

Content Analysis of MGNREGA's TV Advertisements and Online News Coverage

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Abstract

To assess the portrayal of MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) in TV advertisements and online news coverage, two content analysis were conducted for the present study. The first objective of the study was to understand the content of MGNREGA TV advertisements on the basis of components such as voice over, crew members of TV advertisements, crew members' age, background music and the techniques used for advertisements' execution (i.e., slice of life, dramatization, testimonial, animation and others). The second objective was to see how different aspects were influencing the implementation and communication dissemination of MGNREGA, and how these aspects were covered in the online newspaper coverage of well-known publishers (i.e., The Hindu, Times of India, DNA, The Indian Express, The Hindustan Times and others). MGNREGA's 11 TV advertisements and 74 published (online) news articles (between 2012 and 2016) were considered for the purpose of content analysis. The result of the study revealed that i) MGNREGA's TV advertisements carried easy to understand message but were not creative in approach and ii) MGNREGA gets a lot of media attention in India and reputed publisher breaks various MGNREGA news stories through techniques such as informative news, opinion based news and analytical news. Discussions are incorporated to discuss the major findings of the study and relate it to the available literature. The limitations of the study are presented and future research avenues are proposed.

Keywords: Content Analysis, MGNREGA, TV Advertisements, News Articles

Introduction

MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act): Lack of Awareness amongst Poor and Vulnerable Beneficiaries

MGNREGA was notified on 7 September 2005. MGNREGA's primary objective is to provide rural people

with 100 days guaranteed employment in a year. Since its inception MGNREGA has become a very well-known scheme that offers inclusive growth for vulnerable rural people across India (Sukhtankar, 2012; Breitzkreuz et al., 2017; Basak, 2018). MGNREGA's impact on livelihood security, social protection, and people's empowerment have been substantial (Mishra, 2011; Narayanan, Ranaware, Das, & Kulkarni, 2014; Goud and Usha Kiran, 2016). As per the official MGNREGA website, there were 11.77 crore active workers in the year 2018-19.

MGNREGA's unprecedented scale and features such as people-friendly, demand driven and right based approach have fetched attention globally (Reddy, Reddy, & Bantilan, 2014; Breitzkreuz et al., 2017). A large portion of poorest and marginalized people seek employment under MGNREGA, it is a demand-driven scheme where workers can demand work at any given point of the year (Ahuja, Tyagi, Chauhan, & Chaudhary, 2011; Kadiya, Parashar, & Vatavwala, 2016; Basak, 2018). In case the work is not provided to the applicant within 15 days of application, he or she becomes eligible for unemployment allowance. The mechanism of the program makes the states responsible for providing employment to the rural applicants, the states also bear the result of failing to provide employment by providing rural applicants with unemployment allowances (Chopra, 2014; Bebartha, 2013).

However, lack of awareness or low level of awareness on various MGNREGA aspects persists in the rural areas. Raghvan et al., (2008) revealed in their study that low level of awareness existed about MGNREGA among the people in the sample village and they called it "Ek sau din kaaj (100 days' work program)". Selvakumar, Jeyakumar, Sathyalakshmi, and Mohammed Abubakkar Siddique (2018) and Dey (2010) noticed the lack of

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awareness among the rural poor for MGNREGA, as most of the rural poor were illiterate, they were not aware of their rights such as payment within 15 days, free worksite facilities and employment on demand. Raabe et al., (2010) mentioned that the major challenges of MGNREGA were the misappropriation of funds, issuance of job cards, lack of awareness amongst the beneficiaries and decision making for work selection. A UNDP (2010) discussion paper on 'Right Based Legal Guarantee as Development Policy: MGNREGA' indicated that if the rights-based approach had to be followed, the state would have to first create an awareness of the rights.

Shah and Makwana (2011) mentioned the problem the weaker section of society was facing for lodging the complaints about getting the work in MGNREGA, despite intensive IEC (Information, Education and Communication) activities, many stakeholders at taluka and village level had a partial awareness of MGNREGA. In the similar line, Sudarshan (2011) revealed that there was greater awareness of MGNREGA than of other government programmes in Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, and Rajasthan. Specifically, people knew about '100 days of work provision in a year', but were less aware of the other details. In Himachal Pradesh, villagers did not attend the gram sabha meetings (village assembly) on regular basis and hence did not get adequate information about the scheme. Sudarshan (2011) mentioned that in the state of Rajasthan low-level of awareness existed on aspects such as worksite provisions, types of works possible and work application procedure.

