# Male political photographs dominate on front pages: A content analysis of front page political visuals of leading Indian Newspapers

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## Abstract

This study examines the gender representation of political photographs from the most circulated newspapers in India. A total of 355 political photographs were yielded from the 336 front pages among the selected newspapers. Important finding of the research are male political photographs (72%) dominate in the Indian newspapers. *Dainik Tribune* published the maximum photographs of male politicians among the selected newspapers. Maximum political photographs of men were used with the caption. Most of the women political photographs were used with the story. Percentage of international photographs of women politicians was higher than male politicians. English newspapers published maximum women political photographs as compared to vernacular newspapers. All the selected newspapers have given only 3% space to all the women politicians.

**Keywords**: Photojournalism, Gender study, Content analysis, Front page, Political photographs.

## Introduction

Photographs are an important part of news reporting since the beginning of photography. Before the advent of photography, newspapers were using illustrations to explain the news events. According to famous art historian Gombrich (1996), "We are living in a visual age. We are bombarded by pictures from morning to night. Opening our newspaper at breakfast we see photographs of men and women in the news, and raising our eyes from the paper, we encounter the picture on the cereal package".

During the political news coverage, photographs play an important role to show the reality of political circles. All over the world newspapers are using politicians. The photographs of the

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few world leaders get more space due to higher importance of political scenario around the world.

The representation of gender, mostly of women, in the mass media has been a research topic in academic world since the late 1960s. Detailed studies on the portrayals of gender in media are still on the agenda of researchers.

My study is focused on the analysis of representation of gender in political photographs published by the selected newspapers of Chandigarh edition on the front page in 2011. The newspaper is the oldest method of communication with the masses; it is a combination of words and photographs. According to Libet (1991), "With the help of photographs, information processed much faster than words and verbally, it translates sensing (hearing, smelling, touch) into conscious awareness of these stimuli within half a second". Visual dominates perception, the brain perceives, stores, and processes verbal and visual information mainly on distinct routes and with distinct mechanisms (VanDamme, Crombez, & Spence, 2009).

Photographs are very important research tool for the social sciences since the beginning of disciplines like sociology and anthropology. As Emmison and Smith (2000) says "One of the most frequently made observations by commentators on the social scientific uses of visual data is that sociology and photography share the same approximate birth date – 1839".

Political photographs play an important role in political communication around the world; people get to know through the media about the politicians of our nation or the world and about the role of male and women politician for the nation or society. Photographs helps the common reader to know the person physically appearance, after seeing many times a politician photo in the newspapers a reader easily identify the leader where ever he and she goes and our mind recall his or her news in our mind. According to Lemish (2004), media texts are perceived to be one of the prime cultural sites through which it is possible to study the position of women in society. This is an area within which our society presents itself publicly, defines our identity for us, establishes the parameters of consensus, and relegates what is perceived as unconventional to the margins.

Today all the newspapers and other media are mainly dependent on the photographs for proving better news coverage.

Photographs stop a reader to look into the news and read it. People read the news after seeing the photographs as photos is considered most reliable content in the newspapers.

Readers and viewers of a news can understand the meaning of photographs after seeing the gestures of a person in the photographs. Photographs provide the authenticated news from the political circle. Findings of neuroscience say, the brain perceives, stores, and processes verbal and visual information mainly on distinct routes and with distinct mechanisms. When a visual and an auditory stimulus occur at the same time, the visual elements dominate perception (VanDamme et al., 2009).

## Objective

The purpose of this research is to know the gender representation of political photographs on the front page of leading Indian newspapers. The Chandigarh edition of *The Indian express*, *Punjabi Tribune*, *The Tribune*, *The Times of India*, *Ajit*, *Dainik Tribune*, *Dainik Bhaskar*, and *Punjab Kesri* were considered for this study.

## Research questions

- How many male and women photographs were published on the front page?
- What area was given to male and women photographs?
- How many male and women photographs were used by each paper?
- What was the gender of published photographs with and without story?
- How many male and women photographs had captions with them?
- How many male and women photographs were local, regional, national and International?
- What was the size of male and women photographs?

## Literature review

In reviewing the literature for the study of gender representation of political photographs on the front page of newspapers, it makes sense to examine literature relating to the portrayals of political persons of both sexes in the print media. A number of studies have done to analyses the gender representation in the newspapers.

As per the previous research in media shows that women candidates for the U.S. House were covered with the same frequency as male candidates (Lavery, 2013). Women news was much less used in news stories than men (Ross et al. 2013). Gaye Tuchman's Hearth and Home: Images of Women and the Media (1978) was among the first studies in this vein with a well developed theoretical framework (Van Zoonen, 1994).

