

Paid news in india the cases and issues media essay



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This research aims to conduct a study on media ethics and responsibility in India as regards paid news. One of the main objectives of the research is to identify and critically discuss the cases of various forms of paid news specifically the practice paid news during elections. Therefore, in this part of the paper an attempt is made identify and critically discuss the cases of various forms of paid news specifically the practice paid news during elections. The major cases of paid news are discussed in the forms of the case of Maharashtra Assembly elections in 2009, the case of Commonwealth Games and the revelations of Radia tapes.

THE CASES and ISSUES

In the present day, having population of more than billion India props up just about 70 thousand registered newspapers and more than 450 television channels comprising a number of 24×7 news channels. By and large, the Indian media generally plays the part of constructive opposition in the Parliament with that of in different Legislative Assemblies of the State. Media persons and particularly newspapers journalists are distinguished and esteemed as the moral guide in the Indian society at large. Whilst the newspapers in Europe and America are trailing their circulation yearly, the Indian print media is even this day going stronger with vast circulation number and market avenues. More importantly in Indian democracy, the media carries on to be celebrated as the fourth vital pillar after judiciary, legislature and bureaucracy (Thakuria, 2010). However, unhappily a cancer in the form of paid news damaged the image and trustworthiness of media in the country, particularly in the recent years. The practice that entails currency in getting dishonorably media space by the recipients continues to

be a central issue in India all through the recent past. The caner of paid news is found to be damaging the honour and esteem of the media leading to people's decreasing trust in reported news and the journalists.

As per the Eldeman Trust Barometer Survey (2011, cited from Seetharam, 2011), whereas the trust in media as an establishment went up by 4 percent all through the world, the similar parameter for India fell from 58 percent to 50 percent. This downhill trend has had been persisting ever since the previous three-four years. This trend points toward the rising trust deficit of newspapers and television news channels in India. If this trend continues, the world of Indian media will not be glorified and trusted one. Despite this, every day we come to know about big scandals and fraudulent practices in the form of paid news s nexus between media persons and politicians, and further between media persons and corporate houses. The case of Radia tape is still in our memory and many such cases are concealed because of the involvement of media persons. When media people become corrupt, who will disclose the corruption and wrong doings of politicians and business houses? The unfortunate situation is that despite the condition of being grave the media as a whole is yet to recognise this catastrophe of confidence. Instead of taking the responsibility, the big national media houses and media persons are quiet pleased to blame the language media and other institutions and themselves take up a holier than thou position. The emerging crisis is evidently hurting the wellbeing of Indian democracy , where media as fourth pillar of democracy is expected to play more responsible role. If the fraudulent practice of paid news continues, the trust deficit of newspapers and television news channels in India will fast go up,

and it would be nothing to surprise if within two-three years Eldeman Trust Barometer Survey will come out with the result of media trust in Indian going down from 50 percent to 25 percent and even lesser than that.

Off course very recently, particularly after the Radia tape case, various leading media persons' and media houses have demonstrated their concern as regards the ill practice of paid news, but the predicament is that Indian media is badly under the grip of paid news culture and in order to root out the menace of paid news, there is need strike the prevailing culture of paid news in the mainstream media. Paid news are those news or articles in print or electronic media, which point toward favourable situation for the organization or establishment that has paid for it. In the case of paid news, the news comes much in the form of an advertisement, although devoid of the advertisement tag. This sort of news has been regarded as a stern misconduct in view of the fact that it misleads the populace, not allowing them recognize that the news actually is purposed to advertisement. On the other hand, in such cases of paid news the payment modes generally defies tax laws and election expenditure laws. More badly, it raises electoral issue for the reason that the media has a straight control on voters (Banerjee and Gigani, 2011).

The Press Council of India issued guiding principle pertinent to both government authorities and the media during the 15th General Elections to the Lok Sabha hat took place in April-May 2009. Ensuring free and fair coverage by the media was the purpose why Press Council of India issued guiding principle. However, subsequent to the elections, an alarming trend was surfaced by the selected divisions of the media, where journalists from <https://assignbuster.com/paid-news-in-india-the-cases-and-issues-media-essay/>

