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**Title**

**UNDERSTANDING EFFECT OF MASS MEDIA ON  
DISASTER MANAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY**

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**Abstract:**

The general social science literature on media and disaster needs to focus on issues related to ethical concern that dominates the mass communication and journalism literature. To endeavor the benefits to the society a great deal about human and organizational behavior in crisis and disaster needs to be studied in order to reduce the dichotomy in the area of social sciences and mass communication and journalism.

Since the creation of this world, human beings are experiencing disasters and in spite of desperately trying to grapple with the disaster, there is any significant progress in this field. The very basic reason behind this is the complex nature of the system where this disaster takes place. Disaster can be broadly categorized as natural disaster and man-made disaster. The advancement in science and technology has made significant contribution to mitigate natural and some manmade hazards. However hybrid disasters like terrorism, which include bomb explosions, kidnapping, killings and hijacking are difficult to mitigate, as victims are targeted with a planned strategy. The one of its type is the recently experienced Mumbai terrorist attack of 26/11.

Mass media plays a significant role in humanizing disaster by emphasizing “human interest” stories as well as portrayals of the bureaucratic nature of the disaster management agencies. However, there exist up to some extent the portrayals of fiction too particularly through newspaper and movies. Mass media took up the cause with every major and minor disaster reported worldwide. But by doing so, what effect does it leads to, in case of hazards like that of Mumbai terrorist attack of 26/11.

This paper investigates and identifies the role of mass media in mitigating the disaster of Mumbai terrorist attack of 26/11.

**Keyword:** Manmade disaster, Mass media, Mumbai terrorist attack 26/11.

**1. Introduction:**

Disaster is a sudden, calamitous event bringing great damage, loss, and destruction and devastation to life and property. Disasters are of two types –natural and manmade disasters. The most disrupting among the manmade disaster is the –terrorism. Unlike the other manmade

disaster and natural disaster, terrorism not only influences the mental, socio-economic, political and cultural state of the affected area, but the entire state, country and many a times the world. The November 26, 2008, terrorist attack in Mumbai, which killed at least 172 people [i], has been referred to as “India’s 9/11.” The attacks, carried out by a Pakistan-based Islamic terrorist group using automatic weapons and grenades, began on 26 November 2008 and ended on 29 November 2008. Eight attacks occurred in South Mumbai: at Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, the Oberoi Trident, the Taj Mahal Palace and Tower, Leopold Cafe, Cama Hospital, the Orthodox Jewish-owned Nariman House, the Metro Cinema and a lane behind the Times of India building behind St. Xavier's College. There was also an explosion at the Mazagaon docks in Mumbai's port area and a taxi blast at Vile Parle [ii].

The prolonged incident, which went on for 60 hours with the steadily mounting death toll, made it a slow-motion shoot-out and siege that mesmerized the world’s news media. The mass media was definitely a source of minute to minute updates of the situation holding the entire world in front of TV screens and many getting it from blogs, twitters and newspapers. However looking towards the role of mass media in giving coverage to Mumbai terrorist attack it has been criticized by many. As stated in [2], media with its 24 h coverage of the incident with fear provoking headlines like ‘Is India safe?’ and full coverage of the rescue operation by the security forces, actually helped the terrorist achieve their goals.

This paper investigates and identifies through survey the role of mass media in mitigating the disaster of Mumbai terrorist attack of 26/11.

## **2. Methodology:**

The methodology adopted for the present study is based on conducting survey and analyzing the results based on following questions:

1. How responsible was media in broadcasting sensitive information and sensationalizing the news coverage?
2. How ethical was the journalism in covering Mumbai terrorist attack?
3. What do you think about media’s ability to draw the line at showing sensitive news about the movement of the security forces?

