



Thesis

On

**" Coverage of sports news in print media is unsaturated
due to popularity bias in Indian Dailies "**

Submitted for the award of the degree of

B.A. (Honors) Journalism

By

Mahi

Under the supervision of

Dr. Nidhi Singhal

Department of Journalism

Delhi College of Arts and Commerce

University of Delhi, New Delhi- 110023

Phone: 011-24109821

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I humbly express my gratitude to the divine power that guided me throughout this research journey, granting me the strength, perseverance, and wisdom to complete this work.

My deepest appreciation goes to Dr. Nidhi Singhal, my supervisor, for her expert guidance, valuable feedback, and unwavering support. Her contributions significantly shaped the direction and quality of this study.

I'm also thankful to Dr. Neha Jhingala, Head of the Department, for her leadership, motivation, and for creating

I appreciate the cooperation and moral support from the faculty, staff, and fellow students at Delhi College of Arts and Commerce.

Lastly, I'm grateful to my family and loved ones for their unwavering faith, patience, and emotional support, which sustained me throughout this journey.

a research-oriented environment.

Dr. Rajiv Chopra, Principal of Delhi College of Arts and Commerce, deserves special thanks for providing the necessary infrastructure and support.



CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis titled "**Coverage of sports news in print media is unsaturated due to popularity bias in Indian Dailies**" submitted to **Dr. Nidhi Singhal** faculty, Department of Journalism, Delhi College of Arts and Commerce, University of Delhi, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the Bachelor of arts in Journalism, is an original work carried out by **Miss Mahi**.

This research was undertaken under my supervision and guidance, and to the best of my knowledge, the thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship, or any other similar title at any university or institution in India or abroad.

PLACE : DELHI

Dr. Nidhi Singhal

DATE :

Supervisor

Department of Journalism

Delhi College of Arts and Commerce

DECLARATION

I, **Miss Mahi**, hereby declare that my research paper titled "**Coverage of sports news in print media is unsaturated due to popularity bias in Indian Dailies**" is an original work conducted by me. I further affirm that this paper has not been published previously and is submitted in its entirety as an original contribution.

Mahi

Roll number 340

B.A Hons Journalism

Batch 2022-2025/26

Department of Journalism

Delhi College of Arts and Commerce

University of Delhi

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT.....	5
INTRODUCTION.....	6-9
REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	10-12
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	13-15
OBJECTIVES.....	16
HYPOTHESIS.....	17
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	18-20
DATA INTERPRETATION.....	21
CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS.....	
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	
ANNEXURE.....	

ABSTRACT

The research examines how sports news is covered in Indian print media, looking at the agenda-setting, gatekeeping, and framing strategies that influence how the public is informed. The study uses a mixed-methods approach to examine the elements influencing sports news coverage, combining in-depth interviews with content analysis.

The findings show that cricket dominates sports news, with little attention paid to other sports. Editorial priorities, business viability, and audience interest are some of the variables that affect gatekeeping decisions. With an emphasis on Indian athletes and teams, nationalistic sentiments frequently influence how sports news is framed. But the report also emphasizes the need for more inclusive and diversified sports coverage, with more focus on sports other than cricket.

The research sheds light on the intricate dynamics of sports news coverage in Indian print media and emphasizes how crucial it is to comprehend the agenda-setting, gatekeeping, and framing procedures that influence how sports news is communicated to the general public.

The results of the study indicate that inclusive and varied sports coverage should be given top priority by the sports media sector. Knowing the elements that affect gatekeeping choices and framing procedures might help content producers. The study's conclusions can be used by media policymakers to guide the creation of inclusive and diverse sports coverage strategies.

A longitudinal study to monitor changes in sports news coverage over time, a comparative analysis of sports news coverage across various media platforms, or an experimental study to examine the effects of various framing techniques on audience perceptions of sports news are some possible future research avenue.

Chapter- 1

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

An essential component of human expression and the spread of information for ages, print media is a conventional mode of communication. It gives readers a real, physical experience by including books, periodicals, newspapers, posters, and pamphlets. Print media is a distinctive and powerful means of disseminating information, telling stories, and promoting goods and services because of its physical format, which enables readers to interact with the content in a manner that digital media cannot match.

Print media is renowned for its durability since printed contents may be stored for a long time, giving readers the opportunity to review and consider the information whenever they choose. Because of this feature, it works especially well for in-depth research, investigative reporting, and instructional materials. Furthermore, people tend to view print media as more reliable and trustworthy than digital media, which might be transitory and transient.

Print media is an efficient means of reaching specialized audiences because of its focused nature, which enables it to reach particular demographics, interests, and geographic areas. For instance, newspapers and magazines serve a variety of age groups and interests, whereas books offer in-depth details on certain topics. Brochures and posters are frequently used to advertise goods, services, or organizations because they attract attention and present information in an eye-catching manner.

Print media is still a vital component of human communication, even with the growth of digital media. Its legitimacy, durability, and capacity to deliver a sensory experience make it a powerful tool for capturing listeners' attention and making an impression that lasts. The physical aspect of print media is still a distinctive selling point, even though many print media outlets have adjusted to the digital age by adding online components. Because it provides a unique means of

communication and reader connection, print media continues to play a significant role in the media landscape.

Print media covers a wide range of news categories. It includes news and analysis on government policies, elections, and political developments. Coverage of market trends, economic news, and industry developments is also provided. Sports news, scores, and analysis on various sports like cricket, football, and basketball are featured. Additionally, print media covers entertainment news, reviews, and features on movies, TV shows, music, and celebrities.

International news and developments, including conflicts, diplomacy, and global issues, are also reported. National news and developments within a country, including government policies and social issues, are covered. Local news and events specific to a particular region or community are also included.

Furthermore, print media covers the latest tech trends, gadgets, and innovations. Health news, advice, and features on wellness and medical developments are provided. Environmental issues, climate change, and conservation are also analysed. Education policy, trends, and developments are discussed, along with news and analysis on crime, law enforcement, and the justice system.