"Formal and informal discrimination have prevented women from gaining access to the academic world. In communication and cultural studies, both in the United States and Europe, the situation is not fundamentally different, with male faculty dominating, despite the high numbers of female students" (Van Zoonen, 1994).

Women politicians often struggle to receive media coverage (Braden, 1996; Devitt, 1999; Kahn, 1992, 1994a, 1994b; Kahn & Goldenberg, 1991; Witt, Paget, & Matthews, 1994). According to Penny M. Miller (1996), front page coverage of women are seldom the subjects of news stories.

Political coverage in the print media has become increasingly gender-balanced. Although certain disparities exist, some differences now actually favor women candidates (Farida Jalalzai 2006 & Smith, 1997).

Bystrom and her coauthors (2004) analyses the U.S. Senate and gubernatorial election coverage of men and women held in 1998, 2000, and 2002 and find, as a whole, parity in coverage. Although some differences exist, particularly in issue coverage, most are only prominent in 1998 and disappear in 2000 and 2002.

As per the study women sports persons get less coverage than men in print media and broadcast media (i.e., Bishop, 2003; Bryant, 1980; Fink & Kensicki, 2002; Fullerton, 2006; Lumpkin & Williams, 1991; Billings & Angelini, 2007; Billings & Eastman, 2002; Billings & Eastman, 2003). Many scholars have also studied the photos coverage of male and women players (i.e., Bishop, 2003; Duncan & Sayaovong, 1990; Fink & Kensicki, 2002; Pedersen, 2002; Rintala & Birrell, 1984; Salwen & Wood, 1994).

Shaun Kohn (2000) studied gender representation of sports photographs in newspapers. The study examines photographs of both genders in the sports section of newspaper. A content analysis method was adopted for the study of four newspapers

from 1978 to 1998, as per the study of four newspapers women athletes photographs are is increasing in the sports section in last 20 years, whereas a large gender gap in gender is still present.

## Research methodology

My key interest in this research was to know the women political photographs usage on the front page of Indian Newspapers. Eight leading newspapers (*The Times of India*, *The Tribune*, *The Indian express*, *Dainik Bhaskar*, *Punjab Kesri*, *Dainik Tribune*, *Punjabi Tribune* and *Ajit*) of three different languages English, Hindi and Punjabi were selected as per their readership to study the gender representation of political photographs on the front-page in 2011.

The newspapers were accessed via online archive of newspapers and personal visit at newspaper offices. Searches were conducted to collect all political photographs used on the front page during the first week of first six months of 2011. This yielded a sample of 355 political photographs. All the selected political photographs were again sampled in three category men photographs, women photographs and joint photographs of men and women. All three types of photographs were further studied to know the objective of the study.

For this study I have adopted content analysis research method instead qualitative research method. In qualitative research we analyses unstructured data and study the specific topics or issues. This method is mostly used in social and behavioral sciences: sociology, anthropology and psychology.

Whereas content analyses is very helpful to measuring visual content. This is an established research methodology for the media, it is used to study texts, visuals and advertising content. It was introduced by the Harold Lasswell (1927) to study mass media, initially to study the propaganda.

According to the Lasswell, Lerner and Pool (1952) said: "… content analysis operates on the view that verbal behaviour is a form of human behaviour, that the flow of symbols is a part of the flow of events, and that the communication process is an aspect of the historical process … content analysis is a technique which aims at describing, with optimum objectivity, precision, and generality, what is said on a given subject in a given place at a given time".

Berger (1991) says: "Content analysis … is a research technique that is based on measuring the amount of something (violence, negative portrayals of women, or whatever) in a representative sampling of some mass-mediated popular form of art".

Use of content analysis research methodology in media has increased many folds. As the study by Riffe and Freitag (1997) says "research papers using content analyses published in *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* has increased from 6.3% of all articles in 1971 to 34.8% in 1995 – nearly a six-fold increase".

Neuman (1997) describes content analysis research methodology as: "A technique for gathering and analysing the content of text. The 'content' refers to words, meanings, pictures, symbols, ideas, themes, or any message that can be communicated. The 'text' is anything written, visual, or spoken that serves as a medium for communication"

A coding sheet was prepared for all the variables, all the political visual content was coded as per the objective. This process was done for each front page of selected newspapers. Coder reliability is checked by using Scott's pi formula. For coder reliability 50 photographs were coded twice to get the Scott's pi these photographs were not included in this study. The coder reliability value of Scott's Pi is 0.534 and 80 Percent Agreement.

Genders of Political photographs of selected newspapers of front page analysis in terms of location of photographs, column (size), photographs used with story or without story and photographs without caption or with caption. The study doesn't analyses the photographs carried out by the advertisements.

**Data analysis**

I have studied the gender of 355 political photographs published in the selected newspapers on the front-page of 1st week of every month in the first six months in 2011. Based on my study, the tables have been explained.

