

NEWSPAPER CARTOONS AS A MEDIUM OF SPREADING INFORMATION IN COVID

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Abstract:

The cartoons genre is one of the most demanding research interests today across various studies since its potential strength to reach people in short message form. This study is focused on illustrating cartoons as a medium of information. Newspapers have an approach to set political agendas and influence the minds of people on current events. This paper searched for cartoons published in newspapers to analyze data used in cartoons and efforts taken by various newspapers to reach the people. The researcher also observed political cartoons on socio-political issues in different studies. Daily cartoons in the month of April 2021 published in the national Indian newspaper The Hindu are selected for analysing covid messages, topics covered and symbols used. Study of various newspapers indicates worldwide using cartoons as a communication tool and making views of people in a positive way. The results show that people are informed about current issues and have an impact on their viewpoints to change their minds. It shows people reacting and debating on political issues. Nigerian Newspaper cartoons also criticized the military government and played an important role in the democratization process. Finally, the study has identified the increase in covid related messages and awareness spread in the people. Thus, cartoon research indicates the positive role in pandemic and proven easy information conveyance technique.

Keywords: cartoons, newspaper, communication, political cartoon

Introduction:

A cartoon word is derived from the Italian word 'cartone'. A cartoon is a drawing form of expression including humorous captioned illustrations, satirical political drawings, and animated films. It is referred to as a full-scale drawing made on paper as a full-size study for artwork. It acquires the meaning of a pictorial parody, humorous and satirical in its portrayal of social and political events.¹

Newspaper is an important part of print media to get information on current issues. News cartoon is the most indispensable news genre for newspapers that reflect some phenomena and contradictions in social life. In a short period of time, news cartoon is deeply loved by readers. Cartoon ideas and expression techniques give different visual experiences to readers and improve the dissemination with unique and artistic features.²

Newspapers endorse a cartoon as questioning political, economic, sociocultural, environmental, scientific-cum-technological, and sundry affairs. Editorial cartoons are satirical and requisite for newspapers as they play an important role in current issues of our daily lives. It touches upon issues and interprets the political, social, and economic scene in the country and the world.³

Cartoonist plays important role in easily communicating graphic images and messages with suitable drawings, texts, and captions. Editorial cartoons serving as a platform for the dissemination of messages provide additional viewpoints on present news occurrences. The best cartoonist can change readers' minds about an issue that they're commenting on with very funny cartoons.⁴

Newspaper cartoon has enormous potential to influence health-related behaviours and perceptions of viral outbreaks around the world. Cartoons play a crucial role in informing, motivating, and empowering the public based on the conceptualization of subjectivity. They deliver a specific message through verbal expressions, non-verbal pictorials, and mostly satirical images.

A Cartoon is effective in increasing the attention of people to distributing information as compared to text alone. The effect of cartoons depends upon types of cartoons like visual puns (PUN), semantic cartoons (SEM), and theory of mind cartoons (TOM). Cartoons without any text based on visual resemblance are visual puns and are easy to understand. Cartoons require empathizing or systemizing the meaning of the punch line in semantic cartoons. They are critically analyzed based on semantic relations between two scripts or meanings. Whereas one or more characters in the theory of mind

cartoons can be developed with appropriate mental state and interpretive abilities. All these cartoons make the readers think about current issues and visualize them in different forms.⁵

Literature review:

The study on “Illustration cartoon as a communicative weapon in the newspaper” explains the effect on readers spreading all over as a voice to the newspaper stories. The fun part in illustration has a strong impression without language and delivers the right message through a bold cartoon frame.⁶

Cartoons in various newspapers published during a COVID-19 outbreak are studied for social impact. University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka studied different viewpoints including health, social, economic, and political views expressed in cartoons representing the COVID-19 pandemic in Sri Lanka. Cartoons have been used to control the spread of the disease and to convey information on COVID-19, based on WHO guidelines. Newspaper cartoons are used as an effective means of disseminating information related to community resilience, social connection, protecting incomes, and maintaining a secure food supply. Public health workers and authorities provide effective health messages through cartoons that can provide effective health messages. Cartoonists can work collaboratively for more productive use of cartoons on the social, economic, political, and environmental effects of the pandemic on Sri Lanka.⁷