various media houses were found getting currency by candidates in election fray for favourable coverage or planting paid news (Press Council of India, 2010). This paid news was surfaced at three levels. At the first level, the reader of the newspaper or the viewer of the television programs is misled into considering that what is fundamentally an advertisement is in point of fact, in parallel presented news reports. At the second level, the practice of paid news was surfaced by not authoritatively saying publicly the expenses incurred on placing paid news items. In that case the candidate in election fray defies the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961, which are purposed to be put into effect by the Election Commission of India underneath the Representation of the People Act, 1951. At the third level, paid news taking place through not accounting for the riches received from candidates, the related media houses or their people as journalists, as they are violating the provisions of the Companies Act, 1956 with that of the Income Tax Act, 1961, in doing so (Press Council of India, 2010). A part of Indian media extensively reported the occurrences of paid during the period 15th General Election and in the subsequent times. Further articles about paid news practices in Indian media too drew the attention of foreign media and foreign newspapers, particularly Wall Street Journal, the Guardian and the Independent pointed towards the alarming situation arising out due to paid news in India media (Thakurta and Reddy, 2010). The fact is that the occurrence of paid news has acquired sober extent in the world of Indian media. Nowadays, it goes away from the dishonesty of the particular media person and media house and has turned out to be invasive, structured and very much planned, and in this progression it is challenging the Indian democratic value. Paid news is now

limited not only to cash payment but various forms of favours and malpractices. Let us discuss some cases in this regard.

As regards a notable and serious case of paid news, the case of Maharashtra Assembly elections in 2009 is worth mentioning. During the elections of Maharashtra Assembly, Ashok Chavan as candidate made beneficial use of the print media in the forms of regional and national papers through giving advertisements. The paid news stories and editorials in the form of advertisements were published with and with no bylines in newspapers (Lund and Thomas, 2012). The issue was exposed by a reputed national English daily Hindu that campaign advertisements in support of Mr. Chavan (who was contesting from Bhokar in the 2009 Assembly poll), were issued in Marathi newspapers, masking them as news items. The news was reported by Rural Affairs editor, P. Sainath of Hindu revealing much as regards the coverage that took place pre polls in Maharashtra. There was a wide-ranging coverage of Mr Chavan who as Chief Minister by the local media that comprised the largest circulated Lokmat too. Shockingly Chavan claimed that he had submitted the expenditure of those advertising to the District Election Officer , but the fact was that Mr. Chavan had not mentioned the money spent on such advertisements in his election expenses accounts and therefore was violation of Election Commission rules (Balaji, 2012). This was the second level of paid news as defined by Election Commission. Perhaps it was the first major reported case of paid news during elections. Case was filed against Mr. Chavan in the court by the candidates and it is currently in Supreme Court. Certainly this case was a wake up call for both Election Commission and Indian media, and as a result now during every election

there are watchful eyes on paid news practices by Election Commission and some sections of media that operate ethically and responsibly. However, paid news is not full of life all through elections per se. Paid news has as well taken the shape of hush-hush contract where the media firms enters into a agreement with the organizations or corporate houses and money is are exchanged for advertising deals. A number of such cases have been found recently in Indian media. The case of paid news in Commonwealth Games is too worth mentioning.

What notable is that the expression paid news does not essentially signify the news is paid for in the form of money or cash and this was made apparent during the Commonwealth Games that was organised in New Delhi in 2010. It was certainly shocking how no newspaper or media person wrote about downbeat facets of the Games organization and the other linked facet till the last hours. However, in a report on a web portal titled " Suresh Kalmadi met with officials of top media companies and urged them to support the games, " revealed everything of what we talk about paid news. No wonder therefore simultaneously the English daily with the biggest circulation in India arrived with a pitch for getting hold of the status of the official newspaper of the Game and for the same it would offer particular attribute such Commonwealth Games quiz, seminars, marathon and even a Coffee table book. The pitch as well very bigheartedly added that " We do not solicit any financial assistance from Commonwealth Games for the above activities apart from regular advertising support for encouragement" The most shocking component of the pitch was it assured that a few of its editorials, which are believed to be the non partial critical view of the editor,

would exclusively focal point on the Games in a convincing non- advertising set-up. The newspaper as well mentioned the editorial content chart for landmark days such as Republic (Banerjee and Gigani, 2011). Definitely this was the case of paid and the question arises as whether endeavouring to get a collaborator position is ethical or unethical, moreover the question here rather is whether the line up amid news and advertisement is vague. Here if an advertisement attribute is offered as news the Right to Information is breached. In such case, the readers or viewers are deprived of a right picture and is made to suppose whatever is presented to them. This case is nothing but selling of editorials by the newspaper and undeniably a serious and fit case of paid news offense.

The cases of paid news has badly hit the world of Indian media in recent years, and in this context one of most notable revealing has had been the paid news issue linked to Radia Tapes. This has been the most notably talked about issues in the Indian media as far as paid news is concerned, where the nexus is found between corporate houses, government authorities, corporate lobbyists and eminent journalists. The Radia tape has more drawn the attention towards the fact as how eminent senior journalists make use of their influence to strive and weaken the functioning of the government of India, than how media houses are taking money to publish or broadcast news. However, taking money to publish or broadcast news is worse, for the reason that it is all invasive from the smallest newspaper to the major news channel. We can understand that there are few sections in the media who have the sort of influence that is required to influence government, in the

mode in which it was exposed in the Radia Tapes. But definitely the case is an eye-opening.