Charlas and Velmurugan (2012) noticed that lack of awareness was a huge setback for the implementing authorities, rural beneficiaries had very less knowledge on minimum wage payment, unemployment allowance and free job card. Das (2012) highlighted that a low level of awareness was a huge issue in different states, due to the low level of awareness women were not able to participate in MGNREGA. Das, Singh, and Mahanto (2012) carried out research in the state of West Bengal's northern region, their research revealed that due to low level of awareness on MGNREGA's entitlement such as free job card, unemployment allowance, direct payment transfer and right to work, the beneficiaries were paying the registration fees and were paying money to acquire a job card as well.

Importance of Communication Dissemination for MGNREGA

MGNREGA being the countrywide scheme requires a lot of awareness building exercise (Das et al., 2012). Communication dissemination is required for making beneficiaries aware of various aspects of MGNREGA such as 100 days employment, free job card, unemployment allowances, worksite facilities and many others (Das et al., 2012; Selvakumar et al., 2018).

Mani and Krishnan (2014) advocated that the implementing authorities should opt for continuous communication dissemination schedule to spread adequate awareness amongst the rural beneficiaries. Their research further added that adequate awareness was required to encourage the rural beneficiaries to participate in the decision-making process of work selection, the requirement of the labour force and working with family members.

An MGNREGA report (2007) endorsed that communication dissemination of MGNREGA was a very critical aspect in order to achieve effective implementation. For impactful communication dissemination of MGNREGA, communication vehicles such as TV, radio, newspaper, pamphlet and brochure could be used.

A report submitted to the Ministry of Rural Development by Indian Institute of Management (IIM – Lucknow, 2009) highlighted that in the state of Uttar Pradesh, communication dissemination for MGNREGA was taking place through variety of communication vehicles, out of all the communication vehicles, radio had the highest reach, followed by TV, newspaper, hoarding, wall painting, pamphlets, and brochures. Shah (2012) submitted a report for the revision of MGNREGA operational guidelines and emphasized that communication dissemination vehicles such as pamphlets, wall painting, door to door contact program, advertisements on TV, radio and print, programs at public places such as library, village dairy and school should be utilized to create a stronger image of MGNREGA and also to reach out the vulnerable rural beneficiaries of SC and ST background.

Communication dissemination for MGNREGA is managed by the Ministry of Rural Development through DAVP (Directorate of Advertising and Visual Publicity) and various other empanelled advertising agencies. As of December, 2018 DAVP had released more than

15 MGNREGA TV advertisements, more than 10 MGNREGA radio advertisements, posters, banners and print advertisements for different states (Source: davp.nic.in).

Importance of TV Advertisements and other Communication Tools in Rural Setup

There has been a lot of efforts during the last couple of decades to use various communication tools for assisting socio-economic development, especially in rural areas (Kashyap, 2016). For disseminating the information for government schemes, communication vehicles such as TV, radio, internet, magazines, newspapers, contact methods are widely used in India (Sulaiman, Kalaivani, Mittal, & Ramasundaram, 2011). Chapman and Slaymaker (2002) mentioned that TV is transforming the way information was disseminated for a specific program to rural people. Tripp (2001) emphasized the importance of the internet, newspaper, notice-board, and radio to spread information such as market prices to the rural people.

A report titled as 'Engendering Meta-evaluations: Towards Women's Empowerment (2015)' advocated that TV advertisements should be used to promote MGNREGA. The report emphasized on the usage of communication vehicles such as vernacular newspaper, translated policy briefs, pamphlet with pictures, street play, TV and radio advertisements for creating better awareness amongst MGNREGA beneficiaries, especially the women beneficiaries.