**Table 1: Gender representation of political photographs**

|  | Political photographs | % of political photographs (n=355) |
|---|---|---|
| Male | 255 | 72 |
| Women | 25 | 7 |
| Joint Photographs | 75 | 21 |

Total 355 political photographs were used by the selected newspapers on the front page. In which 72% (n=255) photographs were male photographs and 21% (n=75) photographs were joint in which male and women both were seen, whereas only 7% (n=25) women political photographs were published in the selected time frame of the study.

**Table 2: Space given to male and women political photographs**

| Area of male photographs in Sq cm | Area of women photographs in Sq cm | Area of Joint photographs in Sq cm | Total area of Political Photographs in Sq cm |
|---|---|---|---|
| 5227 | 291 | 4114 | 9632 |
| 54% | 3% | 43% | 100% |

As per the table number 2, maximum space 5227sq cm (54%) is given to male photographs on the front page of the selected newspapers, while 4114 sq cm (43%) is given to joint photographs only 291 sq cm (3%) is given to women political photographs.

**Table 3: Gender representation of Political photographs in selected newspapers**

| | Male | Women | Joint Photographs | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Ajit* | 46 (70%) | 5 (8%) | 15 (22%) | 66 100% |
| *Dainik Bhaskar* | 22 (67%) | 2 (6%) | 9 (27%) | 33 (100%) |
| *Dainik Tribune* | 45 (83%) | 1 (2%) | 8 (15%) | 54 (100%) |
| *Indian Express* | 24 (75%) | 1 (3%) | 7 (22%) | 32 (100%) |
| *Punjab Kesri* | 63 (74%) | 4 (5%) | 18 (21%) | 85 (100%) |
| *Punjabi Tribune* | 27 (66%) | 5 (12%) | 9 (22%) | 41 (100%) |
| *Times of India* | 17 (68%) | 4 (16%) | 4 (16%) | 25 (100%) |
| *The Tribune* | 11 (58%) | 3 (16%) | 5 (26%) | 19 (100%) |

As per the table number 3, male photographs dominate in all the selected newspapers. *Dainik Tribune* published maximum 83% (n=45) male photographs, whereas *The Indian express, Punjab Kesri, Ajit, Times of India, Dainik Bhaskar, Punjabi Tribune* and *The Tribune* published 75% (n=24),74% (n=63),70% (n=46),68% (n=17), 67% (n=12),66% (n=27) and 58% (n=11) respectively. Maximum women photographs published by *The Tribune* and The *Times of India* 16%, while *Punjabi Tribune* published 12%, *Ajit* 8%, *Dainik Bhaskar* 6%, *Punjab Kesri* 5%, *The Indian express* 3% and 2% by the *Dainik Bhaskar.* While maximum joint photographs published by the *Dainik Bhaskar* 27% and 26% by *The Tribune,* 23% by *Ajit, The Indian express* and *Punjabi Tribune* published 22%, Punjabi Kesri 21%, The *Times of India* 16% and 15% by the Dainik Tribune.

**Table 4: Shows the male and women Political photographs with or without story**

|  | With story | Without story | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Male | 175 (69%) | 80 (31%) | 255 (100%) |
| Women | 20 (80%) | 5 (20%) | 25 (100%) |
| Joint Photographs | 59 79.00% | 16 21.00% | 75 (100%) |

As per the table number 4, maximum political photographs were used with the story. Women political photographs 80% published with story which followed by 79% joint photographs and 69% male photographs. Without the story (Stand alone) photographs were 31% male, 21% Joint photographs and 20% were women political photographs.

**Table 5: Shows the male and women Political photographs with or without caption**

|  | With caption | Without caption | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Male | 134 (53%) | 121 (47%) | 255 (100%) |
| Women | 7 (28%) | 18 (72%) | 25 (100%) |
| Joint Photographs | 57 (76%) | 18 (24%) | 75 (100%) |

As per the table number 5 , 76% joint photographs, 28% women photographs and 53% male political visuals were used with caption. Whereas maximum 72% women photographs were used without the caption, 47% male and 24% joint photographs published without the captions.

**Table 6: Shows the male and women political photographs places**

|  | Local | Regional | National | International | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Male | 1 (0%) | 115 (45%) | 115 (45%) | 24 (10%) | 255 (100%) |
| Women | 0 (0%) | 9 (36%) | 12 (48%) | 4 (16%) | 25 (100%) |
| Joint photographs | 0 (0%) | 26 (35%) | 42 (56%) | 7 (9%) | 75 (100%) |

As per the tables number 6, Maximum male political photographs 45% used from the region and maximum 56% joint photographs published from nation. While the maximum political women photographs 16% were used from international events.