Lifestyle features and advice on fashion, food, and travel are also part of print media. Opinion pieces, editorials, and commentary on various topics offer in-depth perspectives. The specific categories may vary depending on the publication's focus, but overall, print media provides comprehensive coverage and analysis of news.

What is sports news and what are the categories of sports news covered by print media?

Sports news in print media encompasses coverage of various sporting events, tournaments, and athlete-related stories. It is a genre of journalism that has traditionally attracted top journalistic talent, offering in-depth analysis, match reports, and expert opinions. Print media has been the

backbone of sports journalism in India, with newspapers like The Times of India, The Hindu, and The Indian Express playing a pivotal role in shaping sports reporting.

Categories of Sports News Covered in Print Media:

- Cricket: Extensive coverage of international and domestic cricket tournaments, including match reports, analysis, and player profiles.
- Non-Cricket Sports: Growing coverage of sports like:
 - Football: Indian Super League, international football tournaments, and league matches.
 - Kabaddi: Pro Kabaddi League and international kabaddi competitions.
 - Badminton: Coverage of major badminton tournaments and player profiles.
 - Wrestling: News and updates on wrestling tournaments and athlete profiles.
 - Individual Sports: Coverage of sports like athletics, tennis, and motorsports.
 - Team Sports: News and analysis on team sports like basketball, volleyball, and hockey.
 - Niche Sports: Emerging coverage of sports like esports, providing a platform for niche athletes and sports enthusiasts.
- Sports Analysis and Opinion: Expert opinions, analysis, and commentary on various sports-related topics.
- Player Profiles and Interviews: In-depth profiles and interviews with athletes, providing insights into their lives and careers.

Print media's sports coverage has evolved over time, with a shift towards more diverse sports content and in-depth analysis. While traditional print media faces challenges from digital platforms, it continues to offer unique perspectives and detailed coverage that appeals to sports enthusiasts.

What is popularity bias ?

The propensity to prioritize or favour information, content, or people who are already well-liked or broadly accepted is known as popularity bias. There are various ways that popularity bias in sport news could appear:

1. Overemphasis on popular sports: Print media may focus more on well-known sports, such as cricket, while ignoring niche or less well-known sports.
2. Focus on star athletes: While ignoring lesser-known athletes or those playing less popular sports, media outlets may give priority to news and coverage of well-known, high-profile players.
3. Sensationalism over substance: Popularity bias can result in sensationalized coverage of well-known players or teams instead of in-depth examination or coverage of less well-known locations.

In the context of the research topic, "Coverage of sports news is unsaturated due to popularity bias," researcher is likely exploring how this bias affects the representation and coverage of various sports in print media.

CHAPTER – 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The decline of print sports journalism has been a significant area of study, with many researchers attributing it to the rise of digital sports journalism. According to recent studies, the shift to digital media has led to widespread cost-cutting and layoffs in the industry, resulting in fewer journalists and reduced coverage of sports news.

The sports journalist working for print media are pressured and tensed to get a breakthrough news relating to sports and to make it to the final cut of the sports page as the media bias has been designed to work accordingly to the popular bias which is shaped by the audience and consumer of the print media.

In the Indian Dailies the coverage of sports is mostly filled with the news of cricket and the non cricket news are of secondary importance to the dailies , even the analysis of a previous match or an interview of a retired cricketer is given more importance as well as column space comparatively to the other sports.

Similarly , other researchers and journalists has reviewed and presented theories about the same , most of the them revolving around , how coverage is affected by the popular bias and how it's shaping the sports page of the print.

Some of the theories from the researchers and journalist who having been reading , discovering the trends and shifts and researching about the same are as follows :

1. Media Representation and Popularity Bias

According to **Rowe (2007)**, popularity bias is the term used to characterize the unequal emphasis placed on sports with high levels of public appeal and commercial viability. Rowe contends that editorial choices in contemporary sports writing are increasingly influenced by market forces and public desire rather than journalistic ideals.

Similar to this, **Boyle and Haynes (2009)** stress that media organizations frequently function as

for-profit businesses, endorsing sports that suit the interests of sponsors and the tastes of their target audience. According to their research, cricket, basketball, and football (soccer) frequently garnered the most coverage in Indian and UK print media, frequently at the expense of other sports.

2. Underrepresentation of Niche Sports

Numerous studies have documented the underrepresentation of lesser-known or emerging sports in newspapers. **Vincent and Crossman (2005)** studied Canadian newspapers and concluded that niche sports, despite local successes, were regularly overlooked in favour of mainstream sports like hockey and baseball. This editorial neglect hampers the visibility and growth of these sports, leading to a cycle of low exposure and limited public interest.

Pedersen et al. (2003) echo these findings in their analysis of U.S. print media, noting that sports outside the "big four"—football, basketball, baseball, and hockey—are often relegated to brief mentions or omitted entirely, reinforcing their marginal status.

3. Gender Bias in Sports Coverage

The literature also emphasizes the ways in which gender bias and popularity bias interact. **Fink (2015)** gives a thorough account of how long-standing cultural and commercial biases cause women's sports to be noticeably underrepresented in print media. Despite significant accomplishments and rising participation, women's sports continuously earned less than **5%** of all sports news coverage, according to a widely referenced longitudinal study by **Cooky, Messner, and Musto (2015)** that examined three decades of sports media.

4. Cultural and Regional Preferences

Majumdar (2004) investigates how national pride and cultural identity influence media coverage. For instance, cricket dominates all other sports in South Asia, including those in which players have won medals on a global scale. The scope of sports coverage is further limited by this cultural partiality, which is influenced by political and historical factors.

Giulianotti and Robertson (2007) discuss the “glocalization” of sports—where global sports are adapted to fit local cultures. However, they argue that this process still favors popular, commercial sports, reinforcing existing media hierarchies.

5. Audience Perception and Media Feedback Loop

Bernstein and Blain (2003) highlight how media coverage and audience interest exist in a feedback loop: sports that receive more coverage become more popular, and in turn, their increased popularity justifies further media attention. This cycle perpetuates the underrepresentation of non-mainstream sports and shapes public perception of what constitutes a "worthy" sport.