Parida, Bhowmick, and Sivakumar (2016) mentioned that amongst the MGNREGA beneficiaries, TV was the most preferred communication vehicle to receive MGNREGA information, which was followed by print media and radio. Mahesh, Sudharani, Naik, Devi, and Reddy (2017) endorsed the opinion of Parida et al., (2016) by emphasizing that rural beneficiaries preferred the communication vehicles such as kisan mela (farmer's fair), agricultural magazines and advertisements on TV, radio and newspaper. For the communication dissemination of MGNREGA, importance of communication vehicles such as TV, newspaper, magazines, leaflet, personal contact method, hoarding and wall painting have been endorsed by scholars such as Shah (2015), Jain (2012) and Mavinakatti (2013).

Sulaiman et al., (2011) highlighted that radio and TV were instrumental in disseminating a wide range of information pertaining to rural employment, health, agriculture and environment to rural communities. At the same time the usage of ICT (Information, Communication, and Technology) had enhanced the effectiveness of rural service delivery and brought the factor of transparency, some of the studies also revealed that such initiatives contributed to the rural women's empowerment (Nath, 2001; Gurumurthy, 2006; Arun et al., 2004). Sulaiman et al., (2011) mentioned that radio and magazines were used in rural areas for the information dissemination of employment advisory, career planning, health and nutrition, agriculture and many others. In India, various TV channels telecast numerous programs on rural development, social welfare, child's education, adult education, employment for youth, family welfare, science and technology and natural calamities such as epidemics, earthquake, and floods (Sulaiman et al., 2011).

At the same time, it should be noted that not much research has been carried out to understand the communication dissemination mechanism of MGNREGA. However, several researchers have studied the communication dissemination tools used for MGNREGA, prevailing issues and advantages of MGNREGA (Parida, 2016; Sivasankari & Bharathi, 2012).

MGNREGA in Media

An India Today Report (9 July, 2015) revealed that World Bank had announced MGNREGA as the world's largest public works programme. Since its launch, MGNREGA has been extensively covered by well-known domestic and international publishing houses, especially newspapers and news channels. Public domain on internet offers hundreds of MGNREGA news coverage pertaining to various issues such as benefits to the rural people, benefits to the village, women empowerment, construction of useful assets, work during the lean patch of the year, social security, corruption and malpractices, late payment, ghost workers, unavailability of work and many others. Various international media houses such as BBC, CNN, The New York Times, Fox News and domestic media houses such as Times of India, The Hindu, The Indian Express, The India Today group and many others have published various news pertaining to MGNREGA.

Objectives of the Study

(1) To understand the content of the MGNREGA TV advertisements from the perspectives of components such as voice over, crew members of TV advertisements, crew members' age, background music and the techniques used for advertisements' execution.

(2) To understand how different aspects were influencing the implementation and communication dissemination of MGNREGA, and how these aspects were covered in the online newspaper coverage of well-known media houses.

Research Methodology

The study uses content analysis to quantify the qualitative data. In qualitative research, several methods of analysis can be used, such as ethnography, phenomenography, grounded theory and content analysis (Burnard, 1995). In contrast to the other qualitative methods, content analysis is not associated with any specific science, and rules to be followed are less (Bengtsson, 2016). Krippendorff (2004) mentioned that content analysis is useful in making the inferences on the basis of available text and context. Downe-Wambolt (1992) highlighted that content analysis is a systematic process to make relevant inferences from the available visual, verbal or written information or data. Further, through content analysis, the available data can be described and quantified for the better understanding.

For the present research, content analysis has been utilized to make valid inferences from the MGNREGA TV advertisements and published MGNREGA news articles and in order to describe the elements of news articles and TV advertisements, the same has been elaborated further in two parts.

Part I focuses on the content analysis of 74 MGNREGA centric news articles published (online) between 2012 and 2016 (for the details refer Appendix A). The objective of part I is to see how different external and internal aspects were influencing the implementation and communication dissemination of MGNREGA, and how they were covered in newspaper coverage. For quantifying the qualitative data, 8 parameters were considered through a validation

process. The validation process included the participation of 5 corporate executives from the field of marketing communication and 4 academicians. The experts opined that these 8 parameters were strong enough to represent the type of news articles. These 8 parameters are: i) analytical news, ii) opinion based news, iii) informative news, iv) interview method, v) real-life story, vi to viii) overall outlook of the news report that is positive outlook, a negative outlook and neutral outlook. The content of the news article was coded on the basis of the presence of the aforesaid parameters.