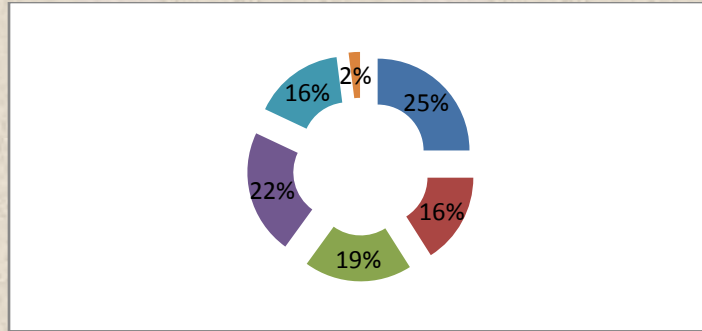


4. What was the media interest in TRP for gaining higher rates for advertisements during the crisis?
5. Was the media more interested in giving coverage to Taj and Oberio attack, then CST?
6. How will you rate the usefulness of the mass media communication during the crisis to the actually affected people?
7. How will you rate the usefulness of the mass media communication to the attackers?
8. What was the role of media in relaying situational information to the mainstream media, which was monitored by Mumbai terrorist?
9. Any proactive measures communicated to general public by mass media considering the lesson learnt from Mumbai terrorist attack?
10. What was the role of mass media and journalism in succeeding rescue operation of Mumbai terrorist attack?

### **3. Result Analysis:**

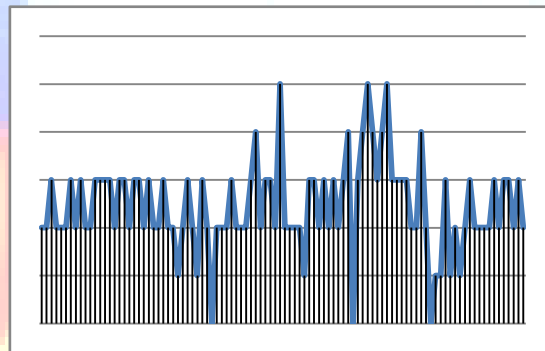
The survey conducted shows that media is responsible in sensationalizing the news. 33% of the people said that there should have been some restriction on the news broadcast and live coverage. 28% of the people said that few of the footage were recursively played that made the situation more sensitive and also spread panic throughout.

The issue of whether it was ethical or unethical journalism in covering Mumbai terrorist attack was unbiased outcome of the survey. Figure 1. Below shows that around 25% of the people believe it to be unethical whereas as the severity of ranking goes on decreasing to mark it ethical. 2% of the people had no opinion about it.



**Figure 1 How ethical was journalism in covering Mumbai terrorist attack?**

Figure 2 reflects the public opinion about media and their interest in TRP at the time of crisis. Media sensationalized the incident and came to cash with human emotions for their TRP. The opinion reflected in [iii] says that November 26 is one of the most hated days in the memory of Indians, not only because of the terror attack on Mumbai but also due to the insensitivity of the media. The media covered the NSG operation live to raise their TRP ratings but at a huge cost — security. Media’s ability to draw the line at showing sensitive news about the movement of the security forces was a failure. It was portrayal of the situations from which terrorist would learn lesson and give plan accordingly.



**Figure 2 Media interest in TRP**

Though there were eight different places where the terrorist attack took place on 26/11, it was observed that more than 30 television news channels were more interested in giving the coverage of Taj and Oberio. The reason could be again TRP or say the media was more interested to give coverage of high profile elements of the society.

80% of the people believe that the coverage by media was hardly useful to the victims as it created more panic and loss of faith in the Government system.

In addition to concern about information that needs to reach the public but does not, some participants in the survey expressed concern about the impact of the information that does reach the public.

#### **4. Conclusion:**

Manmade disasters like terrorism which are the consequences of intended action are in itself a question mark on humanity. Mass media today are authorized with unrestricted relay. The media should take into consideration the law of unintended consequences and have a clear demarcation between ethical and unethical journalism which will truly help people to get courage to face situations like Mumbai terrorist attack of 26/11. The recent bomb blast of 13/7 in Mumbai shows that we have not learnt lessons from 26/11 and media needs to play an awareness creation role. The vital factor in effective communications is the creation and repetition of precise, effective messages, both through mass media and other alternative forms of communications. Such messages can empower people to take practical steps to protect themselves from hazards.

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