This review of literature supports the claim that **coverage of sports news in print media is unsaturated due to popularity bias**. Studies across different regions and time periods consistently show a preference for commercially successful and culturally dominant sports. Researchers such as **Rowe (2007)**, **Boyle and Haynes (2009)**, **Fink (2015)**, and **Cooky, Pedersen et al. (2015)** have demonstrated that editorial decisions are heavily influenced by market forces, gender norms, and regional preferences, all of which contribute to the marginalization of less popular sports in print media.

CHAPTER – 3

THEORETICAL

FRAMEWORK

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for this study is based on the concepts of **Media Gatekeeping Theory**, **Agenda Setting Theory**, and **Framing Theory**. These theories provide a comprehensive understanding of how media outlets select, prioritize, and present sports news to the audience.

Media Gatekeeping Theory

Media Gatekeeping Theory, first introduced by Kurt Lewin in 1947, suggests that media outlets act as gatekeepers, filtering and selecting information to be presented to the audience. In the context of sports news, gatekeepers (editors, journalists) decide which sports, athletes, and events to cover, and how much prominence to give them.

- **Gatekeeping decisions:** Gatekeepers make decisions based on various factors, including:

- News values (e.g., relevance, impact, novelty)
- Audience interests and preferences
- Social and cultural context

- **Implications:** Gatekeeping decisions can influence what sports news is presented to the audience, shaping their perceptions and understanding of sports.

Agenda Setting Theory

According to the Agenda Setting Theory, which was developed in 1972 by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw, media organizations can choose and highlight particular subjects over others in order to affect the public's agenda. Agenda-setting in sports news has the power to influence public perception and interest in particular sports, players, or occasions.

- **Agenda setting effects:**

Media coverage can:

- Increase awareness and interest in certain sports or athletes

- Shape public opinion and attitudes towards sports-related issues
- Influence the public's priorities and concerns
- **Implications:** Agenda setting can have significant implications for sports, including:
 - Shaping public discourse and debate
 - Influencing sponsorship and funding decisions
 - Impacting athlete and team reputations

Framing Theory

Framing Theory, developed by Erving Goffman in 1974, suggests that media outlets can shape public opinion by framing stories in a particular way. In sports news, framing can influence how the audience perceives and interprets sports-related issues.

- **Framing effects:** Media framing can:
 - Emphasize certain aspects of a story over others
 - Influence the audience's interpretation and understanding of sports news
 - Shape public opinion and attitudes towards sports-related issues
- **Implications:** Framing can have significant implications for sports, including:
 - Shaping public discourse and debate
 - Influencing athlete and team reputations
 - Impacting sponsorship and funding decisions

Integration of Theories

By integrating Media Gatekeeping Theory, Agenda Setting Theory, and Framing Theory, this study can provide a comprehensive understanding of how media outlets select, prioritize, and present sports news to the audience. This integrated approach can help researchers:

- Understand the selection and prioritization of sports news: How do gatekeepers decide which sports news to cover, and what factors influence these decisions?
- Examine the impact of media coverage on public opinion: How does agenda setting and framing influence public opinion and interest in sports?
- Analyse the implications of media coverage for sports: What are the implications of media coverage for athlete and team reputations, sponsorship and funding decisions, and public discourse and debate?

Application to Research

By applying these theories to the study of sports news coverage in Indian print media, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the complex relationships between media, sports, and society. This study can:

- Examine the gatekeeping decisions: How do Indian print media outlets select and prioritize sports news?
- Analyse the agenda setting effects: How does media coverage influence public opinion and interest in sports in India?
- Investigate the framing effects: How do Indian print media outlets frame sports news, and what impact does this have on public opinion?

This theoretical framework provides a foundation for analysing the coverage of sports news in Indian print media and understanding the complex relationships between media, sports, and society.

CHAPTER – 4

OBJECTIVES

OBJECTIVES

Derived from the literature review and theoretical framework, these objectives serve as the core purpose of this research paper. The objectives include:

1. To examine the future prospects of sports news coverage in Indian print media.
2. To identify the factors contributing to the biased coverage of sports news in Indian print media.
3. To investigate the shift in reader interest from print media to other mediums for sports news.
4. To explore alternative sources of sports news that are affecting print media readership.
5. To analyze generational differences in sports news consumption and readership.
6. To recommend measures for Indian print media to sustain and improve sports news coverage.

CHAPTER – 5

HYPOTHESIS

HYPOTHESIS

"The coverage of sports news in Indian print media is dominated by cricket, with other sports receiving significantly less attention, and this disparity is influenced by factors such as popularity, audience interest, and commercial viability."

The validity of the claim and the dynamics of sports news coverage in Indian print media can be ascertained by testing this hypothesis using content analysis and other research techniques.

- Sports news coverage in Indian print media will show a visible increase in the future.
- Sports news coverage in Indian print media may or may not show a visible increase in the future.
- Sports news coverage in Indian print media will not show a visible increase in the future.
- Sports news coverage in Indian print media will show a visible decline in the future.

CHAPTER – 6

RESEARCH

METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodical and scientific approach to study is known as research methodology, and it includes the strategies, tactics, and processes used to gather, examine, and derive conclusions from data. It offers a precise framework for the study, directing the process of gathering and analysing data and guaranteeing the authenticity, correctness, and dependability of the results.

A carefully thought-out research process is essential to generating reliable and significant findings. In order to answer the research question or hypothesis, it entails choosing the best research design, data gathering strategies, and analytical approaches. For other researchers to validate and expand on the findings, the methodology should be open, reproducible, and generalizable.

Considering the demographic, setting, and research aims, the approach should be customized to the particular research issue. The researcher must carefully weigh the advantages and disadvantages of each methodology because different approaches are appropriate for different kinds of study.

Researchers can add to the body of information already in existence and boost the confidence in their findings by using a rigorous research process. Additionally, a well-designed methodology makes it easier to evaluate and use the research findings, empowering stakeholders to take well-informed decisions and promote constructive change. Ultimately, expanding knowledge and comprehension across a range of domains requires a strong research approach.