**Table 7: Shows the male and women political photographs column**

| Column | Half Column | One Column | Two Column | Three Column | Four Column | Five Column | One and Half Column | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Male | 92 (36%) | 123 (48%) | 25 (10%) | 3 (1%) | 1 (0%) | 0 (0%) | 11 (4%) | 255 (100%) |
| Women | 12 (48%) | 10 (40%) | 2 (8%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | 1 (4%) | 25 (100%) |
| Joint Photographs | 4 (5%) | 26 (35%) | 20 (27%) | 13 (17%) | 3 (4%) | 1 (1%) | 8 (11%) | 75 (100%) |

As per the table number 7, most of the joint photographs were used in a big size by all the selected newspapers. Whereas women political photographs were used in small size, 48% half column, 40% one column, 8% two column, and 4% one and half column. Male photographs were used in a bigger size as compare to women photographs as 36% half column, 48% one column, 10% two column, 1% three column and 4% one and half column.

## Results & discussions

After the analysis of 355 political photographs gender out of 2394 photographs from the 336 front pages of selected newspapers for the study the following observations were made:

Indian print media dominate by the male political photographs as 72% male photographs were used in the selected newspapers. While only 7% women political photographs were used in the selected time frame and 21% joint photographs were used. Women have only 11% representation in India's Lok Sabha and 10.6% in the Rajya Sabha. This is an important reason of using maximum men photographs in Indian print media

Photographs attract the readers to read the news; if they are published in a big size it will communicate the message more effectively. Study reveals maximum 54% space (area) is given to male political photographs and 43% space is given to Joint photographs, whereas only 3% space is given to women political photographs.

All the selected newspapers published maximum Male political photographs on the front page. *Dainik Tribune* published maximum 83% Male photographs, whereas *The Indian express, Punjab Kesri, Ajit, Times of India, Dainik Bhaskar, Punjabi Tribune* and *The Tribune* published 75%,74%, 70%, 68%, 67%, 66% and 58% respectively. Maximum Women photographs published by *The Tribune* and *The Times of India* 16%, while *Punjabi Tribune* published 12%, *Ajit* 8%, *Dainik Bhaskar* 6%, *Punjab Kesri* 5%, *The Indian express* 3% and 2% by the *Dainik Bhaskar*. While maximum Joint photographs published by the *Dainik Bhaskar* 27% and 26% by *The Tribune*, 23% by *Ajit*, *The Indian express* and *Punjabi Tribune* published 22%, *Punjab Kesri* 21%, *The Times of India* 16% and 15% by the *Dainik Tribune*.

News photographs always enhance the news and credibility of the news and catch the attention of readers. As photographs show an authenticity of occurrence, which later newspaper published. As per the study maximum political photographs were used with the story. Maximum 80% Women political photographs published with story which followed by 79% Joint photographs and 69% Male photographs. Without the story (Stand alone) photographs were 31% male, 21% joint photographs and 20% were women political photographs.

The photo caption provides the essential information to understand a photograph. As per the study 76% joint photographs, 28% women photographs and 53% male political photographs were used with caption. Whereas maximum 72% women photographs were used without the caption, 47% male and 24% joint photographs published without the captions.

Photo captions are most readable text in a media after the titles of news content. Print media should use caption with all the photographs. As it help the readers to know about the person in photographs and many time readers read full news after reading the photo caption.

As per the study maximum 45% male political photographs published on the front page were from the region and maximum 56% joint photographs were from the nation. While the maximum political women photographs 16% were used from international events.

Photographs attract the readers to look into the particular news and create interest to read the full news appear in the media. It's not only about the number of photographs of men and women politicians used, but also the size of photographs published in the newspapers matters. In almost all selected newspapers, men politicians grabbed more space in terms of size also as compared to their women counterparts. So we can say that its both quantitative and qualitative spheres where gender disparity is visible in Indian print media.

India is the world's largest democracy but women presence in India's political system is very low. Women share in national and state legislatures is low despite the equal rights given to the women by Indian Constitution. Discrimination against women has been noticed since a long time in India. Gender disparity in the literacy rate in India is very high as per the census of 2011, 82.14% for men and 65.46% for women.

The study shows the significant difference in the gender representation of political photographs on the front page in the Indian print media. English newspapers published women political photographs more than vernacular newspapers. Front page is an important page of a newspaper and each paper publishes important news on the front page, similarly newspapers publish an important political photo on the front page. Indian men dominate in all the key positions in the politics that's why most of

the male political photographs were used in big size as compare to women politician's photographs.

Despite many protests by the women organisation for the reservation of seats in parliament, not all the political parties are not coming on the same platform for this cause. Newspapers are giving minimum space to women politicians as the percentage of women photographs was 7% but in term of space only 3% space is given to women politicians. So it clearly shows the discrimination by the Indian print media towards them.

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