A Study of Specific Features of Weekend Lankadeepa and Silumina Newspapers when Reporting Crimes

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Abstract

Bringing reliable data and information to the reader is foundation to the task of a newspaper. Crime reporting in a more unbiased way is an important part of this task. Crimes are a feature of the society. Part of the society believes that media has influenced the growth of crimes. In this context, it is timely to explore the positives and negatives of newspapers when reporting crimes. The key objective of this research was to identify the specific strategies used by newspapers when reporting crimes. Data and information were collected from Sunday Lankadeepa and Silumina newspapers of the month of February 2017. Content analysis was conducted based on the logical intuition of the researcher to identify the specific features of crime reporting and to measure the reliability and biasness of information presented in the above newspapers. It has been found that the crime reporting of newspapers can be discussed under two aspects such as 'format' and 'content'. Page layout, designing and the layout of information presented are important aspects to discuss under the format. Similarly, use of language, size; shape and color of the letters used, use of appropriate pictures, extent of the exploration done and information presented are important under the content. From the analysis, it was found that there are noticeable differences - in terms of reliability of information presented and biasness of news published - between state and private sector-newspapers when reporting crimes. Also, compared to other media, newspapers seemingly have followed some level of media ethics when reporting crimes. The research recommends that newspapers must take more efforts to minimize the chances that could provoke reader or put any party involved at risk of physical or mental abuse when reporting crimes. By adopting these recommendations, newspapers - the oldest and most populous media in the world - will be able to endure for a long time.

Keywords: Content analysis; crime reporting; reader; newspapers

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