which underlines the newspaper's interest in the given issue or from an agency feed.

Type is defined as the tool to identify stories published as positive for the issue or negative and whether these are proactive meaning the story was collected by the newspaper reflecting its positive interest or reactive which means the story reports something which has happened and reached the editorial desk through correspondent or agency feed and neutral means which the newspaper has published to fill the space and without any additional points added to it.

Slant as a qualitative variable identifies the stories as pro-development which in this context is defined as stories highlighting the deficiencies in implementing a developmental programme, stories as pro-government which means the story lauds government agenda, and also defines some stories as neutral.

Orientation as a qualitative indicator or variable identifies the stories published on five identified categories of development as policy declarations, or types of reporting which includes event announcement, recurring news, mixed news, and recurring item to indicate the flavor of an item of reporting and finally orientation also refers to nature of reporting meaning if the story was an article, feature article, syndicated column, post-editorial or editorial and identifies the relative importance of development stories vis-é-vis other stories published in the newspaper.

Data Interpretation:

Multiple regression was adopted as a statistical technique since it's a parametric test to understand the relative importance of different developmental stories in the context of Sikkim. It was important to see how out of the 790 printed items including features, editorials, and hard news stories on the five identified areas coded as developmental stories, which category of developmental sectors turned out to be statistically significant.

The multiple-regression technique was applied as a controlled operation to compute the association between two variables while regulating the impact of other variables. Moreover, the following tables explain the degree of linear relationships between the criterion variables like Education, Sanitation and Water, Health, Employment Opportunity, and Women Empowerment and a number of other predictors (or control variables) like the newspapers, the months, and the week. Thus, it can be further derived that the coefficients are to measure the quantum of alteration in the criterion variable with the change of any unit in the predictor while regulating all other variables in the equation.

Multiple regression was used by the researcher to make the relationship non-spurious so that the exact empirical relationship between predictors and criterion variables is maintained. The predictor variable as an independent variable is here known for the purpose

of regression analysis is the newspapers, weekdays, and months whereas the dependent or criterion variables are the developmental stories as coded under the research scheme of the current work.

Education vis-a-vis Newspapers, Weekday and Months	
Model	R
1.	139 ^a
a.	Predictors: (Constant), Weekday, Newspapers, Month

ANOVA ^a				
Model		Df	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3	2.173	.091 ^b
	Residual	332		
	Total	335		
a. Dependent Variable: Education				
b. Predictors: (Constant), Weekday, Newspapers, Month				

Coefficients							
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.		
	B	Std. Error					
1	(Constant)	13.018	11.519			1.130	.259
	Papers	5.994	2.877	113	2.084	.038	
	Month	.171	.133	.070	1.287	.199	
	Weekday	1.052	1.616	.035	.651	.516	
a. Dependent Variable: Education							

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Interpretation: From the above table, Education is found to be significant in the newspapers which are taken for analysis like Hamro Prajashakti, Himalayan Mirror, Samay Dainik, and Sikkim Express. The above multiple regression was applied as a controlled operation to compute the connection between two variables while controlling for the effect of others. Moreover, the above table explains the degree of linear relationships between the dependent variable Education and a number of other independent (or control variables). Thus, it can be further derived that the above coefficients measure the quantity of change in the dependent variable with one unit change in the independent variable while regulating for all other variables in the equation. Multiple regression was used by the researcher to make the relationship non-spurious so that the exact empirical relationship between predictors and criterion variables is maintained.

While keeping the other predictors constant here, the above table clearly indicates that the criterion variables are significantly correlated with only one predictor like the newspapers. The select newspapers are significant variables and a powerful cause for coverage of issues related to Education. Moreover, it showed an insignificant relationship between the weekdays and months with education. The other two predictor variables, weekdays and months have no role in deciding the coverage of issues related to education.

Health vis-a-vis Newspapers, Weekday and Months	
Model	R
1	.69 ^a
a.	Predictors: (Constant), Weekday, Newspapers, Month

ANOVA ^a				
Model		Df	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3	3.259	.022b
	Residual	332		
	Total	335		
a. Dependent Variable: Health				
b. Predictors: (Constant), Weekday, Newspapers, Month				

Coefficients							
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.		
	B	Std. Error					
1	(Constant)	12.516	7.767			1.611	.108
	Papers	2.774	1.940	.077	1.430	.154	
	Month	-.156	.090	-.094	-1.741	.083	
	Weekday	2.462	1.090	.122	2.260	.024	
a. Dependent Variable: Education							

Interpretation: The above multiple regression was applied as a controlled operation to measure the relationship between two variables while regulating the influence of others. Moreover, the above table explains the level of linear relationships between the dependent variable Health and a number of other independent (or control variables). Thus, it can be further derived that the above coefficients measure the amount of change in the dependent variable and at the same time regulate other variables in the equation. Multiple regression was used by the researcher to make the relationship non-spurious so that the exact empirical relationship between predictors and criterion variables is maintained.

