Asian Journal of Information Technology 13 (10): 661-669, 2014
ISSN: 1682-3915
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Does Partisanship Influence the Perception of Credibility? Examining the Determinants of News Media Credibility in the South Indian State of Tamil Nadu

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Abstract: Academic discourse on television in India has underscored its role as a social and political institution. Television in India has been embedded with dual expectations its role as a pro-development tool and as a tool for political communication. Since, the advent of satellite television, the latter framing has taken centre stage with academics focusing on the influence of television on elections, voter behaviour and as a political propaganda and identity politics. Most academic studies and popular commentaries have examined media convergence of public policy issues or framing of political ideologies from normative ethical framework. This study examines the audience's perception of media credibility. A survey of news audience for Tamil and English television news programs in the State of Tamil Nadu in South India suggests that the audience express great concern for the credibility of news media and that there is a positive association between credibility rating and news media use. The study further found significant difference in the type of media ownership (partisan vs. non-partisan television channels) and media credibility rating. The study contributes to our understanding of news media in Tamil Nadu which has witnessed a long history of political use of media.

Key words: Media credibility, television, news, witnessed, Tamil Nadu

INTRODUCTION

The state of Tamil Nadu in South India has a distinctive history of political use of mass media. The regional Dravidian political parties have systematically used various forms of communication prevalent in India (Jeffrey, 2010) from peasant modes (e.g., street theatre) and elite modes (e.g., Newspapers magazines) to mass media (e.g., Cinema) to mobilise support for their political goals. With the advent of satellite television, the regional political parties grafted their experience with films and folk media to the new medium of televisions. This has resulted in a rapid rise of politically owned television channels in the state with almost all major political parties in Tamil Nadu investing in the medium as well as news programming with an intention to frame political developments with partisan views. The practice was pioneered by one of the oldest Dravidian parties, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) which launched a television channel titled SunTV with its party symbol 'Rising Sun' as the channel's logo in 1993. Noting the success of the Sun TV's news bulletins as a propaganda tool for the DMK, its principal political rival the Anainthu Indiya Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK), launched a television channel of its own called the 'JJ TV' in 1995. Presently, the channel has been re-launched as 'Jaya TV', named after its leader J Jayalalithaa. The channel's logo resembles the party's election symbol 'Two Leaves'. Over a period of time other political parties followed suit launching their own television channels. These include the Makkal TV by Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK), Vasanth TV and Mega TV by the Congress, Captain TV by the Desiya Murpokku Dravidar Kazhagam (DMDK) and the Lotus TV by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

With such politically oriented television channels adding a tinge of bias in their news bulletins, the audience felt a vacuum for neutral news bulletins. This craving for objective news coverage on television has been to a large extent addressed in 2011 with the launch of a current affairs television channel in Tamil called 'Puthiya Thalaimurai TV', owned by the SRM Group of Educational Institutions. Neutral news coverage by the channel won it loyal viewers catapulting it to the status of the 'Number One News Channel' in Tamil Nadu within a short time. However, despite the emergence of a neutral television channel, the politically-partisan news bulletins of the other channels continues to occupy considerable space in the media industry. In Tamil Nadu, television is seen as a powerful political tool. In fact, television sets were distributed as freebies by the State Government between 2006 and 2011. More than any other media, the television attracts larger number of audiences.

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Despite this distinctive political use of media, academic researchers have not paid adequate attention to the role of television in regional politics. There are very few studies dealing with the political impact of television channels in Tamil Nadu with hardly any studies on news audiences. Most available studies have looked at media coverage of specific, often contentious issues like the Sri Lankan Tamil issue. But fewer studies have examined the nature of news audiences for Tamil television channels and explored their perception of media. The only available data has been from Television Audience Measurement (TAM), a media research centre, which most television channels use for media planning and advertising.

This study offers to fill this gap and aims to provide empirical grounding to questions concerning perceptions of news audience for Tamil television channels. It focuses on one of the central concerns of media critique that of media credibility.