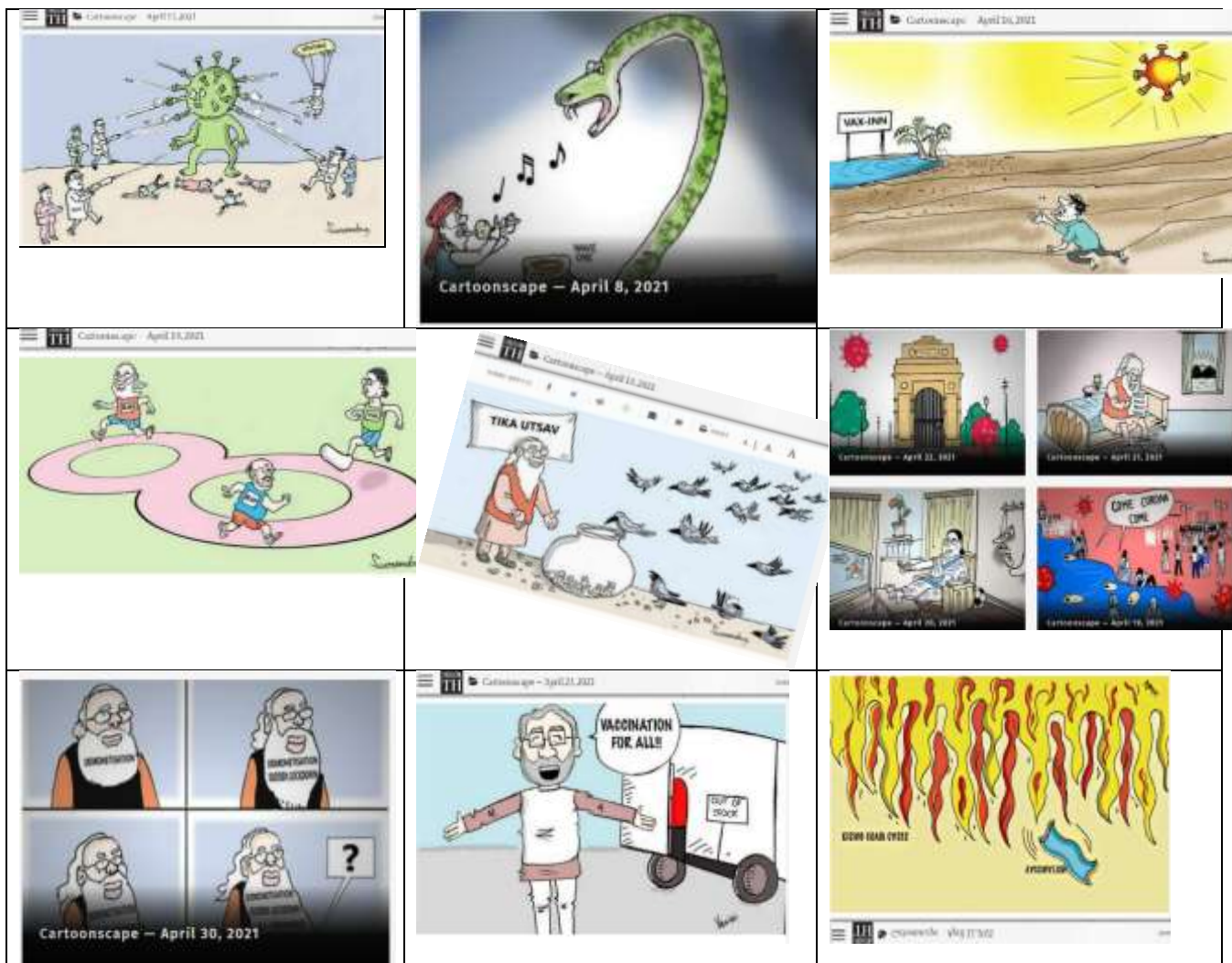
Editorial cartoons with different purposes are accepted according to their purpose, background, and behavior of the receiver. Political cartoons often fuel audiences generating more discussion about an issue. According to the analysis of Nigerian print media, cartoons are used to set agendas, thereby providing political commentary and debate in a humorous and crafty fashion through which social realities are reflected in the nation’s wider socio-political arena.⁸

English newspaper in Guwahati has initiated coronavirus cartoon strips to tackle the fake news and dismiss misinformation related to the coronavirus. It is published with two characters dedicated to creating awareness among the masses. A month-long series of cartoons used a character looking like a coronavirus indicating danger in misinformation.⁹

The virus is scientifically hard to imagine for people and fake news is faster to spread in a large population. Therefore, a small initiative has a great impact on the masses, and newspaper cartoons have the strength to reach the people.¹⁰

According to a study of “Selected Works of Three Nigerian Cartoonists” by Jimoh, Cartoons have a major role to serve as mirrors of the society in terms of corruption, political instability to electoral fraud. During the Nigerian military era between 1983 and 1999, newspapers focused on editorial cartoons that have a great impact on the democratization process. The cartoons with visual commentary reflect and criticize political matters and influence the opinion of the people. The single-frame and multi-frame narrative illustrations of newspaper editorial cartoons reflect the political climate of the nation and have witnessed different military regimes and democratization processes in Nigeria. The study also notes that the cartoonists who criticise the military government through visual satire and humor were scot-free.¹¹

Political cartoons are one of the most significant part of newspaper cartoon. It works on current issues as operative and powerful culture trappings for general public’s attention and awareness. Cartoons can deliver social clarifications shortly on key features of reality and easily convey message as compared to newspaper articles and therefore have special value in newspapers. Cartoon drawings deliver unique style sketches of personalities or political stories to express jokes or the capability to divert minds. Distorted sketches of the nose, big eyes, long ears, etc. attract the public to feel more emotional. Political cartoons reduce social hindrance and avoid the escalation of fight.