Having kept the other predictors constant here, the above table clearly indicates that the criterion variables are significantly correlated with only one predictor like the Weekdays i.e. the weekdays are significant variables and a powerful cause for coverage of issues related to Health. Moreover, it showed an insignificant relationship between the newspapers and month with Health. It means Health is significant on weekdays irrespective of newspapers and months which have no role in deciding the coverage of issues related to Health.

Women Empowerment vis-a-vis Newspapers, Weekday and Months	
Model	R
1	.103 ^a
a.	Predictors: (Constant), Weekday, Newspapers, Month

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ANOVA ^a				
Model		Df	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3	1.196	.311 ^b
	Residual	332		
	Total	335		
a. Dependent Variable: Women Empowerment.				
b. Predictors: (Constant), Weekday, Newspapers, Month				

Coefficients							
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.		
	B	Std. Error					
1	(Constant)	4.013	4.823			.832	.406
	Papers	2.194	1.204	.099	1.822	.069	
	Month	-.028	.056	-.028	-.506	.613	
	Weekday	-.062	.676	-.005	-.092	.927	
a. Dependent Variable: Women Empowerment.							

Interpretation: The above table shows that when it comes to 'Women Empowerment' as a dependent variable, there is no significant relationship between the predictor variable and criterion variables like women empowerment.

Women Empowerment vis-a-vis Newspapers, Weekday and Months	
Model	R
1	.111 ^a
a.	Predictors: (Constant), Weekday, Newspapers, Month

ANOVA ^a				
Model		Df	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3	1.370	.252 ^b
	Residual	332		
	Total	335		
a. Dependent Variable: Employment Opportunity				
b. Predictors: (Constant), Weekday, Newspapers, Month				

Coefficients							
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.		
	B	Std. Error					
1	(Constant)	23.723	6.624			3.581	.000
	Papers	.599	1.654	.020	.362	.718	
	Month	-.028	.056	-.028	-.506	.613	
	Weekday	-1.522	.929	-.090	-1.638	.102	
a. Dependent Variable: Employment Opportunity							

Interpretation: From the above table, it is found that in the case of employment opportunity as a criterion variable, there is no significant relationship with predictor variables like newspapers, weekdays, and months.

Sanitation and Water vis-a-vis Newspapers, Weekday and Months	
Model	R
1	.264 ^a
a.	Predictors: (Constant), Weekday, Newspapers, Month

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ANOVA ^a				
Model		Df	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3	8.303	.000b
	Residual	332		
	Total	335		
a. Dependent Variable: Sanitation & Water				
b. Predictors: (Constant), Weekday, Newspapers, Month				

Coefficients							
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.		
	B	Std. Error					
1	(Constant)	15.605	5.490			2.843	.005
	Papers	3.101	1.371	.120	2.262	.024	
	Month	-.275	.063	-.231	-4.348	.000	
	Weekday	.904	.770	.062	1.174	.241	
a. Dependent Variable: Sanitation & Water							

Interpretation: The above multiple regression was applied as a controlled operation to find out the relationship between two variables while regulating the influence of others. Moreover, the above table explains the level of linear relationships between the dependent variable (Sanitation and water) and a number of other independent variables (or control variables). It can be further summarised that the above coefficients measure the quantity of change in the dependent variable with any fluctuation in the independent variable and at the same time regulate other variables in the equation. Multiple regression was used by the researcher to make the relationship non-spurious so that the exact empirical relationship between predictors and criterion variables is maintained.

With the other predictors constant here, the above table clearly indicates that the criterion variables are significantly correlated with only two predictors like the newspapers and months i.e., the select newspapers and designated months are significant variables and a powerful

cause for coverage of issues related to sanitation and water. Moreover, it showed an insignificant relationship between the weekdays with sanitation and water i.e., weekdays newspapers have no role in deciding the coverage of issues related to sanitation and water.