Research problem: Studies that refer to media credibility in India have either adopted a framing approach to content or have offered a political economic critique of ownership, mostly by the way of commentaries (e.g., the media watch website such as The Hoot). These studies and commentaries assess credibility from an ethical framework, offering critique of presumed objectivity in media but have under represented audience perception of media credibility. Against the background of politically charged television space in Tamil Nadu, it is pertinent to ask how audiences perceive the credibility of news media. Is credibility a concern for news audience? What factors determine news media credibility? Does the type of television ownership influence perception of credibility? Do the audiences perceive differences in credibility of partisan and non-partisan television channels? How can we explain the variability in perceived news credibility? Credibility of media can be evaluated from audience subjectivities as perceived and articulated by news audience. There is an implicit expectation that news media provide accurate picture of reality, even when audience remain skeptical of media and routinely complain of biases. Do audience expect unbiased analysis, non-partisan and neutral presentation of news which can build credibility? Even when media presents distorted forms of news, the information/content available through media serves as a starting point for popular critique of news media (e.g., critique of objectivity). Audience perception of credibility can be seen as an assessment of news media performance. It is widely accepted by the scholars that the credibility of a source and the content can change the beliefs and attitudes of the audiences (Kang, 2010).

Literature review: In an era where the worldview is being echoed from the 'Idiot Box' as television has come to be dubbed, a proliferation of television news channels over the past decade and a half in a large democratic country like India has led to an information explosion. Studies have shown that the penetration of television media in households is likely to rapidly expand further in the coming years and this could prompt more media houses to use the medium to communicate to the people. The FICCI-KPMG Indian Media and Entertainment Industry Report 2013 estimates that the compounded annual growth rate of television industry would jump by 18% to touch a figure of Rs. 848 billion over the next 5 years as opposed to the present figure of Rs. 370 billion. In India where 748 private satellite television stations are in operation, television occupies a huge market. The growth in availability of news channels has raised questions over the accuracy and trustworthiness of the medium as a news source.

Credibility research is as old as ancient Greece still its application in mass communication is not that extensive (Golan, 2010). There is a significant body of research in the communication discipline that examines the determinants, measurements and perceptions of credibility (Cassidy, 2007; Gaziano and McGrath, 1986; Johnson and Kaye, 1998; Meyer, 1988; Newhagen and Nass, 1989; Andaleeb *et al*., 2012; Berlo *et al*., 1969; Kang, 2010; Giffin, 1967).

Research on media credibility at global level elucidate that people's trust in media has been plummeting gradually year by year. Pew research surveys have been consistently suggesting that in people's assessment the accuracy of the news stories have been coming down. In America the credibility of news media has been negative. A report issued by Pew in 2010 shows that 63% of the Americans say that news stories are inaccurate. There has been a decline in the believability ratings of several popular news organisations among the public in America since 1990s. The prevailing credibility gap all over remains a great concern globally. Media educators and editors of newspapers consider the erosion in media credibility as a major concern and suggested public journalism as a means to improve the credibility of media (Dickson and Topping, 2001). However, in India the trend is different. Lowy Institute for International Policy and the Australia India Institute, Australia, conducted a survey in India which showed that 86% of Indians believe that Indian news media gives accurate news on events. Yet, credibility research which is exhaustive and widespread in western countries, is only slowly gaining ground in developing countries like India as only a few studies were conducted to assess the performance of media among the audiences.

Mackay and Lowrey (2011) studied the effects of media use on the perceived credibility of news medium. Researches have been concluding that there will a positive relationship between the news media use and the perceived credibility. Kiousis (2001) found that there is a relationship between news credibility perceptions and media use. He also argues that the credibility rating of a medium is associated with its use. Jackob (2010) found that heavy users of media are more likely to have trust in media. Thus, researchers could expect the following relationship.

H_1: Higher the usage of the media, higher they rate the credibility of media.

According to Metzger as quoted by Kang (2010) involvement of audiences towards a particular channel or medium will be determined based on its credibility rating and so they will prefer the media that they perceive to be credible. Johnson and Kaye (1998) indicate that audiences are more likely to rate the medium which they depend on mostly as more credible. Higher the usage of the medium higher they rate the medium as credible. Perceptions of credibility can be highly situational and may depend on the receiver's relationship to the medium (Flanagin and Metzger, 2007). The following hypotheses are generated based on these literatures.

H_2: The most preferred medium will be rated high in terms of credibility.

Corman *et al.* (2006) argue that the characteristics of the source will be one of the factors for the audiences to make judgments on credibility. It is known that characteristics of a source will be based on its trustworthiness. People expect unbiased information from a source with complete autonomy. In India, media is highly accused of its political leanings. Most of the television channels are owned or affiliated to political parties with party symbols as their logos. In Tamil Nadu, news bulletins of different television channels usually have contents in favour of the political party to which the channel is affiliated to. In this scenario, it becomes inevitable to ascertain whether the political affiliation of a television channel really matters to the audiences? How do they rate the television channels affiliated to political parties in terms of credibility?