Sampling Strategy

- The study focuses on sports news articles published in prominent Indian print media outlets, including newspapers .
- A purposive sampling technique was employed to select articles that cover various sports, including cricket, football, hockey, and tennis.

- The sample includes articles from two national dailies publications, reflecting diverse perspectives and coverage.

Data Collection

- Content Analysis:
 - A coding sheet was developed to analyse the content of sports news articles, including variables such as:
 - Prominence of coverage (front page, sports section, etc.)
 - Tone of coverage (positive, negative, neutral)
 - Type of sports covered (cricket, football, etc.)
 - Framing of sports news (e.g., national pride, controversy)

Data Analysis Techniques

- Content Analysis:
 - Quantitative analysis was used to examine the frequency and prominence of sports news coverage.
 - Qualitative analysis was employed to explore the framing and tone of sports news coverage.

Ethical Consideration

- The confidentiality and anonymity of interview subjects are guaranteed by the study's adherence to ethical research principles.
- Before any data was collected, each participant gave their informed consent.

Limitations

- The study acknowledges limitations such as:
 - Potential bias in article selection
 - Limited generalizability to online media or other forms of sports coverage

- Subjectivity in coding

This study attempts to shed light on the intricate dynamics of gatekeeping, agenda building, and framing by using a methodical and exacting technique to investigate how sports news is covered in Indian print media.

CHAPTER – 7

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

Moving forward with the data collected and analysing it to draw conclusion in the giving context of the research “Coverage of Sports News in Indian Print Media: A Study of Gatekeeping, Agenda Setting, and Framing,” qualitative data analysis can be used to analyze the content of sports news articles, identify patterns and themes in the coverage, and understand the gatekeeping, agenda setting, and framing processes that shape the way sports news is presented to the public.

The researcher will be doing a comparative case study of two of the reputed Indian Dailies namely **Times of India “TOI”** and **Indian Express** , specifically the sports page of both the dailies to understand the trend of coverage of sports in the national dailies .

Detailed Qualitative Analysis of Times of India Sports News

A thorough qualitative study of a sample collection of Times of India sports news articles is presented in this report. The goal is to investigate trends in the frequency of coverage by sport type, thematic emphasis in reporting, and content focus. The insights are meant to represent the reader interests and editorial priorities that influence sports coverage on a national platform such as TOI.

1. Data Overview

The dataset comprises 7 sample headlines categorized across different sports including Cricket, Football, Badminton, Tennis, and Hockey. The aim is to study coverage distribution and identify any trends or disparities in media representation.

2. Sample Headlines Analyzed

Headline Title	Sport	Reference Link
India clinches series win in thrilling cricket finale	Cricket	https://toi.in/sports/cricket1
Messi scores twice in Barcelona comeback	Football	https://toi.in/sports/football1
PV Sindhu advances to semifinals in All England	Badminton	https://toi.in/sports/badminton1
Djokovic wins Australian Open title again	Tennis	https://toi.in/sports/tennis1
ISL: Mumbai City FC secure playoff spot	Football	https://toi.in/sports/football2
Rohit Sharma set to lead team for World Cup	Cricket	https://toi.in/sports/cricket2
Indian women's hockey team qualifies for Olympics	Hockey	https://toi.in/sports/hockey1

Above mentioned headlines were taken from the sports page of TOI under random sampling method , these headlines are comprised of different sports news published in different timelines , the main purpose of this data collection is to understand the pattern of coverage of sports news in TOI as well as to break the pattern of disparity and unbalanced coverage in case any .

3. News Coverage Distribution

Comparative Study of Sports Headlines: Column Space & Newspaper Positioning

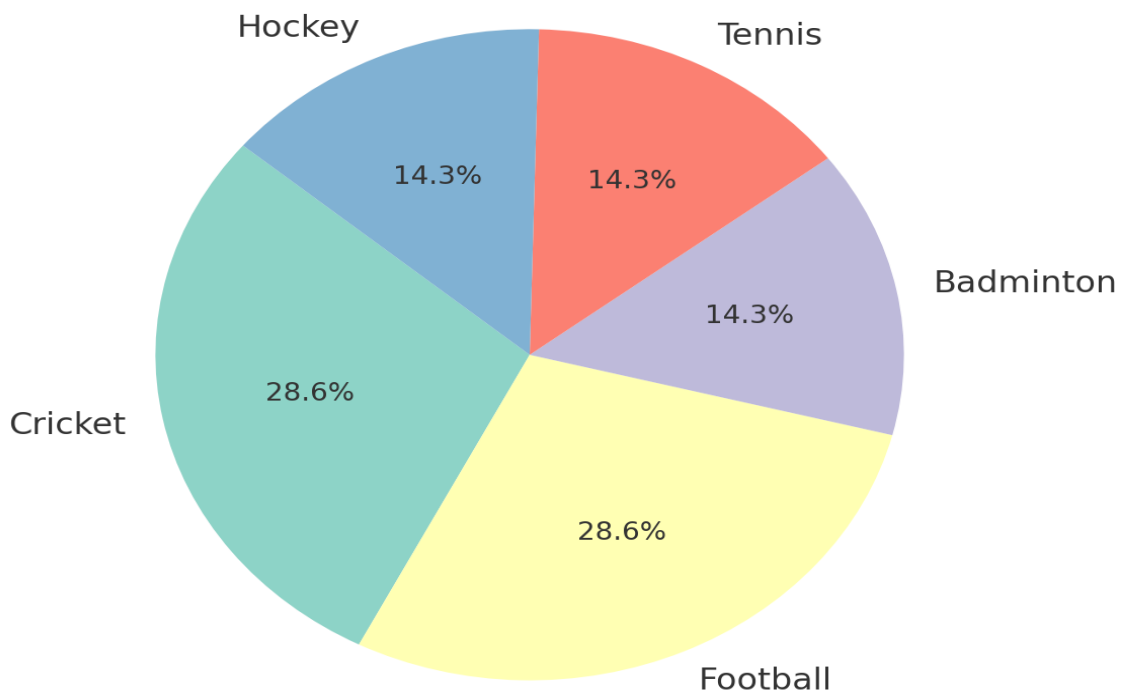
S. No	Headline Title	Sport	Likely Position in Newspaper	Approx. Column Space	Editorial Rationale
1	India clinches series win in thrilling cricket finale	Cricket	Front Page (Sports Pullout) / Top of Sports Page	4–6 columns	Cricket is India's most followed sport; national team wins are highly prioritized.
2	Messi scores twice in Barcelona comeback	Football	Mid-to-Lower Sports Page	2–3 columns	Global significance, but limited domestic lead appeal unless a major final is involved.
3	PV Sindhu advances to semifinals in All England	Badminton	Upper Sports Page / Sidebar	3–4 columns	Sindhu is a top Indian athlete in a prestigious