Part II focuses upon the content analysis of 11 MGNREGA TV advertisements (refer table 1) on the basis of 5 parameters: i) voiceover ii) crew iii) crew age iv) advertisement execution technique v) background music. Each parameter was broken down into sub parameters to understand the components of MGNREGA advertisements the best way possible. The parameters and sub-parameters were decided after a thorough validation process which saw the participation of 10 marketing and communication executives and 3 academicians. The content of the TV advertisements was coded on the basis of the presence of the parameters and sub-parameters depicted in table 2.

Table 1: MGNREGA TV Advertisements Considered for Content Analysis

<i>Sr No</i>	<i>MGNREGA TV Advertisements</i>	<i>Duration</i>	<i>Language</i>
1	Berozgari - sarpanch	30 seconds	Hindi
2	Birju	40 seconds	Hindi
3	Gaon Ke Sarpanch	30 seconds	Hindi
4	Kam Ki Guarantee	40 seconds	Hindi
5	Kam Talshte The	30 seconds	Hindi
6	Wages Within 15Days	30 seconds	Hindi
7	Work Within 15 Days	30 seconds	Hindi
8	MGNREGA Record	30 seconds	Hindi
9	Jordar Guarantee	30 seconds	Hindi
10	Thekedar	40 seconds	Hindi
11	Uttar Dakshin	30 seconds	Hindi

Table 2: Parameters and Sub-parameters Considered for the Content Analysis

Sr No	Parameters	Sub parameters
1	Voice Over	Male
		Female
		Male and Female
		Multiple
2	Crew	Male dominated
		Female-dominated
		Combination
		Celebrity/famous person
3	Crew Age	Male age
		Female age
4	Execution Techniques	Dramatization
		Slice of life
		Humour
		Testimonial
		Animation
		Imagery
		Technical advice
		Combination
5	Background music	Available
		Not available
		Song
		Soft
		Loud
		Modern
		Old

Results

Part I

Content analysis of 74 news articles ranging from 2012 to 2016 revealed that most of the articles published were informative and opinion based (refer table 3). While other were analytical and carried real-life stories of MGNREGA workers. The overall portrayal of MGNREGA as a pan-India scheme was inclined toward negative aspects of MGNREGA such as corruption, late payment, ghost workers, low level of awareness and poor work site facilities. The positives of MGNREGA such as women empowerment, poverty alleviation, employment during the lean patch and assistance in the agriculture sector were well mentioned in the news coverage.

Table 3: Content Analysis of MGNREGA News (Online) Articles

Analytical	Opinion	Informative	Interview	Real life story	Overall negative outlook	Overall positive outlook	Neutral outlook
29	42	60	12	21	34	30	14

A brief summary of some of the articles falling into the categories of analytical, opinion based, informative, interview and the real-life story has been presented further.

Analytical

An article published in The Indian Express (23 June 2016) highlighted that due to the drought there was a poor harvest situation in the months of April and May, 2016. The next harvest season was only due in the months of September and October, 2016. The poor harvest season reduced the employment in the agriculture sector and since the next harvest system was due after several months, the work demand for MGNREGA had increased significantly. The demand for MGNREGA works had doubled in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Karnataka.

An article written by Reetika Khera (Published on NDTV.com on 1 February 2016) presented a pan-India MGNREGA implementation perspective. The article highlighted that the state of Tamil Nadu had emerged as a torchbearer to other states for MGNREGA implementation. In Tamil Nadu, the implementing authorities had taken great care to spread awareness and provide works to rural beneficiaries, especially women. The article further elaborated that on an average each job card holder got 32 days of employment, however, in the state of Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh the average days of employment was only 17 days.

Opinion Based

An article written by Martin Ravallion (Published in The Indian Express, 24 October 2014) mentioned that lack of awareness on what one should do in order to apply for work under MGNREGA was a huge issue for MGNREGA's implementation. Public awareness about MGNREGA should be increased in order to reach out to those who were not associated with MGNREGA works. The article summarized that there was an urgent need

of i) creating greater public awareness on guidelines of MGNREGA and rights of rural beneficiaries ii) making more and more rural people participate in the scheme and iii) developing a stronger and transparent mechanism to solve problems of MGNREGA beneficiaries.