H_3: Television channels affiliated to political parties will be rated low in terms of credibility compared to non-partisan television channels.

India is a country with 22 official languages and nearly 322 spoken languages. By virtue of this apart from a regional language audience, a significant proportion of them are also known to use English as a link language. Hence, television channels that broadcast programmes in English will have a distinct or even overlapping audience than those who confine themselves to watching regional language programmes and news bulletins. Innumerable studies have been done to understand the differences between the two category of audiences. Shendurnikar (2011) who conducted a study on media and regional languages said that English has become a symbol for social status and good education. Consequently, there will be a wide difference in the way audiences of English and Tamil media rate its credibility.

H_4: There will be differences in terms of rating credibility between the English and Tamil media audiences.

Measurement and operationalisation: Analysis of the studies on news media credibility has suggested that judgments of trust, fairness, accuracy and expertise are the major dimensions related theoretically and empirically to the predominant researches on credibility (Stroud and Reese, 2008). Berlo *et al.* (1969) dealt with 83 scales to measure source credibility and investigated the criteria used by audiences to evaluate message source. There were similarities in the way audience judge the credibility of traditional media such as newspaper and television. Fairness and currency are the two elements consistently found in TV news credibility research (Abdulla *et al.*, 2002). Believability, accuracy, fairness and comprehensiveness were the factors used by Cassidy (2007) to form a credibility index. Andaleeb *et al.* (2012) used perceived independence of TV channels, their social role, source expertise, objectivity and audiovisual quality as the determinants of credibility perceptions of TV news. Several other scholars have developed indexes to measure credibility and the most popular among them was Gaziano and Mc Grath's 12 point scale (Gaziano and McGrath, 1986; Abdulla *et al.*, 2002). That index consists of 12 items that measure credibility on the basis of fairness, (un)bias, telling the whole story, accuracy, respect for privacy, watching after people's interests, concern for community well-being, separation of fact and opinion, trustworthiness, concern for public interest, factuality and reporter training level. Meyer (1988) further reduced it to 5 point scale.

This study attempts to measure the credibility of media using parameters adopted and modified from McGrath. A 17 item scale was used with the respondents choosing from 'yes', 'no' and 'not sure' responses. The questions put to the respondents were to broadly ascertain their responses to the following:

- Do they believe their preferred media publication/television channel is concerned about public interest?
- Is the media irresponsible?
- Does the media care for the viewers' needs/interests?
- Are the media reports timely?
- Does the media provide in-depth coverage?
- Does the media present news from reliable sources?
- Does the media tell the whole story?
- Does the media give facts irrespective of its opinion?
- Does the media play an important role in improving society?
- Does the media contribute to solving social problems?
- Does the media build awareness on the dominant issues?
- Does the media campaign for the right social causes?
- Does the media have a hidden agenda?
- Does the media engage in unnecessary provocative reporting?
- Does the media exaggerate and blow up issues? Is the media truthful?
- Is the media superficial?

The dependent variables was the 17 parameter Media Credibility Rating Scale (Mean = 28.601, SEM = 0.2067). The scale had a Corbanch alpha = 0.822 and was therefore summed to create a media credibility rating score which had a range of 7-30 with higher scores indicating higher perceived credibility. The scale was recorded into three categories indicating low, medium and high media credibility.

Concerns about media credibility was measured by asking the respondents to say how concerned they are about the credibility of the news that they receive? Options such as "Not at all concerned" "Somewhat concerned" "Concerned" and "Very much concerned" were given.

Preference of Television Channels was operationalized by asking respondents to choose from a list of television channels gathered from cable television operators and government sources. The choices were grouped into following categories: sun TV (23.9%), Puthiya Thalaimurai (27.5%), other politically owned channels (4.8%), English news channels (25.2%) and others (6.2%). TV channel preferences were further recoded (or recorded?) into different groups to reflect the type of ownership these channels represent. The first represented partisan TV channels like sun TV, jaya TV and captain TV. The second grouping includes non partisan TV channel preference which includes Puthiya Thalaimurai, Doordarshan (DD) and Podhigai TV. The third group represents English news channels like times. Now, NDTV and CNN-IBN. TV channel preferences were also further grouped into English and Tamil channels to enable comparative analysis of regional and English channels.