The study of Indian Political Cartoons says “Political cartoons are a weapon”. Viewers can connect with newspaper cartoons and habits with discussions or transactions. It can outbreak the minds of people and political illustrations can process the thinking positively towards political events.¹² Cartoons are found effective for orienting social issues and suggest that visuals can have positive or negative depictions of an object. Political cartoons in newspaper plays role in setting agenda.¹³

Methodology:

The researcher has done the content analysis of cartoon published in national daily The Hindu. Researcher has the purpose of studying cartoon as a medium of information and impact on people during COVID. It is focused on cartoons delivering information about COVID to the public. Analysis of cartoons published in month of April selected when the corona wave was on high. The topic has wider scope in studying types of cartoons and effectiveness of delivering information to the people. Cartoons are searched for online, offline, social media and published in editions of newspaper. It contains political cartoons majorly and have attractive and unique ideas of presentations. During COVID period, media also took an initiative for awareness in people. COVID guidelines and latest updates reached to the people through the cartoons. The study focuses on information delivered by cartoons and overview of studies on editorial cartoons. It describes various types of cartoons like editorial cartoons, informative cartoons and their strength to reach the people. The analysis includes topics covered during COVID wave and conveying information helping the authorities to guide the people. The study includes text analysis of various studies on cartoons in various issues with systematic way to examine role of cartoons in biasing views of people.

Qualitative Analysis of Cartoons:

According to the guidelines of the Library of Congress, cartoon analysis includes exaggeration, labelling, symbolism, analogy, and irony, etc.

The Hindu, national daily focused on awareness of COVID through cartoons. It includes characters and things that are attractive and have an effect on the minds of people.

Topics of cartoons include:

Rising covid cases, Vaccination, Sputnik vaccine, Lockdown, COVID during elections in West Bengal, Vaccines out of stock, Vaccines, deaths, and oxygen supply, Lack of oxygen supply, etc.

The Hindu selected topics related to COVID updates, social impact, vaccine, and COVID cases conditions. Cartoons pointed to the serious condition during the COVID wave and negligence of people towards corona prevention.

Discussion and Findings:

The world struggling to fight against the COVID tried to reach the people and guide them according to World's Health Organization's guidelines. The media and newspapers started to spread awareness among people. Researchers studied different researches on the impact of cartoons in newspapers. Cartoon has a strong impression to communicate people with an easy and short message. Public health authorities spread health messages through cartoons without language.

Newspaper cartoons have taken the initiative to tackle the fake news and dismiss misinformation creating awareness among the masses about the coronavirus and reaching the people.

Newspaper cartoons have largely been used to reach a large population. The use of cartoons is increased to convey knowledge to the people. The researcher found it helpful in delivering the current situation to make aware of the danger.

Impact of famous Indian cartoonists with gifted talent like R K Laxman, K. Shankar Pillai, Vijay Narain Seth adored by people, have a great impact for several decades. Another popular and respected cartoonist Mario Miranda awarded the Padma Vibhushan in 2012.

Cartoons have proven an effective role in the Nigerian democratization process. A researcher found that cartoons reflect the political climate of the nation. The effect of the single-frame and multi-frame narrative illustrations of newspapers is considered in making the minds of people.

Conclusion:

A cartoon has become a more popular source of communication. Various techniques used in a cartoon made it easy to understand the message. It can have more impact on people as compared to a newspaper article. Cartoonists are experts to put their viewpoints in terms of characters, taglines, or cartoon strips that can change the minds of people. It can have positive as well as negative impacts on people. Some political cartoons are used to set agendas making people biased on a political issue. The positive impacts of the newspaper cartoon are experienced in a COVID pandemic. The newspaper used cartoon characters to guide people for prevention and also provide a way to convey health messages. Researchers found that cartoons have also helped in reducing misinformation and successfully tackled fake news. It put forward the fact on coronavirus to aware people of fake and correct information. The results are included the analysis of COVID messages that made the people aware of conditions of COVID cases, lack of vaccines, and other related information. Thus, it has proven the role of newspaper cartoons in making views of people on current issues and making them aware of health issues.

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