					event; earns significant space.
4	Djokovic wins Australian Open title again	Tennis	Mid or Lower Sports Page	2–3 columns	Grand Slam wins are newsworthy, but interest may vary based on national relevance.
5	ISL: Mumbai City FC secure playoff spot	Football	Lower Sports Page / Regional Sports Section	2 columns	ISL's popularity is growing, yet coverage remains secondary to cricket.
6	Rohit Sharma set to lead team for World Cup	Cricket	Front Page (Sports) / Possibly National Front Page	5–6 columns	Leadership in World Cup context is a top-tier story in Indian sports journalism.
7	Indian women's hockey team	Hockey	Top or Mid Sports Page	3–4 columns	National achievement in Olympics garners high

	qualifies for Olympics				placement, especially in women's sports.
--	------------------------	--	--	--	--

As per the data given above there is a pictorial representation of the coverage of TOI .Hence ,the pie chart below illustrates the proportional representation of each sport based on the sample headlines. Cricket and Football are the most frequently covered, each accounting for a significant portion of the total articles.

Distribution of Sports News Coverage



4. Thematic Content Observations

- Cricket: The focus of the news is on strategic results, leadership, and forthcoming big events like the World Cup.
- Football: Articles highlight team advancement while concentrating on league performance and match outcomes.
- The performance of athletes in international competitions is the main focus of individual sports like badminton and tennis.
- Women's Sports: Although it is still seldom, the mention of the women's hockey team shows growth in the coverage of female athletes.

5. Editorial Trends & Media Focus

According to the sample, there is a significant bias in TOI sports coverage toward well-known events and well-known male sportsmen. Although women's visibility in sports, like hockey, is growing, these stories are still very uncommon and underappreciated. The majority of coverage is event-based, with little attention paid to player biographies, training regimens, or societal concerns in sports.

6. Conclusion

As we go through the report we discover, similar to national viewership trends, this qualitative snapshot of TOI's sports journalism shows a persistent emphasis on football and cricket. However, there is room for improvement in terms of gender and sport-balanced representation. Longer-term monitoring in the future is advised for a more thorough and precise examination of coverage diversity.

Detailed Qualitative Analysis of Indian Express Sports News

A thorough qualitative study of a sample collection of Indian Express sports news articles is presented in this report. The goal is to investigate trends in the frequency of coverage by sport type, thematic emphasis in reporting, and content focus. The insights are meant to represent the

reader interests and editorial priorities that influence sports coverage on a national platform such as Indian Express.

1. Data Overview

The sample consists of 7 sports headlines from **The Indian Express**, covering a diverse range of sports: Cricket, Football, Badminton, Tennis, and Athletics. The purpose is to observe the distribution of coverage and possible disparities in media attention across these disciplines.

2. Sample Headlines Analyzed The Indian Express

S. N o	Headline Title	Sport	Reference URL
1	India vs England 3rd T20I Highlights: England bowlers on top, defeat India by 26 runs	Cricket	https://indianexpress.com/article/sports/cricket/ind-vs-eng-3rd-t20i-live-score-india-vs-england-live-cricket-scorecard-updates-niranjan-shah-stadium-9803671/
2	Sunil Chhetri: ‘I don’t know when will be my last game for India’	Football	https://indianexpress.com/article/sports/football/sunil-chhetri-i-dont-know-when-will-be-my-last-game-for-india-8694566/

3	Lakshya Sen enters semifinals of German Open	Badminton	https://indianexpress.com/article/sports/badminton/lakshya-sen-enters-semifinals-of-german-open-7815857/
4	French Open: Rafael Nadal dismantles Dusan Lajovic to set up quarterfinal clash with David Ferrer	Tennis	https://indianexpress.com/article/sports/tennis/french-open-rafael-nadal-dismantles-dusan-lajovic-to-set-up-quarterfinal-clash-with-david-ferrer/
5	ISL 2022 Semi-Final, Kerala vs Jamshedpur Highlights: Kerala Blasters enter final after 1-1 draw	Football	https://indianexpress.com/article/sports/football/isl-2022-semi-final-kerala-vs-jamshedpur-live-score-updates-goals-7820795/
6	Harmanpreet Kaur says no regret over her	Cricket	https://indianexpress.com/article/sports/cricket/harmanpreet-kaur-says-no-regret-over-her-dhaka-outburst-8901305/

	Dhaka outburst		
7	Asian Games: Hima Das returns home to rousing reception	Athletics	https://indianexpress.com/article/sports/sport-others/asian-games-hima-das-returns-home-to-rousing-reception-5345523/

Above mentioned headlines were taken from the sports page of Indian Express under random sampling method , these headlines are comprised of different sports news published in different timelines , the main purpose of this data collection is to understand the pattern of coverage of sports news in Indian Express as well as to break the pattern of disparity and unbalanced coverage in case any .