Time spent watching TV news was operationalized through the question "On a typical week day about how much time do you spend watching TV news?" Options given were 'don't watch, up to 5, 10, 15, 20, 30 min and 1 h, >1 h. Respondents who watched television news for up to 15 min were grouped together and recoded as audience who spent low time on watching TV news, those between 20 and 30 min were grouped together and recoded as audience who spent moderate time watching TV news and 1 h and above were recoded as audience who spent high time on watching TV news.

English news media use and Tamil news media use was created using sum of scores for frequency of use of news programmes, newspapers and magazines. English news media use and Tamil news media use were operationalized through combining responses to the following questions: How often do you use these following news media? was meant to capture this dimension. The choices were:

- Daily
- 2 or 3 days a week
- Once a week
- Once a month
- Rarely
- Never

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study adopts an exploratory research design with survey method in line with most studies on media credibility. Data were collected through various online and offline methods such as face to face interviews and distributing the link of the questionnaire through e-mail. It was conducted between August 2013 and January 2014. The sample size was 691 with 322 from rural regions near in villages in Kancheepuram, Tiruvallur and Chengalpet and urban Chennai region. A convenient sampling technique was adopted since the main interest of the study was not to estimate the levels of media credibility in the population but rather to examine the sources of differences or variability in media credibility.

A maximum of diversity sampling strategy was adopted to ensure that different sections of viewing population are included. Out of 691 respondents, 430 were male and 260 female. Respondents aged between 17 and 30 years were classified as "younger", those above 31 years were treated as "older" respondents. The younger respondents numbering 373 accounted for 54% of the accepted sample size while the older ones numbering 318 constituted 46% of the respondents. The

151 respondents (constituting 25% of the sample) who drew a monthly income of up Rs. 10,000 were categorised as belonging to the low income group, 272 respondents (45.1%) whose monthly family income was between Rs. 10,001 and Rs. 50,000 were grouped under the middle income category. The remaining 180 respondents (29.9%) who drew a monthly income of Rs. 50,000 and above were categorised as high income group.

About 3% where illiterates and 9.5% of the respondents had studied up to primary and 11.8% had complete high school. The remaining 75.6% of the respondents had completed graduation or above. On the basis of their employment status, the respondents were classified as employed full time (26.4%), employed part time (5.7%), home maker (8.6%), retired (15.8%) and students (43.5%). Occupationally respondents were grouped under four categories. Executives, entrepreneurs and professionals constituted 30.9%. Students constituted 42.2% of the sample.

While 2.4% of the respondents identified themselves as belonging to the high class, 15.5% declared themselves as belonging to the upper middle class. Middle class respondents accounted for 66.7% and the lower class constituted 5.5%. Since, the percentage of lower class and affluent class respondents was significantly low, they were grouped under the middle and upper middle classes respectively. In view of this, two groups of respondents emerged the middle to lower class accounting for 72.2% and the upper class constituting 17.7%.

RESULTS

One way ANOVA was performed to find the significant differences in group means of the selected independent variable "Concern for Media Credibility", "Time Spent Watching TV", "Preference for TV Channels" and "Extent of English and Tamil Media Use". Table 1 presents the group mean and standard deviation for the independent variables. Researchers confirmed that the assumptions of ANOVA-linearity and test of homogeneity of variance were met for each of the independent variables. Only those variables that met the ANOVA assumptions were included for analysis. The relationship between demographics and media credibility was analysed using cross-tabulation and χ^2-test.

Results and interpretation: Television is the most preferred medium by the people as 67.2% of them said when they want to know about an important event or breaking news they switch on the television. Among the 67.2% of them, 37.5% prefer regional (Tamil) television channels, 17.1% prefer English television channels and 12.6% relied on government media. English newspapers occupied second position with 10% and news websites occupied third position with 9.8%.