Qualitative Analysis of the Stories:

Newspapers	Correspondent/ Reporter	Agency/Press Releases	Percentage (%) of stories respectively
Sikkim Express	93	175	35% - 65%
Himalayan Mirror	9	96	9% - 91%
Hamro Prajashakti	15	164	8% - 92%
Samay Dainik	31	207	13% - 87%
Total Stories	148	642	19% - 81%

Sources (Correspondence/Reporters & Agency/Press Releases)

The sources of the news of the four newspapers considered for the study revealed in the above table that for all the newspapers the majority of sources have been agencies or Press releases as a total of 81% have been agencies and only 19% was from Correspondence. Only Sikkim Express has more news reports from their correspondents with 35% against 65% of reports emanating from agencies. Samay Dainik followed with 13% against 87% of the reports coming from agencies. Himalayan Mirror and Hamro Prajashakti had the least percentage of news coming from correspondence with just 9% and 8% against 91% and 92% coming from agencies respectively.

Type of Reports (Hard News/Features/Policy Announcements)

Newspapers	Hard News	Features	Policy Announcements	Percentage (%) of Stories by Each Newspaper
Sikkim Express	38	225	5	14% - 84% - 2%
Himalayan Mirror	18	86	1	17% - 82% - 1%
Hamro Prajashakti	16	160	3	9% - 89% - 2%
Samay Dainik	31	204	3	13% - 86% - 1%
Total Stories	103	675	12	13% - 85% - 2%

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The Type of Reports table above reveals that the majority of news articles have been features, followed by hard news and policy announcements. In aggregate, features occupied 85% of total developmental stories, hard news contributed only 13%, and policy announcements a mere 2%. Among four newspapers Himalayan Mirror has more hard news than others with 17% against 82% for features and 2% for policy announcements articles. Sikkim Express has 14% of hard news against 84% of features and 2% of policy announcements. Samay Dainik has 13% of hard news against 86% of features and 1% of policy announcements. The lowest among these, Hamro Prajashakti has only 9% of hard news against 89% of features and 2% of policy announcement articles.

Orientation of the Stories (Proactive/Reactive/Critical)

Newspapers	Hard News	Features	Policy Announcements	Percentage (%) of Stories by Each Newspaper
Sikkim Express	4	263	1	1% - 98% - 1%
Himalayan Mirror	3	100	2	3% - 95% - 2%
Hamro Prajashakti	6	161	12	3% - 90% - 7%
Samay Dainik	7	231	0	3% - 97% - 0%
Total Stories	20	755	15	3% - 95% - 2%

In the above Orientation of the Stories table, the Sikkim Express has only 1% of proactive stories and 1% of critical stories whereas it has 98% of reactive stories. Three other newspapers have a slightly more percentage with 3% of proactive stories during the study period. However, in critical stories, Hamro Prajashakti has a maximum number of 7% and Samay Dainik has no critical stories at all.

Slant

Newspapers	Pro-Development	Neutral	Pro-Government by	Percentage (%) of Stories Each Newspaper
Sikkim Express	28	236	4	10% - 88% - 2%
Himalayan Mirror	11	94	0	10% - 90% - 0%
Hamro Prajashakti	18	161	0	10% - 90% - 0%
Samay Dainik	30	190	18	13% - 80% - 7%
Total Stories	87	681	22	11% - 86% - 3%

The Slant table above reveals that Samay Dainik has more pro-development articles with 13% and the other three newspapers contributing 10% each. Hamro Prajashakti and Himalayan Mirror had no articles related to pro-government whereas Sikkim Express contributed 2% of it and Samay Dainik contributed the most with 7% of their news articles.

Editorial Analysis

The fourth research question refers to the determination of the priority area by the newspapers in terms of coverage of news. The number of editorials published on a set of issues determines how proactive the newspapers are with regard to those issues. Therefore an analysis of editorials published during the study period has been undertaken. Since the focus area of the work happens to be Sikkim and has looked into the developmental coverage of regional newspapers on the basis of a few chosen parameters of development, the editorial analysis also has been kept limited to the coverage of those parameters only. A total of 66 editorials have been published during the study period by select four newspapers. The editorials were selected and analyzed on the basis of parameters like; editorials written on the matters of the state of Sikkim, and the editorials written on the selected development parameters like Education, Health, Women Empowerment, Employment Opportunity, and Sanitation and Safe drinking water.