Informative

An article published in *The Tribune* (March 30, 2016) highlighted that in the Ludhiana district in Punjab, there was a little awareness about the kind of work that could be provided to villagers under MGNREGA, as a result not many people were seeking jobs under the scheme. Even Panchayats were not aware of the list of works provided under the scheme.

An article published in *The Hindustan Times* (20 July 2016) mentioned the positive side of MGNREGA's implementation. The article mentioned that with the modification in the implementation of MGNREGA, the scheme had seen more enthusiastic participation. The employment generated under the scheme jumped by 60% and as many as 89 crore person days were generated in the first quarter of the year 2016.

An article published in *DNA* (March 10, 2016) mentioned that participation of women in MGNREGA in 2015-16 had increased in comparison to the previous three years. A total of 331.18 lakh women participated in MGNREGA till March 2016 which was 51% of the total 650.14 lakh persons participating in MGNREGA.

An article published in *The Wire* (30 April 2016) mentioned that the durability of assets created under MGNREGA was questionable. The productivity of MGNREGA works remained poor, mainly due to the poor quality of assets built with MGNREGA funds.

Interview

A report published in *The Times of India* (September 20, 2016) highlighted Rajasthan's Education Minister Vasudev Devnani explaining the government's decision to collaborate with MGNREGA works to build school playground across the state.

Real Life Story

An article published in *The Hans India* (June 16, 2016) was based on the story of Yashodabai Rathod, aged 38. Yashodabai migrated to Mumbai from Marathwada region of Maharashtra. Five members of Yashodabai's family were involved in breaking boulders and building temporary roads, they worked for 30 days under the world's largest employment guarantee program MGNREGA. They worked in their village Nevli, located in Mukhed taluk of Nanded district. However, none of them was paid their salary due to administrative lapses. Yashodabai mentioned that due to such payment related issues occurring in MGNREGA as many as 340 villagers from her village had migrated to Mumbai and other urban areas.

Part II

The content analysis of MGNREGA TV advertisements revealed that most of the TV advertisements were dominated by male characters than female characters. The voice over in most of the TV advertisements was also dominated by male voice over. From the perspective of age, the male participants (or crew) of the TV advertisements were of age 40 – 45 years, while female participants were of age 35 – 40 years. It was also observed that never a celebrity endorser (film star, sports personality, social workers) was hired to endorse MGNREGA and to attract more workers to participate in MGNREGA.

As depicted in table 2 and table 4, a majority of MGNREGA TV advertisements were developed through two execution approaches known as dramatization and the slice of life. Dramatization approach helps create a suspenseful situation or a scenario in form of a fictional story, it is widely used for depicting a problem and a solution situation (Belch et al., 2013). Slice of life approach takes a leaf out of the real situation and attempts to depict a part of a person's life in the advertisements. Testimonial approach is used by showing real-life users, consumers or beneficiaries, they give their own account by featuring in the advertisements (Shimp & Andrews, 2017).

Table 4: MGNREGA Advertisement Execution Techniques

<i>Advertisement execution techniques</i>							
<i>Dramatization</i>	<i>Slice of life</i>	<i>Humour</i>	<i>Testimonial</i>	<i>Animation</i>	<i>Imagery</i>	<i>Technical advice</i>	<i>Combination</i>
7	7	0	1	1	1	0	1

As shown in table 1, TV advertisements such as 'Thekedar', 'Gaon ke Sarpanch', 'Birju', 'Kam Ki Guarantee', 'Jordar Guarantee', 'Wages within 15 days' and 'Uttar Dakshin' featured the dramatization and slice of life approach. The

advertisement titled as 'Kam Talashte The' featured the testimonial approach, wherein a rural beneficiary was shown endorsing MGNREGA works.