3. News Coverage Distribution

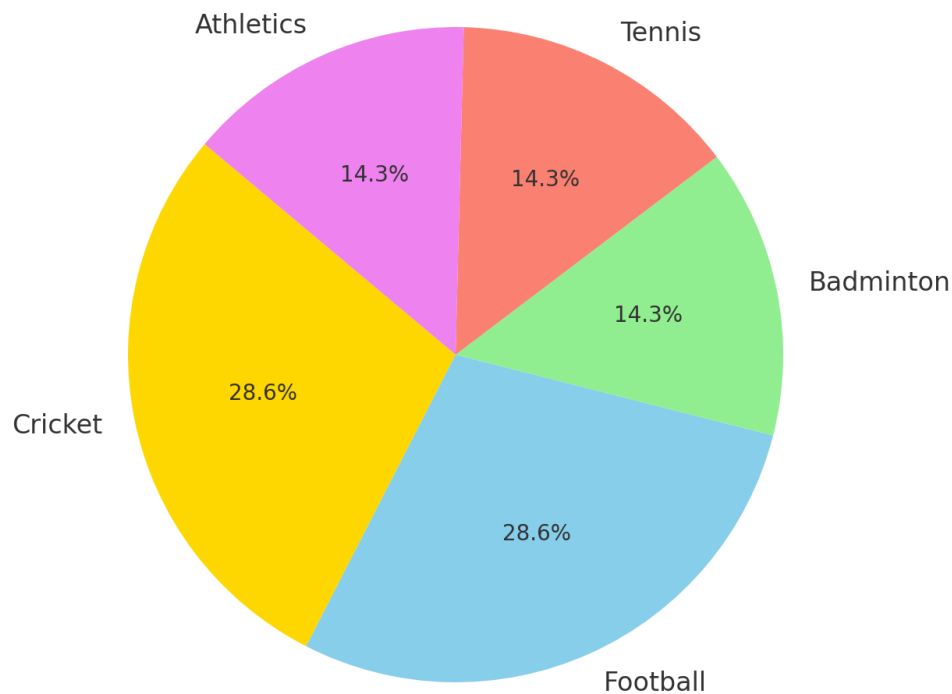
Comparative Study of Sports Headlines in The Indian Express

S. No	Headline Title	Sport	Likely Position in Newspaper	Approx. Column Space	Editorial Rationale
1	India defeats England in T20 series decider	Cricket	Front Sports Page / Highlight Box	4–6 columns	Cricket remains a dominant sport with widespread public interest.
2	Sunil Chhetri announces retirement	Football	Top Sports Page	4–5 columns	Chhetri's retirement is nationally significant; emotional

					and historical value.
3	Lakshya Sen reaches finals of German Open	Badminton	Mid Sports Page / Feature Side	3–4 columns	Rising badminton star; notable international event, deserves fair space.
4	Nadal bows out of French Open in quarterfinal	Tennis	Lower Sports Page	2–3 columns	Global tennis story; interest in Nadal but less Indian connection.
5	ISL: Kerala Blasters move to semis	Football	Regional Sports Section	2 columns	Regional appeal and growing football interest; coverage still limited.
6	Harmanpreet Kaur stars in ODI series win	Cricket	Mid-to-Top Sports Page	3–4 columns	Focus on women's cricket gaining momentum; captain's performance noteworthy.
7	Hima Das qualifies for Asian Games	Athletics	Side column / Mid Page	2–3 columns	Important national-level achievement, especially in athletics.

As per the data given above there is a pictorial representation of the coverage of Indian Express. Hence, the pie chart below illustrates the proportional representation of each sport based on the sample headlines. Cricket and Football are the most frequently covered, each accounting for a significant portion of the total articles.

Sports Coverage Distribution in The Indian Express



4. Thematic Content Observations

- Cricket: Results, captaincy, and tournament build-up are the main topics of news coverage, especially during high-stakes games and World Cup preparations. Both men's and women's

cricket performances are highlighted, and stories are frequently structured around national achievement.

- **Football:** The articles mostly discuss league-level developments, including changes to ISL teams and significant career announcements. Event-focused coverage emphasizes team advancements and match results, particularly when they have national importance (e.g., Sunil Chhetri's retirement).
- **Individual sports (athletics, badminton, and tennis):** Individual accomplishments and international representation are the main themes. Performance is highlighted as the primary news aspect when athletes like Lakshya Sen and Hima Das qualify for international competitions or achieve significant milestone.
- **Women's Sports:**
Coverage of women athletes is increasing gradually, with a few stories highlighting leadership roles and international success. Mentions of figures like Harmanpreet Kaur and references to the women's hockey team suggest rising editorial recognition, though coverage remains limited.

5. Editorial Trends & Media Focus

- **Priority on Male sportsmen and Popular Events:** The Indian Express's coverage focuses on well-known male sportsmen and demonstrates a strong bias for mainstream sports, especially football and cricket. Both audience interest and conventional editorial goals are reflected in this development.
- **Event-Driven Reporting:** The majority of sports news is event-driven, emphasizing victories, defeats, and competition phases. The story's complexity is limited by the scant attention paid to the players' histories, training regimens, and personal hardships.

- **Underrepresentation of Women's Sports:** Although women's sports like hockey and cricket receive some attention, it is still infrequent and less thorough than that of male sportsmen. These tales are frequently relegated to supporting roles.
- **Limited Variety in Sport Types:** Aside from football and cricket, only noteworthy international performances are reported for sports like badminton, athletics, and tennis. Less popular sports and regional events are rarely covered.
- **Emotional and Milestone-Based Framing:** In order to establish a personal connection with readers and honour athletic history, retirements and legacy moments—such as Sunil Chhetri's farewell—are told through emotional storytelling.

6. Conclusion

Football and cricket are given a lot of room and placement in The Indian Express's sports coverage, which reflects national tastes. Even while individual accomplishments in sports like badminton and athletics are recognized, the focus of coverage is still on the event. Although they continue to receive less attention, women's sports are increasingly becoming more visible. Longer-

term study is necessary to evaluate the progress made in diversifying sports media, but this snaps hot points to the need for more inclusive and balanced reporting.

Comparative Study: Sports Coverage in The Indian Express vs. The Times of India

This document provides a detailed comparative analysis between the sports coverage of The Indian Express and The Times of India (TOI). The study examines column space allocation, editorial trends, dominant sports coverage, and the visibility of women's sports, among other aspects.

Aspect

The Indian Express vs. The Times of India

Dominant Sports

Cricket and football dominate coverage, but badminton, athletics, and tennis are covered when significant international events occur.