Editorials (Issues- 299 : Editorials-66)

Newspapers	Total Editorials during the study period	Total issues collected	% of editorials against the total issues
Sikkim Express	04	76	5%
Himalayan Mirror	00	74	0%
Hamro Prajashakti	16	77	21%
Samay Dainik	46	72	64%
Total	66	299	22%

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Categories	Newspapers				
	Sikkim Express	Himalayan Mirror	Hamro Prajashakti	Samay Dainik	Total Editorials
Education	0	0	3	2	5
Health	1	0	1	2	4
Women Empowerment	0	0	2	0	2
Economic Activity & Employment	0	0	2	2	4
Sanitation	1	0	1	4	6
Environment	0	0	0	2	2
Rural Economy & Agriculture	0	0	0	5	5
Politics	0	0	5	12	17
Policy	2	0	1	11	14
Infrastructure			1	1	2
General Human Interest	0	0	0	5	5

From the total of 299 issues collected over 12 months of the study period, only 66 editorials from four newspapers considered for the study were found to be eligible for the analysis of this research. The majority of newspaper editorials were from Samay Dainik has published 46 editorials followed by Hamro Prajashakti with 16 editorials, Sikkim Express with four has minimal editorials though it is published from Sikkim and Himalayan Mirror did not have any editorials that fit in the context of selected categories. Sikkim Express and Hamro Prajashakti have skipped editorials on all Sundays. The editorials on national and international issues not concerning development issues were not considered for this analysis. All the editorials concerning the state of Sikkim are selected and analyzed individually. Editorials on the selected five parameters for this research from national and international issues were also selected for the analysis.

From the above segregation of editorials into different categories, it is found that the majority of editorials, 17 were published on politics, followed by 14 on policy. The development issues considered for this research received very little attention from editorials as is established by education having been mentioned on five days, health on four days, women empowerment on two days, economic activity and employment on four days, and sanitation on six days.

Final Words: While measuring the issue salience, the parametric statistical test reveals that women empowerment and employment opportunity are the least important parameters for select newspapers. While health, water and sanitation, and education are found to have some resonance as developmental issues, it is revealing that in a state like Sikkim which has a higher number of women employed in the government sector and also holds a higher

percentage of the workforce, women empowerment related stories occupy a significantly unimportant place in the press. Employment opportunities or in a way the stories which could offer the youth some idea of how to prepare themselves for the job market are also nearly absent or insignificantly present in terms of space in the newspapers with a reader base in a state which suffers the reputation of having a huge unemployment rate even in terms of the Northeast.

As far as the Sources of the story is concerned, it clearly reveals the unwillingness of the select newspapers to spend on the collection of news which in fact is a national trend. Investigative stories or rather proactive stories which can be found in the table for Orientation of the stories clearly delineate that newspapers analyzed for this study have published three percent of stories on average. The qualitative variables like source and orientation together reveal the complete reliance of the select newspapers which also happen to be the leading newspapers of the Eastern Himalayas region on the agencies or information and public relation departments of the state government. It should also be mentioned that this is a governing trend in regional newspapers as the media market and concomitant revenue is significantly low. While this is one explanation for not being willing to spend on news collection, it also identifies the natural apathy of newspapers to go beyond popular categories like politics, sports, or entertainment. Developmental stories essentially refer to dry statistics and an evaluation of the calibrated approach of the government and other funding agencies to identify the lacunae in the system of delivery and presentation of this evaluative work requires not only skill but also a willingness to serve the reader which is virtually absent in select newspapers.

The stories published by the select newspapers have a slant that is predominantly neutral which essentially means that these stories have been used to fill the news space and the newspapers have no stake in reporting a story on development. The pro-government stories in HamroPrajashakti and Himalayan Mirror are virtually absent and they had been known to be sharp critics of the government during the study period. But, even then, the number of critical stories published by them is not significant. So far as the editorial policy is concerned, in reality, 21 editorials were published by four newspapers together on the issues identified as developmental stories out of 299 editorials during the study period which do not constitute even 10% of the total editorials. Chalkley and Mercado as stated by Lent (1975) opined that journalists have to involve the local people in the process of development and their role are to inspire this process of participation. The state of Sikkim is undoubtedly a fast developing state in many aspects of NITI AYOOG criteria or Human Development Index (HDI), but the press in the Eastern Himalayas region has clearly failed the state to appropriately contribute to the process of measurable and tangible development in terms of creating an environment of development consciousness for the larger community.

Development Issues and Media Attention in Regional Press: An Evaluation of Eastern Himalaya Newspapers with a Special Focus on Coverage of Development Stories in Sikkim

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Bio Profile of the Author

Assistant Professor, Department of Journalism Mass Communication, Namchi Government College Ph.D. Student, Department of Mass Communication, Sikkim University. Gangtok, India.
Email: legoi.mpg@gmail.com