Table 5: MGNREGA TV Advertisements Background Music

<i>Background music</i>						
<i>Available</i>	<i>Not available</i>	<i>Song</i>	<i>Soft</i>	<i>Loud</i>	<i>Simple</i>	<i>Old</i>
11	0	4	8	3	8	1

As depicted in table 5 most of the MGNREGA TV advertisements were backed up by soft background music with a Hindi song. The music was appealing for rural beneficiaries and at the same time, it was termed as simple music with a soft touch to it. TV advertisements such as 'Uttar Dakshin', 'Birju', 'Kam Ki Guarantee' and 'Thekedar' were well supported by a Hindi song, while the rest of MGNREGA TV advertisements featured a conversation with soft background music. TV advertisement such as 'Kam Ki Guarantee' featured the loud background music which continued from the very beginning of the advertisement until the end of it.

Discussions

MGNREGA's online news coverage (between 2012 and 2016) touched upon numerous aspects such as lack of awareness amongst MGNREGA beneficiaries, poverty alleviation, prevalent corruption, women participation and assets creations. However, it should be noted that more than 50% of the news articles featured negative aspects of MGNREGA. This informs us that MGNREGA has always been in the news for various reasons. Bhatia et al., (2016) mentioned that MGNREGA being the largest public employment programme in the world has resulted in much attention in the Indian media as well as in the international academic and media communities.

Content analysis revealed that news coverage of MGNREGA originated from different regions of India, which showed that MGNREGA's reach has been significant and irrespective of region. Even though there

was lots of positive and negative word of mouth regarding MGNREGA, the rural beneficiaries were more than eager to get employment in MGNREGA (Bhattacharya & Vauqueline, 2013; Carswell & De Neve, 2014). However, the issues of unemployment allowances (Jorgensen, 2016), ghost workers (Anderson et al., 2013), late payments and poor work site facilities (Narasimha et al., 2014) were the main highlights which also correlated with the literature review presented in this study.

Other positive aspects of MGNREGA such as employment availability throughout the year, direct payment methods (Breitkreuz et al., 2017), women empowerment (Rajalakshmi & Selvam, 2017), participative approach, benefits of assets created (Manjula, 2015) were also highlighted in the news coverage, these points also correlated with the literature presented in the present study. As MGNREGA reaches out to the rural poor and vulnerable, it has also been subject to many political comments (Ghosh, 2015). Some of the news articles took into account the comments made by local and prominent politicians about MGNREGA's implementation and performance. The aforesaid points highlighted that MGNREGA has always remained a media favourite government scheme, mostly due to its pan India presence, large beneficiary pool, benefits to vulnerable rural beneficiaries and prevailing malpractices.

On the account of MGNREGA's TV advertisements, there is a shortfall in the availability of relevant literature. Content analysis of MGNREGA TV advertisements revealed that the dominance of male characters was quite

evident, the majority of the characters shown were males of age between 40-45 years. Most of the TV advertisements attempted to create a real-life rural scenario where people were interacting and one or two persons were explaining the benefits of MGNREGA to those listening to them. In some of the TV advertisements, testimonial technique was used, where a beneficiary would share his MGNREGA story with the audience and try and explain to them the benefits he gained while he/she worked under MGNREGA.

From the perspective of MGNREGA's advertisement execution, the TV advertisements were crafted with a simple rural tone, easy to understand language and short dialogues. TV advertisements also showcased the stakeholders of MGNREGA such as Sarpanch (village head), workers including women, mates and others such as thekedar (contractor). By doing this the TV advertisements were able to draw the right picture of rural work scenario. TV advertisements were also backed up with soft background music and Hindi song, hence the overall presentation of TV advertisements was appealing, was not exaggerating and easy on eyes and ears for a rural audience. It should be noted that the advertisement execution techniques used for MGNREGA TV advertisements were meaningful and simple, however, the execution techniques lacked the creative approach.

Limitation and Future Research Scope

There are two major limitations of the study which are: i) the present study takes into account limited number of news articles (74 in total) and MGNREGA TV advertisements (11 in total), ii) the present study considers limited parameters and sub parameters for quantifying the qualitative data. Future scope for this type of exploratory study is quite vast. A larger data pool of MGNREGA's news article in English and vernacular dailies could be considered for future research. Similarly, along with MGNREGA's TV advertisement, other advertisements such as print, radio and outdoor could be considered to explore the components of each advertisements.

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