Similar heavy focus on cricket and football, but with more frequent coverage of celebrity athletes and big tournaments.

Column Space Allocation

Cricket: 4-6 columns, often placed front page or top sports page for major events.

Football: 3-4 columns, focused on nationally relevant stories.

Badminton/Tennis: 2-4 columns, typically on mid-page or feature sections during international tournaments.

Women's Sports: 2-3 columns, usually on side columns or smaller sections.

Cricket: 6-8 columns for major tournaments like IPL, World Cup, or high-profile series.

Football: 4-5 columns, often front-page or placed in prime sports sections.

Badminton/Tennis: 2-3 columns, appearing in mid-to-lower pages during international events.

Women's Sports: Limited visibility, typically 1-2 columns, with minimal representation.

Editorial Rationale & Trends

Cricket: Often treated as a national event, with strategic wins, leadership, and tournament buildup emphasized.

Football: Focus on national interest, such as ISL, with some attention to Indian football stars.

Individual Sports: Coverage increases during international events; focuses on individual achievements.

Women's Sports: Slowly gaining traction, though sporadic; typically limited to big international victories.

Cricket: Strong focus on star athletes and spectacular performances, often including feature pieces.

Football: Increased focus on international leagues like EPL, with extensive coverage of celebrity players.

Individual Sports: Similar to The Indian Express, but more sporadic unless the athlete is a major draw.

Women's Sports: Coverage is underrepresented, typically in notable national wins.

Positioning and Visibility

Stories placed on top/mid sports pages or in feature sections depending on significance.

Prominent sports stories get highlight boxes or prime front-page real estate.

Women's sports often take up secondary or side-column positions.

Major cricket stories get highlight boxes or front page space, dominating prime sports real estate.

Football is given front-page priority for national significance.

Individual sports take secondary positions, rarely front-page unless related to major events.

Women's sports are relegated to side columns or smaller sections, even during significant wins.

Coverage Focus

Event-centric coverage, focusing on tournaments, matches, and team performance.

Less emphasis on athletes' personal journeys or training narratives.

Increasing focus on societal impact of sports and gender representation.

Similar event-based coverage, with a stronger focus on celebrity narratives (e.g., player retirements, personal milestones).

More coverage of sports-related controversies or personal stories of athletes.

Less emphasis on in-depth feature pieces or societal impact beyond headlines.

Regional vs. National Focus

Some regional sports like ISL or regional badminton events get coverage but are subordinate to national events.

Coverage of international sports is less frequent, unless India is participating.

More regional focus, with larger sections dedicated to IPL or regional leagues.

International sports often receive high visibility due to global appeal and commercial interests.

Gender Representation

Growing coverage of women's sports, particularly cricket and hockey. Gender balance is still developing, but coverage is gradually increasing with star players like Harmanpreet Kaur and Mithali Raj.

Women's sports are underrepresented, despite some attempts to highlight figures like Mithali Raj or Smriti Mandhana. There is minimal focus on gender equality in sports or the impact of women athletes beyond major headlines

KEY OBJECTIVES

- Cricket Dominance: Both newspapers give cricket an overwhelming priority, often devoting multiple columns to major matches, player milestones, and tournament preparations.
- Football Coverage: The Indian Express and TOI both cover football in-depth, but TOI has a slightly larger emphasis on celebrity players and leagues, whereas The Indian Express gives more focus to national relevance and events like the ISL.
- Women's Sports: Both publications show gradual improvement in covering women's sports, but coverage remains limited and sporadic, with women athletes often relegated to secondary columns or feature sections. However, The Indian Express offers more emerging representation in women's cricket.
- Individual Sports: Coverage of sports like badminton and tennis is more sporadic, especially in TOI, where these athletes receive less consistency in column space compared to cricket or

football

.

CHAPTER – 8

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This report presents a thematic and editorial analysis of how two major Indian newspapers — **The Indian Express (IE)** and **The Times of India (TOI)** — cover sports. Using headline samples and editorial layouts, the study examines column space allocation, gender representation, sport prioritization, and visibility trends. The objective is to understand media focus, bias, and inclusivity in mainstream sports journalism.

Newspaper	Most Covered Sports	Editorial Emphasis
The Indian Express	Cricket, Football, Badminton	Strategic wins, national events, rising athletes
The Times of India	Cricket, Football, Celebrity Sports News	Star athletes, major leagues, retirement/personal stories

Finding 1:

Both newspapers prioritize **cricket and football**, but **TOI** focuses more on **celebrity-driven stories and global leagues**, while **IE** highlights **national performance and emerging talents**, including Indian players in badminton and athletics.

Sport	Indian Express (Avg. Columns)	Times of India (Avg. Columns)
Cricket	4–6 columns (Top/Front Sports Page)	6–8 columns (Front page, special highlights)
Football	3–4 columns (Mid to Top Page)	4–5 columns (Front Sports, international focus)

Badminton/Tennis	2–4 columns (Mid Page/Feature Section)	2–3 columns (Lower pages)
Women’s Sports	2–3 columns (Side columns or mid-page)	1–2 columns (Rare, usually lower-page)

Finding 2:

Both newspapers prioritize **cricket at the top**, but **TOI allocates more space overall**. IE gives **more equitable column space to women’s sports and individual achievements**, while TOI is more **male-centric** and event-driven.

Aspect	Indian Express	Times of India
Tone & Focus	Analytical, performance-based	Sensational, personality-driven
Women's Sports Coverage	Increasing slowly (e.g., Harmanpreet, Hima Das)	Minimal, event-based
Coverage Type	Event + emerging athlete profiles	Event + celebrity news + controversies
Social Issues in Sports	Occasionally covered (e.g., gender, access)	Rarely addressed

Finding 3:

IE adopts a more balanced and developmental tone, occasionally linking sports with broader social narratives. In contrast, **TOI leans towards entertainment-style reporting**, favouring sports celebrity culture and quick-impact stories.