Table 1: One way ANOVA dependent variable: media credibility rating

Variables	Mean	SD
Concern for media credibility		
Low concern	27.251656	5.33569
Moderate concern	29.081699	5.07031
High concern	28.930233	5.08131
Preference for television channels		
Puthiya Thalaimurai	30.736	4.01800
Sun TV	26.523	5.23000
Public service broadcasting	27.251656	4.70500
Politically owned TV channels	27.769	5.68700
English news channels	28.575	5.34300
Time spent watching TV news		
People spend low time on watching TV news	27.891	5.72800
People spend moderate time on watching TV news	28.182	4.94200
People spend high time on watching TV news	30.047	4.54200
Tamil news media users		
Low Tamil news media use	27.547	5.39700
Moderate Tamil news media use	28.5628	5.05300
High tamil news media use	29.465	5.01000
English news media users		
Low English news media use	28.175	5.09700
Moderate English news media use	27.589	5.08900
High English news media use	29.915	5.17400

Concern for media credibility: How important do people find the credibility of the news that they receive? Overall, people displayed large concern about the credibility of the news that they receive. While 26.2% of the respondents said they are "very much concerned" about the credibility of the news they receive, 32.4% of the respondents said that they are "concerned", 35.7% said they are "a little concerned" and only 5.6% said they are "not at all concerned" about the credibility of news. Overall it is understood that credibility of news has been viewed as an important factor by the people. This factor provides justification to carry out further analysis of credibility and related issues for the study.

There is a significant difference (Table 1) in the perceived media credibility among the respondents expressing different levels of concern for credibility of media as determined by one-way ANOVA (F (2, 626) = 6.89921, p = 0.001). Tukey HSD Post-Hoc test revealed that media credibility rating is statistically significantly higher for those expressing moderate concern for the credibility of media (Mean = 29.081699±5.07031) than those expressing high concern for media credibility (Mean = 28.930233±5.08131, p = 0.010) and low in concern for media credibility (Mean = 27.251656±5.33569, p = 0.001). Similarly, those expressing high concern for media credibility give media credibility higher rating than those expressing low concern (p = 0.010). There was no significant difference between groups expressing high and moderate concern for media credibility (p = 0.948).

Taken together these results show that people who express high concern for media credibility give media higher credibility rating than those expressing no concern or only a little concern for media credibility. Individuals who are most concerned about the credibility of media seem to perceive media to be more credible than those who are less concerned about media credibility.

In contrast, how do people who are not at all concerned about the credibility of news rate the credibility of media? While 5.6% of the respondents who said they are not at all concerned about the credibility of news has also rated the media's credibility as "low"; 56% of them said the credibility is "low" and only12% said it is "high". Respondents who are not concerned about the credibility, do not rate the credibility of media as high. A greater proportion of respondents who said they are very much concerned or concerned have rated the credibility of media as high, i.e., 39.4 and 43.3%, respectively.

Perceived media credibility and demographics: A greater proportion of the older people (26.7%) than the younger people (15.8%) indicates that the credibility of the media is low. A slightly higher proportion of younger people (29%), than older ones (28.9%) indicate that the credibility of media is high. Hence, this study found that the older you grow the lesser you feel the media is credible and the younger you are the more you feel the media is credible. A χ^2-test of the relationship between media credibility and age group was statistically significant $\chi^2 = 13.860$, df = 2, $p \leq 0.001$).

As far as income group is concerned, the results show that a greater proportion of high income group (25%) feels that the credibility of media is low. A greater proportion of low income group (36.4%) feels that the credibility of media is high. Hence, it is found that lower the income level, the higher they feel about the credibility of media and higher the income level, the lower they feel about the credibility of media. A χ^2-test of the relationship between media credibility and income group was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 17.155$, df = 4, $p \leq 0.002$).

While analysing the educational qualification of the respondents it is found that a greater proportion of non-graduates (31.7%) indicate that the media's credibility is low and a greater proportion of graduates (30.6%) indicate that the credibility of media is high. Hence, it is found that the more you are educated, the more you feel the media is credible and the less you are educated the lesser you feel the media is credible. A χ^2-test of the relationship between media credibility and educational qualification was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 14.264$, df = 2, $p \leq 0.001$).

Occupationally a greater proportion of non-executives (26.6%) indicate that the media's credibility is low. A greater proportion of executives (31.1%) indicate that the credibility of media is high. A χ^2-test of the relationship between media credibility and occupation was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 12.825$, df = 6, $p \leq 0.046$). Other demographics factors such as gender, employment status and social class proved to be statistically insignificant.

Preference for television channels: Among the 26 television channels listed in the questionnaire, a greater number of respondents (27.5%) say Pudhiya Thalaimurai channel is their first preference, sun TV takes the second place with 23.9% and NDTV gets the third place with 11.3%. There is a significant difference (Table 1) in the perceived media credibility among the respondents expressing different preferences for television channels as determined by one-way ANOVA (F (5, 615) = 12.939, p = 0.000).