Notably here the Radia tapes storm relates to the taped and released telephonic tête-à-tête amid Niira Radia, a corporate lobbyist and a segment of politicians, corporate house owners bureaucrats and journalists that were taped by the Department of Income Tax for the period of 2008-09. The tape of telephonic tête-à-tête reveals the lobbyist Radia stating that media is greedy. The newspapers which had covered Radia tapes notably lost the advertisement from the corporate house of Tata. The report of this case draws our attention towards the negation in depending on advertising for revenue and simultaneously attempting to take action to the amplified professional rivalry which necessitates quality news reporting (Reddy, 2011). Instead of coming with quality news reporting, newspapers and news channels taking the corrupt route of paid news.

As per a latest study (Singh, 2012) approximately 10 percent of news in the newspapers is paid news , however the fact is that there is across-the-board corruption and fraudulent practices in Indian media. Yes not all news is paid news, but page 3 of newspapers in most cases is paid news and all the social activities that are found in newspapers are reported after receiving payment in cash and other forms. Even in the business section of the newspapers is too there is practice of paid news and a definite percentage of news is business section is paid news. Worth to mention here, corporate controlling in the media has had grown recently for the reason that of the cash, the editor's post had been demoted. Corporate currency is required to run the national media and if demoted the clout of an editor the more will demote <https://assignbuster.com/paid-news-in-india-the-cases-and-issues-media-essay/>

the editorial sections of the newspapers. Next comes the role of the central and state governments controlling news newspapers for their favour. These suggest that India media is today diseased to cancer of corruption in the form of paid news where both corporate houses and governments are contributing to demote the position of media from worse to worst. In such critical situation if Indian media fails to respond ethically and responsible, there will be serious challenge to its position democracy's fourth pillar. As George (2012) aptly argues that the unethical character of paid news is so deceitful that one would think no newspaper or news channel organization would carry out such things, although the fact is that such thoughts are planned and started on by the nation's main and esteemed newspapers and media houses . The control of a media house that is money-making is such as the sway of chickungunia as spreading hasty. The plan of paid news has spread fast enough to be converted into one of the shames of contemporary time. The media houses are crossing the boundary and it is ethically shoddier. What shocking is that even Rupert Murdoch did not have the courage to bring in ideas that have turned into dishonorable in the world of Indian media that is paid news and the dishonest practice of hush-hush contracts. The section of media carrying out such fraudulent practices is nothing but cheating with the democracy and abusing the trust of citizens. This is worst of what we can expect from Indian media. The high time has arrived not only for media to behave more ethically and responsibly, but to make regulations to control paid news practices.

SUMMARY

The practice that entails currency in getting dishonorably media space by the recipients continues to be a central issue in India all through the recent past. The caner of paid news is found to be damaging the honour and esteem of the media leading to people's decreasing trust in reported news and the journalists. The unfortunate situation is that despite the condition of being grave the media as a whole is yet to recognise this catastrophe of confidence. Instead of taking the responsibility, the big national media houses and media persons are quiet pleased to blame the language media and other institutions and themselves take up a holier than thou position. As regards a notable and serious case of paid news, the case of Maharashtra Assembly elections in 2009 is worth mentioning. During the elections of Maharashtra Assembly in 2009, the then Chief Minister Mr. Ashok Chavan as candidate made beneficial use of the print media in the forms of regional and national papers through giving advertisements. However, expression paid news does not essentially signify the news is paid for in the form of money or cash and this was made apparent during the Commonwealth Games. The Radia tape has more drawn the attention towards the fact as how eminent senior journalists make use of their influence to strive and weaken the functioning of the government of India, than how media houses are taking money to publish or broadcast news. However, taking money to publish or broadcast news is worse. Just about 10 percent of news in the newspapers is paid news; however the fact is that there is across-the-board corruption and fraudulent practices in Indian media. The unethical character of paid news is so deceitful that one would think no newspaper or news channel organization would carry out such things, although the fact is that such thoughts are <https://assignbuster.com/paid-news-in-india-the-cases-and-issues-media-essay/>

planned and started on by the nation's main and esteemed newspapers and media houses. The section of media carrying out such fraudulent practices is nothing but cheating with the democracy and abusing the trust of citizens. Therefore, there requires urgent control on this both internally and externally.