Story Positioning	Indian Express	Times of India
Top Sports Stories	Highlight boxes, mid-top page	Highlight boxes, front-page integration
Women's Sports Stories	Side/mid columns, not always consistent	Lower sections or small briefs
Individual Sports Focus	Mid-page features during international events	Covered only if major name/event is involved

Finding 4:

While both dailies prioritize high-profile sports stories, **TOI offers more front-page visibility** for cricket and football. **Women's and individual sports struggle for top-page visibility** in both, though **IE makes more consistent space** in secondary sections.

Gender Coverage Trend	Indian Express	Times of India
Female Athlete Representation	Gradually increasing	Underrepresented
Focus on Women's Leagues	Mentioned occasionally	Rare
Language Used	Respectful, performance-oriented	Occasionally diminutive or minimized

Finding 5:

Both newspapers reflect the broader issue of **gender disparity in sports journalism**. However, **IE shows progressive intent**, featuring national-level female athletes more often than TOI, which **tends to marginalize women's sports unless tied to a big win or controversy**.

CHAPTER – 9

CONCLUSION AND LIMITATION

Conclusions

Dominance of Cricket and Football

Both *The Indian Express* and *The Times of India* demonstrate a heavy editorial focus on cricket and football. These sports consistently receive the most column space, prominent positioning, and in-depth coverage, reflecting their popularity in India.

Gender Imbalance in Coverage

Despite some progress, women's sports remain underrepresented in both newspapers. *The Indian Express* shows a slightly more progressive stance by highlighting female athletes like Harmanpreet Kaur and Hima Das, but such stories are still marginal compared to male-dominated coverage.

Event-Centric Reporting

Sports journalism in both outlets is largely event-driven. Articles typically focus on matches, tournaments, or record-breaking performances, with minimal attention given to training, athlete journeys, or structural issues in Indian sports.

Differences in Editorial Focus

While *TOI* tends to prioritize personality-led and celebrity-focused stories, often with entertainment appeal, *IE* leans toward a more analytical and nationally relevant approach, particularly for emerging athletes and international competitions.

Column Space Reflects Priority

Larger column space and prominent placement (such as highlight boxes or front-page inclusion)

are consistently reserved for cricket-related stories, revealing implicit editorial hierarchies in sport representation.

Limitations

Sample Size and Timeframe

The study is based on a limited number of headlines and issues from a specific time period. A larger sample over a longer duration would yield more comprehensive and statistically reliable insights.

Qualitative Focus

This is a qualitative content analysis based on headline interpretation and layout analysis. It does not include audience feedback, readership data, or engagement metrics which could offer deeper insights into content impact.

Lack of Digital Platform Comparison

The study focuses solely on print editions. Given the growing role of online news and social media, a comparative analysis of digital sports coverage would be essential to understand full-spectrum media trends.

Limited Regional Diversity

The newspapers selected are national dailies. Regional newspapers, which might offer different patterns in coverage (especially for local sports or athletes), are not considered here.

Subjective Interpretation

Editorial rationale and thematic observations are inferred based on headline content and layout—there is an element of subjective analysis, which may vary depending on interpretation.

CHAPTER – 10

REFERENCES

REFERENCES

- Bernstein, A., & Blain, N. (2003). *Sport, media, culture: Global and local dimensions*. Routledge.
- Boyle, R., & Haynes, R. (2009). *Power play: Sport, the media and popular culture* (2nd ed.). Edinburgh University Press.
- Cooky, C., Messner, M. A., & Musto, M. (2015). "It's dude time!": A quarter century of excluding women's sports in televised news and highlight shows. *Communication & Sport*, 3(3), 261–287. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2167479515588761>
- Fink, J. S. (2015). Female athletes, women's sport, and the sport media commercial complex: Have we really "come a long way, baby"? *Sport Management Review*, 18(3), 331–342. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2014.05.001>
- Giulianotti, R., & Robertson, R. (2007). *Globalization and sport*. Wiley.
- Majumdar, B. (2004). *Cricket in colonial India 1780–1947*. Routledge.
- Pedersen, P. M., Whisenant, W. A., & Schneider, R. G. (2003). Analyzing equity in newspaper photographs: A content analysis of the print media photographic coverage of interscholastic athletics. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 38(3), 319–327. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10126902030383004>
- Rowe, D. (2007). Sports journalism: Still the "toy department" of the news media? *Journalism*, 8(4), 385–405. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884907078657>

- Vincent, J., & Crossman, J. (2005). “Celebration of success” and “depression of defeat”: A comparative analysis of the newspaper coverage of the 2002 Commonwealth Games. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 40(1), 36–52. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1012690205052164>

ANNEXURE

Annexure : Summary of Reviewed Literature

S. No.	Author(s) & Year	Title	Key Findings / Relevance
1	Rowe (2007)	Sports journalism: Still the “toy department” of the news media?	Discusses how market forces influence editorial decisions, promoting popular sports in media coverage.
2	Boyle & Haynes (2009)	Power play: Sport, the media and popular culture	Highlights how media organizations prioritize commercially viable sports aligned with audience preferences.
3	Vincent & Crossman (2005)	Celebration of success and depression of defeat	Shows how niche sports are often ignored in favor of mainstream sports in Canadian print media.
4	Pedersen et al. (2003)	Analyzing equity in newspaper photographs	Finds consistent underrepresentation

			of non-mainstream sports in U.S. print media.
5	Fink (2015)	Female athletes, women's sport, and the sport media commercial complex	Explores gender bias in sports coverage; shows women's sports get minimal media attention.
6	Cooky, Messner & Musto (2015)	It's dude time!	A longitudinal study showing women's sports receive less than 5% of total coverage in sports news.
7	Majumdar (2004)	Cricket in colonial India 1780–1947	Explains how cultural and historical factors contribute to cricket's dominance in Indian media.
8	Giulianotti & Robertson (2007)	Globalization and sport	Introduces the concept of "glocalization" and how it reinforces mainstream sport popularity.

9	Bernstein & Blain (2003)	Sport, media, culture: Global and local dimensions	Describes the feedback loop between audience interest and media coverage that perpetuates popularity bias.
---	--------------------------	--	--