Tukey HSD Post-Hoc test revealed that media credibility rating is statistically significantly higher for those expressing preference for Puthiya Thalaimurai (Mean = 30.736±4.018) than those expressing preference for sun TV (Mean = 26.523±5.23, p = 0.0), public service broadcasting (Mean = 27.251656±4.705, p = 0.022). Other politically owned TV channels (Mean = 27.769±5.687, p = 0.046) and English news channels (Mean = 28.575±5.343, p = 0.013).

Respondents expressing preference for English news channels give these channels significantly higher credibility rating in comparison with those expressing preference for sun TV (p = 003). There was nosignificant difference between groups expressing preference for sun TV and other politically owned channels (p = 0.838).

Taken together these results show that Puthiya Thalaimurai is perceived to be highly credible in comparison to English news channels, public service broadcasting (Doordharshan, Poodhigai and AIR), sun TV (affiliated to DMK) and other politically owned channels (Jaya TV, Makkal TV, Captain TV). Thus, researchers can conclude that non-partisan TV channels are perceived to be more credible than partisan TV channels.

To examine if there is a significant difference in media credibility between English and Tamil television news channels, the respondents' preference were recoded into three categories-preferences for Tamil, English and other channels. A larger proportion of respondents prefer Tamil (66.7%) news channels. About 30.8% opted for English television channels. Among the Tamil TV channel watchers, a higher proportion of them indicate that the credibility of media is high (40%). As for the English TV channel watchers, it is found that a higher proportion of them (33.5%) indicate that the credibility of media is low.

Time spent watching TV news: There is a significant difference (Table 1) in the perceived media credibility between respondents spending different amount of time watching TV news as determined by one-way ANOVA (F (2, 624) = 9.625, p = 0.0). Tukey HSD Post-Hoc test revealed that media credibility rating is statistically significantly higher for those who spent 1 h or more daily watching TV news (Mean = 30.047±4.542) than those spending moderate time (20-30 min on TV news (Mean = 28.182±4.942, p = 0.001) and those who spend less amount of time (0-15 min) on news (Mean = 27.891±5.728, p = 0.000). There was no significant difference between those who spent moderate and low time watching TV news (p = 0.816). These results suggest that higher the time spent watching TV news, higher will be the perceived media credibility. A χ^2-test of the relationship between media credibility and time spent on watching TV news was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 22.473$, df = 4, $p \le 0.000$).

Tamil news media users rating of media credibility: There is a significant difference (Table 1) in the perceived media credibility between different frequency of Tamil news media as determined by one-way ANOVA (F (2, 618) = 7.261, p = 0.001). Tukey HSD Post-Hoc test revealed that media credibility rating is statistically significant for those indicating higher Tamil news media use (Mean = 29.465±5.01) in comparison to low Tamil news media use (Mean = 27.547±5.397, p = 0.000). There was no significant difference between heavy and moderate Tamil news media users (p = 0.165). These results suggest that there is a positive relationship between Tamil news media use and media credibility rating with heavy users giving media higher rating than light users.

English news media users ratings of media credibility: There is a significant difference (Table 1) in the perceived media credibility between different frequency of English news media as determined by one-way ANOVA (F (2, 618) = 11.778, p = 0.000). Tukey HSD post hoc test revealed that media credibility rating is statistically significantly for those indicating higher English news media use (Mean = 29.915±5.174) in comparison to moderate English news media users (Mean = 27.589±5.089, p = 0.000) and low English news media use (Mean = 28.175±5.097, p = 0.002). There was no significant difference between moderate and low Tamil news media users (p = 0.482). These results suggest that there is a positive relationship between English news media use and media credibility rating with heavy users giving media higher rating than light users (Table 1).

Table 2 provides the frequency of positive responses (scored 1) to each of the 17 parameters in the media credibility parameter. Table 2 indicates the proportion of respondents who gave high ratings for their most preferred channels (grouped into English and Tamil).

Table 2 presents a comparison of item level media credibility rating for those preferring English and Tamil news channels. Chi-square results between preference for English/Tamil news channels and 17 parameters on the credibility scale showed that for the following 12 parameters a greater proportion of those who prefer Tamil news channel give these channels higher credibility rating than those who prefer English news channels (concerned about public, is timely, presents news from reliable sources, tells the whole story, plays an important role in improving society, builds awareness on the dominant issues, is truthful, is irresponsible, has a hidden agenda, engages in unnecessarily provocative reporting, exaggerates and blows up issue and is superficial). Hence, it showed statistically significant differences. χ^2-test for rest of the five parameters did not show any statically significant difference in proportion of users.

Table 2: Perceived media credibility and English-Tamil TV news channels

Variables	Tamil TV channel watchers (Positive responses (%))	English TV channel watchers (Positive responses (%))	Others (Positive responses (%))	χ^2-values	Sig. p-values	df
Concerned about public	51.2	24.6	0.90	18.932	0.001	4
Cares about viewer's needs and interest	53.3	23.7	1.30	5.909	0.206	4
Is timely	56.9	25.0	1.30	12.600	0.013	4
Provides in-depth coverage	45.7	22.7	0.09	8.043	0.090	4
Presents news from reliable sources	51.2	24.3	1.00	9.695	0.046	4
Tells the whole story	36.5	22.0	0.09	16.632	0.002	4
Gives facts irrespective of its opinion	38.4	18.9	1.00	6.669	0.154	4
Plays an important role in improving society	48.3	21.5	0.90	17.387	0.002	4
Contributes to solving social problems	45.4	21.6	1.20	7.444	0.114	4
Builds awareness on the dominant issues	52.2	26.3	1.20	11.568	0.021	4
Campaigns for the right social causes	42.8	22.5	1.20	8.046	0.090	4
Is truthful	45.7	21.2	0.90	19.389	0.001	4
Is irresponsible	48.0	18.3	0.90	31.126	0.000	4
Has a hidden agenda	30.7	10.4	0.60	11.703	0.020	4
Engages in unnecessarily provocative reporting	39.0	13.4	0.90	23.702	0.000	4
Exaggerates and blows up issues	34.8	12.9	0.90	10.729	0.030	4
Is superficial	35.5	13.2	0.70	10.829	0.029	4

DISCUSSION

Overall, researchers find that the proposed four hypothesis were supported through the one-way ANOVA test of significance. Credibility of media is a major concern for news audience. There were significant differences in credibility rating among different age, income, education and occupational groups. The study did not find significant differences in gender, employment status and social class. Non-partisan Tamil regional channel Puthiya Thalaimurai received higher credibility rating than the news programmes in sun TV, public service broadcasting and English news channels. More the time audience spent on watching TV news, the greater is their perceived credibility. Similar results were found for Tamil and English language media use increase in frequency of use of news programme increases perception of credibility. An interesting finding of this study is that the greater proportion of respondents preferring Tamil language gives it a higher rating than those preferring English news channels. This suggests a match between expectations of news media credibility and channel preference, lending support for uses and gratification perspective.

CONCLUSION

Credibility is a complex multi-dimensional concept. Mass media provide plethora of information through different sources and credibility was viewed as a measure of the performance of media. Globally, core assumption is that trust in media among people has been plummeting. Media cynicism, skepticism and distrust have been growing over the past three decades. The prevailing credibility gap remains a great concern globally.

However, in India, studies have suggested that media continues to enjoy the trust of the people in comparison to other institutions. This study also found evidence that majority of the people indicate that news media is highly credibility. This study also supports the previous researches by Abdulla *et al.* (2002), Kiousis (2001), Mackay and Lowrey (2011) and Johnson and Kaye (1998) that audiences will prefer the media they perceive to be credible. The more the usage the more they will perceive the media to be credible.

Generally it is found that people are much concerned about the credibility of the news that they receive. They are very much aware of the political affiliation of the channels and gave low ratings in terms of credibility to those channels. This study also found evidence that there is a language difference in rating the credibility of media as far as television media is concerned. More than English television media viewers, Tamil television channel viewers rated Tamil news media as credible. Though india media has been criticised widely by the scholars and intellectuals for its promotion of sensationalism and its wide known political leanings, still people believe that media is highly credible.

Media credibility could be one of those concepts that are amenable to comparison across various media systems. Even though this study has not adopted a comparative framework, it could be suggested that it is possible to develop a pragmatic study of media credibility the present study can contribute to the understanding of how audience perceive media credibility and the factors that explain them by contributing to a development of framework for analysis of media credibility across regions and countries, besides cross-cultural comparative perspectives.

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